

EDDIE DAWSON  
Reel I [of 2]--Digest--Retype  
August 11, 1959

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Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins, Manuel Manetta.

Eddie Joseph Dawson, born in New Orleans. Began playing in 1904 [later in reel makes tentative correction to 1903], at Fewclothes [Foucault] Dance Hall, Franklin near Iberville, with O'Neil Levasseur's band. 1905, at Tom Anderson's, Basin and Iberville, with [Sam] Moran's [sp?] band. 1907 [later tentatively corrected to 1904], at Harry Parker's Dance Hall, Franklin between Iberville and Bienville, Dawson and Manetta's band for 3 [or 4] years. 1910, Billy Phillips', Franklin near Iberville, with Cornelius Jackson's band. 1912, at Hunt's and Nagel's Dance Hall, Liberty near Iberville, with Joe Oliver's band. 1915, with Chris Kelly. 1918, with Kid Rena. 1921, with Hypolite Charles. [Cf. below]. In the first band, Levasseur, a violinist was leader; ED played tenor banjo; ED doesn't remember the names of the players of the other three pieces in the group--piano, sax and trumpet. ED was born July 24, 1884. None of his family, or any relatives, were musical. ED's first instrument was guitar, which he "just picked up"; he was 19 or 20 years old at the time. ED played with Kid Clayton and his Happy Pals in recent years, about 7 or 8 years ago. ED shows a photograph of Clayton's band (in part); besides Clayton and ED, there were Emile Riley on guitar and "Jock" on drums. Bands ED heard before he began playing were the Blaze Away

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Band (downtown Creoles), Charlie Galloway's band, the Silver Leaf Band (says Bunk Johnson may have been in that band), Buddy Bolden's band (which played lawn parties at Miss [Betsy] Cole's place on Magnolia Street) and [Adam] Olivier's band. All the bands mentioned were "string" bands [dance bands, as opposed to brass bands], and had blowing instruments in them, too. ED later played spot jobs with the Silver Leaf Band; Willie Humphrey (the younger) was leader; Willie Humphrey (the elder) played sax and clarinet with ED in the band at Harry Parker's [George Baquet replaced him]. ED was playing at Billy Phillip's, with Humphrey in the band; they played a special job across the river one time, and when they got back, Billy Phillip's had burned down, so ED went with Joe Oliver's band. Billy Phillip's was called the 101 Ranch, and later, the Entertainers'. Ed took guitar lessons for about a month from a white man who worked on the Orpheum theater circuit; the teacher showed ED about the fingerboard, and told him which method to get, and with the aid of Manuel Manetta, ED learned a lot. After playing guitar about 7 years, ED took up the tenor banjo. ED played guitar for about a year with John Robichaux at the Lyric Theater, in about 1908 [Dates and/or time of playing various instruments do not coincide--see first page]; he was replaced by Coochie Martin, who was replaced by Bud Scott. ED played tenor banjo for about 10 years;

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he then took up string bass, and replaced Billy Moran [i.e. Marrero] in Manuel Perez's Imperial Band. The band at the 101 Ranch [Parker's] consisted of ED on guitar; Manuel Manetta, piano; Jean Vignes ["Tahcoon?"], drums; Willie Humphrey (the elder), clarinet and sax; and Jimmy Palao, violin. Humphrey was later replaced by George B. Baquet, who came from the [Big] 25 club to join. Freddy Keppard came by one night, was asked by Harry Parker to play his trumpet [probably cornet]; at that time, it was illegal to play a brass instrument in the District, but Parker said he would be Keppard's protection [Louisiana Code]; Parker liked the playing so much that he got Keppard to join the band; and went to the mayor for a special permit, allowing Keppard to play the brass instrument. ED says when they were playing at Hunt's and Nagel's place, all the girls nearby came to hear Keppard, as they had never heard a brass instrument played before. Joe Oliver's Magnolia Band then went to work at Hunt's and Nagel's. Manetta says that when he first knew ED [Manetta replaced Black Pete on piano?], ED played guitar, Wooden Joe Nicholas played clarinet; Nicholas was replaced by Humphrey; Jimmy Palao was added on violin; Jean Vignes played drums. Asked about Joe Oliver, ED says Oliver could play only brass music the first time ED asked him to play a dance, so Oliver recommended John Pendleton (who also played baritone horn and possibly [valve])

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trombone in brass bands sometimes) for trumpet. ED says Oliver had a shoe store at that time, somewhere uptown. Later, Oliver began playing dances; he was working as a butler, at 2nd and Magazine, (according to WR, who got the information from Bunk Johnson and from Oliver's widow, Mrs. Stella Oliver). MM says that before he learned to play dance music, Oliver would come to hear the Eagle Band every Saturday night, and he would treat the band. [

