

MSESET3



Matchbox Bluesmaster Series - set 3

MEMPHIS HARMONICA KINGS

(1929-30)

TEXAS ALEXANDER VOL. 2 (1928-29)

RAMBLIN' THOMAS (1928-32)

COUNTRY GIRLS (1926-29)

RUFUS & BEN QUILLIAN (1929-31)

DE FORD BAILEY & BERT BILBRO

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Series Editor: Johnny Parth
Notes: Paul Oliver
Produced by: Gef Lucena
Remastering from 78s: Hans Klement, Austrophon Studios, Vienna
Digitising from vinyl: Norman White

Original recordings from the collections of
Werner Benecke, Joe Bussard, Johnny Parth, Guido van Rijn,
Bernd Kuefferle,

With thanks to Mark Jones of Bristol Folk Publications for the loan of
vinyl LP copies of the original re-issue series

Sleeve Design: Bob Doling/Genny Lucena

Discographical details from Blues and Gospel Records 1902-1942
by John Godrich and Robert Dixon

**Considering the extreme rarity of the original 78s, condition is generally
better than might be expected. Titles marked * are from poor condition
and very rare or only known surviving copies.**

**MATCHBOX BLUESMASTER SERIES
IS A DIVISION OF SAYDISC RECORDS
The Barton, Inglestone Common
Badminton, S Glos, GL9 1BX, England
www.saydisc.com**

Matchbox Bluesmaster Series

The 42 albums that make up the iconic Matchbox Bluesmaster Series were released by Saydisc Records between Nov 1982 and June 1988. Most of the albums were subtitled “Complete Recordings in Chronological Order” with a few under the subtitle “The Remaining Titles” or “New to LP”. The originating 78 rpm records (many of them extremely rare) were provided by several collectors under the editorship of well known Austrian collector, Johnny Parth and were re-mastered by Hans Klement of Austrophon Studios in Vienna. Johnny Parth had already created his extensive Roots Records label which Saydisc distributed in the UK and the Matchbox Bluesmaster Series was a carefully sculpted edition of black blues roots music giving a broad spectrum of the genre.

The series documented the early days of blues, hokum and gospel music from 1926 to 1934 (1950 for two tracks) and gives an insight into the way that black music was first released on record. From a commercial standpoint, records companies such as OKEH sent out talent scouts to find black singers, many of them “singing for nickels” on street corners. The market that these RACE record companies were after was the black community and they sometimes gave these newly found performers epithets such as “Peg Leg ...”, “Blind ...”, “Bo Weavil...”, “Buddy Boy...”, “Barbecue...” or “Texas...” to give them more appeal. The music of these singers formed the backbone of later urban blues, rhythm-and-blues and, of course, rock-‘n’-roll. The songs are sometimes raw and primitive in character, but some outstanding playing and singing shines through many of the performances.

Putting this music into perspective are the very valuable notes by **Paul Oliver** who was a world authority on early blues and travelled in the US extensively to try and trace any remaining details of these sometimes obscure people. Along with the work of other field collectors and researchers, we gain a rare insight into the world of black musicians of the day by reading his notes alongside listening to the music they performed.

Paul Oliver not only wrote 10 books on the history of blues and gospel music, but was also a Professor of Architecture on which subject he wrote five seminal books. He was born in May 1927 and died in August 2017. Through his blues books and writings he opened many windows into a little researched area which is of such importance to the history of black music in America. The final 4 CDs in the series are entitled “Songsters and Saints” and were put together by Paul Oliver to illustrate his book of the same name.

The present Matchbox Bluesmaster Series has been transcribed from the 1980’s vinyl pressings by Norman White using high-end transcription techniques. The original master tapes for the vinyl releases vanished long ago. See page 31 for details of the rest of the series.

Saydisc has in its vaults many more pre-Bluesmaster blues albums which may be issued on CD in due course.

GEF LUCENA, Series Producer

MATCHBOX BLUESMASTER SERIES

SET 3: DISC 1: Original vinyl release date: Feb 1984 as

MSE213 Memphis Harmonica Kings 1929-30

The Complete Recordings in Chronological Order

of Noah Lewis and Jed Davenport

50'54"

Noah Lewis, hca solo/ speech on track 2.

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Chickasaw Special | 56337-2 | Memphis, Tenn., Oct 2, 1929 |
| 2 | Devil In the Woodpile | 56338-2 | – |
| 3 | Like I Want To Be | 64734-2 | Memphis, Tenn., Nov 26, 1930 |

Noah Lewis' Jug Band: Noah Lewis, hca/vcl; Sleepy John Estes, gtr; Yank Rachel, md; Ham Lewis. jug

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---------|---|
| 4 | Ticket Agent Blues | 64736 | – |
| 5 | New Minglewood Blues | 64737-2 | – |

Noah Lewis, hca/vcl; Sleepy John Estes, gtr; unk, md on track 6; Ham Lewis. jug; Mrs. Van Zula Carter Hunt, vcl on track 6

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---------|------------------------------|
| 6 | Selling the Jelly | 64738 | Memphis, Tenn., Nov 28, 1930 |
| 7 | Bad Luck's My Buddy | 64739-2 | – |

Beale Street Rounders: Jed Davenport, hca; unk. pno; Henry L Castle (Too Tight Henry), vcl/gtr

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| 8 | I'm Sittin' on Top of the World | C-6438 | Chicago, c. Oct 13, 1930 |
| 9 | Talkin' Bout Yo–Yo | C-6439 | – |

Jed Davenport, hca; unk. gtr (possibly Joe Williams (alias of Joe McCoy)

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-------|---|
| 10 | How Long How Long Blues | M-197 | Peabody Hotel,
Memphis, Tenn., c. Sep 23, 1929 |
| 11 | Cow Cow Blues * | M-198 | – * <i>poor condition original</i> |

Jed Davenport & His Beale Street Jug Band: Jed Davenport, hca/whistle instead on track 17; acc. unk. vn, gtrs, md, jug, kazoo, vcl, comments

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| 12 | Beale Street Breakdown | MEM-734 | Memphis, Tenn. Feb 20, 1930 |
| 13 | You Ought To Move Out of Town | MEM-735 | – |
| 14 | The Dirty Dozen | MEM-763 | – |

