

THE RECORDINGS OF CLARA SMITH

An Annotated Tentative Personnel - Discography

Of all the many vaudeville blues singers of the 1920s Clara Smith's recorded output – with 72 recording dates until 1932 – was very large, second only to Bessie Smith's with 85 recording dates! It is thus interesting to see that the Columbia people seem to have had a lasting interest in her as a singer.

It appeared to be most useful when preparing this list that the Columbia company kept better recording ledgers than other companies did. And with the work of noted discographers Walter C. Allen and Mrs. Helene F. Chmura of Columbia Records – and Mr. Dan Mahony -we are able to use a long list of documented names of participating accompanists working on the recording sessions of Clara Smith. This fact made it easy to compile a dependable list of her recordings on the basis of Blues & Gospel Records and Brian Rust's discographies in various editions, and check all still unresolved accompanying groups as to the identity of their musicians.

Because of the certainty and reliability of Columbia's inventory I shall refrain from discussing all recording sessions we have documented evidence of. Their accompanists are printed in bold letters here. This encompasses names of accompanists named in the company ledgers as well as on the record labels.

There are a few only of not secured personnels in this list. Only these will be tackled here the usual HARLEM – FUSS way.

SMITH, Clara, singer born: Spartanburg, S. C., 1894; died: Detroit, Michigan, 1935
 Extensive work on theatre circuits from the early 1910s; began recording career in 1923. Made many records in the 1920s accompanied by all-star personnel: Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, James P. Johnson, etc. Appeared regularly at the 'Stroller's Club' in New York during the early 1930s; played six-month residency at 'Orchestra Gardens', Detroit, then played dates in Cleveland. Died of heart trouble at the Parkside Hospital, Detroit. (John Chilton, Who's Who of Jazz)

CLARA SMITH

001 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	May 31, 1923
81059 I Got Everything A Woman Needs	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
81060 Every Woman's Blues	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
002 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Jun. 28, 1923
81059-6 I Got Everything A Woman Needs	Col A3943,	Document DOCD-5364
81060-5 Every Woman's Blues	Col A3943,	Document DOCD-5364
003 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Jul. 27, 1923
81150-5 Kind Lovin' Blues	Col A3961,	Document DOCD-5364
81151-3 Down South Blues	Col A3961,	Document DOCD-5364
81153-3 All Night Blues	Col A3966,	Document DOCD-5364
81154-2 Play It A Long Time Papa	Col A3966,	Document DOCD-5364
004 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Elmer Chambers – tpt (2); Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Aug. 31, 1923
81183-1 I Want My Sweet Daddy Now	Col A3991,	Document DOCD-5364
81184-1 Irresistible Blues	Col A3991,	Document DOCD-5364

005	CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Joe Smith – cnt; Don Redman – clt (2); Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Sep. 06, 1923
81198	Don't Never Tell Nobody	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
81199	Georgia Blues	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
006	CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Sep. 07, 1923
81202-2	I Never Miss The Sunshine (I'm So Used To The Rain)	Col A4000,	Document DOCD-5364
007	CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Sep. 13, 1923
81210-3	Awful Moanin' Blues	Col A4000,	Document DOCD-5364
008	CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Stanley Miller – pno	New York,	Sep. 18, 1923
81221	Goin' Down To The Levee	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
81222	Kansas City Man Blues	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
009	CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Oct. 01, 1923
81198-4	Don't Never Tell Nobody	Col 13002-D,	Document DOCD-5364
81250-2	Waitin' For The Evenin' Mail	Col 13002-D,	Document DOCD-5364
010	CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Oct. 02, 1923
81222-6	Kansas City Man Blues	Col 12-D,	Document DOCD-5364
81253-2	Uncle Sam Blues	Col 12-D,	Document DOCD-5364
<p>What we hear is definitely Fletcher Henderson's piano style, modelled on Harlem stride piano. Stanley Miller played piano in a modest blues style using different right hand melodic lines and left hand accompaniment.</p> <p><u>Notes:</u> - Rust*3,*4,*6: Fletcher Henderson -p - BGR*2,*3,*4: Fletcher Henderson, pno - W.C. Allen, Hendersonia p. 72: "Takes 1- 4 of matrix 81222 were originally recorded on Sept. 18, 1923, with Stanley Miller (Clara's personal accompanist on road tours) on the piano. Rust (1961) says this remake has Henderson on piano, although the labels were prepared using Miller's name. Henderson was in the studio making another title, and the remake does sound typical of Fletcher's style; but the file card for this matrix does not actually specify Henderson on the remake."</p>			
011	BESSIE SMITH - CLARA SMITH Clara Smith, Bessie Smith – voc duet; Fletcher Henderson – pno	New York,	Oct. 04, 1923
81261-3	Far Away Blues	Col 13007-D,	Document DOCD-5364
81262-2	I'm Going Back To My Used To Be	Col 13007-D,	Document DOCD-5364
012	CLARA SMITH her Jazz Band Clara Smith – voc; unknown (<i>Gus Aiken?</i>) – tpt; unknown (<i>Bud Aiken?</i>) – tbn; unknown (<i>George Scott?</i>) – clt; unknown (<i>Stanley Miller?</i>) – pno; unknown – bjo; unknown – bbs; unknown - dms	New York,	Jan. 11, 1924
81476-1	It Won't Be Long Now	Col 14006-D,	Document DOCD-5364
81477-3	Hot Papa	Col 14006-D,	Document DOCD-5364

The trumpet player definitely is Johnny Dunn influenced. His energetic playing certainly leads me to think of Bubber Miley. But there are no growl phrases whatsoever, and he is not as stiff as Miley at this time. As the trombonist plays a very clean, distinct and musical style with great tone - sometimes trumpet-like - I am inclined to think of Gus Aiken and his brother Eugene Bud Aiken. Gus just at this time was back from an extended tour to Cuba which definitely had changed his style of playing from Dunn-style to a more modern and swinging style. The clarinetist shows some tonal similarities to Ernest Elliott with his unsecure pitch, but plays more musically and with technical features unheard from Elliott. Referring to Storyville 95, p. 200 he might possibly be considered to be George Scott, although this player did not name Clara Smith when talking of singers he accompanied. This then might have some consequences when thinking about the clarinetist on the Charles Matson 'Matson's Lucky Seven' recording which also dates from January 1924 where I hear Gus Aiken together with possibly Ernest Elliott.

