

EDDIE DAWSON
Reel I--Digest--Retyped
June 28, 1961

Also present: William Russell
Ralph Collins

Recorded at the home of Eddie Dawson, 325 North Johnson Street,
New Orleans, Louisiana.

ED tells that [Joe] King Oliver began dropping a brick to signal the end of a tune, because the musicians either didn't hear his foot stomp or they didn't pay any attention to it; the brick made a noise impossible to ignore. ED says the band was playing in a hall on Baronne, between Sixth and Seventh streets, when the brick incident occurred.

WR mentions Tintype Hall, quoting Richard M. "Myknee" Jones as his source; ED says it was Tintop, and was on Perdido between Liberty and Franklin [now Loyola?]. Kinney's Hall, also known as Funky Butt Hall, was further out Perdido. Tintop had a tin top. WR mentions that the old headquarters of the Zulus, and Rouchac's [spelling?] saloon were in the same area?]. The Tintop had a bandstand, not in a balcony; the Pelican, on Rampart near Gravier, had a balcony bandstand; ED played there with Kid Rena; "Beansy" [Fauria] ran the place; the Rena band would also "ballyhoo" from the gallery on the outside front of the place. When ED worked (playing guitar) with King Oliver for a short time, others in the band were: Chris Minor, drums; George "Pop" Foster, bass; Willie Foster (brother of George), violin; Eddie Atkins, trombone; (recounting, ED says Louis, or Willie, Keppard [but he apparently means Willie Foster, as mentioned]); Lorenzo Tio, Jr., clarinet; (Oliver, cornet). The band was called the Magnolia Band. ^[Compare reel I, 11 Aug. 1959, p. 4, on Louis Keppard, guitar.] ED says Oliver and Armstrong left together to go to Chicago [Oliver went first, sending for Armstrong sometime later--PRC]; Oliver took only George Foster with him to Chicago. [Cf. Walter C. Allen and Brian Rust, King Joe Oliver.] When Oliver left, he had been playing, with ED in the band, at Huntz [Hunt's?] and

Nagel's, at Liberty and Iberville, about 1915, or 1912, says ED [doubtful that Oliver left that early; cf., King Joe Oliver; also Paul Barbarin interview, Reel ?].

Some of the dance bands playing about the same time Buddy Bolden had a band were the Blaze Away Band (Creoles from downtown), the Eureka Band, the Olympia Band, and the Tuxedo Band [cf. Bébé Ridgley, reel]; a couple of them also operated as brass bands. The bands played Dixieland, as played today, says ED. Uptown and downtown styles were about the same. WR says he has been told that uptown bands played more blues; ED says only one band played mostly blues--that of Chris Kelly [Kelly was of a later generation than Bolden and the other bands ED has mentioned--PRC]. Practically everything they played sounded like the blues. ED says Kelly was operating at the same time as Billy Phillips ran his cabaret, and Huntz [sp?] and Nagel's was going; ED played tenor banjo with Kelly for quite some time. Kelly had a lot of work over the river; most of his work was for colored people. Kelly had a lot of work, mostly every night, just like Kid Rena. ED says Rena's band was better; they played more of a variety of tunes. Speaking of other early bands, ED says that in 1904 O'Neil Levasseur had a five-piece band, played at Fewclothes [Foucault's] dance hall, Franklin near Iberville; Levasseur played violin. In the next block was the 101 Ranch, a dance hall owned by Harry and Charlie Palmer, where ED (who got the job) played with Manuel Manetta, piano, about 1907. Others in band: Willie Humphrey [the elder, clarinet], ED, guitar; Jean Vigne, drums [one other, as ED says there were five pieces; see below]. ED was the first to use a cornet in a band playing in the District, where use of cornet or trombone was not allowed [cf. Johnny Lala, reel (); Freddy Keppard