15 Jug Blues	MEM-764 –
16 Save Me Some	MEM-774 –
17 Piccolo Blues	MEM-775 –

SET 3: DISC 2: Original vinyl release date: Feb 1984 as
MSE 214 TEXAS ALEXANDER: Texas Alexander Vol. 2 (1928 – 29)
Subtitled: Complete Recordings in Chronological Order 54'33"

Alger "Texas" Alexander, vcl; acc. Lonnie Johnson, gtr

1 Sittin' on a Log	400454-B San Antonio, Tex., Mar 10, 1928
2 Mama's Bad Luck Child *	400455-B – <i>*poor condition original</i>
3 Boe Hog Blues	400456-B –

"Texas" Alexander, vcl; acc. Lonnie Johnson, gtr; Eddie Lang, gtr

4 Work Ox Blues	401330-A New York City, Nov 15, 1928
5 The Risin' Sun	401331-A –
6 Penitentiary Moan Blues	401334-B New York City, Nov 16, 1928
7 Blue Devil Blues	401335-A –

**"Texas" Alexander, vcl; acc. King Oliver, cnt; Clarence Williams, pno;
Eddie Lang, gtr**

8 Tell Me Woman Blues	401346-A New York City, Nov 20, 1928
9 'Frisco Train Blues	401347-B –

"Texas" Alexander, vcl; acc. Eddie Lang, gtr

10 St. Louis Fair Blues	402348-B –
11 I Am Calling Blues	402349-A –

"Texas" Alexander, vcl; acc. Little Hat Jones, gtr

12 Double Crossing Blues	402639-B San Antonio, Tex., June 15, 1929
13 Ninety-Eight Degree Blues	402640-A –
14 Someday, Baby, Your Troubles Is Gonna Be Like Mine *	402641-A – <i>*poor condition original</i>

15 Water Bound Blues	402642-A –
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16 Awful Moaning Blues – Part 1	402643-B –
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17 Awful Moaning Blues – Part 2	402644-B –
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SET 3: DISC 3: Original vinyl release date: Feb. 1984 as
MSE 215 RAMBLIN' THOMAS: Ramblin' Thomas 1928–32 47'43"
Subtitled "Complete Recordings in Chronological Order" – except, that is,
 for two tracks from a 1932 session, which remained undiscovered. All tracks
 credited to Willard "Ramblin'" Thomas except the last two tracks which are
 credited to Rambling Thomas.

* = *poor condition original*

Willard "Ramblin'" Thomas, vcl/gtr

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | So Lonesome * | 20334-2 Chicago, c. Feb 1928 |
| 2 | Hard To Rule Woman Blues * | 20335-3 – |
| 3 | Lock and Key Blues | 20336-3 – |
| 4 | Sawmill Moan * | 20337-2 – |
| 5 | No Baby Blues * | 20338-1 – |
| 6 | Ramblin' Mind Blues | 20339-2 – |
| 7 | No Job Blues | 20343-2 – |
| 8 | Back Gnawing Blues | 20344-2 – |
| 9 | Jig Head Blues | 21017-4 C Chicago, c. Nov 1928 |
| 10 | Hard Dallas Blues | 21018-2 – |
| 11 | Ramblin' Man | 21019-4 – |
| 12 | Poor Boy Blues | 21020-4 – |
| 13 | Good Time Blues | 21027-1 – |
| 14 | New Way Of Living Blues | 21028-2 – |

Rambling Thomas, vcl/gtr

- | | | |
|----|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 15 | Ground Hog Blues | 70666-1 Dallas, Tex., Feb 9, 1932 |
| 16 | Shake It Gal | 70667-1 – |

SET 3: DISC 4: Original vinyl release date: April 1984 as
MSE 216 VARIOUS ARTISTS: Country Girls 1926–29 55'32"
Complete Recordings in Chronological Order

Lillian Miller, vcl; acc. Hersal Thomas, pno
 1 Kitchen Blues 9570-A Chicago, March 4, 1926

Lillian Miller, vcl; acc. George W. Thomas, pno; Charlie Hill, gtr
 2 Harbor Blues 13713-A Richmond, Ind., c. May 3, 1928
 3 You Just Can't Keep a Good Woman Down 13714A –
 4 Butcher Shop Blues 13716-B –

Lillian Miller, vcl; acc. George W. Thomas, speech; Charlie Hill, gtr
 5 Dead Drunk Blues 13718-A –

Hattie Hudson, vcl; acc. Willie Tyson, pno
 6 Doggone My Good Luck Soul 145338-2 Dallas, Tex., Dec 6, 1927
 7 Black Hand Blues 145339-2 –

Gertrude Perkins, vcl; acc. Willie Tyson, pno; unknown, gtr;
Octave Gaspard, bb.
 8 No Easy Rider Blues 145340-1 Dallas, Tex., Dec 6, 1927
 9 Gold Daddy Blues 145341-2 –

Pearl Dickson, vcl; acc. "Pet & Can" (Mahlon & Richard Harney), gtr. duet
 10 Twelve Pound Daddy 145370-3 Memphis, Tenn., Dec 12 1927
 11 Little Rock Blues 145371-2 –

Laura Henton, vcl; acc. unknown, pno, gtr & bb.
 12 He's Coming Soon 147562-2 Dallas, Tex., Dec 5, 1928
 13 Heavenly Sunshine 147563-1 –

Laura Henton, vcl; acc. Bennie Moten, pno; Eddie Durham, gtr;
Joe Page, sb
 14 Lord, You've Sure Been Good To Me KC-579 Kansas City, early Nov 1929
 15 I Can Tell the World About This KC-580 –
 16 Plenty Good Room In My Father's Kingdom KC-581 –
 17 Lord, I Just Can't Keep from Crying Sometimes KC-582 –

Bobbie Cadillac, vcl; acc. unknown, pno
 18 Carbolic Acid Blues 147599-2 Dallas, Tex., Dec 8, 1928

Note: Bobbie Cadillac recorded four duets with Coley Jones. These are on Matchbox MSE 208 Coley Jones and The Dallas String Band

SET 3: DISC 5: Original vinyl release date: April 1984 as
MSE 217 RUFUS & BEN QUILLIAN: Rufus & Ben Quillian 1929 – 31
Subtitled: Complete Recordings in Chronological Order 52'27"

Blue Harmony Boys: Rufus Quillian, Brother Jackson. poss. James McCrary. vcl trio (or, if marked **, duets by two of them): acc. Rufus Quillian, pno; unknown. gtr.