No identifiable features of the rhythm players can be recognized, and any suggestions of names seem to be impossible. Only, that Stanley Miller was Clara Smith's accompanist when touring. But his blues-style piano must then be covered by the strong banjo and the other rhythm players. A tuba seems to be present and a drummer (?) is heard with single tom-tom strikes in the first title's second chorus middle eight.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc unknown tpt, tbn, clt, p, bj, tu, d.

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown t / tb / cl / ? Stanley Miller -p / unknown -bj

- BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown tpt, tbn, clt, prob Stanley Miller, pno; unknown bjo

013	CLARA SMITH her Jazz Trio	New York,	Jan. 18, 1924
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Porter Grainger – kazoo; Lincoln M. Conaway – gtr; Clarence Conaway - mdl		
81495-1	I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down	Col 14013-D,	Document DOCD-5364
81496-1	I Don't Love Nobody (So I Don't Have No Blues)	Col 14016-D,	Document DOCD-5364
014	CLARA SMITH	New York,	Jan. 29, 1924
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Ernest Elliott – clt, alt; Charles A. Matson – pno		
81508-1	Good Looking Papa Blues	Col 14026-D,	Document DOCD-5364
81509-1	You Don't Know My Mind	Col 14013-D,	Document DOCD-5364
015	CLARA SMITH her Jazz Trio	New York,	Jan. 31, 1924
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Porter Grainger – kazoo; Herbert Leonard – har; Lincoln M. Conaway – gtr		
81512-2	My Doggone Lazy Man	Col 14016-D,	Document DOCD-5365
016	CLARA SMITH her Jazz Band	New York,	Jan. 31, 1924
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Elmer Chambers – tpt; Teddy Nixon – tbn; Don Redman – clt;		
	Fletcher Henderson – pno; Charlie Dixon – bjo; Kaiser Marshall - dms		
81513-2	Chicago Blues	Col 14009-D,	Document DOCD-5365
81514-1	31 st Street Blues	Col 14009-D,	Document DOCD-5365
<p>The generally listed personnel certainly is correct and reasonable, with the exception that the trombonist must be Teddy Nixon stylistically and because of the recording date. Charlie Green did not join the Henderson band until July 1924. And there very probably is a drummer present – hear the tom-tom strokes at the end of the first title – and thus must certainly be Kaiser Marshall.</p>			
<u>Notes:</u>			
- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc Elmer Chambers, tpt; Charlie Green ?, tbn; Don Redman, clt; Fletcher Henderson, p; Charlie Dixon, bj.			
- Rust*3,*4,*6: Elmer Chambers -c; Teddy Nixon -tb; Don Redman -cl; Fletcher Henderson -p; Charlie Dixon -bj.			
- BGR*2,*3,*4: Elmer Chambers, cnt; Charlie Green, tbn; Don Redman, clt; Fletcher Henderson, pno; Charlie Dixon, bjo; prob Kaiser Marshall, dms (2).			
- W.C. Allen, Hendersonia p. 98: Elmer Chambers, cornet; Teddy Nixon, trombone; Don Redman, clarinet; Fletcher Henderson, piano; Charlie Dixon, banjo (and possibly the percussive effects which are heard occasionally). "One of the latest releases on the Columbia New Process record which dealers are featuring this week is Chicago Blues recorded by Clara Smith accompanied by Fletcher Henderson and his Alabam Club Orchestra. Chicago Blues was written by Paul Biese, popular record artist and orchestra leader in Chicago and it is published by the Melody Music Co. of New York. Backing the Chicago Blues recording is 31 st Street Blues, another "hot" tune, from the catalogue of the Joe Davis Music Co., which is replete with novel breaks and blue notes. The Clara Smith and Fletcher Henderson combination also recorded the 31 Street number. Columbia record dealers are featuring the record which has just been released and expect it to be among the "best-sellers". (Phonograph & Talking Machine Weekly, March 18, 1924, p.35)			
017	CLARA SMITH	New York,	Apr. 10, 1924
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Don Redman – clt; Fletcher Henderson – pno, <i>whistle</i> (2)		
81683-2	War Horse Mama (Pig Meat Sweetie)	Col 14021-D,	Document DOCD-5365
81684-1	Cold Weather Papa	Col 14021-D,	Document DOCD-5365
018	CLARA SMITH	New York,	Apr. 17, 1924
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Fletcher Henderson – ukl; Charlie Dixon – gtr		
81694	Back Woods Blues	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
81695-3	West Indies Blues	Col 14019-D,	Document DOCD-5365
81697-2	Mean Papa , Turn In Your Key	Col 14022-D,	Document DOCD-5365
81698-2	The Clearing House Blues	Col 14019-D,	Document DOCD-5365
019	CLARA SMITH	New York,	Apr. 23, 1924
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Porter Grainger – pno; Clarence Conaway – gtr, ukl		
81722-1	Don't Advertise Your Man	Col 14026-D,	Document DOCD-5365
81723	Mama's Gone, Goodbye	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
020	CLARA SMITH	New York,	Apr. 30, 1924
	Clara Smith – voc;		

