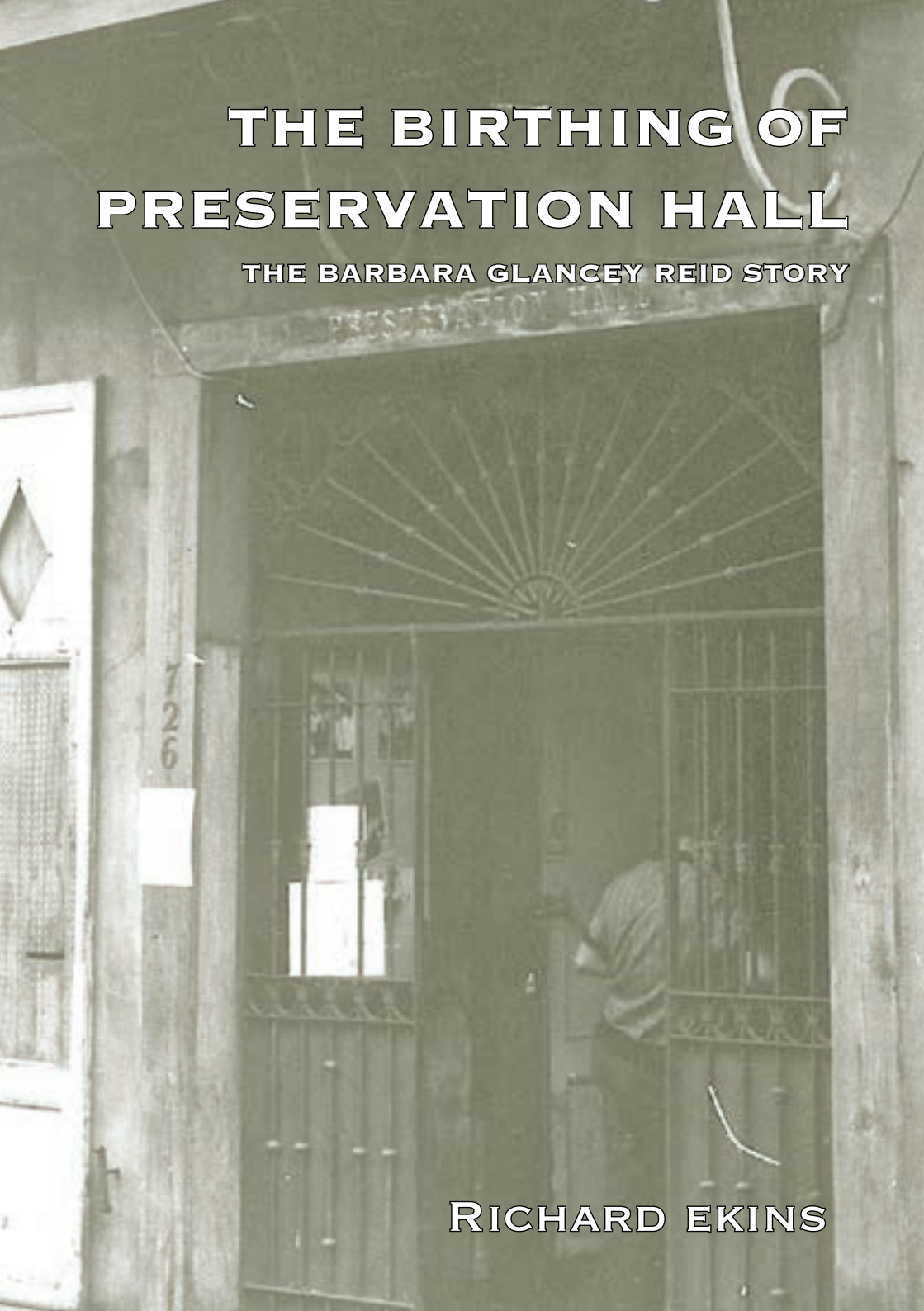


THE BIRTHING OF PRESERVATION HALL

THE BARBARA GLANCEY REID STORY



RICHARD EKINS

The Birthing of Preservation Hall



Barbara Glancey Reid c. 1951
Photograph by William 'Bill' Russell
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

The Birthing of Preservation Hall

The Barbara Glancey Reid Story

Richard Ekins

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For Kelley Todd Reid Edmiston (1957-2021)

and

In Memory of Pete Lay (1947–2025)

longtime editor of *Just Jazz*, whose devotion to jazz
sustained the magazine for over two decades

**THROUGH THE IRON GATE ON ST. PETER'S STREET
LIES ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST RESPECTED MUSIC
VENUES – AND THE SPIRITUAL HOME OF NEW
ORLEANS JAZZ.**

**IN THE 1950S, ART DEALER LARRY BORENSTEIN
FROM MILWAUKEE MANAGED AN ART GALLERY IN THE
FRENCH QUARTER, CALLED ASSOCIATED ARTISTS.
TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS, HE INVITED LOCAL JAZZ
MUSICIANS TO PLAY FOR TIPS. AFTER A TIME, THE
MUSIC STARTED DRAWING MORE ATTENTION THAN
THE ART.**

**IN MAY 1961, BORENSTEIN TURNED MANAGEMENT
OVER TO KEN GRAYSON MILLS AND BARBARA REID,
WHO TURNED IT INTO A MUSIC VENUE AND NAMED IT
'PRESERVATION HALL'.**

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A black and white photograph of a building facade. At the top, there is a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, the word "Introduction" is written in a large, white, serif font. The building has several doors and windows. On the left, there is a white door with a diamond-shaped window. Next to it is a doorway with a window and a cushioned seat. To the right of that is another white door with a diamond-shaped window and a mesh screen. Further right is a dark doorway with a sunburst design above it. A person's arm is visible on the far right. The number "726" is visible on a pillar between the mesh door and the dark doorway.

Introduction

726

Introduction

This book has been written as a companion volume to my *Genesis and Exodus of Preservation Hall: The Ken Grayson Mills Story*. In order to assess adequately the contribution of both Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Glancey Reid¹ to New Orleans jazz revivalism, it is essential to read both books. It is also written as a readers' guide to my Barbara Reid Project published in *Just Jazz* in twenty-one parts between July 2018 and May 2021.²

Mills and Reid first met in 1960 during Mills' first visit to New Orleans. They co-founded Preservation Hall the following year at 726 St Peter Street, the former home of Larry Borenstein's Associated Arts Studio art gallery.

After an intensive four months of activity from early May to mid-September 1961, their landlord Larry Borenstein engineered their eviction from 726 St Peter Street. Mills was furious, but Reid was devastated. For Reid, it was as though her baby had been stolen and given to a Johnny-come-lately couple, the business studies-trained Allan Jaffe and his new bride Sandra, who had just arrived in town. The Jaffes took over the management of Preservation Hall in mid-September 1961.

Reid worked for a while with Mills the following year, at their 'Preservation Hall in Exile' – Icon Hall, later named Perseverance Hall. But when Ken Mills finally left town in October 1962, never to return, so bad was Barbara's hurt, that for a good while she gave up her life-long passion of following New Orleans jazz. For over a decade³ she felt unable to enter Preservation Hall and only rarely went thereafter.

Meanwhile, as the years passed, the contributions of Mills and Reid as co-founders of Preservation Hall were systematically erased by Larry Borenstein and Sandra Jaffe, in particular. Larry's daughter Sacha Borenstein never heard her father mention the name of Ken Grayson Mills. Sandra's fantasy version of the origin story – that the Hall was founded by herself and her husband – was so successful that when she died aged 83, those responsible

for her obituary in The UK *Independent*, for instance, felt able to state no less than three times that she co-founded the Hall. First, was the header in large print which read ‘Sandra Jaffe, co-founder of Preservation Hall, dies.’ Second was the sub-header repeating the lie: ‘The woman who co-founded Preservation Hall in New Orleans has died.’ Then followed the text:

Sandra Jaffe, who co-founded Preservation Hall in New Orleans, introducing countless people to jazz through the intimate French Quarter venue over six decades, has died.

. . . Days after arriving [in New Orleans], they [Allan and Sandra Jaffe] came across a French Quarter gallery where owner Larry Borenstein held informal concerts featuring local artists. Borenstein introduced the couple to some of the jazz musicians, many of whom were elderly, according to the hall’s website.

Ultimately, he offered the Jaffes the space to continue the concerts as a business, marking the founding of Preservation Hall.⁴

Utter nonsense, of course, but hurtful to the relatives of Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Reid, in particular. It was also hurtful nonsense to William Carter, who, while writing his book *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart* (published in 1991⁵) became a great friend and admirer of Allan Jaffe. In that book, Carter, in his characteristically fair-minded way, sought to give full credit to all those who contributed in their different ways to the origin, development, and extraordinary success of Preservation Hall. Sandra Jaffe saw to it that Carter’s book was never sold at Preservation Hall. Husband Allan could do nothing about it. He had died four years earlier in 1987, aged just 51.⁶

The publication of Carter’s book, which made it quite clear that the Jaffes did not found the Hall, must have come as quite a shock to Sandra. For her, it was as though the book did not exist, and she did not want it to exist for anyone else. I had several email conversations with Bill Carter about this. They always ended up with Bill saying how hurt and upset he was by Sandra’s behaviour towards him and his book, and encouraging the

psychoanalyst in me to explain her behaviour. Carter sensed that it was not just a simple matter of her wanting to claim kudos and glory for giving birth to Preservation Hall and its subsequent development. He thought there could be deeper psychological reasons. As Carter wrote to me on August 1, 2019: ‘If anyone could diagnose Sandra Jaffe and her efforts to promote her fairy tale version of the Hall, that would be a gift to jazz history.’⁷

Wary of diagnosis and analysis of a woman I met but barely knew, I will merely make some general points about what I will call ‘birthing’ – birthing, that is, as a social process taking place from the time of the initial ‘twinkle in the eye’, to the conception, to the ‘actual’ birth and its aftermath.

As I detail in Chapter 2, Alden Ashforth had been visiting New Orleans since the early 1950s and knew Barbara well from those days. He wrote in the sleeve notes for the ‘Dancing at Confectioners Hall’ LP, recorded in 1985:

I reflect that in 1981 when, for the last time, I saw Kelley’s mother Barbara Reid (who first conceived of the idea of what became Preservation Hall) she talked at length about a new dream: a real old-fashioned dance hall for relaxed evenings of food, drink, dancing with jazz music, where families with children would feel comfortable. Now, thanks to Barry Martyn and Chris Burke it’s about to happen, at least once, but a couple of years too late for Barbara to enjoy it. Her spirit is with us tonight.⁸

When Alden says that it was Barbara who ‘first conceived of the idea of what became Preservation Hall’, he is referring to Barbara’s often expressed dream, stemming at least from the mid-1950s, that there should be such a place in New Orleans – a live music space and place suitable for all the family. Alongside the wayward bohemian side of Barbara, was the side that sought the stability of a more conventional family life.

When she first came to New Orleans in 1952, Barbara had abandoned her two children with their father in Chicago. When she later married the ‘stable rock’ Bill Edmiston, and Kelley was conceived, there was always tension between her desire for a happy family life and the temptations of a bohemian

life in the French Quarter. Clive Wilson, who knew Barbara well, made the essential point about Barbara and her dream of Preservation Hall:

I began to realize that Barbara had a gift for seeing future trends, and for having the vision that an idea like Preservation Hall could succeed, though someone else would always have to follow it through.⁹

It was Ken Grayson Mills' vision for Preservation Hall that, when combined with Barbara's, led to its conception – initially along not-for-profit lines, with no bar, no drinking, and so on. Just music. Without Mills, it would not have happened. But with Mills it did, albeit for only four months, whereupon as Ken Mills summarizes:

Borenstein despised the socialist overtones of the Hall's operation and had searched relentlessly for a loose thread that might unravel the managerial fabric. The board was oblivious and primed itself and me for a coup d'état. Borenstein simply TOOK Preservation Hall and GAVE it to Allan Jaffe.¹⁰

Exploring the 'birthing of Preservation Hall' line of thought, it may be helpful to distinguish the two major meanings of 'conception'. There is conception as the forming of devising of a plan or idea, as in 'the time between a product's conception and its launch'. And there is conception as the action of conceiving a child or of one being conceived, as in 'an unfertilized egg before conception'.

Following this distinction, we might say that Barbara's 'conceiving' the idea of Preservation Hall in the early-to-mid-1950s, and Ken Grayson Mills later 'conceiving' the idea in 1960 in California, was conceiving as a plan or idea. The actual 'conception', as in conceiving a child, took place when Barbara and Ken met and consummated the idea of Preservation Hall, and it was born and grew between May and mid-September 1961. Barbara now has a new 'baby' to accompany the birth of her daughter Kelley in 1957. Her two abandoned children in Chicago have been replaced. Her new husband Bill fathered Kelley; her new collaborator Mills fathered the new baby. All seems well. There then follows a short period of nurturing the new child –

both the space and the place of Preservation Hall and the musicians, before it is snatched away from her and given to an adoptive mother and father. Mills had written: ‘Borenstein simply TOOK Preservation Hall and GAVE it to Allan Jaffe’, but Allan and Sandra always worked as a couple, and it would have been more accurate to say that the gift was to them both.

We might say, therefore, that Larry Borenstein stole the child as conceived and gave it to Allan and Sandra Jaffe in mid-September 1961. In Sandra’s case, guilt is variously consciously suppressed and unconsciously repressed about the ‘stealing’ of the baby (by Borenstein) that preceded the gift of it to the adoptive parents. Another psychoanalytic approach is to say that Sandra Jaffe ‘disavows’ the adoption. Disavowal (*Verleugnung*), often translated as ‘denial’, denotes a mental act that consists in rejecting the reality of a perception on account of its potentially traumatic associations. So, we might say that Sandra simultaneously ‘knew’ the truth – the reality – and ‘denied’ it. As time passed, she came to deny it ever more persistently, right up to the time of her death at the end of 2021.¹¹

Barbara, on the other hand, had ‘lost’ another baby. She is re-traumatised. The loss, especially when coupled with the deteriorating relationship with her husband Bill, not long after Ken Mills left town for the last time, sent her into another near frenzy of bohemian activity, thereby repeating the pattern of the earlier time in the 1950s when she lost her children having abandoned them in Chicago in 1952. This time she abandons her interest in music more-or-less entirely, to involve herself with such ‘distractions’ as the John F. Kennedy assassination, with voodoo, with *Discordia*, and with the Process Church of the Final Judgement, as I detail in this book.

It is worthwhile to reflect on the age of the Preservation Hall ‘child’ when stolen from her (and Ken). I have often heard it said: ‘Well Barbara and Ken only ran it for four months, what is the big deal about erasing them from the history of Preservation Hall?’ However, if we follow an orthodox phasing of Western childhood into baby (1-3 months), infant (3-12 months), toddler

(1-3 years), pre-school (3-4 years), school (4-5 years) and child (1-12 years), I plump for the theft taking place between the pre-school and school years.

Almost immediately after their gift/adoption of the child, the Jaffes began their taming and routinising (schooling) of it.¹² This was Ken Mills' view. Certainly, that is my view. Preservation Hall was no mere 'infant' when it was taken from them – a word that has been used by Barry Martyn.¹³ Rather it was a pre-school child, if, indeed, not an early-school child.¹⁴

For the Barbara Reid story, I find it helpful to pursue the 'birthing' analogy further, hence the book's title – 'The Birthing of Preservation Hall'. Those parts of my Barbara Reid Project relating to the birthing of Preservation Hall may be seen to divide naturally, as follows: 1. Pre-birthing – (a) In Chicago and (b) In New Orleans; 2. Birthing – the main articles on Preservation Hall; 3. Post-Preservation Hall (where Barbara goes off the rails a bit, following the loss of her 'baby'); and 4. Re-birthing – where Barbara gets back on the rails, returns to the music, encourages the youngsters. This section ends with her memorial meeting in Preservation Hall.

But what of her child conceived in New Orleans, the child that she neither abandoned nor was snatched from her? What of Kelley Reid Edmiston?

Not surprisingly, in view of all the losses Barbara had experienced, mother and daughter developed an extraordinarily close relationship, as much of this book demonstrates. Most importantly, Kelley took up the mantle of the wrong she felt her mother had suffered – the theft of Preservation Hall and the erasure of Barbara's contribution as founder. From the time I met Kelley until her untimely death – just as I had finished the project – Kelley badgered and cajoled me to complete what this book sets forth.

An event was held in Preservation Hall on the day before the interment of Kelley's ashes in St. Louis Cemetery No. 3, New Orleans. Dodie Smith-Simmons was called upon to make a memorial statement for Kelley in the context of her mother and Preservation Hall's history. Dodie had worked at the Hall for many years, from the mid-1960s onwards, some four years after

Mills and Reid had been evicted. I could barely believe my ears when in the melange of references to Barbara Reid, Larry Borenstein, Bill Russell, Allan and Sandra Jaffe, Associated Artists Studio, and the origins of Preservation Hall, there was STILL no mention of Barbara Reid as the Hall's co-founder. No mention, that is, in a five-minute video, now online headed 'Dodie Smith-Simmons speaks at Kelley Edmiston's memorial about her mom, Barbara Reid.'¹⁵ Poor Kelley would be turning in her grave.

As Sigmund Freud put it of psychoanalysis, in his B.B.C. recording broadcast of December 7, 1938, made some nine months before his death: 'Resistance was strong and unrelenting . . . but the struggle is not yet over.' Indeed, it is not.

NOTES

1. This was her preferred name while running Preservation Hall. She variously called herself Barbara Glancey Reid, Barbara Reid, Barbara Edmiston, and Barbara Reid Edmiston. Her first husband was Bill Reid and her second husband Bill Edmiston. Her birth name was Barbara Glancey Williams.

2. Richard Ekins, *The Barbara Reid Project – The Contribution of Barbara Glancey Reid Edmiston to New Orleans Jazz Revivalism*,

<http://www.lacroixrecords.com/barbara%20reid.html>.