PARKER'S OWNED 101 RANCH IN 1911-1912. JDP
1-29-85

(with Wiggs, Burke, WR, etc.)); Freddy Keppard came by ED's job one night and was asked by Harry Parker to play; Parker promised to protect him from any consequences, so Keppard played, creating such a sensation that all the ["B-drinking"] women at Huntz [Hunt's?] and Nagel's came to hear him. Keppard was added to the band (Parker got a mayoral permit to allow the cornet to stay); next week, [Huntz or Hunt's?] and Nagel's got Joe Oliver and his band. ED later quit his job at the 101 Ranch to join Oliver at [Huntz or Hunt's?] and Nagel's. ED remembers that Jimmy Palao, violin, was also in the band at the 101 Ranch [clearing up the mystery of the fifth piece].

Levasseur had violin, guitar, piano, drums [and clarinet], but ED doesn't remember who played with him, as personnel turnover was frequent.

Piano and drums were the main instruments used in the District; blowing instruments were added later.

ED talks about "chummies" (sailors, mostly from Norwegian ships) coming into the dance halls in the District, and the large tips the musicians got when they were in town.

ED says Harold Dejan [quite young--RBA] from the downtown Creole section, can probably tell more about the Blaze Away Band. ED lived uptown, Third Ward, until 1931, when he moved downtown to the Fourth Ward.

ED remembers the Charlie Galloway band; he played guitar on a couple of jobs with Galloway, whom he describes as a one-legged bass player. The band name was "Happy Galloway's Band." Galloway was also a barber; his shop was on [Simon] Bolivar [Boulevard], between Poydras and Lafayette. When Kid Punch [Miller] first came from the country [Raceland, La.] he played with Galloway's band [Cf. Punch

Again, this would be 1911-12.
7 Cornets were common in district.

JDP

1-24-85

PROB. HANS NAGEL AND

Edna O. Goshall's. JDP
1-29-85

Miller interviews]. Frankie Duson played trombone in the band; Joe Welch played violin (Welch was also a good drummer). Galloway got a lot of work, mostly in the country, along the route of the Southern Pacific and T[exas and] P[acific] railroads.

RC and WR mention Adam Olivier, violinist, who had a band with which Bunk Johnson began his music career; Tony Jackson worked with the band in his youth; Olivier was from around Tchoupitoulas and Amelia streets, uptown, had a barber shop; ED doesn't remember it.

[Prob. HENRY Payton] JOP 1-29-85-

ED says Lee Payton didn't have a band, but a duo; Payton, an accordion player, had a guitar player with him, and that was his outfit. Payton's accordion, large, was what people called a "flutetina" [spelling?]. Payton played at the Big 25, which was also called the Bucket of Blood. There were ham-kicking contests held there. The 25 was called Bucket of Blood before it became the Big 25.

ED began his playing on guitar; went to tenor banjo later. He was about 33 when he began guitar [in a later interview, he says he was born in 1884, so if he were 33 when he began playing, he couldn't very easily have played in the District, or anywhere else, in 1907-- must have begun playing earlier, or have been born earlier, or got his chronology mixed up--PRC]. He began playing bass about 1912, after he had quit playing banjo; he would sometimes play banjo, but his main instrument was bass from about the time he learned it. ED doesn't play banjo anymore, not wanting to be bothered with playing it, especially as most of his banjo work was around Carnival day [Mardi Gras] on trucks; he sold his banjo to [Fred] "H.E." [Minor], so he wouldn't be called to play it. For Carnival jobs on trucks, the instrumentation was usually drums, tenor banjo, clarinet, cornet, trombone more or less. The musicians were expected to play while the truck was moving in later years.

ED began playing bass with a bow, but did more picking soon after; he says he believes he started "that 4/4 rhythm" [i.e., picking four beats to the bar]. ED says George Foster got the idea from him, and after that all the bass players began playing that way.