Fletcher Henderson – ukl; Charlie Dixon – gtr 81694-4 Back Woods Blues	Col 14022-D,	Document DOCD-5365
021 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Aug. 19, 1924
Coleman Hawkins – ten; Fletcher Henderson – pno 81931-3 Deep Blues Sea Blues 81932-1 Texas Moaner Blues	Col 14034-D, Col 14034-D,	Document DOCD-5365 Document DOCD-5365
022 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Sep. 20, 1924
Ernest Elliott – clt, alt; Charles A. Matson – pno 140052-1 Basement Blues 140053-4 Mama's Gone, Goodbye	Col 14039-D, Col 14039-D,	Document DOCD-5365 Document DOCD-5365
023 CLARA SMITH her Jazz Trio Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Sep. 30, 1924
Cecil Scott – clt; Don Redman – gfs (queenophone), clt (2); Porter Grainger – pno 140064-3 Freight Train Blues 140076-3 Done Sold My Soul To The Devil (And My Heart's Done Turned To Stone)	Col 14041-D, Col 14041-D,	Document DOCD-5365 Document DOCD-5365
024 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Oct. 07, 1924
Cecil Scott, Don Redman – clt; Fletcher Henderson – pno 140090 Broken Busted Blues 140091-2 San Francisco Blues	Col unissued Col 14049-D,	not on LP/CD Document DOCD-5365
025 CLARA SMITH her Jazz Trio Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Oct. 15, 1924
Elmer Chambers – tpt; Don Redman – clt; Porter Grainger – pno 140108-1 Death Letter Blues 140109-1 Prescription For The Blues	Col 14045-D, Col 14045-D,	Document DOCD-5365 Document DOCD-5365
026 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Dec. 16, 1924
Ernest Elliott – alt; Porter Grainger – pno; unknown - p 140181-2 Steel Drivin' Sam 140182-1 He's Mine, All Mine	Col 14053-D, Col 14053-D,	Document DOCD-5365 Document DOCD-5365
027 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Dec. 20, 1924
Cecil Scott, Don Redman – clt; Fletcher Henderson – pno 140090 Broken Busted Blues 140200 Nobody Knows The Way I Feel This Morning	Col unissued Col unissued	not on LP/CD not on LP/CD
Since these recordings are unissued and no tests seem to have been found nothing definite can be said about the music and the personnel. The named persons might be assumed because of their documented participation at session 024, but might also come from the Columbia files. I do not know where Rust's certainty of naming the participants comes from.		
<u>Notes:</u>		
- Rust*3: acc by 2 cl (probably from Don Redman, Ernest Elliott and Buster Bailey); ?Fletcher Henderson or Porter Grainger -p.		
- BGR*2, *3, *4: acc by two unknown clts (probably two from Don Redman, Ernest Elliott and Buster Bailey); prob Fletcher Henderson or Porter Grainger -p.		
- Rust*4, *6: Cecil Scott, Don Redman – clt; Fletcher Henderson – pno		
028 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Jan. 07, 1925
Louis Armstrong – cnt; Charlie Green – tbn; Fletcher Henderson – pno 140226-1 Nobody Knows The Way I Feel This Morning 140227-2 Broken Busted Blues	Col 14058-D, Col 14062-D,	Document DOCD-5366 Document DOCD-5366
029 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc;	New York,	Jan. 08, 1925
Leon Abbey – vln; Porter Grainger - pno 140230-3 If You Only Knowed 140231-2 You Better Keep The Home Fires Burning ('Cause Your Mama's Getting Cold)	Col 14058-D, Col 14062-D,	Document DOCD-5366 Doc. DOCD-5366
030 CLARA SMITH	New York,	Jan. 17, 1925

Clara Smith – voc;
Louis Armstrong – cnt; **Fletcher Henderson** – pno
 140266 My John Blues Col unissued not on LP/CD
 140267 Shipwrecked Blues Col unissued not on LP/CD

031 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Mar. 24, 1925
 Clara Smith – voc;
Herbert Leonard – har; **Leonard Myers** - gtr
 140459-3 My Good-For-Nuthin' Man Col 14069-D, Document DOCD-5366
 140460 Rock Pile Blues Col unissued not on LP/CD

032 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Mar. 27, 1925
 Clara Smith – voc;
Lemuel Fowler – pno
 140470-1 When I Steps Out Col 14069-D, Document DOCD-5366
 140471-1 The L & N Blues Col 14073-D, Document DOCD-5366

033 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Apr. 03, 1925
 Clara Smith – voc;
Louis Armstrong – cnt; **Charlie Green** – tbn (4);
Fletcher Henderson – pno
 140491-1 Shripwrecked Blues Col 14077-D, Document DOCD-5366
 140492-1 Courthouse Blues Col 14073-D, Document DOCD-5366
 140492-2 Courthouse Blues Col 14073-D, Document DOCD-5366
 140493-1 My John Blues Col 14077-D, Document DOCD-5366

No uncertainties re personnel here, but differences of takes are noted below.

Notable differences of takes:

140492-1 *intro bars 3/4, tpt introduction: LA plays 2 quarter notes G, 1 eighth note G, 1 quarter note G, 2 sixteenth notes G - A (jumping trill) (bar 3), 1 whole note G (bar 4)*

140492-2 *intro bars 3/4, tpt introduction: LA plays typical Armstrong downward phrase 5 eighth notes G - F- D - B- Bb, 1 quarter note Bb, 2 sixteenth notes G - A (jumping trill) (bar 3), 1 whole note G (bar 4)*

034 **CLARA SMITH** her Jazz Band New York, Jul. 06, 1925
 Clara Smith – voc;
 unknown - tpt; unknown – alt;
 unknown – pno; unknown – bjo; unknown – whistle (2)
 140751-1 Different Way Blues Col 14085-D, Document DOCD-5366
 140752-1 Down Home Bound Blues Col 14085-D, Document DOCD-5366

I hear a trumpet player without distinct individual features and an alto saxophonist playing long stretched legato phrases. None of these musicians evoke any aural remembrancies. The pianist plays in a way I would attribute to Porter Grainger. And there is a strong and secure banjo player with good taste – who might be known to banjo specialists. But, don't ask me for the identity of the whistler!