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1 | Sweet Miss Stella Blues** | GEX-2471 New York City, c. Oct 25, 1929 |
| 2 | Jerking The Load | GEX-2474-A – |
| 3 | Take It Out Too Deep* | GEX-2475-A – |
| 4 | Ragged But Right** * | GEX-2476-A – |
| 5 | All In Down and Out** * | GEX-2477-A – |
| 6 | Good Feeling Blues** | GEX-2478-A – |

**Rufus & Ben Quillian, vcl duet; acc. Rufus Quillian, pno;
James McCrary, gtr**

- | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| 7 | Keep It Clean | 150362-2 Atlanta, Ga., April 23, 1930 |
| 8 | Good Right On | 150363-1 – |

Rufus & Ben Quillian, vcl duet; acc. poss. acc. Perry Bechtel, gtr

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 9 | Workin' It Slow | 151088-2 Atlanta, Ga., Dec 7, 1930 |
| 10 | I Got Everything | 151089-2 – |
| 11 | Satisfaction Blues | 151090-1 – |
| 12 | It's Dirty But Good | 151091- – |

**Rufus & Ben Quillian with James McCrary: Rufus Quillian, Ben Quillian,
James McCrary, vcl trio; acc. Rufus Quillian, pno**

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 13 | Holy Roll | 151994-1 Atlanta, Ga., Oct 31, 1931 |
| 14 | Workin' It Fast | 151997-1 – |

James McCrary, vcl; acc. prob. Rufus Quillian, pno

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------------|
| 15 | Shove It Up In There | 151998-2 – |
| 16 | Loose Me from This Woman | 151999-1 – |

**poor condition original*

SET 3: DISC 6: Original vinyl release date: Oct 1985 as
MSE 218 DE FORD BAILEY & BERT BILBRO (1927-31)
Harmonica Showcase
Subtitled: Complete Recordings in Chronological Order

49'34"

De Ford Bailey, hca solo

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Pan American Blues | E-22475/76 | New York City, April 18 1927 |
| 2 | Dixie Flyer Blues | E-22501/02 | New York City, April 19 1927 |
| 3 | Up Country Blues | E-22503/04 | – |
| 4 | Evening Prayer Blues * | E-22505/06 | – * <i>poor condition original</i> |
| 5 | Muscle Shoals Blues | E-22508/08 | – |
| 6 | Old Hen Cackle | E-22509/10 | – |
| 7 | The Alcoholic Blues * | E-22511 | – * <i>poor condition original</i> |
| 8 | Fox Chase | E-22512 | – |
| 9 | John Henry | 47111-2 | Nashville, Tenn., Oct 2, 1928 |
| 10 | Ice Water Blues | 47112-1 | – |
| 11 | Davidson County Blues | 47116-1 | – |

Bert Bilbro, hca solo

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|----------|---------------------------|
| 12 | C. & N.W. Blues | 402041-2 | Atlanta, Ga., Aug 2, 1928 |
| 13 | Mohana Blues | 402042 | – |

Bert Bilbro, vcl/hca solo; acc, by unknown guitar

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------|----------------------------|
| 14 | Yes, Indeed I Do | 402309 | Atlanta, Ga., Mar 14, 1929 |
| 15 | We're Gonna Have a Good
Time Tonight | 402310 | – |

D.H. Bilbro, hca solo

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| 16 | Chester Blues | 69364-2 | Charlotte, N.C., May 27, 1931 |
|----|---------------|---------|-------------------------------|

SET 3: DISC 1: Original vinyl release date: Feb 1984 as

MSE213 Memphis Harmonica Kings 1929-30

The Complete Recordings in Chronological Order of Noah Lewis and Jed Davenport

Memphis in the late 1920s was, by any standards, an extraordinarily musical city. On and around Beale Street the roster of guitarists, pianists, harmonica players, jug-blowers, banjo pickers and the like was seemingly inexhaustible, while at the Palace and other theatres and night spots, bands like Charley Williamson's Beale Street Frolic Orchestra were working. Go down the street at any time of day or night you'd be bound to hear music in the saloons, the churches or simply on the sidewalk. And if it was the sidewalk musicians you were listening to, you might hear Noah Lewis blowing his harmonica for tips. Not that he stayed too long in Memphis at any one time; like many of his contemporaries he frequently returned to the country to farm and to play at country suppers and

picnics at weekends.

Noah Lewis was a small, compact-featured man who was in his mid-thirties when he recorded the tracks on this collection. He was born in a farming community near Henning, Tennessee on September 3rd, 1895, and spent his youth on his father's holding. Henning was on the Illinois Central line running south to Memphis. Like other harp-players he learned to "mock the trains," (as I have described on the notes to "Great Harp Players" Matchbox MSE 209) and to learn the customary standards like **Fox Chase**. His **Chickasaw Special** is a typical train imitation on which he has introduced a fragment of the chase as he spies the hounds from the freight "rattler". Such themes were partially borrowed from rural fiddle players. **Devil in the Woodpile** was one such fiddle standard, originally called, by whites at any rate, **Nigger in the Woodpile** and meaning an unforeseen difficulty or "spanner in the works." In Noah Lewis' piece the Devil is heard moaning in the piles of logs.

When he was seventeen Noah moved a few miles further up the line to Ripley, where he worked on local farms as a casual labourer, and played for tips and parties whenever he could. He was a well-known musician, often playing in the company of guitarists Cornelius Treadaway, Eddie Green and Allen Shaw (only Shaw made records) and sometimes with Sleepy John Estes from Brownsville. Noah's ability to play the harp through his nose as well as his mouth, or even both at once, impressed his friends and got him a spot on a medicine show.

According to Bengt Olsson, the Swedish researcher whose fieldwork resulted in most of what we know of Noah Lewis, it was on one such visit by a show that he was invited to record in Memphis. He made a couple of titles with his Jug Band that included Estes, Yank Rachel and Ham Lewis, a jug-blower from Mississippi. **Ticket Agent** included the somewhat unlikely request to "turn your depot round" (the line is usually a request to turn the train). **New Minglewood Blues** was a re-

working of a blues that he had earlier made with Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers on which Ashley Thompson had taken the vocal. It was a favourite theme in the Ripley, Henning area for a well-known sawmill camp and box-making factory was sited near there at Mengelwood, by Ashport, which employed black labourers; there's a reference to the women in the camps on his version of the blues. Another Mengelwood, a suburb of Memphis, has been confused with the mill camp on occasion. On this Noah Lewis's sensitive harp work is without peer, but he was always a subtle musician. Sadly, he was a very poor man, living in destitution in a tiny, one-roomed shack. In 1961 he suffered frost-bite in a freak cold spell, and both of his feet were amputated. Blood poisoning set in and he died that February at the age of sixty-five.