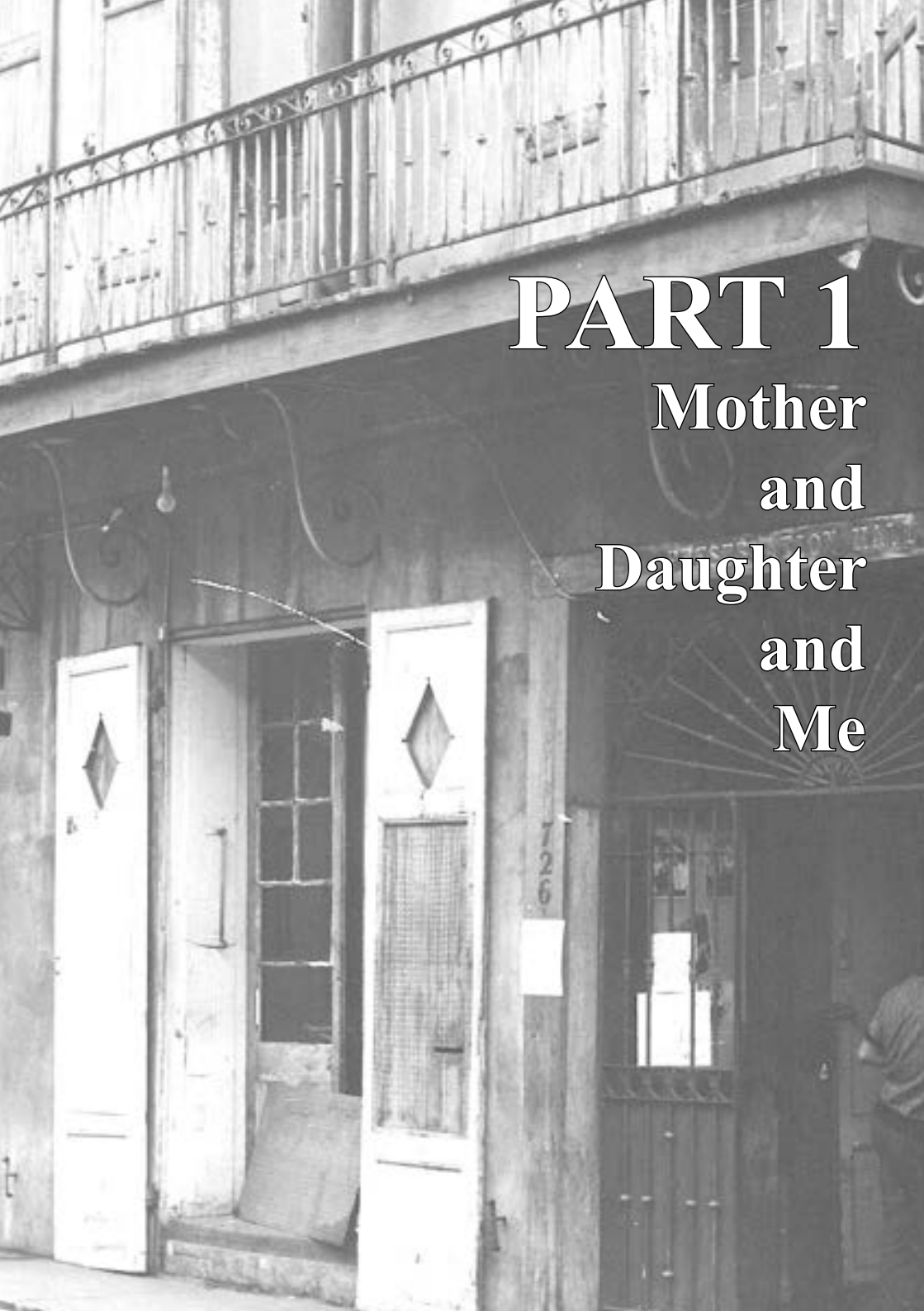
In this book, I have altered considerably the order of publication of the previously published articles to give greater coherence to the project. However, to maintain the integrity of the original project, all articles are reproduced as published, apart from the occasional correction of typographical or other errors.

3. As late as August 1974, Paige VanVorst recalls that Barbara was 'adamant about not going there'. He was surprised when she agreed to go there with Bill Russell for a photoshoot, late one evening that August when no event was on. The photoshoot was to celebrate her recordings of Lee Collins made in Chicago in the early 1950s and released by Clive Wilson and Paige VanVorst on *New Orleans Records*, NOR 7203, in 1974. Email, Paige VanVorst to Richard Ekins, June 13, 2023. Clive Wilson wrongly dates this photoshoot as 1978. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life: A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2019, p. 150.

4. Via AP News Wire [Rebecca Santana], ‘Sandra Jaffe, co-founder of Preservation Hall, dies’, *Independent*, December 29, 2021, accessed June 25, 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/new-orleans-facebook-mexico-city-philadelphia-children-b1984036.html>. For an even more extraordinary erasure of Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Glancey Reid see, for instance, Shira Hanau, ‘Sandra Jaffe, New Orleans’ Celebrated Preservation Hall jazz club owner, dies at 83’, *The Times of Israel*, January 6, 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/sandra-jaffe-new-orleans-celebrated-preservation-hall-jazz-club-owner-dies-at-83/>. There are countless such examples.
5. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1991.
6. Dutch Uithoven reports that ‘Bill [Carter] told me that he visited Allan before he passed away and Allan was fine with the book [as it was progressing then].’ Facebook comment on Bill Carter, July 4, 2023, accessed July 6, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/richard.ekinslordrichard>.
7. The rest of this chapter develops arguments I introduced with reference to Ken Grayson Mills, in the last few pages of Richard Ekins, *The Genesis and Exodus of Preservation Hall: The Ken Grayson Mills Story*, La Croix Publications, London, 2024, pp. 385-388. Here, my focus is on Barbara Reid.
8. Alden Ashforth, Sleeve Notes, ‘Dancing at Confectioners Hall’, GHB-205, vinyl LP.
9. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life: A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*, Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 2019, p. 137.
10. Ken Mills, Booklet Notes, ‘Opening Night at Preservation Hall’, p. 6.
11. Rich Marvin, a trained counsellor, and an expert on aspects of the New Orleans scene, adds ‘My guess is because Sandra helped breathe life into Preservation Hall, she felt a maternal instinct to protect it like one of her kids. She felt she could control the story and Bill’s book.’ Facebook comment on ‘Bill Carter’, July 4, 2023, accessed July 6, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/richard.ekinslordrichard>.
12. Sandra Jaffe’s discouraging Peter Bocage from playing violin at the Hall is a particularly sad example of this.
13. Barry Martyn, Booklet Notes, ‘Opening Night at Preservation Hall – Emile Barnes’ Louisiana Joymakers’, American Music, AMCD-86, p. 3.

14. I appreciate that if you take the months literally then the child IS an infant. However, I am, of course, referring to the development of the Hall analogously. As, for instance, in the case of a cat where the human equivalent of a 4 month old kitten is 6 years.

15. Posted by Andrea Duran Freitas, March 3, 2022, accessed June 13, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Zpuhc9wIp3g&t=43s&fbclid=IwAR0jy9ROI7f6YwOhdDvaRaYcQZ9etNWF-tXTl0OWOswX7pPAbZGvXbuk-cw>.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The upper part shows a balcony with a decorative metal railing. Below the balcony, there are several doors. On the left, a white door is open, revealing a window with a diamond-shaped decorative element. In the center, another white door is open, showing a window with a diamond-shaped decorative element and a mesh screen. To the right of this door, the number '726' is visible on the wall. Further right, there is a dark, possibly wooden, door with a sunburst design above it. The overall scene is somewhat aged and weathered.

PART 1
Mother
and
Daughter
and
Me

PART 1

Mother and Daughter and Me

This book could not have been written had it not been for Barbara Reid's daughter Kelley Edmiston, who took on the task of preserving her mother's collection of material on New Orleans jazz. This had been amassed by Barbara in Chicago in the early 1950s, and in New Orleans from the mid-1950s to her death in 1983.

Moreover, it would not have been written had not Kelley been driven to right the wrong of her mother's erasure as co-founder of Preservation Hall. She called on me to do what I could to rectify that wrong.

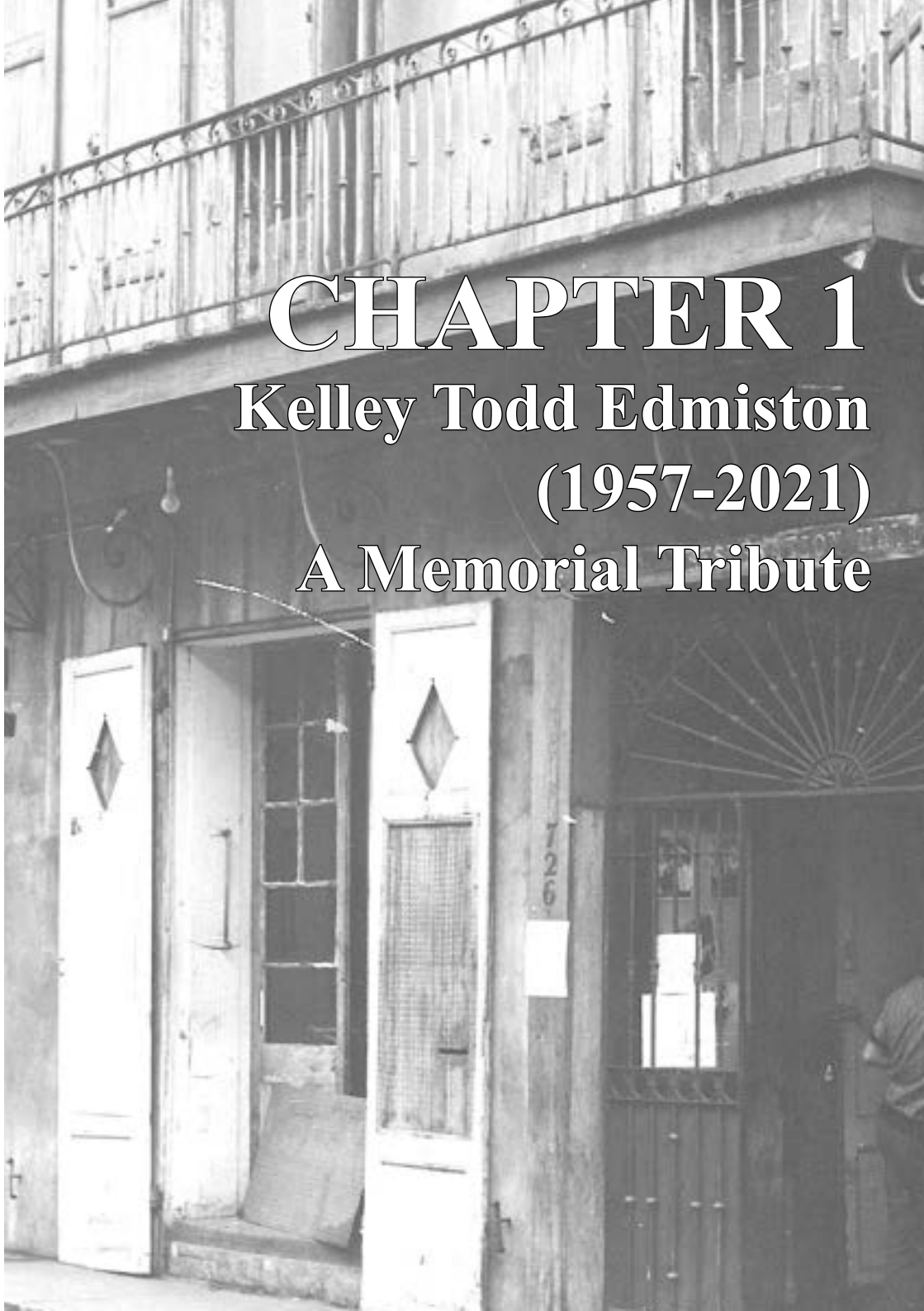
Kelley died in a tragic accident just as we had completed our project in January 2021. There is no better way of summarising the whole project and illustrating the way we worked together than to begin this book where, in a sense, it ended, with my memorial tribute to Kelley as published in *Just Jazz*, April 2021.

Noel Rockmore was the artist commissioned by Larry Borenstein to complete his *Preservation Hall Portraits*.¹ The Prelude to the Memorial Tribute to Kelley, written by Rich Marvin of the Noel Rockmore Community, sets the scene perfectly.

Chapter 1 is followed by my re-construction, with Kelley, of her mother's memorial event at Preservation Hall in 1983, which was the last article we worked on together, as published in *Just Jazz*, April 2021 (Chapter 2).

NOTE

1. Noel Rockmore, paintings, text by Bill Russell and Larry Borenstein, *Preservation Hall Portraits*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1968.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. At the top, there is a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, the text 'CHAPTER 1' is written in a large, white, serif font. Underneath that, 'Kelley Todd Edmiston' is written in a smaller, white, serif font, followed by '(1957-2021)' in the same font. At the bottom, 'A Memorial Tribute' is written in a white, serif font. The background shows a doorway with a white door on the left and a window with a white frame on the right. The door has a diamond-shaped window. The window has a grid pattern. To the right of the window, the number '726' is visible on the wall. A person's arm is visible on the far right side of the image.

CHAPTER 1
Kelley Todd Edmiston
(1957-2021)
A Memorial Tribute

Chapter 1

Kelley Todd Edmiston¹ (1957-2021)

A Memorial Tribute²

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*

Thank you so much for trying to right a wrong.

Andrea Duran Freitas, friend of Kelley Edmiston
to Richard Ekins, January 10, 2021

*Kudos to you for fulfilling Kelley's dream . . . it is not often
that one gets to realize their dreams in their lifetime, and
you did that for Kelley. We all thank you.*

Rich Marvin, the Noel Rockmore Community³
to Richard Ekins, January 12, 2021



Figure 1.1 Barbara Reid and Kelley Edmiston, 1981
Artwork by Noel Rockmore
Photograph courtesy of Tee Marvin

A Prelude by Rich Marvin

We first met Kelley Edmiston over the phone when she was in England and Sacha⁴ connected us. Tee says:

She was so passionately outspoken on all things French Quarter and a fearless traveler, as well as hopeful and confident about all of her adventures. She was working on getting back to New Orleans and we would talk for hours on end about her excitement of returning and helping us on the Noel Rockmore Project.⁵

Kelley was what Tee and I refer to as one of the French Quarter Kids who were the offspring of the Quarterites that lived in the quarter and helped bring it to life through jazz music. This includes the Borenstein kids, the Jaffe kids, the Lambert kids, the Nami kids, Rex Rose, Beryl Smith and Kelley Edmiston, daughter of Barbara Reid and Bill Edmiston.

The French Quarter kids all had an upbringing in that wild and crazy locale, that to them was their protective little village. It included characters like Noel Rockmore, Johnny Donnels, Mike Stark, Bill Russell, the Duck Lady, the Cross Lady, the Jazz Musicians, French Quarter Merchants, Bourbon Street performers and it goes on and on. Kelley fit right in and was part of the ‘French Quarter Kids’ and she was fiercely loyal to her mother and her mother’s legacy.

We discovered this when she returned to the French Quarter in the midst of the Noel Rockmore Project and we met her in person. This was also when we discovered how important Sacha was as a friend to Kelley and a conduit to all Quarterites of old in the French Quarter, just like her dad, Larry Borenstein.

Kelley would come to our events always with her copy of William Carter’s *Preservation Hall* book⁶ held close to her chest. This book was the only proof that she had that her mom had been instrumental in the founding of the revival of jazz returning to the French Quarter.

That was until she met Richard Ekins, an author and jazz enthusiast, who

took on Kelley's project. By now Kelley had returned to England – Scotland and with Kelley's relentless encouragement, Richard crafted a beautiful 20 article project: 'The Barbara Reid Project - The Contribution of Barbara Glancey Reid Edmiston to New Orleans Jazz Revivalism by Richard Ekins'.⁷

Thanks to Richard, Kelley's burning life passion of immortalizing her mother's contribution to jazz has been beautifully preserved forever in Kelley's lifetime. It was really all she ever wanted.

How poetic that it was through Sacha and Richard that we learned of Kelley's tragic passing.



**Figure 1.2 Kid Thomas, Creole George Guesnon, Bill Russell,
Barbara Reid Edmiston, and Kelley Edmiston
at Mr. Larry's Gallery, 1958
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston**



Figure 1.3 Kelley Todd Edmiston and Sacha Borensten Clay, 1982
Photograph by Don Perry

A Tribute by Richard Ekins

Introduction

Shortly after hearing of Kelley Edmiston's death, I posted the following rather stark notice, both on my own Facebook wall and on Per Oldaeus's private group Facebook site: New Orleans Music – For All Genres from that City.

As many of you will now know, Kelley Edmiston, daughter of Barbara Reid and Bill Edmiston, tragically died in an accident at her home in Paisley, Scotland, this past Tuesday morning. She fell down the concrete stairs in the block of flats where she lived. A concerned near-neighbour, Graham Shaw, alerted Facebook users to a local newspaper report of her death seeking family contacts. Kelley's lifelong friend Sacha Borenstein Clay is in contact with her family. Like all who knew her, I am in a state of shock at the suddenness of this. Kelley was much loved by so many.⁸

Kelley was, indeed, much loved by so many. The preliminary Facebook notices of her death prefaced an outpouring of Facebook comment within the international community of New Orleans jazz and more widely. Kelley had touched so many and some very movingly and deeply. At the same time, for the next days, I was receiving phone calls and emails about Kelley from many others who did not use social media.

I first met Kelley at the October 2008 *Festival New Orleans* event held at the 02 Greenwich, London. I had gone there specifically to meet Robert Greenwood as part of my Dan Pawson research project⁹ and was intending to spend as much one-to-one research time with Robert as he could make available. Kelley would have none of it.

She heard from her network that I was at the Festival. She located me and that was the beginning of a research relationship that was to last over thirteen years. I was impressed immediately by her ebullience, her passion, and her generosity.

Regarding the latter, she had just returned from one of her many visits to the National Jazz Archive, Loughton, Essex,¹⁰ depositing selections of the

very large collection of materials on New Orleans jazz that she had inherited from her mother, Barbara Reid Edmiston. Nevertheless, as was her wont, she was carrying with her a fascinating additional small collection of rare New Orleans jazz memorabilia. She came forth bearing gifts of which I was the happy recipient. I was hooked.

I did not meet with her in person very frequently and when I did the occasions were often marked with a turbulence that was something of a shock to my British reserve.