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc unknown tpt; alt; p; bj.

- Rust*3,*4: unknown -t / as / p / bj / whistle

- BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown tpt; unknown alt; unknown pno; unknown bjo; unknown whistle

- Rust*6: unknown t; unknown as; unknown p; unknown bj, unknown w

035 **CLARA SMITH** her Band New York, Aug. 20, 1925
 Clara Smith – voc;
Bob Fuller – clt (2), alt (1);
Stanley Miller – pno; **Buddy Christian** – bjo
 140859-3 My Two-Timing Papa Col 14097-D, Document DOCD-5366
 140860-1 Kitchen Mechanic Blues Col 14097-D, Document DOCD-5366

No uncertainties re personnel here. Typical Fuller – Miller plays many melodic bass figures – beautiful simple four-four banjo by Christian.

036 **BESSIE SMITH - CLARA SMITH** New York, Sep. 01, 1925
 Clara Smith, Bessie Smith – voc duet;
Stanley Miller – pno, voc, *whistling*
 140889 Down Old Georgia Way Col unissued not on LP/CD
 140890-2 My Man Blues Col 14098-D, Document DOCD-5366

No uncertainties re personnel here. Miller is a blues pianist, not stride or similar.

037 **CLARA SMITH AND HER JAZZ BAND** New York, Sep. 16, 1925
 Clara Smith – voc;
 unknown – tbn; unknown – clt;
 unknown – pno; unknown - bjo

140945	I'm Tired Of Bein' Good	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
140946	'Tain't Nobody's Fault But Yours	Col unissued	not on LP/CD

Since these recordings are unissued and no tests seem to have been found nothing can be said about the music and the personnel.

038	CLARA SMITH her Jazz Band (Bud Allen's Blues Trio)	New York,	Sep. 24, 1925
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Teddy Nixon – tbn; Prince Robinson – clt;		
	Mike Jackson – pno		
141044-1	Onery Blues	Col 14117-D,	Document DOCD-5366
141045-1	You Get Mad	Col 14126-D,	Document DOCD-5366

No uncertainties re personnel here. Nixon very academic, legato, smooth, very wide vibrato – Robinson fuller tone than Fuller, strong time, simple melody, not erratic, wide vibrato, as young saxophonist (not clarinetic) – Jackson modest stride with melodic/flowery right hand.

039	CLARA SMITH Jazz Band	New York,	Sep. 25, 1925
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Harry Cooper – tpt; Bob Fuller – clt, alt;		
	Stanley Miller - pno; Buddy Christian – bjo		
141046-2	Alley Rat Blues	Col 14104-D,	Document DOCD-5366
141047-1	When My Sugar Walks Down The Street	Col 14104-D,	Document DOCD-5366
141048	You'll Never Miss Your Water	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
141049-1	Disappointed Blues	Col 14126-D,	Document DOCD-5366

Having heard the very assured and strong Harry Cooper on the above recordings (in my Harry Cooper listing – KBR) it seems very strange to assume the same player here on these titles. Our player here is rather weak and reticent, although he certainly has a good feeling for jazz playing. But technically he certainly is not on Cooper's level. Yet, the Columbia recording ledgers show him as trumpet player here, and consequently I have to revise my original opinion. It is Harry Cooper. I had thought different.

The clarinetist is named as Bob Fuller, but his clarinet style does not show the gimmicks Fuller is known for. Instead, he plays some strong and full-bodied clarinet phrases and is adept on alto sax as well. And he uses chordal arpeggios which are not otherwise heard from Bob Fuller. But, just as with the trumpet player, the Columbia ledgers state Bob Fuller as clarinetist and altosax player, and we again unexpectedly and surprisingly hear a developing musician: Bob Fuller.

Pianist and banjoist are as stated.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Harry Cooper, cnt; Bob Fuller, clt/alt; Stanley Miller, pno; Buddy Christian, bjo
 - BGR*2,*3,*4: Harry Cooper, cnt; Bob Fuller, clt, alt; Stanley Miller, pno; Buddy Christian, bjo.
 - Rust*3,*4,*6: Harry Cooper, t; Bob Fuller, cl, as; Stanley Miller, p; Buddy Christian, bj.

040	CLARA SMITH Jazz Band	New York,	Sep. 28, 1925
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	unknown - tbn; Bob Fuller – clt;		
	Mike Jackson - pno; Buddy Christian – bjo		
140945-5	I'm Tired Of Bein' Good	Col 14117-D,	Document DOCD-5366

The clarinetist with great certainty is Bob Fuller. The trombonist plays in a sparse, rudimental and rough style with tailgate elements. He sounds as to have come from Chicago or even farther South (Jonas Walker comes to mind). The pianist may be Mike Jackson, judged by his pianistic style (solid unobtrusive rhythm and some flowery right-hand figures). The four-four banjo without gimmicks would suggest Buddy Christian.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc unknown tpt (sic - KBR); alt; p; bj.
 - Rust*3: unknown t, cl, p, bj.
 - Rust*4,*6: unknown tb; unknown cl; unknown p; unknown bj
 - BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown, tbn; unknown, clt; unknown, pno; unknown, bjo

041	CLARA SMITH	New York,	Nov. 10, 1925
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Ernest Elliott – clt, alt; Harry Stevens – bsx;		
	Porter Grainger - pno		
141257-3	The Market Street Blues	Col 14108-D,	Document DOCD-5366
141258-3	It Takes The Lawd (To Tell What's On My Mind)	Col 14108-D,	Document DOCD-5366
141259	Caught You Triflin' Blues	Col unissued	not on LP/CD

The musicians' names documented in the Columbia files, it should be remarked that Harry Stevens plays bass sax throughout the two issued titles. He can not be heard on clarinet. Elliott plays clarinet on the first title and alto sax on the second.