Another noted harmonica player who worked in Memphis was Jed Davenport. Whereas Noah was a visitor, Jed was a resident, a familiar figure in Beale, sometimes working in the street but often playing with the

medicine shows that came to Memphis to recruit musicians. He is believed to have been from Mississippi but by the early 1920s he was living in Memphis. Though he recorded playing harmonica, and once, on **Piccolo Blues**, playing a tin whistle, he was known to play trumpet, pick a guitar and blow the jug. Clearly he was an entertainer who could draw the attention of the crowd in a tent show, or cope with the "book" of the jazz bands that played the Palace or the Flamingo Hotel.

This aspect of his ability is evident even when his harmonica pieces are considered, for he seems to have favoured well-known standards which would be familiar to an audience. His solo **How Long, How Long Blues** for instance, follows the vocal line rather than the piano line of the renowned Leroy Carr composition. This was not for lack of ability as he promptly displayed on **Cow Cow Blues** which he played as the piano piece, consciously recalling its train associations and using a chuntering rhythm once or twice. **Cow Cow**

Blues was composed by his famous namesake Charles Davenport, and there's an outside chance that they were related, for both were well remembered on the shows. So too was "Too Tight Henry" Castle, on whose version of the Mississippi Shiek's **Sittin' On Top of the World** he played. He also accompanied Castle on a novelty blues, **Talkin' 'Bout Yo-Yo**, which had the rather unusual ABC stanza form. Perhaps this entertainer's approach comes over most strongly on **The Dirty Dozen**. It seems to be linked with the version by Memphis Minnie and Kansas Joe McCoy, and the opening guitar passage is strongly reminiscent of them. Then Jed takes over with a wordless recitation of the song on the harp, so vocalised that one can hear him move to the "God made him an elephant" stanza. He didn't record with them when they made **The Dirty Dozen** a few months later, but he was on a couple of titles by the McCoy's that year.

There was still music on Beale for many years afterwards, and when he wasn't travelling with a show Jed

Davenport contributed to it. His Jug Band included at odd times, according to Will Shade, a bass player Alex Jackson, who had recorded with Mamie Smith, and a saxophonist, Dub Jenkins. But by the 1960s times had changed; professional music making was almost dead. Yet, even then, Jed Davenport was still blowing for coins on the Street; what became of him later we have yet to learn.

SET 3: DISC 2: Original vinyl release date: Feb 1984 as MSE 214 TEXAS ALEXANDER:
Texas Alexander Vol. 2 (1928 – 29)
Subtitled: Complete Recordings in Chronological Order

Recent research by Lawrence Brown in Texas has filled out a great deal of the biographical information on Alger Alexander. From him we learn that Alexander was born on September 12, 1900 at Jewett, which was then a tiny community in Leon County. His mother, Jenny Brooks "was rowdy, she was runnin' about" according to one informant, so Alger and his brother Edell were placed in the care

of his grandmother at Richards, Texas – a hamlet so small that it does not occur on Texas maps of that date. Perhaps this break with his mother at an early age had something to do with Alexander's disillusionment with women, which comes over strongly in many items on this second album of his recordings. Probably too, the lack of parental care accounted for his somewhat wayward life in early years – though Lawrence Brown's researches do not add much to our knowledge of what he was doing before he began to make records.

Recollections of those who knew him tend to emphasize either his lack of stature – he was about five foot tall – his heavy-set build, his large head or his coal-black complexion. As noted on MSE 206 (Vol I) Alexander was both a field hand and a store-man, and his physical strength made up for his lack of height. As I mentioned there, it was rumoured in Texas that he served time in the Ramsey Unit of the "Department of Corrections" and further evidence to support this comes in some of these blues.

Penitentiary Moan Blues, in particular, is of great interest, not only because it has Alger speaking, but also because it makes reference to Bud Russell; "Uncle Bud", the "long-chain man" who brought convicts to the Texas prisons as Joe Turner did to the Tennessee ones.

"... now Mama, Bud Russell's got me and I can't help myself", Alexander says; "if I had a listened, mama, when you was tellin' me these things, I wouldn't have to worry with these ole rusty chains."

*"I wonder what's the matter with po' Annie Lee,
Lord the captain whupped her, and she ain't been seen (twice).
If you get buggy, want to see Red River red,
Lord, Bud Russell will take you and you won't be dead ... "*

The ominous words of these stanzas refer to washing in river water after being beaten with the "Black Betty" leather strap used by Russell. It seems a little incongruous that this extremely local Texas theme should

have been sung in New York City, with Eddie Lang joining Lonnie Johnson on the accompaniment. Nevertheless, they played somewhat more simply on this than on **Rising Sun**, where the accompaniment is rather baroque, markedly in contrast to the directness of Alger's lyrics:

*"She got something round and it looks just like a bear,
Sometime I wonder what in the hell is there?"*

Even today the explicit sexual nature of many of Texas Alexander's blues is striking, never more so perhaps, than in **Boe Hog Blues**

*"Oh tell me mama how d'ye want your rollin' done (twice)
Says, your face to the ground and your noodle up to the sun.
She got little bitty legs, gee, but below her thighs, (twice)
She's got something on-a-yonder works like a bo' hog's eye.
Says I'll be your doctor, pay your doctor bills (twice)
Says if the doctor don't cure you, I've got something will."*

or, on **Ninety-Eight Degree blues**:

*"I'm gonna get up in the mornin', do
like Buddy Brown, (twice)
I'm gonna eat my breakfast, man and
lay back down.
When a man get hairy y'know he
needs a shave, (twice)
When a woman gets musty, you
know she needs a bathe (twice)
I've got somethin' to tell you make
the hair rise on your head (2)
Got a new way of lovin' a woman
made the springs screech on her
bed."*

The title of this blues does not appear in the lyrics, but the recording was made in San Antonio which lies 98°.50' West, and Alexander may have picked up a local reference to the situation.