She created a storm, for instance, when we first met in New Orleans.

I mentioned to her that a defective telephone in my hotel room had prevented me phoning Tom Stagg and other well-known figures living in New Orleans. All hell broke loose at the hotel reception when she confronted Reception about my difficulties. The phone was soon fixed.

Years later, when I was beginning to undertake serious work on her mother, Kelley decided that I was an appropriate person to receive one of her 'magic sticks', as we came to call the single USB memory stick she gave me. We met in central London with her friend, Adele Tinman. Having been rebuffed by the British Library in her attempts to show me the contents of her magic stick on one of their computers, I took her to a local Camden library. By the sheer force of her personality, a hapless assistant broke all the rules of membership and silence and set us up with one of their computers.

I was soon being regaled with Kelley's views of the material that she saw as particularly important. I could see, immediately, that there were at least five articles worth of subject matter, specifically on New Orleans jazz revivalism. As it turned out that five became twenty.

Kelley also spoke of valuable letters that Bill Russell had written to her mother from Chicago to New Orleans in the early 1950s that were not on the USB drive.

Collaborating with Kelley

The Russell-Reid Letters

From a chronological point of view, it was important that I wrote about these letters in my first articles.

I learned later that Kelley had sold the originals of these letters to the Historic New Orleans Collection in the French Quarter, New Orleans. They were a valuable addition to the William Russell Collection housed in the Williams Research Center, part of the Historic New Orleans Collection.¹¹ Kelley was very disappointed that this Collection would not buy any other part of her mother's material.

Eventually, the bulk of the Barbara Reid material was bought by the University of North Carolina and housed as part of the Edmiston Family Collection.¹² Further material was either loaned or gifted to the UK National Jazz Archive. Kelley also deposited a small collection of jazz material with the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University.¹³

Of the specialist non-jazz collection, Kelley sold extensive material relating to her mother's involvement with Jim Garrison's investigations into the assassination of John F. Kennedy to a French Quarter bookshop. Subsequently, this material was bought by an unknown buyer.¹⁴

The Russell-Reid letters that I worked from had been put on what turned out to be a defective and unusable CD-ROM deposited with the UK National Jazz Archive. Thanks to the work of director David Nathan and his team of technicians, I eventually had all the letters in the collection in a format I could work from.

Styles of Thinking, Research, Writing and Living

I have long found it useful to distinguish three main styles of thinking, research, writing and living, namely, the 'analytic-scholarly', the 'haphazard-scatter gun', and the 'intuitive-mystic'.¹⁵

My collaboration with Kelley worked on the principle that mostly I provided the analytic-scholarly components of our research and she provided the other two components.

Her haphazard-scatter gun approach was not only illustrated by the scattered nature of her deposits of her mother's material in different libraries. She also dispersed it among different individuals. Sammy Rimington's interest and expertise in magic meant that he was given a copy of Barbara's unpublished typescript on voodoo, for instance.

Always, it was Kelley's hope that the recipients of her dispersals would take up her crusade to publicise her mother's contributions.

More significantly, it was her thoughts, ideas and associations that were so scattered. She did, of course, have one major focus – her mother – but that apart, it was almost impossible to keep her focussed on anything for any but the shortest of times. This worked rather well for our collaboration: just as soon as I had done what I could to expand and/or verify what I could for the particular focus I had at the time, I could then build upon her more scattered thoughts to provide the focus for future articles. On the 'intuitive-mystic', she could be at the most 'far out' end of that style. On many occasions, she would summon up the spirit of her mother for guidance, insight and/or revived memories. It was remarkable how frequently this summoning led to new verifiable discoveries.

Kelley was not keen on writing. She would respond in brief to my thousands of questions occasionally in a Facebook message or a short email. But mostly she preferred very long telephone conversations. Just as her mother's forte was facilitating and networking, so was Kelley's. Time and time again I would be instructed, nay ordered, to telephone this or that person to verify or expand on some line of research I was developing from our conversations and her magic stick.

Although we shared many of the same contacts within the international world of New Orleans music, her contacts were very much wider than mine,

particularly among the non-musicians of the city. Mostly, when I contacted one of her recommendations, they corresponded with me as extensively as I wished.

Kelley's approach to archiving her mother's collection also followed the 'haphazard-scatter gun' approach. Folders were mostly given appropriate names to distinguish them, but there was very little detailed classification, far less any systematic dating and naming of places, spaces, events, and musicians.¹⁶ This kind of work had to be carried out by me, with the help of an array of relevant informants, enthusiasts, and experts.¹⁷

Kelley's forte, however, was putting on her magic stick the vast bulk of the material relevant to Barbara's time in New Orleans. Occasionally, Kelley would add to it, as she did with the valuable photographs of Lyle Bongé,¹⁸ but, in the main, it was Barbara who did the collecting and Kelley who archived it in the sense of either depositing it in a library or copying it on to her magic stick.

The Final Collaboration

Our final collaboration was on the article that follows this tribute to Kelley Edmiston, namely our reconstruction of the Memorial/Celebration held at Preservation Hall for her mother in early 1983. This was another example of Kelley adding material to her mother's collection.

A brief synopsis of how we came to complete this article provides an apt final illustration of our method of collaboration.

I had noticed that across two different large separate files on the magic stick were two sets of photographs that were possibly taken at the same event. The first set appeared in various files in a folder labelled '791-Preservation Hall'; the second set appeared in files in a folder labelled 'Sal Camacho'. Kelley thought that that both sets were taken at her mother's Memorial Party held at Preservation Hall. While I recognised many of the musicians and others in the two sets of photographs, there were many people, including some of

the musicians, that I did not recognise. Eventually – but only with the help of Sacha Borenstein – did I realise that Kelley had merged photographs from two different events into two different folders.

Separating out the photographs into the two different events involved such things as identifying who was wearing what on the two different occasions, who was dead or alive on the date of the two occasions, and so on. I wanted to use the identification of all the relevant people in the photographs to illustrate Barbara's Memorial Party and this involved drawing upon the knowledge of many of my informants within the present-day international social worlds of New Orleans music. It took a very long time.

Finally, Salvador Camacho was able to confirm that he did, indeed, take all the photographs I used in the Memorial article, but even he was unable to confirm the date of the occasion. He kindly gave his permission to use the photographs. Little did we realise that the next time he would be writing about Kelley was on his hearing of her death. His words make a fitting penultimate section to this tribute to Kelley:

I think the word is out that my dear friend of 50+ years, Kelley Edmiston died from a fall on a concrete staircase at the row house in Glasgow [Paisley], Scotland where she had been living and working as a tour guide for a few years, as she had done in New Orleans for many years where she was born.¹⁹ Her mother, Barbara Reid, was one of the founders of Preservation Hall and we spent many years together hanging out with all the musicians and going to private parties with lots of music jams. I worked with Kelley photographing many of them for historical projects about her mother and some of her favorite musicians and jazz historians. I will miss her greatly and am heartbroken. Bless her soul wherever she may be. Please pass this on so friends may know of her passing. Salvador Camacho. Thanks.²⁰

As I write, arrangements are being made for Kelley's homecoming back to New Orleans from Scotland.²¹

I would like to think that in due time there would be a memorial party held for her in Preservation Hall. Anniversary dates were very important to Kelley.

In a previous note, I wrote:

Kelley thanks Pete Lay for publishing this article in January, a special month for the Reid family; Barbara Reid was born on January 5, 1928²² and died January 15, 1983. Sarah, her daughter, and Kelley's half-sister, was born on January 15.²³

The attentive reader will have noted that Kelley died on the anniversary of her mother's birth: January 5th.

I never did manage to identify the precise date of Barbara's Memorial Party held on an afternoon in 1983, probably in March. It would be marvellous if the precise date could be confirmed by the current management of Preservation Hall and a Memorial Party held for Kelley on that same day of the month.

Barbara and Kelley would have appreciated that. As would I.²⁴

NOTES

1. December 27, 1957 – January 5, 2021. Kelley variously used the names Kelley Edmiston, Kelley Todd Edmiston, and Kelley Reid Edmiston. Kelley Todd Edmiston was her preferred name when appearing in films.
2. I thank Andrea Duran Freitas, Rich and Tee Marvin, Salvador Camancho, Sacha Borenstein Clay, and Matthew Ekins for their contributions to this memorial tribute.
3. Accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/Noel-Rockmore-Community-192250469533/>.
4. Sacha Borenstein Clay, daughter of Larry Borenstein and lifelong friend of Kelley Edmiston.
5. Shirley, Rich and Tee Marvin, *Noel Rockmore and Shirley Marvin: Our Journey to the Discovery of Rockmore*, 2nd ed., Golden Era of the French Quarter Foundation.
6. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1991.
7. The 20 articles include this one and the forthcoming: 'Revisiting Barbara Reid, William "Bill" Russell and Mahalia Jackson in Chicago and New Orleans: An Extended Footnote' which was published in *Just Jazz*, May 2021.

8. January 7, 2021.

9. <http://www.lacroixrecords.com/res.html>.

10. Accessed June 29, 2023, <https://nationaljazzarchive.org.uk/>.

11. Accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.hnoc.org/>. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, Mark Burford in his excellent recent work on Mahalia Jackson and Bill Russell did not have access to the Russell-Reid letters when he was researching the William Russell collection. As a result, he makes significant errors regarding the dating and early development of the relationship between Russell and Jackson and Russell's intention to write a book about Jackson. The earlier (possibly original) intention was for Russell and Reid to write this book together. Burford misses this. Mark Burford, 'Gospel According to Bill Russell', Chapter 8, in his *Mahalia Jackson and the Black Gospel Field*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2019, pp. 243-278; Mark Burford, ed., *The Mahalia Jackson Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2020.

12. Edmiston Family Collection on New Orleans, 1910s-2019, accessed July 2, 2023, <https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/05750/>.

13. Accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/jazz>.

14. Richard Ekins, 'Barbara Reid in New Orleans: Further Contributions and Legacy, 1964-1983, Parts 1-3', *Just Jazz*, Nos. 272-274, December 2020 - February 2021.

15. To illustrate the styles: most of my jazz writings are in the 'analytic-scholarly' style. I view Brian Harvey, *The Hottest Trumpet: The Kid Howard Story*, Jazzology, New Orleans, 2007, as illustrating the 'haphazard-scatter gun' approach. Most of Ken Grayson Mills' jazz writings may be seen in terms of the 'intuitive mystic'. Inevitably, much writing variously combines the styles.

16. Occasionally, Kelley would add wrong dates to documents.

17. I carefully sought to acknowledge the details of this help throughout the Barbara Reid Project and its closely related Ken Grayson Mills Project. This support came from scores – even hundreds – of informants and it would be invidious here to single out more than the four people who were most engaged with the two projects: Fred Eatherton (UK), David Wyckoff (USA), Robert Greenwood (UK), and Per Oldaeus (Sweden).

18. E.g., Richard Ekins, 'Barbara Reid, Billie and DeDe Pierce and a "Beatnik Film" – The Photographs of Lyle Bongé', *Just Jazz*, No. 251, March 2018, pp. 22-26.

19. Kelley plays herself as a tour guide in the film *American Interior*. See, 'Kelley

Todd Edmiston – Filmography – *American Interior* (2014)’, accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm6380225/>. In his book, Gruff Rhys gives an excellent account of how he met Kelley in the St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, and how Kelley led him to ‘the lost grave of John Evans’ where Evans was buried in 1799. Rhys’s description of Kelley and her use of Voodoo resonate perfectly with my own experiences with Kelley. Gruff Rhys, *American Interior*, Penguin, Random House, UK, 2015, pp. 233-279 at pp. 259 and 263-268. Nick Telfer has edited a video of Kelley as featured in this film: ‘Kelley Edmiston Memorial’, accessed June 29, 2023, <https://vimeo.com/506030822>.

20. Salvador Camacho, Facebook post, January 13, 2021, accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/salvador.camacho.90038>. The weblink will only work if the reader uses Facebook.

21. ‘Help Bring Kelley Home’, organised by Lici Beveridge, January 2021, gofundme.com. ‘Kelley Edmiston was a champion for the arts in New Orleans, whether theater, music or visual. We will always remember her bright smile and engaging personality as well as all she did to promote the best in her city. . . . We are trying to raise money to bring Kelley home so she can be at rest among the people who loved her in the city she loved . . . we need help to facilitate her homecoming.’

22. On numerous occasions Kelley wrote and said that her mother’s birthday was January 5th, 1928. It was, in fact, January 5th, 1925.

23. See: Richard Ekins, ‘Barbara Reid as Bill Russell’s Protégée in Chicago 1950-1952 – On Natty Dominique, Sidney Bechet, Jimmy Yancey and Lee Collins’, *Just Jazz*, No. 249, January 2019, pp. 24-29 at p. 24.

24. I never did ascertain the precise date. However, as stated in the Introduction above, a memorial event for Kelley was organised by Sacha Borenstein-Clay and held in Preservation Hall on March 2, 2022.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. At the top, there is a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, the text 'CHAPTER 2' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font. Underneath the chapter title, the author's name 'Barbara Reid Edmiston' and the title 'A Memorial Party at Preservation Hall, 1983' are also overlaid in a white, serif font. The building features several doors: a white door on the left with a diamond-shaped window, a central doorway with a window and a cushion on the step, and a dark door on the right with a sunburst design above it. The address number '726' is visible on the wall between the central and right doors.

CHAPTER 2

Barbara Reid Edmiston

A Memorial Party at
Preservation Hall, 1983

Chapter 2

Barbara Reid Edmiston

A Memorial Party at Preservation Hall, 1983¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*

Yes, Barbara was a dear friend of mine. She cherished and loved me for being a young man being interested in wanting to play old style Traditional New Orleans Jazz.

Greg Stafford to Richard Ekins, June 2020



Figure 2.1 Barbara Reid, 1982, at a Sue Hall party, Royal St., New Orleans
All photographs in this chapter are by Sal Camacho

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

In his book *Preservation Hall*, William Carter writes, ‘When Barbara passed away in 1983, Jaffe opened the Hall one afternoon so that family and friends could gather there in her memory.’²

To my knowledge, this is all that has ever been written on the subject.

The purpose of this article is to reconstruct the happenings of that afternoon with reference to the circumstances that preceded it and to the photographs taken at the memorial event by photographer and cameraman, Sal Camacho.

Reconciliation

Some weeks after Barbara died, Bill Edmiston³ received an invitation from Allan Jaffe to use Preservation Hall as the venue for a private celebration for Barbara. He was both very surprised and very delighted. The surprise came from the long period of rancour that followed Barbara’s eviction from Preservation Hall when Allan and Sandra Jaffe took over the management of the Hall in September 1961; the delight came from Edmiston’s sure knowledge that Barbara would have so appreciated Allan Jaffe’s gesture, as did Bill.

Three main interrelated developments led to the memorial event in Preservation Hall and the form it took, as documented by the available photographs of the occasion.

In the first place, after a long period of bitterness, Barbara slowly came to terms with her removal from the Hall as the 1970s progressed. Previous parts of my *Just Jazz* Barbara Reid Project detailed Barbara’s various activities in New Orleans from the end of 1964 to her death in 1983.⁴

We saw how she slowly re-engaged with the jazz scene from the early 1970s onwards. At the same time, her resentment and sadness at the Preservation Hall debacle subsided, principally because of her appreciation that the musicians were working and many of them were receiving international recognition beyond all expectations in the early 1960s. She came to accept

that this would have been impossible under her own aegis.

A key marker of this acceptance was her return to Preservation Hall on an occasion in 1974. While there, she was photographed with Bill Russell, herself holding the front cover of the New Orleans Records release of recordings she had made of Lee Collins at the Victory Club and at the Gaffers Lounge in Chicago in 1951.⁵ As Clive Wilson recalled the event:

On occasion, she began visiting Preservation Hall again to sit with the tourists on the cushions against the wall near the band, loving every minute of it, chatting with Bill Russell as old friends, and even dancing one time with Allan Jaffe in the carriageway. It was reconciliation. The vision that Preservation Hall would succeed was hers . . . Under Allan and Sandra Jaffe's subsequent management her dream became a reality.⁶

And then, finally, shortly before Larry Borenstein's death in January 1981, there was a final coming together of Allan Jaffe, Larry Borenstein and Barbara. They hugged each other and 'made up' over their various antagonistic histories concerning the origin and development of Preservation Hall.⁷ For Allan Jaffe, I suspect, this was not difficult. As Carter had put it, referring to the period in 1961 when hostilities were at their greatest:

Out of all this bickering, back-biting and gossip-mongering, the person who has the highest tolerance seems to be Allan Jaffe. He seems to bear no malice to anyone involved.⁸

We may suppose that Larry Borenstein's reconciliation was more ambivalent. There had been a much-reported incident at the start of the Bourbon House funeral parade in 1964⁹ when, in the carriageway at Preservation Hall, Barbara was settling herself as she lay in the Bourbon House R.I.P. coffin. Borenstein seized the coffin lid and made great play of nailing it down on top of the supine Barbara. A wish, perhaps. But there were competing trends in Borenstein's personality – many speak of his beneficence – and we have those tendencies to thank for his final accord with Barbara, such as it may have been.¹⁰

There is further evidence of Barbara's thoughts and feelings about Preservation Hall rooted in the early 1980s. Characteristically, she wanted to take her vision of Preservation Hall further and add to it food, drink, and dancing while emphasising, as she always did, the family-friendly nature of her proposed enterprise. The occasion was a session that Barry Martyn organised at the Confectioners Hall, 2001 Burgundy Street on May 3, 1985. Appropriately, when the record release came out on LP, it was called 'Dancing at Confectioners Hall'. In the introductory first paragraph of his sleeve note, Alden Ashforth's thoughts turn to Barbara and he writes:

I reflect that in 1981 when, for the last time, I saw Kelley's mother Barbara Reid (who first conceived of the idea of what became Preservation Hall) she talked at length about a new dream: a real old-fashioned dance hall for relaxed evenings of food, drink, dancing with jazz music, where families with children would feel comfortable. Now, thanks to Barry Martyn and Chris Burke it's about to happen, at least once, but a couple of years too late for Barbara to enjoy it. Her spirit is with us tonight.