042	CLARA SMITH her Novelty Band	New York,	May 01, 1926
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Tom Edwards - tbn; Clarence Adams – clt;		
	Stanley Miller - pno; Herman Gibson – bjo		
142117-1	Look Where The Sun Done Gone	Col 14138-D,	Document DOCD-5367
142118-2	Rock, Church, Rock	Col 14138-D,	Document DOCD-5367

These titles feature a trombonist who might have been a member of Clara Smith's touring band. Rudimentary in the first title, but showing more proficiency in the second title, some tonally beautiful parts included. He is not listed with any other band in Rust. The clarinetist also seems to be part of Miss Smith's band. His only other mention on record is with Martha Copeland in June 1928 on Columbia. Obviously, these two musicians belong to the numerous body of vaudeville/blues and jazz musicians touring the country without any chances to reach greater fame. Tom Edwards certainly is not the trombonist of session 040 above!

The reliable Stanley Miller, Clara's usual accompanist, plays his blues-based piano, struggling against the dragging banjo player who is released at the following session.

043	CLARA SMITH her Novelty Band	New York,	May 03, 1926
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Tom Edwards - tbn; Clarence Adams – clt;		
	Stanley Miller - pno		
142136	So Long	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
142137-3	Jelly Bean Blues	Col 14294-D,	Document DOCD-5367
044	CLARA SMITH	New York,	May 25, 1926
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Lem Fowler - pno		
142250-3	How'm I Doin'	Col 14150-D,	Document DOCD-5367
142251-1	Whip It To A Jelly	Col 14150-D,	Document DOCD-5367
045	CLARA SMITH	New York,	May 26, 1926
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Fletcher Henderson - pno		
142252-1	Salty Dog	Col 14143-D,	Document DOCD-5367
142253-2	My Brand New Papa	Col 14143-D,	Document DOCD-5367
142253-3	My Brand New Papa	Col	not on LP/CD
046	CLARA SMITH	New York,	Jun. 15, 1926
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Clarence Parson - pno		
142300-2	Ain't Nothin' Cookin' What You're Smellin'	Col 14160-D,	Document DOCD-5367
142300-3	Ain't Nothin' Cookin' What You're Smellin'	Col	not on LP/CD
142301-2	Separation Blues	Col 14160-D,	Document DOCD-5367
142301-3	Separation Blues	Col	not on LP/CD

Since no alternate takes of the above titles are reissued, no differences can be stated.

047	CLARA SMITH - SISTERS WHITE AND WALLACE	New York,	Nov. 23, 1926
	Clara Smith, Ethel Grainger, Odette Jackson – voc;		
	Lem Fowler - pno		
143140-1	Percolatin' Blues	Col 14202-D,	Document DOCD-5367
143141-3	Ease It	Col 14202-D,	Document DOCD-5367
143142-2	Livin' Humble	Col 14183-D,	Document DOCD-5367
143143-1	Get On Board	Col 14183-D,	Document DOCD-5367
048	CLARA SMITH	New York,	Nov. 29, 1926
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	Ernest Elliott – alt; Porter Grainger - pno		
143155-3	Cheatin' Daddy	Col 14192-D,	Document DOCD-5367
143156	Deep Down In My Soul	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
049	CLARA SMITH her Jazz Babies	New York,	Dec. 30, 1926
	Clara Smith – voc;		
	unknown – tpt; unknown – ten;		
	Stanley Miller – pno; unknown - bjo		
143230-3	You Don't Know Who's Shakin' Your Tree	Col 14192-D,	Document DOCD-5367
143231-3	Race Track Blues	Col 14294-D,	Document DOCD-5367
143232	The Old Folks Hunch	Col unissued	not on LP/CD

After listening to most of Joe Smith's recordings I feel very certain that this is not him. This trumpeter/cornetist lacks all of Smith's beauty of tone, melody and singing phrasing and is of only secondary stature. He might have been a member of one of Miss Smith's touring bands. He is far below Joe Smith's proficiency and art. This same must be said of the tenor saxophonist who plays little structured long melody lines without any distinct quality, sometimes doubling the singer's melody. Stanley Miller giving hold to the procedure on piano, with a nerving banjo player doubling his strokes by up-and-down strumming. (See also sessions 042/043.)

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc unknown tpt; ten; Stanley Miller, p; bj.
- Rust*3,*4,*6: Joe Smith -c; unknown -ts; Stanley Miller -p; unknown -bj
- BGR*2,*3,*4: Joe Smith, cnt; unknown, ten; Stanley Miller, pno; unknown, bjo

050 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Apr. 07, 1927
 Clara Smith – voc;
Ernest Elliott – clt, alt; **Clarence Parson** - pno
 144000-2 Troublesome Blues Col 14256-D, Document DOCD-5367
 144001-3 You Can't Get It Now Col 14256-D, Document DOCD-5367

051 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Jun. 01, 1927
 Clara Smith – voc;
Bob Fuller – alt; **Porter Grainger** - pno
 144249-1 That's Why The Undertakers Are Busy Today Col 14223-D, Document DOCD-5367
 144249-2 That's Why The Undertakers Are Busy Today Col 14223-D not on LP/CD
 144250-1 Black Woman's Blues Col 14223-D, Document DOCD-5367

Since no alternate take of the above title is reissued, no differences can be stated.