End of Reel I

EDDIE DAWSON
 Reel II--Digest--Retyped
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Also present: William Russell,
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ED continues about bass playing, saying most bass players used to use the bow, even when playing 4/4 rhythm [in a simulated pizzicato style--PRC], instead of picking with the fingers; the bow is also used when playing sentimental pieces (e.g., some waltzes, etc.).

When ED began studying guitar, he had ~~not~~ teacher, but taught himself with the help of method books. ED had ~~help~~ when he learned bass; a crippled white man, Mateo [Dutranga or Catranga?], who had played at the Orpheum Theater before giving up playing, and who had a place of business at the corner of Conti and Claiborne, helped him learn the fingerboard [i.e., the various positions of the hands and fingers and chords]. When ED learned to read, he took up treble and bass clefs at the same time; he had help with time division from various musician friends, such as Manuel Manetta. When he joined Hypolite Charles's band, he got a lot of help there, especially from drummer Joe Welch. (Welch and Louis Cottrell [Sr.] were the only drummers who really played drums by reading music). ED played tenor banjo with Charles. The orchestrations were played from introduction to coda, including modulation. All the Charles band members read music; others were: Sunny Henry, trombone; Camilla Todd, piano; Emile Bigard, violin; Charles, trumpet; Welch, drums; Clarence Hall, saxophone. [Also Albert Glenney, bass; see below. Also cf. Sunny Henry, Reel Hypolite Charles, reel]

The band played at the New Orleans Country Club, had a contract at the San Jacinto Hall (to play any event which was booked there), the colored Lions Club (Liberty Street near the Francis Amis Hall).

ED played in the band of trumpet player Edward Clem; Clem had more work in the country (i.e., Hammond, Bogalusa, etc.) than any other New Orleans band. Clem was a good trumpet player. Some in his band when ED played: Willie Warner, clarinet, "Shugah" [spelling?], valve trombone. Frankie Duson, trombone, also worked with the band for a time. Old man [Senet (spelling?)], violin, also played with Clem's band. Bob Lyons played bass with the band. ED says he began learning bass in that band, as he would often carry Lyons's bass on the job for him. The band was called the Pelican Band. ED, at the insistence of Clem, and with the blessing of Lyons, replaced Lyons in the band. The Clem band traveled out-of-town on trains. They wore uniforms (coats with braid, caps with name of band). Clem was about the size and build of WR [fairly tall, a bit heavy]; he always wore dark glasses, as he had had one eye put out when he was a child.

Joe Oliver had only one good eye, too, but he could see better with one than a lot of people could with two; Oliver was a very good sight reader. Clem was also a pretty good reader; he could make band arrangements from piano sheet music. ED thinks Clem was from around Ponchatoula [Louisiana], where Clem's father had a "sort of a farm."

John Pendleton was a trombone player, but he could play trumpet; he could play dance music before Joe Oliver could. Pendleton lived on Peniston Street. Once when ED wanted to hire Oliver for a dance job, Oliver (who ran a shoe repair shop uptown [Cf. Soards']) told him he could play only brass band music, that he was not able to play dance music yet; he sent ED to Pendleton (who lived about three blocks away), saying Pendleton was a trombone player who could play cornet and could play dance music. Pendleton took the job and played acceptably, although ED says he was better on trombone. ^PED speaks of "Wooden Joe" [Nicholas], who could play cornet and who also could "fill in" on clarinet [cf. Wooden Joe Nicholas, reel]. ED worked "little skacky [sic; check slang dictionaries] jobs" with Nicholas, such as at Graffanino's (Claiborne and Tulane Avenue[s]). Leon Mumford played piano in Nicholas's band; Manny Gabriel played sax; ED played tenor banjo; Sammy Penn (now with [Kid] Thomas [Valentine]'s band) was on drums. WR doesn't remember who was in the band when he heard ~~it~~ ^{about} about 1943.

RC and WR mention old-time trumpet player, "Ned," who played about the same time as Buddy Bolden; Ned was supposedly from uptown, and a good blues man. ED doesn't remember him. There were many relatively unknown bands around the Garden District and across the river.