Jam Sessions

In addition to this trajectory of reconciliation, there was a second tributary that preceded the memorial event. Leading into the mid-1970s, Barbara had been holding regular parties at which many New Orleans musicians played. In retrospect, we can see that that this was the period in which second wave New Orleans jazz revivalism was coming to an end and was giving birth to the phase I term 'post-revivalism'.¹¹ For some, it was these parties that were the most memorable thing about Barbara Reid. The English banjo player Ron Simpson, who came to live in New Orleans after a period in Canada and who played regularly with Chris Burke for many years in New Orleans, told me:

The first time I came to New Orleans was in 1963. I did meet Barbara briefly. She had an art gallery across the street from Preservation Hall. She did mention some issues she had with Jaffe. As it was so long ago, I don't remember the details. The second time I came to Nola in 1968, I don't remember talking to her then.

In 1972, my wife and I came to live in Nola. We lived in the French Quarter for 12 years. I particularly remember going to parties at her house on I think it was St. Philip close to Chartres St.¹² We used to have good jam sessions. I remember Nelson and Andrew Morgan being there. Unfortunately, he died not long after.¹³

We know from photographs and memories of the parties that they were held very regularly for somewhere between a year and two years. The jam sessions featured the full range of revivalist musicians resident in and visiting New Orleans. There were the old-timers such as Louis Nelson and ‘Father’ Al Lewis; the Europeans, who had been living in New Orleans since the sixties, such as Lars Edegran and Orange Kellin; and the new generation of African American New Orleanians who had returned to old-style traditional jazz, like Greg Stafford and Leroy Jones. Barbara Reid not only had her finger on the pulse of these lattermost new developments in New Orleans music, but she was actively facilitating and encouraging them at these jam sessions.

Sal Camacho

The documentation of the event took the form it did because of her friendship with the cameraman and photographer, Sal Camacho. Following Barbara’s death, Camacho would be a cameraman on many of the films particularly associated with New Orleans and the French Quarter, including *Storyville* (1992), *The Big Easy* (1996) and *When the Levees Broke* (2006).

As his friendship with Barbara developed in the mid to late 1970s, Sal would occasionally accompany Barbara on trips when she was wanting to document aspects of New Orleans.

More notably, the Sal Camacho files in the Edmiston Family collection include photographs he took in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 and No. 2; and, also, a series on the Fleming Plantation Lafitte Cemetery at night. These photographs, all dated 1978 in the files, were taken when Sal was accompanying Kelley Edmiston.

The photographs taken by Camacho at the gathering¹⁴ include family

members closest to Barbara: husband Bill Edmiston and daughter Kelley Edmiston; elder statesmen of New Orleans Music, Bill Russell; celebrated French Quarter literary bohemian, Gypsy Lou Webb; and a range of musician friends and others wanting to pay their respects. The two photographs that I include of Louis Nelson provide the continuity between a favoured photograph of Barbara taken at one of Sue Hall's parties the previous year and Nelson and Hall's presence at the memorial itself, both taken by Sal Camacho.

As befitted the event, the musicians and friends we see pictured here successfully illustrate Barbara's enthusiasm to facilitate the coming together of a range of developments in old-style traditional New Orleans jazz. There is the international element: Chris Burke and Maggie Kinson, originally from Nottingham, England, who settled for many years in New Orleans. Similarly, there is Trevor Richards, originally from England, who would commute regularly for decades between Germany and New Orleans. Brian O'Connell, from Minnesota, settled in New Orleans in 1981 and is still there, though he recently retired from playing. Likewise, Ron Simpson, from England via Canada, though still playing.

However, in terms of future developments, it is Greg Stafford who stands out. Gregg, a protégé of Danny Barker's Fairview Baptist Christian Band in the 1970s, went on to become the most important single transition point from old to young. As Bruce Sunpie Barnes puts it:

Many of his mentors were the musicians who created the New Orleans jazz revival period. . . . He sat for thousands of hours with older musicians and learned how they played....He has been a bridge from old to young.¹⁵

Moreover, he has continued that bridging work with successive generations of youngsters through his leadership of the Young Tuxedo Brass Band, his work as a jazz music educator in New Orleans public schools, and his co-founding in 1993 of The Black Men of Labor organisation created to promote and preserve Traditional Jazz Music.¹⁶



**Figure 2.2 Louis Nelson and Barbara Reid, 1982
at a Sue Hall party, Royal Street, New Orleans**



**Figure 2.3 Seated on front row bench, left to right:
Sue Hall,¹⁷ Louis Nelson, Kurt Jerde,¹⁸ Jim Tanenbaum,¹⁹
Back row (with glasses) David Thomas Roberts²⁰**



Figure 2.4 Bill Russell and Kelley Edmiston



Figure 2.5 Left to right: Trevor Richards,²¹ Gregg Stafford, Speedy Gonzales,²² Barry Wratten,²³ Andrew Alexis²⁴



Figure 2.6 Left to right: Trevor Richards, Brian O'Connell,²⁵ Speedy Gonzales, Andrew Alexis



Figure 2.7 Bill Edmiston and Gypsy Lou Webb²⁶



Figure 2.8 Left to right: Speedy Gonzales, Andrew Alexis



Figure 2.9 Chris Burke²⁷



Figure 2.10 Left to right: Chris Burke, Maggie Kinson,²⁸ Ron Simpson



Figure 2.11 Gregg Stafford

Eulogy

To end this article – nothing could be a more fitting eulogy than Gregg Stafford’s reply to me when I asked him if he had any thoughts, memories or feelings about Barbara and/or the memorial event:

Yes, Barbara was a dear friend of mine. She cherished and loved me for being a young man being interested in wanting to play old style Traditional New Orleans Jazz. I was with her just 12 hours before she passed away. Sammy Rimington, along with his current wife Louise, and I spent a nice quiet evening of conversation and coffee with her at her apartment on Decatur St. that evening. Sammy and Louise had been on a short visit and were due to fly out the next morning. It was around 3 or 4 am when I received a long-distance call from England. It was Kelley crying and trying to tell me that her mother had just died. She wanted me to inform her father of what had just happened. He was on duty as a pharmacist at the Waterbury drugstore which was located at Canal and Camp St. I got up out of bed and drove over to the store to convey to him what had happened. Barbara was known by all the musicians and I was fortunate enough to make some of those nice jam session parties she would throw. Those parties really opened up my eyes and made me realize how much of an impact this music played in the social lives and some fun-loving times for each musician.

NOTES

1. I thank Sal Camacho, Kelley Edmiston, Sacha Borenstein Clay, Fred Eatherton, Barry Wratten, Ron Simpson, Greg Stafford, Trevor Richards, Orange Kellin, Rev. Jishin Kinson and Matthew Ekins for their contributions to this article. Sacha Borenstein Clay’s help was invaluable in excluding two misplaced photographs from the series and identifying several participants in the photographs selected. This occasion was in memory of Barbara Reid, both a memorial event and a celebration of her life.
2. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1991, p. 159.
3. William ‘Bill’ Kelley Edmiston and Barbara Glancey Reid married in 1956 and separated in 1967. They remained good friends, often lived close to each other and met frequently. From 1976, they lived in adjacent apartments at 921 Chartres Street.

4. Richard Ekins, 'Barbara Reid in New Orleans, Further Contributions and Legacy, 1964-1983, Parts 1-3', *Just Jazz*, Nos. 272-274, December 2020 - February 2021; Chapters 15-17, in this book.
5. Lee Collins, 'A Night at the Victory Club', *New Orleans Records*, NOR 7203.
6. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life: A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*, University of Mississippi Press, Jackson, 2019, p. 144. No date is given for this incident in the book. Clive has confirmed this was in 1978 at the same session that the photograph with Bill Russell was taken. Email, Clive Wilson to Richard Ekins, May 21, 2020. For the photograph, see *Time of My Life*, *ibid.*, p. 150. **This is an error.** Wilson seems to have conflated two events. Paige VanVorst, who took the photograph, has incontrovertible evidence that the photo was taken in Preservation Hall in August 1974. As VanVorst emailed me on June 13, 2023: 'stop the presses – I just happened to have a box of my NO slides handy . . . the original slide was right where it belongs – the slide was processed in September 1974 so the picture would date from August.' See Chapter 1, note 2, for the circumstances of the photoshoot which was a private event. It is probably safe to say that Barbara's reconciliation at Preservation Hall, such as it was, took place in the late 1970s.
7. See: Richard Ekins, 'PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills', Introduced, Illustrated, and Annotated by Richard Ekins, with a Footnote by Larissa Mills, *Just Jazz*, No. 235, 2017, pp.18-25 at p. 19.
8. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, *ibid.*, p. 160.
9. Richard Ekins, 'Fantasy and Reality at Bourbon House: Barbara Reid, the Olympia Brass Band and a Most Unusual Funeral', *Just Jazz*, No. 265, 2020, pp. 6-16.
10. I am following Kelley Edmiston's account of the reconciliation, as told to her by Barbara, her mother. There was no such reconciliation with Ken Grayson Mills. In all the years Borenstein spoke of Preservation Hall with his daughter, Sacha, Sacha never heard Mills' name mentioned. Facebook Messenger, Sacha Borenstein Clay to Richard Ekins, June 3, 2020.
11. Richard Ekins, 'Authenticity as Authenticating – the Case of New Orleans Jazz Revivalism: An Approach from Grounded Theory and Social World Analysis', *Popular Music History*, 7 (1), pp. 23-52.
12. 538 St. Philip Street, New Orleans.
13. Email, Ron Simpson to Richard Ekins, June 12, 2020. Andrew Morgan died on September 19, 1972.

14. In early March 1983, according to the best evidence I have from Sacha Borenstein Clay. Reid's obituary notice in *The Times Picayune* appeared as 'Edmiston: Barbara Reid Edmiston – Tuesday, January 18, 1983. She died on January 15.'
15. Bruce Sunpie Barnes and Rachel Breunlin, *Talk That Talk: Passing on Brass Band Music in New Orleans the Traditional Way*, Center for the Book at the University of New Orleans, New Orleans, 2014, p. 46.
16. 'Black Men of Labor: Keeping New Orleans Traditional Jazz Music Alive and On the Streets', accessed July 2, 2023, <https://thebmol.org/about/>; Matt Sakakeeny with Greg Stafford and Fred Johnson, 'Black Men of Labor Parade 2006', accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.wwoz.org/media/89602-black-men-labor-parade-2006>.
17. On Sue Hall and Louis Nelson, see, Robert Wolf, 'Legends Keeping the Music Alive in New Orleans' Jazz Quarter', *Chicago Tribune*, April 13, 1986, accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1986-04-13-8601270343-story.html>.
18. Curator of the Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, 1980-1989.
19. On Jim Tanenbaum, see: accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.mandy.com/uk/crew/jim-tanenbaum>; https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0849237/?fbclid=IwAR1y-alEOPTpyULVmAjtjSEkfSPH0byMzH8xMkim77jIQyCxF4g_esHyqE. He worked in the film *Pretty Baby* (1978) with Kelley. Here he is recording the session. Brian Wood writes: 'A tape of the event was given to Marcel Joly by Kelley [Edmiston], on which the previously unrecorded Richard [Andrew] Alexis plays.' Kelley has several of these tapes. Brian Wood, *The Song for Me*, 2003, Brian Wood, Deal, Kent, p. 316. Wood wrongly gives 1982 as the date of Barbara Reid's death.
20. Larry Melton, 'David Thomas Roberts' Ragtime Transcendence', *The Syncopated Times*, May 30, 2019, accessed July 2, 2023, <https://syncopatedtimes.com/david-thomas-roberts-ragtime-transcendence/>.
21. 'Trevor Richards', *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. 2nd edition, ed. Barry Kernfeld, Macmillan, London, 2002, p. 410.
22. Speedy Gonzales was the janitor at Preservation Hall for many years.
23. On Barry Wratten, see, accessed July 2, 2023, <http://www.geocities.ws/neworleanspelicans/barrybiog.html>. Australian Barry Wratten moved permanently to New Orleans in 1982 and lived there for sixteen years.
24. On Andrew Alexis, Barry Wratten comments: 'I seem to recall that he had a claim to a link with Bunk in some manner, that gave him some type of credence in

the occasional patio party jam sessions that would draw folks together from all over the world. He'd appear then and not be seen again until the next year's round of parties at Sue Hall's, Olivier House & the like.'

Sacha Borenstein Clay adds: 'He was my father's handyman and driver and worked in his frame shop.'

25. See: Richard B. Allen, 'Brian O'Connell', in Booklet Notes, 'Two Clarinets on the Porch', GHB BCD-308, 1992, pp. 4-6.

26. See: Jeff Weddle, *Bohemian New Orleans: The Story of the Outsider and Loujon Press*, University of Mississippi Press, Jackson, 2007.

27. See: Al Rose, 'Chris Burke', in Al Rose, *I Remember Jazz: Six Decades Among the Great Jazzmen*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1987, pp. 70-72.

28. Kinson adds: 'I was in New Orleans from the beginning of 1983 till 1996 and gave up playing music on returning to England. I played with local NO musicians, always touched by their generosity and friendliness, especially given their ancestral history. Also grateful to Andrew Hall who often got enough music work for two bands around those years and kindly – though he didn't have to – employed me in the second band.' Email, Rev. Jishin Kinson to Richard Ekins, June 23, 2020.



PART 2
Pre-Birthing
in Chicago

PART 2

Pre-Birthing in Chicago

The next four chapters were originally published in the *Just Jazz* issues of August 2018, September 2018, January 2019 and May 2021. They document Barbara Reid's apprenticeship into New Orleans jazz under the protective and loving wing of William 'Bill' Russell, the man who more than any other single person was responsible for the New Orleans jazz revival of the 1940s and 1950s.

What follows is the story of their family connections, friendship networks, Barbara's role as Bill's research assistant, their inseparable companionship for almost two years, and Russell's role as mediator between Barbara and her estranged husband in Chicago as she makes the move to permanent residence in New Orleans in 1952. Barbara kept all her letters from Bill Russell in a bundle wrapped in pink ribbon.

The brief 1958-1963 New Orleans material is best regarded as a supplement to the early 1950s letters from Chicago.

I constructed the extended note of Chapter 6 principally from the originals of previously unknown documents in the possession of Kelley Edmiston and now in the Lord Richard collection. Up to this point, apart from a few pages included in William Carter's *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, 1991, nothing of any substance had been published on Barbara Reid. It was a neglected history waiting to be written.¹

NOTE

1. Clive Wilson's chapter on Barbara Reid in his *Time of My Life: A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*, University of Mississippi, Jackson, pp. 130-145, was published in 2019. It is an excellent chapter on Barbara Reid's psychology but weak on Reid and Russell in Chicago, as in the wrong-headed: 'When Russell left Chicago for New Orleans, Barbara left her husband Bill Reid behind and moved with her two children as well', on p. 135.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The upper part shows a balcony with a decorative metal railing. Below the balcony, there are several doors. One door on the left is white and has a diamond-shaped window. Another door in the center is also white and has a diamond-shaped window. To the right, there is a dark door. The overall scene is a street-level view of a building.

CHAPTER 3

The Letters of
William 'Bill' Russell
to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953
with a Postscript
on Punch Miller,
the Judge Babylon Incident
and Mahalia Jackson, 1958-
1963 – Part 1

Chapter 3

The Letters of William ‘Bill’ Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953, with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident and Mahalia Jackson 1958-1963 – Part 1¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*



Figure 3.1 Water colour of Bill Russell playing violin
by Noel Rockmore
Richard Ekins Collection
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

Introduction

In my recent articles on Ken Grayson Mills, published in *Just Jazz* during 2016 and 2017, I touched on the fact that Mills regarded Barbara Reid as co-founder of Preservation Hall and that she was an important figure in second wave revivalism, more generally. Over a period of several decades, Preservation Hall grew from being home to a series of Mills' 'rehearsals' of the remaining old-style New Orleans jazz musicians, in the early 1960s, to a popular French Quarter 'Kitty Hall', and then to one of North America's most famous and most visited tourist attractions that marketed the Hall in terms of traditional jazz 'authenticity.'²

Bill Russell had acted as Ken Mills' main inspiration and mentor when he established Icon Records. Russell was also involved in the inception of Preservation Hall and helped out there for many years. But as I researched more deeply into Barbara Reid's life and work, it came clear to me just how important Barbara Reid had been to Russell, as well as to Mills. Moreover, whereas Mills was very much a creature of second wave revivalism – he was only 23 when he began his recording activities in New Orleans in 1960 – Reid had been centrally involved in the New Orleans jazz scene in Chicago in the late 1940s, as well as in New Orleans from 1952 onwards until her death in 1983.

There is no academic jazz studies literature on Barbara Reid. There are one or two short journalistic pieces on her contribution to New Orleans jazz revivalism, most notably, 'Preservation's Progress' by John Swenson,³ and she is given a fair hearing in William Carter's *Preservation Hall*.⁴ These things apart, there is only the occasional mention of her in newspaper and magazine articles.

Fortunately, Smith and Pointon's recently published *Bill Russell and the New Orleans Revival* does include a three page section that introduces Bill Russell's relationship with Barbara Reid.⁵ In particular, it provides fifteen quotes from seven of the letters that Russell wrote to Reid in 1952 and

1953 in the context of revealing ‘much of Bill’s philosophy and kindness.’⁶ Rightly, the authors point out that Bill had been a family friend of Barbara and Bill Reid in Chicago and that when their marriage broke down, Bill had acted as mediator between the couple. Smith and Pointon summarize the context of the letters thus:

Barbara shared Bill’s love of New Orleans jazz, and she was popular with the New Orleans musicians she had met in Chicago. Bill kept her informed in his correspondence as to what was happening in Chicago and encouraged her enthusiasm for music.⁷

However, Smith and Pointon do not make explicit that the letters they draw on are from an extensive Russell-Reid correspondence deposited by Barbara’s daughter, Kelley Edmiston, in a number of libraries in both the USA and the UK.⁸

The jazz studies academic Sherrie Tucker had as far back as 2004 singled out the need for research on Barbara Reid, amongst others. In her extensive research study, *A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women*,⁹ Tucker merely notes that Barbara Reid Edmiston played a key role in founding and running Preservation Hall¹⁰ but adds no more information about her in the main body of her text. Rather, she includes an appendix to her main study entitled ‘More Women in New Orleans Jazz’,¹¹ which lists the names of over forty ‘women important to New Orleans jazz, about whom little is known at present, but would make excellent studies for researchers who wish to contribute to our knowledge of jazz history.’ Barbara Reid appears as Number 32 in Tucker’s list.¹²

It is my intention to write further articles on Barbara Reid’s contribution to New Orleans Jazz revivalism, but here my purpose is to introduce her into jazz studies literature with reference to Russell’s letters to her. I focus on those parts of the letters that will introduce themes that call out for further exploration of Reid’s contribution to revivalism, rather than dwell on the intimate detail which is frequently a focus of the letters. I do not know what

happened to Barbara's letters to Russell¹³ during this period. Perhaps, Russell destroyed them in view of their personal nature.