052 **CLARA SMITH** Five Black Kittens New York, Jul. 30, 1927
 Clara Smith – voc;
Gus Aiken – tpt; **Bob Fuller** – clt, alt;
Stanley Miller – pno
 144527-2 Black Cat Moan Col 14240-D, Document DOCD-5368
 144528-2 Strugglin' Woman's Blues Col 14240-D, Document DOCD-5368

053 **CLARA SMITH** New York, May 10, 1928
 Clara Smith – voc;
Bob Fuller – alt; **Porter Grainger** - pno
 146244-2 Jelly, Look What You Done Done Col 14319-D, Document DOCD-5368
 146245-3 It's All Coming Home To You Col 14319-D, Document DOCD-5368

054 **CLARA SMITH** New York, May 21, 1928
 Clara Smith – voc;
Lem Fowler - pno
 146310 Down And Out Blues Col unissued not on LP/CD
 146311-2 Gin Mill Blues Col 14419-D, Document DOCD-5368

055 **CLARA SMITH** New York, May 23, 1928
 Clara Smith – voc;
Freddy Jenkins – tpt; **John Anderson** – tbn;
Porter Grainger - pno
 146324-3 Steamboat Man Blues Col 14344-D, Document DOCD-5368
 146325-1 Sobbin' Sister Blues Col 14344-D, Document DOCD-5368

056 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Jul. 06, 1928
 Clara Smith – voc;
Joe Smith – tpt; unknown (*Happy Caldwell*) – clt;
Marion Cumbo – vco; **Stanley Miller** - pno
 146507-1 Got My Mind On That Thing Col 14419-D, Document DOCD-5368
 146508 Ain't Got Nobody To Grind My Coffee Col unissued not on LP/CD

There are very few trumpet notes to judge the trumpet player's identity. Joe Smith's presence should have made a stronger impact in the recording, and at the end of the first title only the tonal quality of the few notes played might be a hint to Joe Smith. Mahony's booklet does not give the source of the listed musician for this session – which it usually does – and it might therefore be assumed that it is Mahony's suggestion only to give Smith. I am inclined to hear a trumpeter from Clara Smith's working band, perhaps like at session 049 above. If this would be Smith it would be far below his usual quality.

Most interesting is the clarinetist's Dodds-derived style which he plays very expressively and with fervour. There were not many players in New York of this kind. This man could have been one of Clara Smith's touring band as before whose name would then certainly be unknown to us. But I see a fair possibility that he could have been Albert 'Happy' Caldwell, who was a player following Dodds in his clarinet style convincingly, and he lived in New York at this time.

The violincello part is obviously played from music. Mr. Cumbo also appears on record with Eva Taylor in February 1928, but his playing shows no jazz whatsoever. Stanley Miller is the reliable pianist.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc Joe Smith, cnt; unknown, clt, Marion Cumbo, cello; Stanley Miller, p.

- Rust*3,*4,*6: Joe Smith -c; unknown -cl; Marion Cumbo -vc; Stanley Miller -p

- BGR*2,*3,*4: Joe Smith, cnt; unknown, clt; Marion Cumbo, 'cello; Stanley Miller, pno

057 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Jul. 13, 1928
 Clara Smith – voc;
Marion Cumbo – vco; **Stanley Miller** - org
 146636-1 Wanna Go Home Col 14368-D, Document DOCD-5368

058 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Aug. 09, 1928
 Clara Smith – voc;
 unknown (*Happy Caldwell?*) – clt; unknown – kazoo;
 unknown (*Porter Grainger?*) – pno; unknown - grt
 146828-3 Ain't Got Nobody To Grind My Coffee Col 14368-D, Document DOCD-5368

There is a kazoo player here trying to lead the band, but falls out of the proceedings very early on the record. When he rejoins the band, it is for a short solo which is not convincing. Interesting again, as in session 056, is the clarinetist. He also plays in a more "Western" style, which was not fashionable in New York in these days. But I do not dare to identify Happy Caldwell here as this player plays with more fast runs than what I am accustomed from Caldwell. But I still see the faint possibility of his presence.

The pianist is unobtrusive and could be Porter Grainger, not Stanley Miller. But he plays with delicacy and good rhythm. The guitarist plays in a style akin to Bobby Leecan, but somewhat clumsy and dragging.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc unknown clt, p, g, kazoo

- Rust*3,*4,*6: unknown kazoo, cl, p, g.

- BGR*2,*3,*4: unknown kazoo, clt, pno, grt.

059 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Jan. 17, 1929
 Clara Smith – voc;
 unknown (*George Baquet?*), unknown – clt;
 Porter Grainger - pno
 147851-3 Tell Me When Col 14409-D, Document DOCD-5368
 147852-3 Empty House Blues Col 14409-D, Document DOCD-5368

The Columbia files do not give any information as to the identities of these two clarinetists. Thus, all listed names certainly are pure speculation. I hear some traits of early clarinet style of "Western" origin played by the first clarinetist, who could well be Baquet as assumed. Emerson Harper appears with the Leroy Smith band in Rust, thus as a legitimate musician who probably did not have the strong and fast vibrato heard. Because of this Ernest Elliott appears to be another possibility. The clarinetist playing second parts can not be identified at all since nothing individual can be detected, and it is far off the mark to name Ben Whitted, who certainly was an improvising and experienced musician with a strong bluesy style, of what nothing can be detected here.

Porter Grainger probably is the most probable pianist here.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: clarinets and piano acc.

- Rust*3: ? George Baquet, ?Ben Whitted -cl; ?Clarence Williams -p.

- Rust*4: ?Emerson Harper and another -cl; ?Porter Grainger -p.