In the early days, the dance bands were called string bands, unless they were "heavy" bands (six or seven pieces and larger), in which case they were called orchestras. ED says the small groups might be composed of guitar, violin, bass and mandolin, and that some of the members would probably sing; there were no blowing instruments, just strings; the groups were called string bands. [Even "heavy" bands are still called string (as opposed to brass) bands today--RBA.] They played music like the hillbilly bands play.

Willie Edwards, trumpet, is mentioned; RC says Punch [Miller] talks of him. ED barely remembers having heard of him. ED says Punch was originally from Raceland [Louisiana].

Freddy Keppard played the same style as the others who played Dixieland and jazz. There were some musicians who played only brass band music and there were some who played dance music [dance music meaning jazz?]. Keppard was good. He first started playing on violin [cf. Louis Keppard, reel]; ED played jobs with him on violin, at Milneberg picnics, for instance. At the picnics during intermission, Keppard would pick up the trumpet player's instrument and play it; finally he began to play it well. The trumpet player on the job probably was Manuel Perez; ED remembers working a lot with Perez at Milneberg, when a fellow called "Gossoon" was operating the outings. WR says [Alphonse] Picou mentioned playing at those picnics with Perez, and had mentioned Keppard's picking up the cornet. ED played some with Picou, but not on the same job as the one mentioned; Sidney Bechet was the clarinet player on the job. ED talks about how the band would wait for Bechet to arrive on "Smoky Mary," and that Bechet would ride back and forth, to and from town, because he would be sleeping. Someone would finally go to the train and find him, and take him to the job.

End of Reel II

ED continues telling about Sidney Bechet's riding the train to Milneberg, and how ED would get him off and take him to the job; Bechet could really play, even then.

ED played with Peter Bocage years ago; RC had just mentioned that ED played with Bocage recently. ED says Bocage worked in a lot of different bands, same as ED did; Bocage worked mostly in the [Original] Tuxedo [Brass] Band and the Eureka Band [also for years with Piron--PRC]; he didn't form his own band until late years [Bocage and Dwight Newman had the Creole Serenaders in the late twenties and during the thirties--PRC], a band which he calls the Creole Serenaders. Violin was his only instrument until late years [played trumpet, trombone, and vibes (or xylophone?--RBA) with Piron--PRC].

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Talk about who is usually the leader or manager of band, about who stomps off the tempo (anybody can be leader or stomp off; better if a lead instrument, e.g., trumpet, clarinet, sax, stomps off; (violin can, but is too soft in volume).

ED worked a couple of jobs with Papa Celestin, but not as a regular. ED worked with Emma Barrett several times, the latest during the past Carnival, at Brennan's, when Emma still had the job at the Absinthe House.

ED played guitar with John Robichaux, at the Lyric Theater. The first guitarist with Robichaux was "Coochie" Martin (brother of Henry Martin); ED replaced Martin, who was replaced after a short time by Bud Scott, who remained with Robichaux practically until the

band broke up. [In the spring of 1923 Bud Scott joined Kid Oliver's band in Chicago. W. C. Allen and Brian Rust, King Joe Oliver, p.] Robichaux was a left-handed violinist. There were two Kimballs in his band: Henry Kimball (father of H[enry?--RBA] Narvin Kimball, bass and banjo, who still plays), bass [confusing here--RBA], and Andrew Kimball [cornet].