6/8 rhythm march?] Oliver had become good when ED played with him; ED says Oliver always was a good reader, even though he had one glass eye, but not an ear musician [!:] Oliver and Armstrong later worked together in Chicago. Oliver's band played spot jobs, not having a steady job until they went into <sup>CASINO WAS LOUIS MILNE'S, 1400 E. BROADWAY, 1911 SOARDS AND</sup> Hunt's and Nagel's (MM says it was also called The Casino). In <sup>LEVY THUR</sup> Oliver's band, when ED (guitar) worked with him, were Chris Minor, <sup>IDP 129</sup> drums; Alphonse Picou, clarinet; Eddie Atkins, trombone, "Pop" Foster, bass; Foster's brother, Willie Foster, on violin; Louis Keppard later played guitar with the band, but was not in it long. ED didn't play music with Oliver after their job at Hunt's and Nagel's; the place was a dance hall; it was run by Eddie Groshell and [Hans] Nagel. ED says that he played in a band for picnics at Milneburg, in which were Manuel Perez, trumpet, and Jimmy Palao, violin, among others; Sidney Bechet was hired to play for [one, or

some?] of the job[s?], and was to come out on the train, "Smoky Mary"; when he didn't show up on time, ED was sent to find him; when he asked the train's conductor, if he had seen a musician, the conductor said that one man on the train had made three trips, and had something, a box, which might have an instrument; ED checked, woke Bechet, washed his face for him, and Bechet played the rest of the job. ED says their band for the picnics was a Dixieland band, but Perez and Palao had a lot of classic music, and most of the men were also good readers. ED says the word "jazz" was first used in bands when he was playing around Basin and Iberville, at Harry Parker's, and that jazz was applied only to music; MM agrees with the time. MM says the older bands from uptown were called "ragtime" bands--Johnny Brown's, Olivier's, Frank [Duson]'s, Galloways's, Bolden's, et al--and that later bands of the same type were called "Dixieland" bands. The Pelican Band, from uptown, was a Dixieland band. Frankie Duson's band [The Eagle Band] had John Pendleton on trumpet for a while, then Ned, who liked to travel with shows, and then Edward Clem, who had only one leg and who wore dark glasses all the time, and also wore a Stetson hat. Joe Welch played drums with Duson's band then. ED says Charlie Galloway, a string bassist, had a band; Galloway had only one leg; he was also called "Loving" Galloway and "Happy" Galloway. Galloway had a crutch-like stick,

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on which he placed the stump of his leg, and he could move around and carry his instrument at the same time. Galloway played mostly bowed bass; MM says the only time any string bassist picked was when the band was going out, on the last chorus. ED says he himself started the style of picking the bass when he was working in the District; he says he taught it to Pop Foster, and that Foster will verify the story; ED started picking, and playing 4/4 rhythm then. ED says Jimmy Johnson, another bassist, was older than himself, and was a good player; Jimmy Brown was another old-time bassist; MM says Brown was the greatest.

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Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins, Manuel Manetta,  
one other.

...MM says he had to leave the band, "leave the boys go", and go to work private [as a single], playing piano in the [sporting] houses, including Lulu White's. ED says he worked in some houses, but as part of a string band hired by Chester Mercier, fun-loving son of clothier D. Mercier; the troupe would move from house to house as the evening wore on. MM says the only "fellow" he ever knew to go into a house to work was Frank Landry, who played mandolin and sang, and who teamed with [Emile] "Stale Bread" [Lacoume], guitarist; they would go to play for "big shots" [apparently, they were not employed directly by the house, but would work for special occasions]. The houses generally hired pianists. Some early good pianists, other than MM, were Alfred Wilson, Tony Jackson and Bob Caldwell; Caldwell, "sissified", had a brother, George Caldwell, a clarinetist and shoe-maker, who lived uptown; Bob Caldwell got a job with the Whitney Bank, ED's employer, after the District was closed, and some time afterward committed suicide by jumping out of one of the bank's windows; MM says he was sort of disgusted with himself [!:] ED has worked for the Whitney Bank for 41 years, having started in 1917. He was born on Mandeville Street, between Chartres and Spain [could mean Chartres between Mandeville and Spain? RBA].