- Rust*6: Acc by 2 cl (? Emerson Harper, ? George Baquet, ?Ben Whitted); ?Porter Grainger -p.

- BGR*2: prob George Baquet, Ben Whitted, clts; prob Clarence Williams, pno.

- BGR*3,*4: poss George Baquet, poss Ben Whitted, clts; prob Clarence Williams, pno.

060 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Jan. 26, 1929
 Clara Smith – voc;
 Joe Williams - tbn; Porter Grainger - pno
 147889-2 Daddy Don't Put That Thing On Me Blues Col 14398-D, Document DOCD-5368
 147890-3 It's Tight Like That Col 14398-D, Document DOCD-5368

The pianist seems to be Porter Grainger as assumed by others. But as for my knowledge of Charlie Green: this trombonist here is somebody else. Green is much more cultivated at this time of recording. Being trombonist of the Henderson band, he possesses a well-founded technique with a deeply rooted full tone and a middle vibrato. Our man here has a much shallower tone and less technique, but he certainly tries to copy Charlie Green with his gruff blues style. And he certainly is not so far from his model. But he is rougher and uses more growl tones. Thus, I'd prefer to identify this player as the much under-rated Joe Williams, known from a few Bessie Smith sides of August 1928. He sounds more "primitive" than Green, but uses the same style. No wonder that he was misidentified as Charlie Green for many years.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: trombone and piano acc.

- Rust*3,*4,*6: Charlie Green -tb; ?Porter Grainger -p

- BGR*2,*3,*4: Charlie Green, tbn; poss Porter Grainger, pno

061 **CLARA SMITH** New York, Sep. 04, 1929
 Clara Smith – voc;
 Ed Allen – cnt; Bennie Morton – tbn;
 James P. Johnson – pno
 148970-2 Papa I Don't Need You Now Col 14462-D, Document DOCD-5368
 148971-2 Tired Of The Way You Do Col 14462-D, Document DOCD-5368
 148972 Breath And Reeches Col unissued not on LP/CD

Talking of trombonists: without any doubt, our man here is Green's colleague from the Henderson band, the young Bennie Morton (yes, he wanted his name to be written Bennie!). I have contributed this judgement to Jan Evensmo's and Ola Ronnow's recent Bennie Morton solography on 'Jazz Archeology', and they have written: "We've omitted this session from the first version of this solography, but K.-B. Rau alerted us! Both Rust and Lord list the trombonist as 'unknown' on this session, but he is clearly HBM (Henry Benny Morton, but his real name was Henry Sterling Morton - KBR); listen to his introduction to 'Tired Of The Way ...'! These are the first recordings where we can hear HBM as a personal voice with his characteristic sound and vibrato." I have nothing to add here. But, listen to Morton's very beautiful and sensitive accompaniment using his very special long lip-trills which he performed as first player in classic jazz, only very few colleagues using short jumping-trills in this period. And Ed Allen is his very own clear, melodic, outstanding and relaxed self. I do also think that we

have James P. Johnson on piano on these sides. A great and very beautiful recording session this. If we only could hear the third title of this session! I'd give a whole lot for this experience!

Notes:

- *Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc Ed Allen, cnt; unknown, tbn, unknown, p.*
- *Rust*3*4: Ed Allen -c; unknown -tb; James P. Johnson -p*
- *Rust*6: Ed Allen -c; Charlie Green -tb; unknown -p*
- *BGR*2, *3, *4: Ed Allen, cnt; unknown, tbn; poss James P. Johnson, pno*

062 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; James P. Johnson – pno	New York,	Sep. 12, 1929
148994-2 Oh! Mister Mitchell	Col 14536-D,	Document DOCD-5368
148995-3 Where Is My Man?	Col 14536-D,	Document DOCD-5368

063 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Ed Allen – cnt; unknown – clt; unknown (<i>J.C. Johnson</i>) – pno	New York,	Dec. 31, 1929
149632-3 You Can't Stay No More	Col 14497-D,	Document DOCD-5368
149633-3 Let's Get Loose	Col 14497-D,	Document DOCD-5368

It is good old Ed Allen from the Clarence Williams circle here again. He plays in his very own relaxed and melodic style and leads the proceedings with a tranquil dominance. To his side plays a nice sounding clarinetist, joking sometimes with some light gas-pipe features. But these do not sound to be ment seriously. Yet, he lacks an ability to develop melodic lines. What he plays sounds nice and easy, but it does not reach further than chord changes. I have no idea who this player might be. I would assume J.C. Johnson to be the pianist.

Notes:

- *Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Acc includes Ed Allen, cnt.*
- *Rust*3: Ed Allen -c; unknown -p; ? others*
- *Rust*4: Ed Allen -c; unknown -p; others unknown*
- *Rust*6: Ed Allen -c; unknown -cl; unknown -p*
- *BGR*2: Ed Allen, cnt; unknown, pno; probably others*
- *BGR*3, *4: Ed Allen, c; unknown, cl; unknown, p*

064 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Porter Grainger – pno	New York,	Jul. 21, 1930
150649-1 Don't Fool Around On Me	Col 14553-D,	Document DOCD-5369
150650-1 Down In The Mouf' Blues	Col 14553-D,	Document DOCD-5369

065 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; Ed Allen – cnt; J.C. Johnson - pno	New York,	Aug. 01, 1930
150584 Why Can't You Do It Now?	Col unissued	not on LP/CD
150585 Lowland Moan	Col unissued	not on LP/CD

066 CLARA SMITH Clara Smith – voc; unknown – tpt; J.C. Johnson - pno	New York,	Sep. 09, 1930
150685-7 Lowland Moan	Col 14580-D,	Document DOCD-5369
150783-3 Woman To Woman	Col 14580-D,	Document DOCD-5369

Now, this really is a crazy recording: Ed Allen is documented by the Columbia files, but this trumpeter is a different man! No doubt. This man plays in a more modern and seasonable trumpet style, using rhythm and vibrato different from Allen. He likes to play augmented fifths on dominant chords which you would never hear from Ed Allen. He might be found in the ranks of the big bands of this time, but I am unable to attribute a name. The pianist might well be J.C. Johnson as listed. But do we really know?