As the story of the letters unfolds, we enter a world too often ignored or made light of in the New Orleans jazz revivalist literature and, indeed, in much of jazz studies: exploration of the detailed interrelations between private passions, social networks and public outputs.

The period of the letters marks the time that the 24 year-old Barbara has left Chicago to live permanently in New Orleans. Russell, at this time aged 50, has been living in Chicago since summer 1950 and will remain there until early 1956, although he is visiting New Orleans regularly. Barbara is in the process of divorcing her first husband Bill Reid. She is living apart from him and he will not communicate directly with her. Their two children are at an address unknown to Barbara. Throughout this time, Russell is acting both as conduit between Barbara and her husband and children and, more generally, as a mutual confidant. Bill Reid is not supporting his wife in any way and Bill Russell is doing what he can to help Barbara, both financially and emotionally. The correspondence ends when Barbara has started a relationship in New Orleans with Bill Edmiston. Bill Edmiston would become her second husband.

From 1950-1952, prior to her permanent move to New Orleans in September 1952, Barbara worked as Russell's assistant in the operation of his American Music records in Chicago. This is the period of the release of the first five of the American Music LPs. It is also the period that Barbara has recorded the Lee Collins sides, that will eventually appear as 'Lee Collins: A Night at the Victory Club' (New Orleans Records, NOR 7203).

However, their friendship and mutual interests went much further back. Barbara's marriage to Bill Reid cemented, for the period the couple were together, family friendships between the Reid and Russell families that had much of their focus on New Orleans jazz and blues in Chicago. As Kelley Edmiston, daughter of Barbara Reid and Bill Edmiston, puts it:

Barbara Glancey Reid – born January 5, 1928¹⁴ – St. Joseph, Missouri.¹⁵ Her father, Charles William, was a Jazz drummer and businessman with Chicago roots. She attended the University of Chicago in Journalism. Ms. Reid married Bill Reid at age 19. They were fellow music supporters and together had two children, Sarah and Christopher. In the 1940's/early 50's the Reid family hosted, promoted and recorded New Orleans and Blues artists including Jimmy Yancey, Lee Collins, Johnny and Baby Dodds, Little Brother Montgomery, Muddy Waters and Mahalia Jackson. Barbara Reid was also an assistant to Bill Russell at his Chicago studio, American Music Records. In 1953 [1952] Ms. Reid moved to New Orleans. Barbara married William Edmiston in 1956 and they had a daughter, Kelley.¹⁶

Earlier, Barbara had written in a CV that she had prepared shortly after moving permanently to New Orleans:

Education Background: Graduate of St. Joseph Junior College, St. Joseph, Missouri.

Previous Experience: 1950-1952: Worked for American Music Records, 1637 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago, Ill. Connected with them through 1952. Duties consisted of Promotion of various musicians recorded by company; Publicity releases on musicians; writing album notes for covers of record albums.¹⁷

During this time was also personal manager for various musicians and promoted and publicized jazz concerts and a series of dances . . .

1952: New Orleans: Employed by Larry Borenstein during winter in capacity of selling for Associated Artists, 726 St. Peter St. Terminated because of return to Chicago.

Spring of 1952: New Orleans: Self-employed. Managed “The Gallery”, 734 St. Peter St. Handling representative work of French Quarter artists. Terminated because of property changing hands.

Working knowledge in: All phases of record promotion; Selling to general public; Most offices requiring controlled imagination.

In the above CV, Barbara provides William Russell as her reference for 1950-52 and Joseph Mares, Dr. Edmond Souchon, and Albert Rose as her ‘Personal Character References’.

In later un-dated hand-written jottings of her ‘Qualifications’, Barbara writes:

Girl Gunzemaker [ganze macher] – The happy flunkey – hard work; harder the better – can type, follow orders & talk – Lord can I talk! . . . Know when not to talk. Am reliable, dependable, loyal, handy, charming, & have best references, some interesting references, too. Am full of bright ideas I don’t mind others taking credit for -; but am willing to take the blame for -.



Figure 3.2 Barbara Reid at American Music Records, 1637 N. Ashland, Chicago. Photograph by Bill Russell, April 30, 1953

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

The Letters

There are thirty-four letters from Russell to Barbara written between late September 1952 and early June 1953.¹⁸ Most are a few pages long, one letter is fifteen pages, and the longest is twenty-two pages.

They contain some very interesting and new information, most notably, on American Music records, Mahalia Jackson and the New Orleans jazz scene in Chicago at that time.

For at least one year of the two years that Barbara worked as Russell's assistant, she went with him everywhere he wanted to go. Their outings included both formal jazz and blues concerts; informal clubs; and informal gatherings and friendship networking with many individuals on the music scene. So close were they both to Mahalia Jackson during this period, for instance, that they planned to write a book on Mahalia together.

Russell valued his companionship with Barbara enormously and came to love her deeply. Up until the last of the 1953 letters considered in this article he hoped that Barbara would reciprocate his feelings for her.

Throughout the 1952 and 1953 letters he discusses his feelings for her, acts as a go between for her with her family, gives her money, sends various packages to her, criticises her lifestyle and relationships, and despairs at his unfulfilled relationship with her.

For all his angst and occasional bitterness at the foregoing, many of the letters contain a significant amount of information that relates to the music and introduce a number of themes relating to Barbara's contribution to New Orleans jazz revivalism, regarding both her activities in Chicago and in New Orleans.

For the purposes of this article, I focus on this latter musical material.

Letter 1: September 1952

Letter 1 is one of the few undated and unaddressed letters in the series. The context makes clear, however, that it was written in September 1952, shortly after Russell had completed one of his visits to New Orleans from Chicago.

The early 1950s were important years for the development of what would develop into a canon of old-style archaic New Orleans jazz recordings. Alden Ashforth, David Wyckoff and Sam Charters had heard the Eureka Brass Band in a New Orleans street parade in December 1950.¹⁹

Ashforth and Wyckoff decided to return to New Orleans to record the Eureka and in an intensive period of recording from July 11 to September 3, 1951, the pair supervised two dance band sessions featuring Emile Barnes, a session featuring the Eureka Brass Band, and the two sessions which would be issued by Bill Russell on American Music (Emile Barnes with DeDe Pierce's Band and Emile Barnes with Kid Thomas' Band). Barbara Reid did not assist at any of these sessions. There is no evidence to suggest she was in New Orleans during this period.

However, when Ashforth and Wyckoff returned to New Orleans in 1952, Barbara and Russell had come down from Chicago in the summer. Ashforth notes in the booklet notes to the Charlie Love-Emile Barnes session of September 1952:

The late Barbara Reid was a great help in arranging this session; as a long-time friend of the Barnes family she arranged through Joe Mares to find a ground-floor studio in the Quarter where we could record late at night.²⁰

Again, in the booklet notes to the Kid Clayton session recorded on August 20/21, Ashforth comments on the presence at the session 'of a gang of friends . . . including Barbara Reid and Bill Russell.'²¹

Later, in reply to my recent emails to David Wyckoff, seeking his clarification of the details of who arrived when and how, Wyckoff confirmed that Barbara was definitely not at the 1951 sessions but was there at the two 1952 sessions, before adding: 'What can be said is that, when present for a

session, Barbara added much enthusiasm and enjoyment for all – musicians, recording personnel, and assorted onlookers.²² Russell then ends this first letter with:

I'm ashamed to leave only this \$2²³ for you but honestly I have only a little over \$2 dollars myself to eat on until I see John [on] Mon . . . I hope it helps a little.

John is John Steiner. Paige VanVorst summarises thus:

Russell moved his operations to Chicago in the early 1950's operating American Music in conjunction with John Steiner's Paramount label. Russell lived at 1635 N. Ashland, a commercial building housing a testing lab operated by Steiner, a chemist, and some apartments, which were rented to various musicians and often accommodated visiting jazz fans and record collectors.²⁴

Letter 2: 1637 N. Ashland Chicago, September 29, 1952

Sorry I didn't get to talk [things] over with you before I left but I couldn't find you at home, or B. House [Bourbon House], or on St Peter St the last day I was in N.O.

Bourbon House was a favourite bar and eating place of bohemians, writers and artists in the French Quarter. Tourists often felt its atmosphere forbidding for them and, in general, stayed away.

Bourbon House would become increasingly important to Barbara as her home-from-home in New Orleans. Later, it would feature in some of the most important events in her life.

Russell, on the contrary, regretted that Barbara found such places and their clientele fascinating, when he would have preferred her to be visiting musicians like Wooden Joe,²⁵ who, Barbara had told Russell in Chicago, was her favourite trumpet player.



Figure 3.3 ‘Wooden Joe Nicholas seated in front of a piano, holding a trumpet and a clarinet, with a young relative holding an accordion at his home’, 1952

**Courtesy of the Ralston Crawford Collection,
Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University**

Russell notes how ‘Everybody enquires about you’, including Lee Collins (at Marble Stairway)’, before noting: ‘Lee, Mama Yancey and Don Ewell will go to Europe in Oct’, before adding: ‘Last nite I talked to Alden [Ashforth] & Harvey²⁶ in N. Y. Nothing important. Ald just wanted me to write notes for the Eureka Brass Band Album.’²⁷

Letter 3: October 7, 1952

This is the first letter in the series that illustrates a recurring theme: that of Russell’s busyness and his rushing from one task to another and feeling that he has never completed the earlier task properly.

I gotta run for union station in exactly 3 mins. Going home to Mo. [Missouri] to pick up my masters at last, & then on to Milwaukee to have Nunn²⁸ cut them this weekend.

Subsequent letters suggest that these may be the masters needed for the second batch of American Music LPs. Five LPs have already been issued, and the ‘masters’ referred to probably constitute the second batch of five.²⁹ The three Baby Dodds American Music LPs and the Natty Dominique material will follow later.

Letter 7: October 31, 1952

While most of the previous letters have been two pages long, Letter 7 is much longer: six pages. ‘There is so much I wanted to write about but I have to get out an end-of-the-month royalty report,’ writes Russell:

Progress on my new LPs is rather slow. The processors in Calif. Wrecked 2 of them this week and Nunn has cut them over. I’m still working on labels, envelope notes, cuts, etc. Incidentally, have you any idea where, my big 11x14 ins. enlargement of Weegee’s photo of Bunk³⁰ sleeping on the stand (in front of Baby’s drums) is?

Could Virginia³¹ have taken it, you once mentioned she was painting Bunk. I don’t need it for the record envelopes but always planned to use it in a possible book.

Baby's wife called me up Tues, & had me come down & pack up & ship his record player to N. Y. He goes to Switzerland on Nov 29 (with Lee Collins, Don Ewell etc.)

Letter 8: (afternoon) November 7, 1952

I'm working hard on writing some notes for the new LPs and have to go to the printer this afternoon

Russell recalls 'how happy we were a year ago doing so many things together – such as getting album covers ready among dozens of other things.'

Letter 10: (afternoon) November 12, 1952

This letter touches on a number of Russell's jazz concerns as he is writing, including the jazz he is following in Chicago and his attempts to get receipts in from records he has sold to Fred Hatfield's record shop in New Orleans.³²

From the time Barbara moved to New Orleans in 1952, to the time Russell finally moved to New Orleans permanently in 1956, she tries to get him down to New Orleans in order to run a record shop as a source of revenue and outlet for his own records. As we shall see, at one time Hatfield offered Russell a partnership in his shop [Letter 12].

Don Ewell just called up and talked for 10 minutes . . . Don is now working at Gaffers³³ (piano behind bar) for two weeks until he goes to Europe. He wants me to bring the Magnecorder down to his home and record his new Steinway for a small Texas Co. L.P. record.

Lee Collins still at Marble Stairway. He inquired about you when I took some friends (Some people up from Antioch College) there to hear him Sat nite . . .

Speaking of Fred Hatfield, he was always going to pay me the \$1.10 balance he owed me, the last week I was down in Sept, but he never got around to it. If you don't mind asking him about it & presenting the enclosed "statement" to him, you may keep the \$1.10 for your trouble in collecting it. If you do collect it please let me know, so I can mark it off my "books".

Letter 11: (nite) November 12, 1952

The invoice to The Fred Hatfield-Don Perry Record Shop, included in this letter,³⁴ makes it clear that the balance on the five AM LPs refers to the first five LPs that Russell issued during the years that Barbara was his assistant, namely, #638 (*Bunk Blues and Spirituals*); #639 (*George Lewis*); #640 (*Wooden Joe*); #641 (*Emile Barnes*); #642 (*Kid Thomas*).

Letter 12: November 17, 1952

Russell is replying to another of Barbara's letters in which she has told him how low spirited she is in New Orleans. No doubt, too, she has spoken of the bohemian characters she is drawn to at Bourbon House. Russell is exasperated with her attraction to these people, wishing she would visit 'sincere & genuine' New Orleans people such as Wooden Joe. Characteristically, he dwells on music and its role of music in alleviating psychic pain interspersed with his detailing practicalities of running American Music Records.

I do know you are having a tough time. Maybe, as the line goes in 'Trouble in Mind' . . . "the sun will shine in your backyard someday". . . I'm flattered that Fred Hatfield would want me as a partner. At present I still do not have the finances to do anything about a store. In fact, I still have to raise \$300 someway in the next 2 weeks if I'm to get all 5 of my new Long Play records out before Christmas. But if I do I'll have a couple of thousand records to sell, & I hope to get them in time for the holiday selling season.

I was much interested, & I must admit pleased, at your remarks about music, that you realize music could make your own life's burdens easier to bear. Not many people know or believe that. I'm writing some of the Bunk album notes (there are 3 new Bunk albums) I've been trying to quote some of the Bunk-Bill Colburn philosophy of "no get-tired" music in the last one (#647) on which I'm working at present. And in writing it the other day I was thinking about you and wishing you had more help from music to lift your spirits. I know from my personal experience that no matter how low I feel music can always help me feel so much better. Of course I haven't been around to hear much here in Chi[cago] lately . . . A couple of weeks ago Tom Harris³⁵ brought a friend of his girl-friend up here & introduced her to me as "another Barbara Reid", meaning her interest & knowledge of music, etc.

But personally, I'm afraid there can never be "another Barbara Reid". To me there's just one Barbara Reid in the world, & I hope she'll be here a long, long time.

Just try to be patient for a while, please, & maybe you'll still get to hear a lot of good music & do a lot of interesting things. I wish you could get out & meet some more of the real sincere & genuine New Orleans people, like Wooden Joe, & the enclosed photo reminds me of Johnny St Cyr (& his book that should need some help to get produced someday). They're so different from some of the French Quarter "characters" you mention. Anyway try to keep up your spirits for awhile.

Letter 13: November 25, 1952

Try to have a good time Thanksgiving day. I'll probably stay home & write "album notes" all day, but maybe next Thanksgiving Day will be happier for all of us.

Letter 14: December 24, 1952

The month gap between Letters 13 and 14 is much longer than usual. Russell's comment: 'Glad to hear you got to N.O. okay' indicates that Barbara has been away from New Orleans. A later letter to her from Russell (February 1, 1953) states specifically that Barbara was in Chicago for a visit in November.

Letter 15: January 12, 1953

Sat[urday] we (Bill Reid and a mutual friend) went to Marble Stairway to hear Lee C & the IIII Club³⁶ for Brunies³⁷ etc.

Letter 16: January 15, 1953

Russell refers to the phonograph and \$10.00 he has sent Barbara the previous day and gives her advice on adding weight to the pickup to make LPs track satisfactorily, and then turns his attention to Maude Johnson, Bunk Johnson's widow:

I thought you knew [last summer] that Maude, Bunk's wife was living in New Orleans, not New Iberia.

Letter 18: February 1, 1953

Russell has learned of Barbara's relationship in New Orleans with an artist who Russell considers lacks worth and integrity. He feels deceived and reflects upon the nature of 'stupidity' with reference to Bunk Johnson, Baby Dodds, Stanislavski, and authentic art.

It looks like I really overplayed that 'stupid' act I've always put on, which I once explained to you I'd learned from Bunk. Baby Dodds, you may remember has told how he often uses the same device. If you can make the other fellow think you are real dumb you are already a jump or two ahead of him.

That reminds me of a quote from one of Bunk's New Iberia front porch sessions – "While the white man's talkin' I'm thinkin' and before the white man's thru talkin' I have the answer," but of course he doesn't give the white man the answer, or if he does it is not the right answer. But I must have put on such a good dumb act that I probably really became that stupid . . .

At one time in my life I used to read, study, & practise everything I could get on the Stanislavski system of acting. (In case you don't remember him, he was the leader of the famous Moscow Art Theatre, who taught that you had to put your mind & body so intently into the character that you're playing that you really came to believe in your own mind that you were that person by the time you stepped on stage.) It may sound different but actually it is not much different from the mental process a musician has to use (& much more quickly) all the time if he to say anything at all.³⁸

Of course I know you consider M[...] a great artist & genius. But when are you going to learn some of those very simple truths, such as Bill Colburn³⁹ and Bunk tried to pound in our stupid heads, that any person's music, art, painting, writing, or what have you, comes from that person, & is only an expression of him. Where else can it come from? It might be something less, but certainly can't be anything more.

Do you think when a person picks up a paintbrush, or a horn, or a pen, a spiritual force descends on him from heaven to guide it? I'm afraid you are going to find out sooner or later that if a person is a rat or a phony his art, music, etc. come out the same way.