The only white musician he knows much about is Sharkey Bonano, who has a Dixieland band. ED says Sharkey learned his style from Kid Rena, that Sharkey would sit on the bandstand when Rena's band, with ED, was playing, asking a question now and then. MM says that when Rena "was kinda going down", he took a jitney dance hall job; his wife asked MM to teach him to read, so MM did; Son Thomas, banjo, and Joe Rena also became interested in learning; MM never could get Zeb [Lenoir] interested and Maurice French always had some excuse for not coming. ED replaced Albert Glenney in Rena's band, was in turn replaced by Chester Zardis, and replaced Zardis. MM says Rena also used Simon Marrero [bass] at one time. A question is asked about when the use of steel pipes, etc. [skiffle instruments] came into use as musical instruments; the instrument described is called a bazooka, and the local player mentioned is [Edward] "Noon" Johnson; his guitarist [usually] is Harrison Verret. The instrument called "tub bass" or "tub-a-phone" by some is described. Asked if he heard that kind of music when five or six years old, ED says that was the time of serenade bands, composed of 3 or 4 pieces--guitar, mandolin, string bass and violin--which would play at midnight outside residences; the occupants would get up and treat the serenaders to "prizes" [food and drink, etc.]. ED says [Charlie] Galloway's band played a variety of music--waltzes, schottisches, mazurkas,



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quadrilles, ragtime and blues. The first time he remembers hearing a band play blues was when he heard Buddy Bolden, playing at Miss [Betsy] Cole's lawn, on Magnolia Street. ED says "Rabbit" Brown and Walter Preston were among the early blues guitarists and singers. MM says Preston was drafted [in World War I], when he was about 50 years old; he didn't know how old he really was, not having any birth certificate; MM saw him on the drill grounds and had him put in his band [apparently MM was also in the Army]. MM says the last time he saw Preston playing in New Orleans was with Chris Kelly. Preston has been dead about 25-30 years. Preston also played with George Jones [and Punch Miller], but most of his work was with small groups, string bands, such as Cornelius [Jackson]. Phillip *Nickerson* was the best, besides Frank "Guitar Frank" *[De] Landry*. Landry liked mandolin better, ED played mandolin also; he and Phillip Nickerson won a contest from two white players in a barbershop in the French Quarter. MM says he and ED were playing with George Jones at The Orchard, now Pete Herman's, the night of the Johnson-Jeffries fight, July 4; MM says the year was about 1912, but there is some disagreement. They were working regularly at the Orchard. MM says Jones used to pay him his \$5.00 per night, until MM discovered that the others, working on percentage, were making 4 or 5 times more, so he told Jones he would work on percentage, also. GJ was taking more

than his cut. ED went with Jones to Indianapolis, playing for a Shrine convention held at the Claypool Hotel; ED played tenor banjo; Jones played bass; Cornelius Jackson was violinist; Snow played guitar. ED had an offer to stay in Indianapolis, but he refused it, preferring New Orleans. Cornelius Jackson would sing with a lighted cigaret in his mouth or behind his ear, and play violin simultaneously. ED has played trombone with Noon [Johnson] and DeDe [Pierce], but only in later years. ED played bass drum in a brass band function with Edward Clem in Plaquemines. ED was more interested in string bands as a youth, and didn't pay much attention to brass bands; he says there were some brass bands, but that they seldom played a funeral; the use of music at funerals is a late development, for the most part. [!!!! RBA] ED worked with Hypolite Charles, who was a first-class trumpet player; Charles had contracts with the New Orleans Country Club, the Lions Club, the Autocrat Club, etc. The band made plenty of money; in it were Charles, trumpet [cornet]; Camilla Todd, piano; Sunny Henry, trombone; [Emile] Bigard, violin; ED, tenor banjo; Joe Welch, drums; Lorenzo Tio [Jr.], sax [and clarinet?]; Albert Glenny, bass.

The uptown bands were called ragtime bands, and the downtown bands were called Dixieland bands, but they played pretty much the same, except that the downtowners played more from music and played

a more varied program--waltzes, mazurkas, etc.--, while the uptowners played "by ear", and mostly blues. The downtowners even used the "Red Books" [Standard High-Class Rags, published by Stark]. At one time, many bands worked many jobs; Rena's band, with ED, had spot jobs for every night in the week.

Tom Anderson's, mostly a bar, with little space for dancing, was on the corner of Basin and Iberville. ED worked there with Tom Brown, the best mandolin player "by note", and with Sam Moran, bass; ED played guitar, being one of two. Other guitarists who worked with Brown were Clarke, Snow, and [Wallace Bernard?]. The only blowing instrument used was trombone, played by Ed Jones. The band received no salary; tips were so good that each member would make \$ 10.00 to \$ 15.00, or more, per night. ED says a lot of that money came from foreign sailors.

End of Reel II

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~~ 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. 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