Notes:

- *Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Ed Allen, cnt; J.C. Johnson, p.*
- *BGR*2: Ed Allen, cnt; J.C. Johnson, pno. "The cornet sounds most unlike Ed Allen for this date, despite the file evidence."*
- *Rust*3: The recording files state that the accompaniment for the next (this one – KBR) session is the same as on the last, but the cornet does not sound like Ed Allen.*
- *BGR*3: Ed Allen, cnt; J.C. Johnson, pno. "The cornet sounds most unlike Ed Allen for this date, despite the file evidence for naming him."*
- *Rust*4: unknown c, p (not as last above)*
- *BGR*4: Ed Allen, c; J.C. Johnson, p. "The cornet sounds most unlike Ed Allen on this session, though he is named in the Columbia files."*

067 CLARA SMITH AND TOMMY JORDAN Clara Smith, Lonnie Johnson – voc duet; Alex Hill – pno; Lonnie Johnson - gtr	New York,	Oct. 31, 1930
150927-3 You're Getting Old On Your Job	Col 14568-D,	Document DOCD-5369
150928-2 What Makes You Act Like That?	Col 14568-D,	Document DOCD-5369
404523-B You Had Too Much	OK 8839,	Document DOCD-5369

404524-A Don't Wear It Out OK 8839, Document DOCD-5369

The pianist's performance is entirely in accordance with what I know of Alex Hill's piano style.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Lonnie Johnson, vcl, g; unknown -p
- Rust*3: unknown, p; Lonnie Johnson, vcl, g
- Rust*4,*6: ?Alex Hill, p; Lonnie Johnson, g
- BGR*2: unknown, pno, Lonnie Johnson, gtr
- BGR*3,*4: Alex Hill, pno, Lonnie Johnson, gtr

068 CLARA SMITH New York, Mar. 07, 1931
 Clara Smith – voc;
 Porter Grainger – pno
 151401-2 I Wanna Two-Fisted Double-Jointed Man Col 14592-D, Document DOCD-5369
 151402-2 Good Times (Come On Back Once More) Col 14592-D, Document DOCD-5369

069 CLARA SMITH New York, Aug. 04, 1931
 Clara Smith – voc;
 Asbestos Burns – pno, voc (2)
 151706-2 Ol' Sam Tages Col 14619-D, Document DOCD-5369
 151707-3 Unemployed Papa – Charity Working Mama Col 14619-D, Document DOCD-5369

Clara Smith's accompanist here certainly is an accomplished pianist in "Western" style and teams up with her as a nice singer. His last name obviously was Jones, but everything else about him seems to remain unknown.

Notes:

- Mahony, Columbia 13/14000-D Series: Asbestos Burns, p (1); unknown, p (2).
- Rust*3: unknown -p: "assisted by Asbestos Burns" (2)
- Rust*4,*6: Asbestos Burns -p, who also sings where shown (2)
- BGR*2: Asbestos Burns, vcl (2); pno
- BGR*3,*4: Asbestos Burns, vcl (2); pno. "The name of Asbestos Burns was originally entered in the Columbia files as Asbestos Jones, and then altered to Asbestos Burns."

070 CLARA SMITH New York, Sep. 25, 1931
 Clara Smith – voc;
 Clarence Williams – pno
 151810-1 For Sale (Hannah Johnson's Jack Ass) Col 14633-D, Document DOCD-5369
 151811-1 You Dirty Dog Col 14633-D, Document DOCD-5369

071 CLARA SMITH New York, Jan. 18, 1932
 Clara Smith – voc;
 Fred Longshaw – pno
 152076-1 Street Department Papa Col 14645-D, Document DOCD-5369
 152077-1 Pictures On The Wall Col 14645-D, Document DOCD-5369

072 CLARA SMITH New York, Mar. 25, 1932
 Clara Smith – voc;
 Fred Longshaw – pno
 152159-1 I'm Tired Of Fattenin' Frogs For Snakes Col 14653-D, Document DOCD-5369
 152160-1 So Long Jim Col 14653-D, Document DOCD-5369

The great trumpet player, Bobby Stark, has claimed to have recorded with Monette Moore, also with Clara Smith, but after checking all Clara Smith's recordings with unknown trumpeters I have been unable to attribute any of the trumpet playing at sessions Clara Smith 034, 049, 056, and 066 to Bobby Stark (see Storyville 2002/3, p. 221). His recollection of a recording session with Monette Moore might possibly be an error of name, and that he did record with Julia Moody instead (see there at this website!).

There is another female singer of vaudeville/blues material who recorded in St. Paul, Minnesota, in June 1927.

J. Chilton, Who's Who in Jazz, p. 307:

SMITH, CLARA:
 born: Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1894; died: Detroit, Michigan, 1935.

Extensive work on theatre circuits from the early 1910s; began recording career in 1923. Made many records in the 1920s accompanied by all-star personnel: Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, James P. Johnson, etc. Appeared regularly at the Strollers' Club in New York during the early 1930s; played six-month residency at Orchestra Gardens, Detroit, then played dates in Cleveland. Died of heart trouble in the Parkside Hospital, Detroit. Clara Smith was not related to Bessie Smith or to Trixie Smith or to Laura Smith.

K.-B. Rau
May 22, 2017
July 31, 2017
26-97-2019