Texas Alexander seems to have made little effort to vary his approach to blues singing, or to adjust to accompanists; they had to fall in with him, and accept both his timing and erratic verse structure. King Oliver's cornet responses on a couple of tracks fit a more strict mode and he,

in turn, plays as if he were accompanying a "classic blues" singer. Lonnie Johnson alone is completely at ease, anticipating and elaborating with astonishing fluency; this was the period of his most remarkable guitar solos and he seems to have been at the peak of his abilities. At times a little florid, his playing serves as a contrast with Alexander's moaning, rise-and-fall vocal lines. "Little Hat" Jones was more "country" and he seems to have wanted to speed Alger up; each time he opens up the record with his fast-flowing songster-styled guitar, and then has to slow up to fit Alexander's singing. **Double Crossing** appears to have presented him with problems, and the singer's exclamation of "Damn it! Damn it!" could have been with impatience with his accompanist, rather than the woman that he was singing about.

In spite of the large number of records that he made and the similar approach on each of them to the blues he was singing, Texas Alexander continued to be one of Okeh's best sellers and a highly

popular artist. He even appeared on stage at Ella B. Moore's Theatre on Central Tracks, but for the most part he was a street singer, a part of the environment of the times. He rarely repeated himself, and his lyrics are consistently interesting – even if he was only four years old when the St. Louis Fair took place! Listening to his lyrics we are carried back to the earliest phase of the blues.

The Lawrence Brown interviews referred to above are quoted from notes to Agram AB 2009 "Texas Troublesome Blues".

SET 3: DISC 3: Original vinyl release date: Feb. 1984 as MSE 215 RAMBLIN' THOMAS: Ramblin' Thomas 1928–32

Subtitled: Complete Recordings in Chronological Order– except, that is, for two tracks from a 1932 session, which remained undiscovered. All tracks credited to Willard Ramblin' Thomas except the last two tracks which are credited to Rambling Thomas.

In the summer of 1964 the black poet Langston Hughes was in

London, and on one of the occasions when we met and talked about blues singers, he remarked that one of his favourite singers on record was Ramblin' Thomas. I was surprised because he had not written about Thomas as he had about Memphis Minnie, but, as he explained, he knew nothing about him. Twenty years later we still know very little, but listening to this collection of his recordings it's easier to see why he appealed to Langston Hughes. In his way, Ramblin' Thomas was a poet, with a use of imagery and turn of phrase in his blues which was far more inventive than that of many better-known singers.

What we do know of Thomas comes from an interview conducted by Gayle Dean Wardlow with Jesse Thomas, the younger brother of the singer, and from Willard Thomas's own recordings. Jesse referred to himself as Willard's "little brother" when, at the age of eighteen or so, he was himself auditioned in Dallas in 1929. This suggests that Willard was quite a bit older than Jesse, born possibly before 1900. A poorly

reproduced photograph on a Paramount advertisement for **No Job Blues** suggests a man in his thirties, while a drawing of him, with rather deep-set eyes and lines beside his mouth, conveys an even older man. "He and Lemon, they run together quite a bit and played together", Jesse told Wardlow, so it seems likely that Willard may have been of the generation of the mid-Nineties. Jesse was born in Loganport, Louisiana, in the same area where Leadbelly and Uncle Bob Leadbetter also lived, and it is reasonable to think that Willard came from that way too.

At the time when these records were made, Willard Thomas spent a fair amount of his time in Dallas or Fort Worth, or travelled between there and Shreveport. Shreveport was a haunt of Leadbelly's and it was also where Oscar Buddy Woods, Joel West, Kid Harris and others hung out. Several of the guitarists played with a slide, Buddy Woods and his protégée Black Ace (B. K. Turner) playing a steel-bodied Hawaiian instrument laid flat across the lap.

Willard played with a slide – a clasp-knife or bottleneck probably – but the photograph mentioned shows him playing with his guitar in the customary position. He played mainly in open G tuning (D,G,D,G,B,D) and perfected a clear, arpeggio style which made full use of both the slide touched delicately on the strings, and the sliding of the strings across the frets. Slide playing, incidentally, is so frequently associated with Mississippi that it is necessary to point out that most Texas bluesmen of that generation used slide at times, if not necessarily on record (both Blind Lemon and Leadbelly recorded examples); Willard Thomas used it far more frequently than most.

It seems that his life was a casual one. "He'd mostly get hisself a room to hisself and play on the streets, in a barbershop, on a corner or even in the alley. In those days it wasn't against the law to play on the streets," Jesse recalled. Willard was named "Ramblin' " by the Paramount company he said, but doubtless the name arose from his frequent references to wandering – "*ramblin'*

stays on my mind" he sang:

*"And you will wake up in the mornin'
and find me gone (twice)
Cause I'm a ramblin' man and I can't
stay in one place long.
It's one day and one night, as long
as I stay in one place (twice)
But I been in Chicago one week
because I like these Chicago ways."*

The ways of Dallas in the late twenties could not have been endearing: *"man, don't never make Dallas your home"* he sang on **Hard Dallas Blues**, and on **No Job Blues**:

*"I been walkin' all day and all night too, (twice)
'Cause my meal ticket woman have quit me and I can't find no job to do.
I pickin' up the newspapers, and I lookin' in the ads, (twice)
And the policeman came along and he 'rested me for vag'."*

– which suggests that you could be brought before the judge for being a vagrant at the time. The verses suggest that he was literate, and on

Ramblin' Man he sang:

*"Then I start to write, but I believe I'll go myself (twice)
Says a letter's too slow and a telegram may get left."*

Of course it may have been a standard verse, or a fantasy, but there is a ring of truth in Thomas's verses that surely comes from experience, like the "hard to rule" woman who was always going on automobile rides:

*"She sleeps late in the mornin', I can't hardly get her woke, (twice)
She will wake up in one second, when she hear her horn blow.
Some of these days I'm gonna be like Mister Henry Ford, (twice)
Gonna have a car and a woman runnin' on every road."*

Well, he didn't get that rich, though he did broadcast in 1932 for Kendle Brothers Furniture Store, and it was then that he was recorded for Victor. The superior recording technique displays his playing to advantage, and though virtually all his items

were slow blues, there was a dance rhythm to **Shake It Gal** which showed that he could play for such functions. This is hinted at elsewhere: on **Lock and Key** for example, which has echoes of Blind Blake in the guitar work. Undoubtedly he listened to others and was influenced by prominent figures in Texas, like Blind Lemon Jefferson, whose phrasing is very evident on **No Baby Blues, Jig Head** – which should have been **Jug Head**, judging by the account of alcoholism in his family – has more than a touch of Lonnie Johnson's approach, while the moaned syllables on **Sawmill** clearly derive from Victoria Spivey's **T. B. Blues**. And it was of tuberculosis that, his brother stated, he died from in Memphis in the 1940s, still ramblin' no doubt, still thinking up lines like: "*I can't sleep for dreaming, sure can't sleepwalk for cryin'.*"

The Gayle Dean Wardlow interview with Jesse Thomas referred to above is from the book, Charley Patton and the Mississippi Blues by Steve Calt and Gayle Dean Wardlow.