NOTES

1. I thank Kelley Edmiston and David Nathan for making this article possible. I thank Fred Eatherton and David Wyckoff for helpful comment on preliminary drafts.
2. Matt Cibula, 'Race, Authenticity, and New Orleans: The Preservation Hall Band Turns 50', 2012, July 2, 2023, <https://www.popmatters.com/163458-race-authenticity-and-new-orleans-the-preservation-hall-jazz-band-tu-2495813874.html>.
3. John Swenson, 'Preservation's Progress: Barbara Reid and the Origins of New Orleans's Most Famous Hall', *Oxford American*, Louisiana Music 97, winter, 2012, pp. 19-21.
4. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1991.
5. Ray Smith and Mike Pointon, *Bill Russell and the New Orleans Jazz Revival*, Equinox, Sheffield, 2018, pp. 225-227.
6. Ibid, p. 225. The quotations are referenced as [1952/53] 'Letters held by Ray Smith' on p. 310.
7. Ibid.
8. See this chapter, note 17.
9. Sherrie Tucker, *A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazz Women*, A New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park Study, 2004.
10. Ibid, p. 98.
11. Ibid, pp. 361-363.
12. Ibid, p. 363.
13. Barbara's first and second husbands – and Bill Russell – were all called 'Bill'. Barbara Reid, whose maiden name was Williams variously called herself Barbara Glancey Reid, Barbara Reid, Barbara Edmiston, and Barbara Reid Edmiston. To avoid confusion, I mostly refer to 'Barbara' and 'Russell'.
14. On numerous occasions Kelley wrote and said that her mother's birthday was January 5th, 1928. It was, in fact, January 5th, 1925.
15. Smith and Pointon, op. cit. p. 318, state that she was born in Chicago. Much remains to be researched on the life and work of Barbara Reid.
16. See, also, Brian Wood, 'REID, Barbara Glancey', in his *The Song for Me: A*

Glossary of New Orleans Music and Its Musicians Plus Others of that ilk, CD Version, December 10, 2007, pp. 31-317. The Reid family's involvement in the Chicago jazz scene needs further research.

17. It is curious that Reid does not state her recording activities.

18. I refer throughout this article to those letters which are part of the Barbara Reid material collected by Kelley Edmiston. I am most grateful to David Nathan of the National Jazz Archive, Loughton, Essex, UK, for providing me with copies of the letters obtained from a disc deposited with the Archive by Kelley Edmiston. The letters are also available at The Historic New Orleans Collection, 533 Royal Street, New Orleans.

19. Samuel B. Charters, 'A Footnote to Jazz – Recording the Eureka Brass Band', *Jazz Journal*, 1960, April, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 10-12.

20. Alden Ashworth, 'Booklet Notes', Emile Barnes Early Recordings, Volume 2/1951-1952, Folkways Records FJ258, p. 2.

21. Alden Ashworth, 'Booklet Notes', *The First Kid Clayton Session 1952*, Folkways Records FJ 2859, p. 1.

22. Email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, August 13, 2017

23. In today's money, approximately \$18.00.

24. Paige VanVorst, 'Bill Russell at One Hundred', *Jazzbeat*, May 26, 2005, <https://www.jazzology.com/jazzbeat.php?id=23>. See, also, <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/serc/findingaids/view.php?eadid=ICU.SPCL.STEINERJ&q=Gaffer%27s+Lounge>.

25. See, Letter 12, below.

26. David Wyckoff adds: 'Harvey' was a nickname for Robert Whiteside, a NYC friend, a modern jazz bass player who also enjoyed our music, and spent some time with us in NoLa,' Email to Richard Ekins, March 6, 2018.

27. *The first Eureka Brass Band LP*, recorded in August 1951 by Alden Ashworth and David Wyckoff, and first issued on Pax 9001. In the event, the notes were written by Charles Edward Smith.

28. Ewing D. 'Ed' Nunn (1900-1977) of Audiophile, a 'wonderful engineer' says Russell. See: George W. Kay, 'Bill Russell Reminisces', *The Mississippi Rag*, September 1979 pp.1-4 at p. 3.

29. See Letter 12, below, for Russell's comments on the three new Bunk Johnson LPs he is working on.

30. David Wyckoff adds: “Weegee” – real name Arthur Fellig – was a celebrated NY street scene photographer, his subjects often morbid - homicides, etc.’, Email to Richard Ekins, November 3, 2017. He was the inspiration behind the film *Nightcrawler* (2014). Fred Eatherton adds: ‘Arthur Fellig was actually Usher 'Arthur' Fellig (1899-1968). 'Arthur' was a quasi-anglicised form of his Russian name.’

31. I have been unable to identify ‘Virginia’.

32. On Fred Hatfield’s activities in New Orleans and his relationship with Donald Perry, see: Fred Hatfield, ‘In Memoriam: My Lifelong Friend Donald Perry’, *The Second Line*, 53, Spring 2009, pp. 7-9.

33. The Gaffer’s Lounge on Water Street, Chicago.

34. See: Fred Hatfield, op. cit.

35. I have been unable to identify ‘Tom Harris’.

36. For a list of the Chicago ‘Hotspots’, see: ‘On the Town’, *DownBeat*, Chicago, October 19th, 1951, p. 6. The IIII Club was at IIII W. Bryn Mawr.

37. George Brunies, the trombonist.

38. Russell was proud of the fact that by working at the Stanislavski method he became President of the college dramatic club. He adds: ‘It certainly was not because of my looks.’ This may have been when he attended Culver-Stockton College (1923-1926).

39. On the role of Bill Colburn in the rediscovery of Bunk Johnson, see: Mike Hazeldine and Barry Martyn, *Bunk Johnson: Song of the Wanderer*, Jazzology Press, New Orleans.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The upper part shows a balcony with a decorative metal railing. Below the balcony, there are several doors. One door on the left is white and has a diamond-shaped window. Another door in the center is also white and has a diamond-shaped window. To the right, there is a dark door. The overall scene is somewhat dimly lit, with some shadows.

CHAPTER 4

The Letters of
William 'Bill' Russell
to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953
with a Postscript
on Punch Miller,
the Judge Babylon Incident
and Mahalia Jackson, 1958-
1963 – Part 2

Chapter 4

The Letters of William ‘Bill’ Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953, with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident and Mahalia Jackson 1958-1963 – Part 2¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*



Figure 4.1 Barbara Reid – ‘Voodoo Woman from New Orleans’

The French Quarter
GAZETTE

BARBARA REID
News Editor

509 Conti Street : New Orleans, La. 70130
Telephone 525-4702

**Figure 4.2 Barbara Reid, headed note paper, The French Quarter Gazette
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston**

Letter 19: February 8, 1953

Barbara has written about making progress with her literary work and the possibility of writing for Bob Cass who in the mid-1950s produced Climax magazine, which featured an article by Barbara on the music of the dance halls of New Orleans.²

Glad to hear you have a job again, but hope it holds up longer than Carnival time, or else that something permanent like the record shop, comes thru. Also I'm glad to hear you are making progress with your literary work, & the magazine with Cass sounds interesting. But of course I will always regret that I couldn't have worked with someone as talented as you to write something about some of the really worthwhile people of N.O. Or maybe I'm just too prejudiced & personally so conceited that I think the things, the people, & the music I like are more important than others. But I'd still say that the book on Mahalia we'd planned to write might have been more interesting & more real New Orleanish than a book on Maybelle,³ etc, just to mention 2 fat gals. Of course Mahalia left N. Or. 25 yrs ago & she probably didn't live in Fr. Qt. (As black as she is I'm sure she came from Uptown like Bunk & Bolden & I'll bet she was never in the Bourbon House, unless as a dishwasher) & I

doubt if she ever slept with as many men as May Belle. But I still bet Mahalia has got 10 times the stuff M.B. ever had. All you got to do is watch Mahalia move, the way she raises that shoulder & starts to strut and “move on up” as she goes into her final chorus. But then I forgot you never did get to see & hear her sing a song all the way thru. But just from one record, such as the Upper Room I was playing for someone the other day, you can get the whole idea of how highly sexed she is. Not just the, what some people would call “suggestive” words – I remember the 1st time I played it for John Steiner last year – he just said “Yeah, I went upstairs with Jesus”, but also all that rhythm in the music, & the sensuous quality of her voice on certain phrases. It’s no accident that a church full of women “carry on” to the point that an orgasm is reached right in public in the services when she (& others) sings. Anyway there’s a gal 10 times as sexy as May Belle, even if she isn’t so deformedly fat. And a lot more typical of N. Or. than M.B. even if M.B. were to live on B. Street for 2500 more years.

Yes, there were a lot of things we were going to do together . . .

Little news here. Geo Lewis Bd will be here March 1st.

Baby Dodds got back from N.Y. a couple of weeks ago, and asked about you, as did Natty.

Fri nite we (Russell and a photographer friend) went down to South side & photographed Muddy Watters, & then to Marble Stairs, and photos Lee & Band (Little Brother still there). Lee says he’ll go to Europe in 2 weeks or so.

Letter 20: February 26, 1953

Geo Lewis will be here Sat for his IIII club date later Sun. I’ll take Baby & Natty. They have the same band together for a dance Mar 11th that they had for us last spring. They’ll get me in to it as “band boy” to set up Baby’s drums. They both inquire about you everytime I see them.

Letter 21: March 24, 1953

Thank you for your wonderful letters. Wish I could have gotten this \$5 to you for tonite, so you could have it to hear Geo Lewis & Band.

Letter 22: March 22, 1953

Russell continues the upbeat mood of his previous letter.

I really wanted to take a couple of hours & write you a real letter, all about the wonderful Dominique Band dance the other nite. Baby, who has been very nervous etc. about playing the past few weeks, was great, like the old times, before he had any strokes. He seems to have made another remarkable recovery since his left-hand stroke in New York just 3 mnths ago.

But I'll tell you more about Natty etc later. It was just a year ago last nite that we had the 1st Dominique Dance at "the French Quarter of the Midnite Sun". Natty is better than ever, the best trumpet I know of at present playing anywhere, as far as "swinging a band" goes . . .

I had to work all day, as am really behind in my record work etc. John [Steiner] wants to get a girl to help with record envelopes, correspondence, etc. I'm about 400 records behind in shipment at present . . .

Also did you ever read Mezz's book? It's out in 35c pocket ed. now. Let me know if you want a copy.

Letter 23: March 29, 1953

Barbara's response to Russell's wanting the sort of help she had previously given him with AM Records in Chicago is to try to persuade Russell to move to New Orleans and open up a record store there, which, as we have seen, will not actually happen until early 1956.

I'd really like to write you a long letter in a few days about record stores, the situation here, (still over 500 records behind in shipments etc & need help). With a little more work etc, I should be able to make a lot more sales, & I hope to save up plenty of money to make the move to N. Or.

So it doesn't look possible to buy out a store right now; when I go down I want to have enough money (and for backing etc so that it can't fail).

. . . Let me know if you want Mezz's book, Really the Blues.

Letter 25: undated, but internal evidence suggests a date between letter 24 (March 31, 1953) and letter 26 (April 6, 1953)

For some time Russell has been promising a long letter, but he only has time for short ones, which he puts right in this letter (five pages) and the subsequent one (seven pages).

. . . Really you're not the only one I neglect, for I neglect my business even more. For example, I notice near the top of the big pile of unanswered letters on the table (much bigger than when you were here) a few of the Wooden Joe LP labels thrown in, to remind me to order more from N. Jersey. I ran out of Wooden Joe records 2 weeks ago & can't order more until I get more labels printed, & so far I haven't had (or taken) time to order the labels.

. . . The Mezz book was mailed yesterday. There's a lot of junk in it, but also some real good stuff worth reading, remembering, & thinking about.

. . . I heard from Dick Allen this week again. (Last time I asked that he keep it "confidential" that he'd communicated with me).⁴ Anyway I told him I didn't want to take over the record store at present, or until I could have at least \$2,000 to finance a store properly, to enlarge the stock, & also have enough reserve for rent & living expenses to last at least 6 months, so that it couldn't fold even if no customers came in for a while. So to save up the \$2,000+ dollars (since I wasn't able to borrow it) I've started working at John's Lab for a few months & will be able to save all my salary & can live on the record receipts easily. In fact 2 people could easily live on the record biz it were run properly.

Actually I could raise over \$1000 right now (from my youngest bro etc) but, as I said, I want to be sure the store couldn't fail before I made the move.

John [Steiner] was in N.Y. last week, & says there seems to be a big demand for Geo Lewis & Bunk records at present (due partly to the Columbia publicity, etc). Blue Note is putting out some more Geo Lewis (old stuff I sold them in 1943) on LP. & John says the Bootleggers are sure to bootleg my stuff very soon if I don't get busy & satisfy the demand. In fact one he talked to claimed to be negotiating for the Amer. Music rights from another of the N.Y. Bootleggers! Believe it or not. That's like selling Brooklyn Bridge to strangers, the way the N.Y. crooks used to work 50 yrs ago.

But right now I am so busy I can't tend to the record biz. properly. But I hate to see all the years I have put in (not to mention the \$10,000 or so) slip

through my fingers into some crooks hands. I wish I could find some girl who was interested, to help out, but I know you don't want anything to do with Chicago, (probably not even temporarily until I can get organised to move to N. Or.) so I can hardly believe you asked a week ago if I wanted you to help out . . . I wouldn't want you to be unhappy in Chi. even for a short while. However in a month (I hope) John expects to move to South Side, & perhaps the different surroundings (near Chi. U. etc & colored section) wouldn't be so bad for a short while, until I get ready to move to N. Or.

Letter 26: April 6, 1953

I'm out in the kitchen writing this tonite while John is recording one of Mayo Williams' groups. Mayo is the fellow (a Negro) who has been in the record business for 30 or more yrs. In the '20s he had charge of the race catalog at Paramount, during the time Ma Rainey etc recorded, then a little later he ran the "race" dept at Vocalion, at the time Pinetop, Jimmy Noone, King Oliver etc worked there. During the 30's he was with Decca; recorded all the Hamfat records etc. He's had about 3 sessions up here since you were here & tonite is recording Little Brother & girl blues singer with a band using Al Wynn, Booker T. Washington & a couple of other guys I don't know.

Both Al Wynn & Little Bro. work regularly now with Lee Collins and Booker at the Bee Hive & Baby Dodds has been sitting in about twice a week. Don Ewell was there too last Week one nite. Don has day time job at last, and plays only week-ends nowadays. Anyway, with Baby the band goes pretty well & is almost a New Orleans band. Certainly it's the best band Lee had had on a regular job since I've known him (when Baby is there) altho it is still not half the band that Natty's is. Al Wynn is playing some good blues trombone tonite, like on the old Vocalions he made with Kid Punch for Vocalion about 1928, altho often at the Bee Hive Wynn has not been very impressive. Incidentally, Kid Punch was back in New Orleans (or was a month ago). He wanted to make the northern tour with George Lewis, but they didn't take him because they thought there would be complications when they got back in regard to using Percy [Humphrey] again etc, so they took Kid Howard. But I wish I could have heard Punch with Geo. Anyway, try to hear Punch, if you can find him.

Baby is playing better than he did a year ago, and I still think we ought to record "Baby Dodds Legacy" before leaving Chicago to settle in N. Or.

Natty was right when he said last year that Baby can still play more drums, even when sick, than any other drummer. I'm quite sure some friends in Baltimore would want to finance such a project, so it wouldn't be any drain on the capital saved up for the New Orleans record store. Perhaps we could even get Nunn⁵ to do some of the musical recording with real high fidelity.

And when we move to the South Side (John talks about May 1st now) it would be easier to get to Baby's if it were only a few blocks away. Some friends at Wisconsin U, a historian – Larry Gara & his wife (who recently sold 75 of my records at Wis.[consin] U) have suggested that while Baby is talking he ought also tell enough to do a book on Johnny Dodds. Practically nothing has ever been written about Johnny. Despite the fact that he's no longer living, there is still a terrific interest in his music & life, & Baby, when he talks about Johnny (& re-enacts scenes on the stand) really makes Johnny come to life. The Garas also want to help on my Bunk book & already have given me some helpful advice. They were down for the Geo Lewis session Mar 1st, & also for the Dominique Dance St. Patrick's Day . . .

I still think it best that I save up enough cash to properly finance the move to a N. Or. Store – which would include funds in reserve so it wouldn't fold for several months even without a single customer. Also funds to do other things such as more recording if possible, and/or promotion of live music etc as well as publishing activities etc.

I've seen so many record shops fail, in N.Y., Chi. & New Orleans, too, that I don't want to try to start, or run one halfway. You must feel somewhat the same way for in your last letter you talked about being glad when I'd "get down here & start a place where there won't be this upset atmosphere." Perhaps it is unfortunate that I can't take advantage, at this time, of a good buy, of this present deal, but I don't want to jump in half prepared. Meanwhile I'll have to do my best to salvage my AM business. John asked me this eve "if I intended to go back to the record business."

Actually I did get considerable done this week-end in spite of visitors . . . But I'm still just about as far behind as ever.

Finally wrote to England tonite & forwarded Knocky's⁶ Dec 28th letter telling them to return the Omer Simeon tapes so I can issue them this Spring. Knocky will be here again this week-end. But I really do need someone to help (or really run) my record biz, especially the correspondence, getting the LP envelopes ready etc. John still talks about more retail sales in the new

place when we move to S. Side & may do something about a regular store possibly, but all that is uncertain.

. . . P.S. Before I forget it again, Lee, Baby, Natty etc always ask if I've heard from you.



**Figure 4.3 The Baby Dodds Legacy: *Baby Dodds No. 3*
American Music, LP cover**

Letter 28: April 12, 1953

With the release of his first 10 AM LPs, Russell has the time and energy to focus on his ‘Baby Dodds Legacy’ project. Mike Hazeldine’s *Bill Russell’s American Music* draws upon Russell’s diaries covering his visits to New Orleans, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston and New York between 1942 and 1949. Hazeldine gives very little information, however, about the Baby Dodds project. He notes that ‘no diary entries were found covering . . . the Baby Dodds sessions in the 1950s.’⁷

Hazeldine regrets that he did not ask Russell more about these sessions,

among others. Contrary to Hazeldine's usual detailing of Russell's meticulous notes, only sparse information is given on the Baby Dodds LPs. Hazeldine notes that the projected No. 4 LP was never issued. He sketches out the contents of Nos. 1-3 and adds 'Note: The above are extracts from twelve reels of Baby Dodds interviews and drum demonstrations that Bill Russell recorded between 1952-54', concluding with the note from Bill Russell: 'Most of these tapes are not dated. I used to stop by at Baby's house at 51st Street sometimes, after I had finished work at a factory on the South Side of Chicago (at about 110th Street).'⁸ This letter fills in some of the detail and Russell will take up the same theme in subsequent letters.