Frank [Keeland or Keelin? real name Campbell according to his wife--RBA], trumpet, played in small bands around town [jazz bands]; he worked in ED's band at Tom Anderson's; he was good and barrel-house in style, but didn't play very loud. There were two guitars in the band at Anderson's; two of the band members, "Snow" and Charlie Washington, also sang; Tom Brown, mandolin in the band, could read and was the leader. ED played bass, having replaced Sam Moran. Keeland was added later, and eventually replaced by an uptown barber who played valve trombone. Honore Dutrey is mentioned, and Sam Dutrey, Sr., is mentioned; WR says Sam Dutrey, Jr., [now of Opelousas, [La.] is now playing on Bourbon Street; ED worked with the older Dutreys many times. ED played at Anderson's around 1905. ED could play enough bass then to "make out." Keeland came into the band after [Freddy] Keppard had become the first cornet player in the District [at the 101 Ranch--see previous reel]. Anderson could do anything, as he was a powerful politician; he had two places, one on Basin and Iberville, and the other on Rampart between Canal and Iberville. ED worked in both places. WR mentions Gertrude Dix, a madam who supposedly was married to Anderson; ED doesn't verify; it WR says Anderson's wife is supposedly still living, on Bourbon Street, in the French Quarter [since deceased--RBA, 1965]. ED continues talking about Anderson's; he mentions that Maestri's Furniture Store was nearby.

ED's first job with a band was with Cornelius Jackson. ED was working then at Thompson's Sawmill, at Broad and Poydras. ED got his start by playing guitar and harmonica at fish fries, lawn parties, etc., in "The Battlefield" section. Jackson, a violin player, had a regular job at Rice's [cabaret] (across the street from Pete Lala's); ED played guitar with him one night, and was hired as a regular, where he remained for quite some time. He was then about twenty-three years old[cf. above].

WR says M. Manetta mentioned a night spot called [John? McNish's? ^{Exhicios?} spelling?], supposedly in the same area as Rice's, Lala's, etc.; ED doesn't remember. RC asks if a Lala ever ran the Big 25; he says "Jno. T. Lala" was inlaid in the sidewalk in front of the Big 25 at one time; ED doesn't know. [ED confused on this. Cf. RBA's notes in secretarial notebook.] He does remember that the Big 25 bartender was named Henry Bowser [spelling?]; ED and MM were working at Harry Parker's 101 Ranch at the time. The Big 25 was a gambling place, bar room. ED doesn't remember that Joe Oliver played at the Big 25, unless for something special; there was no dance floor at the place. ED discusses card games played there. Terms include "I [check spelling] and "three sixes."

Handwritten notes:
→ MAN NABO EXHICIOS WAS PARTNER IN CABARET AT 1801 Iberville, 1909, w/ JOA Hayti.
CORRECT- 1913 SOARDS. JDA 1-24-85
This later became Ricco's. [JOEL O. PALMER] 8/13/84

WR asks about the Tuxedo Dance Hall, across from the Entertainers'; ED says Billy Phillips owned the Entertainers', and he describes it. Phillips also owned a bar at Howard [now La Salle] and Gravier. George Jones, bass, played at that place. Jones had a string band; Jones could sing, but was not much of a bass player; he would hire good men, though. WR quotes Johnny St. Cyr as saying Jones sometimes used ropes for strings on his bass; ED confirms. Jones got a lot of work;

Handwritten note: [SOARDS]

he could make up on-the-spot rhymes to anything, so he was popular. ED went to Indianapolis, Indiana, with Jones, with the Shriners. ED took his tenor banjo; says people there surprised, never having seen a tenor banjo. "Snow" was on guitar; Jim Dixon [instrument?]; Cornelius Jackson, [violin;] plus Jones and ED. ED was working at the [Whitney] band [even] then. The entourage paraded in Memphis, [Tennessee,] then on to Indiana. ED describes some of the events there. Another band [of Hawaiian style?] also worked the job in Indianapolis. The Jones band was away a little less than a week. The year was about 1919 (ED began working at the bank in 1917, where he still works--42 years). ED confirms WR's report of Johnny St. Cyr's statement that Valteau [spelling?], violin, worked some with George Jones. Valteau was a good violinist, in ED's opinion, the best violinist was Jimmy Palao; Manuel Manetta was second; Peter Bocage was third; Valteau was next, then Tinette [spelling?].

End of Reel III