SET 3: DISC 4: Original vinyl release date: April 1984 as MSE 216 VARIOUS ARTISTS: Country Girls 1926–29
subtitled: Complete Recordings in Chronological Order

It's a salutary reflection on the nature of blues research that, after a quarter of a century of study and writing on the subject and after the publication of millions of words in innumerable blues magazines, almost nothing is known of the singers represented on this collection of "Country Girls". Women singers have not received much attention by blues writers and the very few women who have written on blues have not improved the situation. Part of the problem has been the lumping together of women singers as stage or vaudeville performers so that the style of Harlem singers like Rosa Henderson or Lucille Hegamin has been ascribed to them all. This does them a great disservice as the present collection clearly indicates. We might remind ourselves while listening, that not one of them rates an entry in "Blues Who's Who".

With the exception of Pearl Dickson (or Dixon) they were all associated in one way or another with Texas. She recorded in Memphis and was accompanied by Richard "Hacksaw" Harney and his brother Mahlon Harney on guitars. As a boy, Richard Harney had been known as "Can" (short for "Candy"), and it was as "Pet and Can" (a pun on Pet canned milk) that they worked in the Delta, accompanying Walter Rhodes. They may have met Pearl Dickson there – Richard was partly raised in Arkansas and, bearing in mind Pearl's **Little Rock Blues**, she might have been from that state. She had a strong voice with a natural vibrato, somewhat anticipating that of Memphis Minnie who recorded for the first time a couple of years later.

There's a marked difference between Lillian Miller's **Kitchen Blues** and the other titles by this singer. On the former the sensitive accompaniment was by Hersal Thomas, recording shortly before his tragic death from food poisoning at the age of sixteen. **Kitchen Blues** related to Sodarisa Miller's **I Keeps My Kitchen Clean**,

and there's more than an outside chance that the two singers were related. **Kitchen Blues** was sung in a manner that recalled Bernice Edwards, who lived with the Thomas family in Houston, Texas, where Lillian Miller is known to have lived. She was certainly promoted by Hersal's much older brother George, who accompanied her on three of her other titles together with Papa Charlie Hill. One of these, **Butcher Shop**, was recalled several years later by Bernice Edwards: another title, **Dead Drunk Blues**, on which George Thomas spoke but did not play, was nonetheless his composition. It was recorded in other versions by Sippie Wallace and, majestically, by Gertrude "Ma" Rainey. On all these tracks Lillian Miller's voice is harder and more direct. Though Sippie Wallace remembered her in Houston and believed that she moved to Chicago, further details of her career are not to hand.

Far more professional in approach was Hattie Hudson, whose full voice was ideally suited for performing

before an audience. The striking tune of **Doggone My Good Luck Soul**, with its interpolated title line, is immediately arresting, while the interesting words are matched by those of her other title **Black Hand Blues**. On the first track she calls the pianist, rather wilfully. "Mister Jefferson" but settles for his correct name – Willie Tyson – on the second. This blatant statement of a pseudonym is not to be ignored for it may be a clue to Hattie Hudson's own position which was, I believe, pseudonymous. In my view she was Hattie Burleson recording under another name, though, as she was yet to be contracted to Brunswick, there seems to have been no reason for so doing. There were no composer credits on the record to confirm her identity, but both titles recorded by her session-mate, Gertrude Perkins, were credited to "Burleson". An entry in the Columbia files included the note after each title: "composition purchased by Columbia from Hattie Burleson for \$25.00 as per contract." Gertrude Perkins had a more rural voice and she employed the typical Texas vowel sounds.

which were also evident in "Hattie Hudson's" pronunciation of "away".

Hattie Burleson was an active promoter of talent, going to considerable trouble to try out her singers on stage, or in her travelling road shows as well as on record, as I have explained elsewhere. Bobbie Cadillac may have come under her management for a spell – at least. **Carbolic Acid Blues** has the trademark of a Burleson composition. She was one of the group who "ran together" in Dallas, Texas which was centred on Whistling Alex Moor, among them Billiken Johnson, and Blind Norris McHenry. She recorded a few titles with Coley Jones (MSE 208) but this was her only blues recording unfortunately. A "good-time woman", with a reputation for hard drinking, she was reportedly still in the Dallas area as late as 1970, but attempts to locate her failed.

Unlike the other singers on this album, Laura Henton was a gospel soloist and a powerful one. Her first coupling was made in Dallas with unknown piano, guitar and brass

bass. The latter might have been Charlie Dixon who was working in the city and recording for Brunswick around this time. **Heavenly Sunshine** had been recorded several months earlier by Blind Connie Rosemond, but it was a fairly popular gospel song and Laura Henton may not have picked it up from the record: hers was an infinitely superior version and she was not fazed by the high notes that it demanded. The following year she was in Kansas City singing with gusto to the accompaniment of a small group. Its identity is interesting, the pianist being Bennie Moten – who had just given up the piano stool in his own band to the youthful Count Basie. The guitarist was Eddie Durham, later to be a pioneer of the electric instrument and the major influence on Charlie Christian, while the bass player is listed as "Joe Page" – perhaps Walter or Vernon Page, unless there were three bass-playing Pages in Kansas City that month! Suitably, Laura Henton sang **Lord, You Sure Been Good to Me**, a favourite with the jazz bands in New Orleans and a few other gospel

and spiritual items that were well-known. But her spirited attack breathed new life into them and doubtless she continued to stimulate congregations in the mid-west, even if, like the other country girls on this anthology, she didn't record again.