One of my old customers (A.V. Bailee) who used to hear the Johnny Dodds-Dominique Band at Kelly's Stables in the 20s was up yesterday, and wants to help finance the Baby Dodds Legacy, if we can get started on it soon. We picked up Baby and took him to the Bee Hive to sit in for a couple of sets with the Lee Collins-Al Wynn Band last nite. So didn't get home until 4am.

I know you were disappointed in Baby's actions after the dance series last Spring, but he's still the best drummer in the world, & his knowledge & experience shouldn't go wasted. Also we should understand that Baby must also feel he's a great musician, (even if he doesn't talk about it as much as Jelly Roll Morton did, for example), but after he'd worked a few dates last year @ \$20 per week, I guess he had hopes of keeping on, so that's why he "threatened" to go to N.Y. if we didn't keep him going. After all he sees his pupils, such as Gene Krupa making a \$1000 a week, so maybe he thought that he deserved a chance to work once a week for \$20 at least. Anyway I'm sure he meant nothing personal in his phone call to you. It was just a temporary reaction to his life and troubles I guess. Wish I had more time to write about this & other things, but maybe I'll see you soon, & we can get to work on the Baby Dodds deal etc.

Letter 29: April 15, 1953

This one and a half page letter is all about Barbara's pending trip up to Chicago. Russell talks of sending her money in two different letters as a precautionary measure.

Letter 30: April 16, 1953

This is the only letter of the series written on American Music headed notepaper. Russell says he ‘has finally run out of Josh Billings work-headed note paper.’

The new Wooden Joe labels came in today so I’ll soon have all the LPs in stock again. They’re pressing several numbers this week, so soon after you arrive I’ll be back in the record business . . . would like to write more but I’ll be seeing you soon, and won’t that be a joyful day.

Letter 33: April 19, 1953

This is the final letter before their meeting in Chicago. There is more talk of arrangements and money sent and the first mention of jazz for some time:

The whole Salty Dog band from Purdue were here yesterday afternoon and bought a lot of records & last night they gave a dance out in Cicero, which I went to, so I didn’t get home until 5am, so as usual am behind in my mail. No other news. Thank you for your letter and I’m crazy to see you.

Letter 34: May 1, 1953

Barbara’s trip to Chicago was not the success Russell had hoped for. On the contrary, it soon became clear to him that far from helping him to run American Music in Chicago, Barbara would soon be returning to New Orleans having met Bill Edmiston, the man she would marry some three years later.

This letter is the second longest letter of the series – 14 pages – written over an extended period: May 1 (9 pages), May 16 (2 pages); June 8 (3 pages). As he is holding back posting [his] the various instalments, Barbara continues sending him letters. Meanwhile, Russell is reflecting on the loss and pain he feels with reference, as might be expected, to the blues. Referring to the train that took Barbara back to New Orleans, he writes:

I’ll always know now what all the Railroad – How Long - & Lonesome Train Blues mean. And this time I knew there would never be a “2:17 to bring her back someday.”

Further jazz and blues references in this letter include:

In the package is also another How Long Blues that I've had around for you for a long time. At 1st I thought it was too bad to give you but Joe Turner sings pretty well & probably makes it worth having, altho the all star band is pretty terrible. [Coleman Hawkins, ten, & Benny Carter, the alto on tpt, both playing under pseudonyms (you know what I mean – I can't spell it)]. There's nothing worse than a bunch of "all-stars" trying to say something when they have nothing to say. This came out about 1940.⁹

Touchingly, on this record, Joe Turner does not sing the most common lyric about the left lover refusing the loved one back when she returns. Rather Joe Turner ends with the plaintiff: "I love my baby, I'm crazy . . . but she don't love me."

From the lost loved one of the lyric, Russell moves straight to: 'I've been too busy, on something, to get down to see Mahalia, so haven't been able to replace your Upper Room so far, and finishes the letter with references to Bunk Johnson and his final farewell from Chicago.

I suppose Lee Anderson took your Bunk scrap book to Calif. He left here May 1 for L.A. & I got my (Gene Wm's [Williams]) Bunk scrap book & some other notes a couple of weeks ago from his sister-in-law. He was always supposed to let me have your Bunk scrap book next so I could read it & take notes. You had even said I could keep your Bunk material, altho I did not necessarily care to keep the stuff unless you didn't want it, but I had very much wanted to look over the material, especially an interview in Minneapolis. It does make me a little sick to see someone try to take advantage of a person's tough times or unsettled conditions to grab their property. Even if you don't want the stuff yourself, or want me to see it either, anymore, I hope you will write to Lee & ask him to return it to you, for it belongs to you . . .

While Russell shows himself aware of what he calls the 'subconscious' motivation of delaying mailing what he believes to be this 'final' letter to Barbara, he is, perhaps, less aware of what has impelled him to mention Mahalia Jackson and Bunk Johnson in this letter. Russell's devotion to Bunk is well known and has been much commented upon. Lesser known was his

devotion to Mahalia Jackson.

What has not been commented on before, however, is the relevance of the chronology of these respective devotions. I believe that it is no coincidence that it is following Bunk's death in July 1949 that Russell moves to Chicago in 1950 and, there, almost immediately begins his collaboration with Barbara.

Although Russell and Barbara were following Mahalia in Chicago together and, as we have seen, even planned to write a book about her together, with Barbara now gone he can turn his full attention to Mahalia and that is exactly what he does. Indeed, he seems to have developed the same relationship with Mahalia Jackson as he did with Bunk and Barbara. He was deeply passionate about all of them but in all sorts of ways became their errand boy. This was made especially clear in Laurraine Goreau's book *Just Mahalia, Baby*.¹⁰

Russell enters Goreau's narrative in September 1954, the very month of Barbara's departure to New Orleans. While he (and Barbara) had been 'a welcome visitor' for 'these two years',¹¹ now he came to work as an unpaid assistant to Mahalia, initially to teach her to read music. That didn't work out:

If he couldn't teach her to read music, he'd help her learn by rote. He played the new music through on his violin, with Mildred at the piano, until she got it. "But it never came out the same way it was written, anyway."

And then:

Every day for more than a year, when he wasn't working with music, he did whatever was at hand – from nailing posters on poles to washing dishes. And he strode happily with her to programs as never-defined general assistant.¹²

Barbara's daughter, Kelley Edmiston, found all the above letters in one bundle. Nearby, were three other Russell letters from a later period: one from 1958; and two from 1963.

These later letters make for fascinating reading.

The 1958 letter gives Russell's account of what might be termed 'The Judge Babylon incident' which has been the subject of considerable comment in the literature.

The 1963 letters illustrate something of the post-Preservation Hall relationship of Barbara and Russell. He is still ever-present for her as her advisor and mentor and, once again, the subject is Mahalia Jackson.

Supplementary Letter 1: February 11, 1958

This letter is addressed from 600 Chartres, N. Or. The context makes it clear that Barbara has it in mind to write an article on Punch Miller who has recently returned to New Orleans and was the leading musician (with Kid Thomas) in playing 'kitty session rehearsals' for Larry Borenstein at Associated Artists Studio. Russell starts his letter in a similar vein to his letters of the early 1950s – on how hard he works and yet is always behind with what he has to do:

I just got over the flu again & will be back on my usual 18 to 20 hour day by tomorrow, so may not get to write as much as I'd like. Actually I have over 300 letters piled up (for ages), quite a few orders, etc. which I've neglected so will try to be brief.

I personally doubt that the Punch story is good for a Sunday article, but that is your business of course.

The Jazz Report story that Erwin Helfer wrote was all true.¹³ I was there, & almost locked up, since I didn't run out of the place like everyone else in the audience when the police raided the place. Having invited Kid Thomas to go over & see Punch & sit in that nite, I wouldn't run out on him, & when the police were loading up the wagon and saw me holding Kid Thomas' tpt in one hand & a tpt belonging to a white friend in the other (which in itself was very bad I suspect), they ordered me in the wagon too. But then another cop said I wasn't playing & need not get in. Actually they hadn't seen who was playing anyway; for instance the white piano player got up & walked out, fortunately, for since he was from England, an arrest (or at least a conviction on this serious charge) would have prevented him from ever entering the country again.

Anyway to get back to Erwin's article, as Doc Souchon pointed out, some of Erwin's implications may be false, such as he is not working at music because of the race bans etc. For as Doc says, many of the white guys have no regular music jobs either. For ex, Raymond Burke (who would be rated by just about everyone here as one of the 2 or 3 best clarinetists still playing in N. Or,) works about 1 nite a week at music, and runs a 2nd hand magazine shop the rest of the time. Anyway plenty of the better white guys can't get jobs either.

Punch probably works about 1 music job a month lately; and does odd jobs, such as washing dishes at Kolbs Restaurant to pay his rent. He is able to play OK, & better than a lot of guys who pass for musicians down here today. The union angle is not of much importance as far as I can see. If Punch could get a regular job lined up in music he could easily arrange to pay up his past dues etc & be reinstated in the colored local here. Confidentially I don't think the colored local here does anything much for the usual run of jazz musician here. I don't class them with the teamsters, & other assorted union crooks the Senate is investigating, but I'm still too dumb to see much sense in their organization.

The letter continues: February 15 and 25, 1958

. . . A week ago Punch told me all about his union problems; he is much displeased with the union treatment he's received here, but I still think his union difficulties are not serious, important or vital to his wellbeing, & to air them publicly would certainly do him no good.

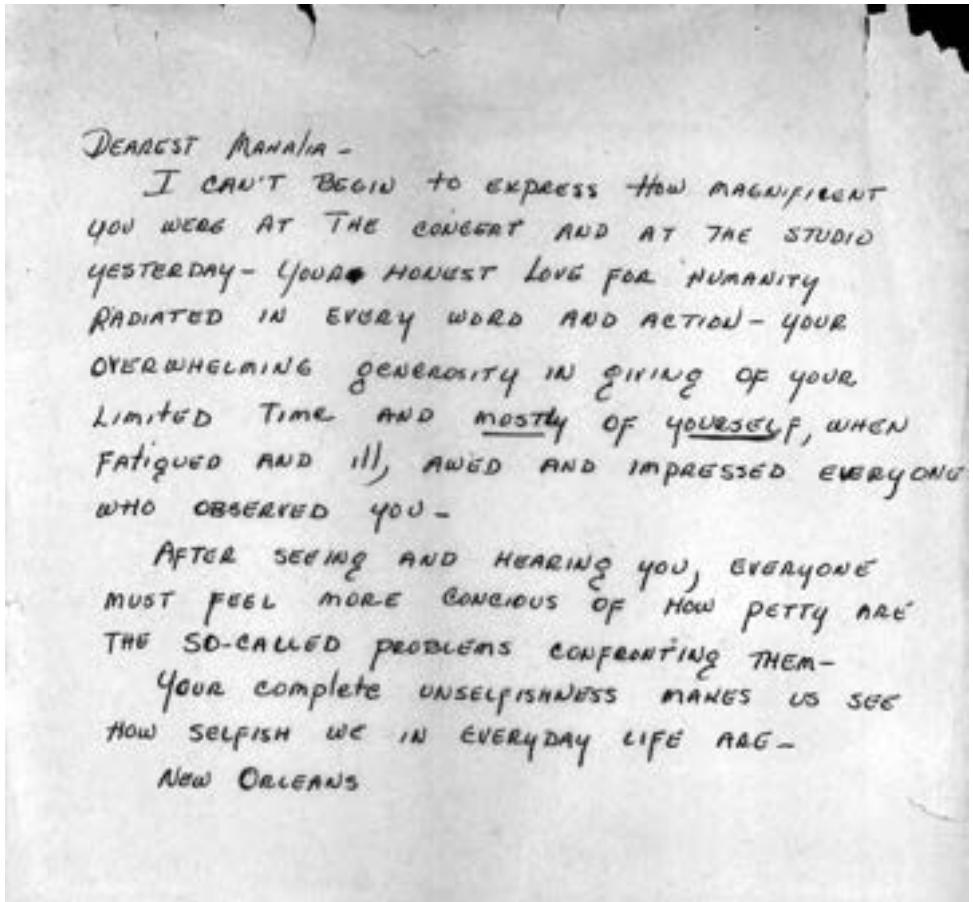
To continue to answer some of your questions; in my opinion there has been fair response to the article in Jazz Report & the letter in Nation (which I didn't see – being a high class magazine) Punch has been getting 3 or 4 letters a week at my place, & a few also at his S. Rampart St. address I believe.

Next day

It probably has been illegal for many years (possibly since about 1894) for white & negro musicians to play together, but today it is much worse – since the dozen or so more “hate laws” were passed (all unanimously) by the state legislative in the summer of 1956. These laws went into effect Oct. 15, '56.

February 27, 1958

. . . It is of course unlawful to have any mixed bands here (for instance Louis Armstrong & his whole band & presumably the promoters, & possibly the audience as well, would land in jail if they attempted to play here). Also no colored band would be allowed to appear on the same program, bill, or club the same nite as a white band. If the laws were enforced strictly I couldn't attend a colored church, or even have a colored friend come to see me on a social visit.



DEAREST MAHALIA -
I CAN'T BEGIN TO EXPRESS HOW MAGNIFICENT YOU WERE AT THE CONCERT AND AT THE STUDIO YESTERDAY - YOUR HONEST LOVE FOR HUMANITY RADIATED IN EVERY WORD AND ACTION - YOUR OVERWHELMING GENEROSITY IN GIVING OF YOUR LIMITED TIME AND MOSTLY OF YOURSELF, WHEN FATIGUED AND ILL, AWED AND IMPRESSED EVERYONE WHO OBSERVED YOU -
AFTER SEEING AND HEARING YOU, EVERYONE MUST FEEL MORE CONSCIOUS OF HOW PETTY ARE THE SO-CALLED PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THEM - YOUR COMPLETE UNSELFISHNESS MAKES US SEE HOW SELFISH WE IN EVERYDAY LIFE ARE -
NEW ORLEANS

**Figure 4.4 Draft of letter from Barbara Reid to Mahalia Jackson
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston**

Supplementary Letter 2: November 28, 1963

This letter is addressed 704 Lewis St. Canton, Mo. It is in response to a request from Barbara for information about Mahalia Jackson.

. . . I've looked all over the place for the La Weekly clipping with pictures & address of the new home Mahalia both for her folks in N. Or. a year or two ago, but it isn't in the 2 big boxes of N. Or. clippings in my room here where I saw it in the last 8 o 9 mo, nor could I find it in 2 big boxes of Mahalia material in the garage. However I'll look again when I have another hour to spare, & send the information tomorrow if I can find it.

Meanwhile I'll list the old addresses & names that I had in my old address book . . .

Supplementary Letter 3: November 29, 1963

This is the final letter from Russell to Barbara in the Kelley Edmiston collection. It illustrates once again Russell's difficulty in finding time to satisfactorily respond to the various pressures on his time, whatever his intentions and however hard he tries.

As usual only 2 min to write. I still can't find the La Weekly clipping, showing Mahalia, her new house & address in N Or., altho I looked through many hundred clippings last nite, (off & on til 1.30am) & then for almost 2 hrs this morn . . . but it's still mixed up someplace, maybe in one of the Tulane boxes. I still have months or work etc to sort out for Tulane, also some of your stuff (tapes & photos) are here & I'll get to all of them some day.

. . . Sorry to be always in such a rush but gotta run fast for the 5pm final mail (if not already too late.)

WR

NOTES

1. I thank Kelley Edmiston and David Nathan for making this article possible. I thank Fred Eatherton and David Wyckoff for helpful comment on preliminary drafts.
2. Barbara Reid, 'Back O'Town', *Climax* 1, 1955, pp. 37-38.
3. Russell writes both Maybelle and May Belle. According to David Wyckoff: 'Barbara pronounced her name as if it were Mabelle, with the stress on the second syllable . . . I do remember her being indeed a very fat white woman, a fixture at the Bourbon House, a Quarter coffee house/bar, where she seemed to be sort of the Queen Bee for the Quarterite regulars who spent a good deal of time there.' Email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, October 31, 2017.
4. This is presumably a reference to Dick Allen's record shop in New Orleans.
5. See Chapter 3, note 27.
6. Presumably, the pianist Knocky Parker.
7. Mike Hazeldine, *Bill Russell's American Music*, Jazzology Press, New Orleans, 1993, p. viii.
8. *Ibid*, p. 142.
9. Coleman Hawkins with the Varsity Seven, 'How Long, How Long Blues', New York, January 15, 1940.
10. Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1975.
11. *Ibid*, p. 187.
12. *Ibid*.
13. For Charlie DeVore's version of the story that refers to Erwin Helfer, see Richard Ekins, 'On the Origins of the Larry Borenstein Sessions at Associated Artists Studio, 726 St. Peter Street, New Orleans. A Reminiscence from Charlie DeVore', *Just Jazz*, No. 230, June 2017, pp. 22-23. I have been unable to locate the *Jazz Report* reference, despite writing to Erwin Helfer. I refer to it as 'The Judge Babylon Incident' because in early 1957 a number of the musicians playing at Borenstein's Art Studio were charged with 'disturbing the peace by playing loud music' when the real concern was a mixed band of black and white musicians playing together. The case appeared before one Judge Babylon who 'went on about we don't put cream in our coffee down in New Orleans, and you can stuff it down our throats but we are not going to swallow it.' This quote is from William Carter's account of the incident in his *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, Norton, New York, pp.120-122, at p. 122.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The upper part shows a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony are several doors. On the left, a white door is slightly ajar. In the center, a doorway is open, revealing a dark interior. To the right of the doorway is another white door with a diamond-shaped window. Further right, a dark door is visible. The overall scene is somewhat aged and urban.