References: Steve La Vere "Hacksaw Harney". Living Blues No. 18. Autumn 1974: Paul Oliver, notes to The Thomas Family Magpie PY 4404 and Texas Blues: Dallas 1928. Fountain FB 305.

Set 3: DISC 5: Original vinyl release date: April 1984 as MSE 217 RUFUS & BEN QUILLIAN: Rufus & Ben Quillian 1929 – 31

Subtitled: Complete Recordings in Chronological Order

To the blues collector "hokum" is a kind of arch, nudging blues style popularised in the city. Good-time music, it is essentially entertainment, with suggestive lyrics and no profound feelings to interfere with the extrovert character of the songs. Georgia Tom Dorsey, Tampa Red,

Big Bill Broonzy and a handful of other Chicago-based singers are usually associated with hokum and the groups that used the term on record were generally from that city. As a word, "hokum" has a somewhat uncertain etymology, though it probably derives from "hocus-pocus", or perhaps that word combined with "bunkum", terms which imply the spurious. In the vaudeville theatre it meant the use of acts, jokes or routines that were guaranteed to produce a laugh or an audience response. Eventually it became synonymous with successful "corn" and was used with this meaning in the travelling circuses.

This suggests that the term may have been applied in rural areas too, and possibly therefore, the blues use of "hokum" may have originated not in Chicago but in the South – as on Coley Jones' **Hokum Blues** (MSE 208). Though they never used the term on their records, Rufus and Ben Quillian epitomised blues hokum, having an approach which was clearly related to that of the Chicago singers. But they were from the

South, members of a family of ten children from Gainesville, Georgia. Tom Dorsey, as his nickname implied, also came from Georgia: he was born in Carroll County on the opposite side of Atlanta from the Quillians, who lived about sixty miles north-east of the city. Atlanta was a magnet for aspiring blacks and Dorsey was working at the 81 Theatre, and learning to play piano, by the time he was eleven, in 1910, Rufus Quillian was just a year younger and eventually he moved to Atlanta too, to be followed by Ben, who was born in 1907 and was seven years his junior.

By 1916 Georgia Tom had moved from Atlanta and the chances are that they did not meet: nevertheless, the possibility that the roots of Dorsey-styled hokum lie in an Atlanta local party tradition can't be ruled out. As these recordings show, there was a close relationship between the titles cut in Atlanta by the Quillians and those by Tampa Red and Georgia Tom. The latter recorded prolifically, and made their first records the previous year, 1928: but

there could easily have been a direct influence through records although there is a musical connection, the Quillians performed their own material, as Ben recalled to Mike Rowe. Most of their songs: "were kinda indecent for that day but ... not today! We were a little ahead of our time. That's about all they wanted from us was jumping little songs, **Tight Like That, Dirty But Good, Keep it Clean** ... all kinds of funny stuff like that. We had a lot of fun, played a lot of house-parties, small dances". Rufus, he recalled: "taught himself to play and he was really quite a musician. He did a lot of composing, rearranging stuff like that."

They performed regularly on WATL – the Atlanta radio station and seemed to have had a highly enjoyable time as The Blue Harmony Blues, with Ben's schoolboy friend James McCrary joining them.

Many of their songs were on a twelve-bar blues structure, but were sung in a couplet-and-refrain form which somewhat obscures the

familiar sequence-songs like **Keep It Clean, Good Right On** or **Working It Slow** are of this type. Their use of the phrase "good right on" is unusually early and confirms their claim to be "a little ahead of" their time. Though the song was not the one that Sloke and Ike were to popularise several years later in 1937, they made early use also of the phrase "ragged but right". This item in fact, was a cod sermon, and here they were employing a device that had a long history behind it – Bert Williams and his contemporaries made a lot of humour from parodies of sermons. **All In Down and Out** was another, telling the story of Nicodemus and Pharoah's home brew. Rather incongruously, the assembled company did not sing a spiritual parody but one of the Quillian's adaptations of a blues song. **All In Down and Out** was freely based on the Jimmy Cox song **Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out**, one or two stanzas remaining virtually intact in their song. Religious satire was also evident in **Holy Roll**, a song with a more developed structure than some

of their more conventional compositions.

Indebtedness to The Hokum Boys is apparent in **Jerking That Load** which is based on the form of the best-selling **Beedle Um Bum**, while the original A side, **Selling That Stuff**, provides a foundation for **It's Dirty But Good**. But these items also reveal their originality: none of the songs is overly dependent on recorded precedent and the words are quite different. **Take It Out Too Deep** thematically is their equivalent of Georgia Tom and Jane Lucas's **Terrible Operation Blues**, but it is quite different in both tune and words. Nevertheless, Ben Quillian's guitar is strongly based on Tampa Red's. Rufus played a strong, ragtime influenced rather than blues-styled piano. This is especially noticeable on **Shove It Up In There**, sung by James McCrary whose interpretation is rather in the manner of a female "classic blues" singer.

On four titles by the "Blue Harmony Boys" a white guitarist accompanied them. His flat pick style was certainly

not blues, but he was a good performer and these are instrumentally attractive sides. Though current discography favours Perry Bechtel (who says he was not on the tracks), it is likely that the guitarist was Hoke Rice, who also came from Gainesville. Incidentally, though the "Blue Harmony" referred to their harmonising, the fact that the town of Harmony Grove was not far from Gainesville may have given an extra association to their name.

The "Boys" worked in an Atlanta dry cleaning plant, but after separating from his wife in 1935, Rufus went out to California: he died in 1946, survived for thirty years by his brother Ben who was still living in St. Louis in the late seventies, a staunch member of the church who could still recall with warmth. the years of Southern hokum.

References: Bruce Bastin, "Blue Harmony Boys", Blues Unlimited No. 113. May/June 1975: Mike Rowe, "The Blue Harmony Boys—The Unusual", Blues Unlimited No. 123. Jan/Feb 1977.

**SET 3: DISC 6: Original vinyl
release date: Oct 1985 as
MSE 218 DE FORD BAILEY &
BERT BILBRO (1927–31
Harmonica Showcase**

*Subtitled: Complete Recordings in
Chronological Order*

When I first heard **Alcoholic Blues** it was being played by Sonny Terry. He told me that he had learned it from "a little feller, Defoe Bailey" back home in Rockingham, North Carolina. Brownie McGhee confirmed that Bailey was black and that he used to play on Grand Ole Opry. Black and playing the Opry? I felt that they must be mistaken but of course they were not. I tried to get Sonny to record the tune but he told me that he had already done so. (Right again – for Folkways in 1952). It took a long while before the picture of De Ford Bailey began to take a logical shape.

He was born in 1899 (or 1900) in the settlement of Carthage, Smith County Tennessee. His parents were farmers but the family had originally moved to Tennessee from New York.

Even so, DeFord remembered that his "granddaddy was the best fiddle player in Smith County played **Old Joe Clark**, **Lost John**: all them way back pieces . . . reels and breakdowns" as he explained to Bengt Olsson. All the members of his family played instruments, his mother played guitar, his brother the banjo, and at the age of three he started himself to learn to play both harmonica and mandolin. A Höhner Marine Band harp was his favourite instrument: "Oh, I would wear it out trying to imitate everything I heard. Hens, foxes, hounds, turkeys, everything around me. In the evenings we'd call the cows and goats with cow and ox horns". Going to school he would pass under the trestle between Newsome Station and Thompsons Station and imitate the trains as they passed over him. A victim of polio when he was a small child, he developed a slight hump on his back and his growth was stunted.

Unable to obtain normal farm work DeFord made use of his musical talents by joining up with another small and crippled harp player

named Bob "Tip" Lee, performing together on a wagon in the streets of Nashville. He was able to make good enough money from his playing, and from working as a cook, to make it worth his while to stay in Nashville. He got another job as an elevator operator and played harmonica to the people who used it, some of whom encouraged him to play in a harmonica contest on station WDAD. He came second, but it seems to have led indirectly to his being introduced to Judge Hay and a spot on his "Barn Dance" show on WSM in October 1925. He was a great success and when the "Barn Dance" became the famous "Grand Old Opry". it was the DeFord's playing of **Pan American Blues** which opened the show.

For over 15 years Bailey was a regular and immensely popular artist on the Opry show. It went out every Saturday night to a large audience, of whom many may never have known that he was black, for he seldom spoke, but concentrated on playing his harp. But he also toured with the Opry show and was

favoured as a "mascot" for the company, a role which had less pleasant overtones. In fact, he was the victim of a lot of racial prejudice in those days, unable to eat at segregated lunch counters or to have a hotel room in the same hotel, unless Uncle Dave Macon, the veteran banjo player, claimed that Bailey was his personal valet and insisted on accommodation for him.

In 1941 came the parting of the ways. According to Judge Hay, who wrote a brief history of the Opry, "DeFord was lazy. He knew about a dozen numbers, which he put on the air and recorded for a major company, but he refused to learn more, even though the reward was great. He was our mascot and was still loved by the entire company. . .". According to Bailey he quit because he was tired of being pushed around: according to Hay he was fired because he wouldn't learn new themes. Whatever the reason – and it seems certain that he took no pleasure in being a "mascot" but did enjoy the wide fame he had gained – DeFord left that year, and opened up

a shoeshine stand to support himself and his wife. Later he worked in a bakery too, but when his house was torn down in an "urban renewal" scheme, his shoeshine stand went. In February 1974, over thirty years after the split he was invited to play at the closing show in the old Opry building, but though he occasionally reappeared from his long retirement he never recorded again after the 1927 and 28 sessions from which these, his total recorded output of titles, come.

Though they are few in number, his recordings do present his abilities and his breadth. Two items are train imitations – **Pan American Blues** which mimics the sound of the train which he heard as a child, and **Dixie Flyer Blues** which imitated the "solid train", as it was advertised, which went from Chicago to Jacksonville, Florida by way of Nashville. Both faithfully capture the sounds of their respective whistles. **Fox Chase** was probably based on his mimicry of animals as a child, but it was also a standard show-piece among fiddlers and he may

have heard his grandfather play it. **Old Hen Cackle** too, was a favourite fiddle tune, recorded by a number of white country musicians but probably shared by rural musicians both black and white. Charles Wolfe has suggested that he represented a tradition of "black hillbilly music that is all but extinct." But this is not really supported by his records. **John Henry** was the old black (and white) ballad, while **Ice Water Blues** was based on **The Preacher and the Bear**, written by one Joe Arzonia in 1904. **Up the Country** and **Muscle Shoals Blues** were both songs that had been composed by the Texas writer George W. Thomas, and recorded by Sippie Wallace and Edith Wilson among others. Even the influential **Alcoholic Blues** was written by Will von Tilzer in 1919. So it seems that to a large extent DeFord Bailey relied on standards and composed pieces for most of his repertoire, changing the title occasionally, like **Davidson County Blues** which, was **Cow Cow Blues** under a different guise.

DeFord Bailey died on July 2nd 1982, aged 83. We don't know whether D.H Bilbro is still alive [*in 1985*], or indeed anything else about him except that he was white, and made these few titles in Atlanta and Charlotte. N.C. so he presumably came from the Piedmont region. He too played a train imitation on **C & N.W. Blues** and his **Mohana Blues** is on a similar theme to **Alcoholic Blues. Yes, Indeed I Do** is a Coon song trifle (" . . . a little lady, she's dark and shady. . ") while **We're Gonna Have a Good Time Tonight** is the **Hot Time Tonight** composed by Theodore Metz in 1896. Bert Bilbro shares quite a lot stylistically with DeFord Bailey, including in **Chester Blues** a 78 disc, which was backed by Bailey's **John Henry**. His five titles make appropriate companions to those by the diminutive black man on a white hillbilly show who they used to bill as "The Harmonica Wizard. "

All notes: Paul Oliver

UPDATES TO ORIGINAL NOTES:

[Bert (or Burt) H. Bilbro (1888–1951) was actually born in Clinton, Mississippi, but spent his youth in Alabama, moved to Georgia and, at some point in the 1920s, settled in Chester, South Carolina, where he was living when he made his recordings, and remained until his death. A lifelong textile-mill worker, he also had a local reputation as a harmonica-player and blackface comedian, and newspaper reports record him displaying both talents at fiddlers' conventions and other events in neighbouring York County. *Tony Russell, 2020*]

The Beale Street Jug Band that partners Jed Davenport on Disc 1, Tracks 12–17, is now known from a photograph to have included Henry L. Castle (12-string gtr) and Charlie McCoy (md), and probably also drew in Joe McCoy and possibly Memphis Minnie for some items

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