CHAPTER 5

Barbara Reid
as Bill Russell's Protégée
in Chicago 1950–52
On Natty Dominique,
Sidney Bechet,
Jimmy Yancey and
Lee Collins

Chapter 5

Barbara Reid as Bill Russell's Protégée in Chicago 1950-1952

On Natty Dominique, Sidney Bechet, Jimmy Yancey and Lee Collins¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*

In the July and August [2018] issues of *Just Jazz* I detailed the letters of Bill Russell to Barbara Reid, covering the September 1952 – July 1953 period when she was away from him in New Orleans, while he remained in Chicago. During this period Russell missed Barbara's role in his life. This was both professional, as Barbara was his assistant running American Music records in Chicago during the time the company was making the transition to vinyl LPs; and personal, as she was his constant companion for much of the two-year period she worked for him, between 1950 and 1952.

In any such relationship, it is difficult to ascertain the contributions of the protégé as distinct from the older and more experienced mentor. In the article on the Russell-Reid letters, I gave some indication of Barbara's background in jazz, blues and boogie-woogie before she met Russell, drawing on a number of biographical and autobiographical sources.

In summary, William Carter put it this way, in relation to her later collaboration with Ken Mills in co-founding and running the early Preservation Hall:

Her active interest in old-style jazz predated her close friendship with Russell: in Chicago, she and her first husband, Bill Reid had known such figures as reedman Sidney Bechet, pianist Jimmy Yancey and trumpeter Lee Collins. This background, along with her publicist's talents and network of local connections, proved valuable complements to Mills's intense focus on the music per se.²

Of the many he might have picked, Carter is right to single out Bechet,

Yancey and Collins. This is because it is these three musicians that provide the focus for a number of Barbara's contributions while she was in Chicago and, incidentally, enable us to indicate something of the nature of her contribution to New Orleans jazz revivalism in the early 1950s.

Among Barbara's papers in the Kelly Reid Edmiston Collection deposited with the National Jazz Archive, Loughton,³ was a card, presumably typed by Barbara herself, to accompany the CV she had prepared when she first moved permanently to New Orleans toward the end of 1952. It is headed 'OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF JAZZ MUSIC' and lists the following:

1. Personal manager and booker of two bands: Natty Dominique's Creole Dance Band; Lee Collins' Dixieland Jazz Band.⁴
2. Recorded most jazz luminaries of Chicago area.
3. Promotion of dance series and concerts.
4. Publicity and copy writing.
5. Assisted at recording sessions in New Orleans on behalf of American Music Records and Paramount Records.⁵

Barbara worked with Russell in promoting Natty Dominique's Creole Dance Band, sometimes called the Chicago Slow Drag Orchestra, which was organised to allow Baby Dodds to work after he had suffered a number of strokes.⁶ The posters that follow (pages 97 & 99), probably prepared by Barbara Reid, indicate that the band had two drummers, Baby Dodds and Jasper Taylor. The band only played slow numbers while Baby was playing. Jasper Taylor was available to play drums on the fast numbers.

Barbara helped to get things organised, prepare and pass out handbills, work the door, and so on. She hung around a lot with various musicians. Despite Dodds' incapacity, Russell considered him still the best New Orleans drummer. He also regarded Natty Dominique as the best New Orleans trumpet player still playing in 1953 when he recorded the band on September 28 of that year, by which time Barbara was in New Orleans.

For the recording session, most of which was not released until the American Music AMCD-18 release of 1993,⁷ Russell preferred to use Darnell Howard on clarinet. As Russell put it:

This was the regular band that Natty was using at the time, except that the clarinetist was Volly de Faux. I never did like his playing, too thin, so I got Darnell Howard for the two 10 inch LPs of Natty Dominique . . . planned but never issued.⁸

For unknown reasons the regular bass player, Bill Anderson, was replaced by Bill Settles for the recording session.



Figure 5.1 Flyer for Natty Dominique's Creole Dance Band, 1952



Figure 5.2 Natty Dominique with members of his band: Jasper Taylor (drums), Preston Jackson (trombone), Odell Rand (clarinet); playing for a dance at the Midnight Sun, 1531 N. California Ave., Chicago, Illinois, on March 22, 1952

Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University



Figure 5.3 Flyer for New Location for Natty Dominique's Creole Dance Band, 1952. Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston Collection

In another document entitled 'Background', which gives further details of her CV, Barbara adds 'Downbeat, writer – (Bechet cover story)'.

On another occasion she credits herself with writing about Jimmy Yancey. I recall my disappointment when tracking down the two most likely sources of these writings in *Downbeat* that there was no credit given to Barbara in either of them.

However, these two most relevant issues of *Downbeat* – October 19, 1951 and December 14, 1951 – do provide an excellent introduction to the Chicago jazz scene of the early 1950s and the jazz and blues worlds within which Barbara, mostly with Russell, participated and often contributed.



Figure 5.4 Jimmy Yancey, source unknown



**Figure 5.5 Oldie Blues vinyl LP label
'The Immortal Jimmy Yancy 1898-1951'**

Downbeat, October 19, 1951

‘Jimmy Yancey Dies’ is afforded front-cover notice and a Page 1 feature:

Chicago – Pianist Jimmy Yancey, who at one time appeared before the late King George V and the present dowager Queen Mary of England, and who worked as a groundskeeper for the White Sox at Comiskey park for more than 30 years, died Sept. 17 at his home in Chicago. Yancey, who was (by his count) 57, had been ill for some time with diabetes.

The cheerful, self-effacing little boogie stylist was well known in Chicago for the open house he and his wife Estella (Mama) kept for young jazz fans and musicians. Years ago, those young followers included such men as Meade Lux Lewis, and the late Albert Ammons, who were the first to take his piano inventions into public acclaim. Lewis’ *Yancey Special* became a favorite among boogie enthusiasts.

Before taking up with White Sox, Jimmy toured this country and Europe as a singer and tap dancer. He was a native Chicagoan; his father had played guitar in a pit orchestra of the old Pekin theatre on S. State street. Jimmy never had any lessons on the piano. “Just picked it up by myself,” he used to say. During recent years his local appearances were supplemented by Mama’s vocals, to which he played the accompaniment.

This same issue of *Downbeat* features an extensive article on Lee Collins to mark his 50th birthday and 35th year as a jazzman. The article is credited to George Hoefer, feature writer and, later, New York editor of *Downbeat*, but Barbara may well have had considerable input in providing copy and other material for the article.

The Victory Club became home-from-home to Barbara in the early 1950s and it is easy to see why. It had been the Chicago base for Lee Collins since 1945. Visiting musicians such as Bunk Johnson and Louis Armstrong would head for the Club when they had time off from their gigs in Chicago and, most especially, for Barbara, it had a very mixed clientele that she found fascinating. The *Downbeat* article makes much of this:

The jazz music Lee plays has universal appeal, but a lot depends on Lee’s uncanny ability to simultaneously arouse appreciation from a wealthy professional man who once played in a college band, a snobbish co-ed who’s

dating a young Dixie enthusiast, a sodden bum, a well-liquored tart, and the many types in between that frequent the place where Collins appears nightly.

Mainly strippers

Chicago's N. Clark street beyond the river is a six-block double row of barrelhouses, with the main come-on being the strip tease. Some of the less well-to-do bars can't afford to hire strippers but plaster pictures of show girls all over their front windows anyway. The multitude of conventioners visiting the Windy city make this honky-tonk lane a haven late at night.

But there is one spot, at 664 N. Clark, out of tune with the scheme of things. It's the Victory Club, the home of Collins and the most unusual clientele in the city of Chicago.

Here well-known professional musicians, college students, artists, foreign delegations seeing America, hillbillies, young instrumentalists learning to play jazz, the denizens of Clark street's riff-raff society, all gather together to hear the music of old New Orleans in Lee's trumpet.

It is not a clip joint, as are its many neighbours – beer is two-bits a bottle and a shot costs little more, but these attractions do not draw the convention peasantry, as they are conspicuous by their absence from this one niche on Clark's sex way.⁹

Barbara made much of her Chicago and bohemian roots. When I asked *Jazzbeat* editor Paige VanVorst for his recollections of Barbara from the early 1970s, he commented:

Barbara was a native Chicagoan and we hit it off right away – my mother's maiden name was Reid and I could well have been related to her ex-husband. She was raised in the Drake Hotel – then and now a posh landmark on the Gold Coast – her parents were divorced and she and her mother lived in this fine hotel. She spoke often about how she was pampered when she was little. Her grandfather was president of the Board of Trade, a commodities exchange and a man of significant wealth and power. The Drake is located near an area that was the center of Chicago's Bohemian district dating back to at least the 20s. I think she went to some of the events during her formative years – there was an institution called the College of Complexes, sort of a do-it-yourself college where people would give speeches on whatever subject they were interested in. Some of the speakers talked about jazz – S. I. Hayakawa (later a US Senator) gave a live demonstration using some New

Orleans pioneers he knew, and there were others. Within a few blocks were other musical treats – the Victory Club and several other dives along Clark St had music, and the club attracted the Bohemian crowd as it was cheap and convenient. Many of the students who hung out there went on to become well-known. Studs Terkel became a famous author, John Chancellor a news anchorman, and David Garroway, the host of the Today show.¹⁰

The *Downbeat* article then goes on to detail something of Lee's illustrious career and his association with Clark Street, Chicago since 1939.

Just Jazz readers who seek to learn more about Lee Collins from a variety of perspectives would benefit from reading Alan Barrell's four-part series in *Footnote*,¹¹ as supplemented by Chris Hillman's articles in *Footnote* and *New Orleans Music*.¹² Both writers assess in considerable detail Lee's place in the Buddy Bolden - Bunk Johnson - King Oliver - Louis Armstrong trumpet lineage. Lee, himself, always placed most importance on Bunk Johnson. He relates the story of how, as a 15-year-old boy, he played with the Eagle Band when Bunk 'was off on another of his famous drunks':¹³

After the first number I played with the Eagle Band that night, the boys started telling me that I sounded like Bunk, that I had the same tone and the same kind of feeling he had. Now Bunk Johnson was my idol; he was the best jazz musician when I was a boy. Of course, there were many others who blew plenty of cornet in their own ways, but Bunk was way ahead when it came to jazz – I'm talking about hot phrasing, not trick tone or trick effects. It was said that he took his style from Buddy Bolden, so this style came from Bolden, through Bunk, to Buddy Petit, Louis Armstrong, and me.¹⁴

Barrell considers the question of the supposed Lee Collins-George Lewis recording of 1925,¹⁵ and quotes Lee, approvingly:

It has been stated many times in print that [in] about 1924 a recording session took place with a band including George Lewis on clarinet. I never did record with George Lewis. In 1929 I made ASTORIA STRUT with Joe Robichaux on piano. During that time I was in very fast company, the greatest New Orleans had then – Big Eye Louis, Frankie Dusen, even Lorenzo Tio Jr.¹⁶

Other Clark Street music venues are highlighted in the *Downbeat* article: the Ship's café, the Casa Blanca ('where he finally played behind strip Acts'), before he settled at the Victory Club. The arrangement worked excellently for him, there, because the management was quite happy to keep a residency open for him while at the same time, he was free to go away for alternative dates whether for more money or more fame, or whatever. Interestingly, the same issue of *Downbeat* lists in a 'On the Town: Chicago' feature, no less than seventeen music 'Hotspots'; thirteen music 'Dine and Dance' venues; and four 'for dancers' venues and includes those venues most associated with Lee in Chicago, namely, the Bee Hive and the Blue Note, in addition to the Victory Club. Other venues, such as the IIII Club, which we know Russell and Barbara visited, are also listed.



Figure 5.6 Sidney Bechet and Barbara Reid at the Blue Note, Chicago, 1951
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston Collection

Barbara's claim as *Downbeat* writer for the Sidney Bechet cover story relates to the issue of December 14, 1951. The cover is headed with the phrase 'Bouquet to Sidney Bechet' which heralds the major article on Sidney Bechet extending over four pages credited, as with the Lee Collins article, to George Hoefer. Bechet was the 24th musician to be profiled in *Downbeat's* Bouquet to the Living series. A photograph Barbara was particularly proud of was of her standing next to Sidney Bechet with a folded copy of the earlier *Downbeat* copy that included the notice of Jimmy Yancey's death and the Lee Collins feature article.

There is no doubt that from very early on Barbara evidenced considerable flair for publicity and networking and this photo with Bechet at the Blue Note, Chicago, is illustrative of that fact. Noteworthy, in this context also, is the photo of her with Louis Armstrong accompanied by Bill Russell and Lee Collins, also at The Blue Note.



**Figure 5.7 L/R: Carolyn Schuster, music fan; Lee Collins; William Russell; Louis Armstrong; Barbara Reid. The Blue Note, Chicago, June 28, 1951
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston Collection**

Reid gifted a copy of this photograph, featuring herself with Louis Armstrong, to the William Ransom Hogan Archive, Tulane University. On the white border of this Tulane copy was Lee Collins' autograph with the words 'Best wishes to my pal Barbara', and Louis Armstrong's autograph, with the words 'Best wishes to Barbara'.

It is difficult now, almost 70 years later, to assess many of the claims Barbara makes for her own contributions to the jazz scene, and, indeed, to her other scenes of interest, such as her prose and poetry. I will return to this theme in future writing. For now, I examine one of her more important contributions to New Orleans jazz revivalism that is more easily researched, notwithstanding the number of years that have passed, namely her recordings of Lee Collins at the Victory Club and at the Gaffer's Lounge, Chicago.

Frank J. Gillis prepared a discography of 'Private Recordings' for *Oh Didn't He Ramble: The Life Story of Lee Collins as Told to Mary Collins*, 1974. Of the twenty private recordings listed (including two interviews) between 1948 and 1953, apart from the ten radio broadcasts, four of the remaining ten recordings are credited to Barbara with one additional session possibly recorded by her. Clive Wilson and Paige VanVorst selected their New Orleans Record release from two sessions definitely recorded by Barbara Reid.

There are discrepancies between Gillis's listing, the sleeve notes of the New Orleans Record release (written by Clive Wilson) and the *Oh Didn't He Ramble* book. I wrote to Clive for clarification. He assured me that Side B of his LP were all from the session that Gillis lists as July 7, 1951, Gaffer's Lounge, Chicago. Clive chose the numbers 'Panama', 'Sunny Side of the Street', 'Struttin' with Some Barbecue', and 'Sleepy Time Down South'. He made the interesting point that he had edited out the long solos of clarinet, trombone and drums which in his view 'were not worth listening to'.¹⁷ Wilson focused on Lee Collins and Don Ewell and, indeed, learned later that Don Ewell was the leader on this gig.



**Figure 5.8 Bill Russell and Barbara Reid with New Orleans Records NOR 7203, 'Lee Collins – A Night at the Victory Club', August 1974
Photographer Paige VanVorst, courtesy of Kelley Edmiston Collection¹⁸**

There is no mention of the tracks ‘If You Were Mine’ and ‘Blue Turning Gray’ in the sole Victory Club session listed by Gillis that was recorded on August 10, 1951. Wilson and VanVorst selected all the numbers for their Side A from this session, according to Clive, including these two numbers.

Clive assured me that these two additional numbers were from the same Victory Club session as the other numbers initially chosen by Clive to release, namely ‘Storyville Blues’, ‘If You Were Mine’, ‘A-Flat Blues’, ‘Sister Kate’, ‘Royal Garden Blues’, and ‘Blue Turning Gray Over You’. The discrepancy that ‘Royal Garden Blues’ was listed on the LP cover notes, but not included in on the LP, Clive explained thus:

I rejected the initial pressing and removed ‘Royal Garden Blues’ from the final pressing. I don’t remember why. There were many other tunes recorded but the band was getting drunk, I guess, resulting in considerable slowing down and not issue-able material.

I was puzzled, too, by the fact that I had located in Barbara Reid’s unpublished papers her handwritten notes that appear on the Victory Club sleeve notes. These notes are rather different than those that appear in the book, yet it is the book that is credited as the source for the sleeve notes. Clive explained this in the following way:

Because the book was badly edited by Frank Gillis, Barbara insisted we put the wording back the way Lee would have spoken it. Also Barbara helped me with the second part of the notes, sentence construction, etc.

The journey from initial recording – and the circumstances that led up to it – to any future record is, of course, the result of all sorts of inputs, often competing viewpoints and so on. And once a record release is near to fruition there can be endless debates about accurate credits and acknowledgements. This need not matter much, but it does when we are considering Reid’s contributions to New Orleans music. Although the various discographies all credit Barbara Reid with both the Victory Club and Gaffer’s lounge recordings, in Clive’s view:

The sessions were recorded by Bill and Barbara Reid, assisted by Bill Russell. Russell retained possession of the Victory Club recordings in exchange for a loan to Barbara. Joe Mares had possession of the Gaffer's Lounge recording in exchange for a loan to Barbara.

According to Clive, 'Russell requested 'If You Were Mine' to be played without the sax, as Lee reminded him of Bunk Johnson on that tune.'

Paige VanVorst put it this way:

After we got NOR up and running we were looking for new material. Raymond Burke/Wooden Joe was very successful – we paid Burke very little for it and sold out the first pressing almost immediately. Clive knew Barbara Reid from around the French Quarter – she was one of the regular characters on the jazz scene. I don't think I'd met her before we started working on the album . . .

Lee Collins had the band during the late 40s and early 50s and she made recordings both there and at Gaffer's Lounge, a more upscale nightclub. I'm not sure if she ever paid Collins or the band members, or if she had any intention of issuing them. Somewhere along the line she ran short of money and borrowed against them with Joe Mares, so we had to settle with him, though as I recall he agreed to let us use them without having to pay off Barbara's loan. Mary [Lee Collins' wife] was a different story – she'd been getting advances from Bill Russell against the session – Bill had receipts for all the money he'd sent her but she said those were loans and not payments against her money for the session . . .

We were excited when we played the acetates for the first time – they needed some editing and Bill Russell said he'd take them to Chicago and work on them with John Steiner – we sent the master tape to the plant and they sent us a test pressing – it turned out quite different to what we expected – Bill deleted almost all of the saxophone solos. We thought they were an integral part of a live recording – Jeep [Robinson] wasn't a bad saxophonist and a nice guy.

We wound up paying all the musicians a nominal fee (\$75 I think) and paid Mary a royalty.¹⁹

As I detailed in my article on the Bill Russell to Barbara Reid letters, Barbara had written in some supplementary CV material: 'Am full of bright ideas I

don't mind others taking credit for - ; but am willing to take the blame for -'. The attentive reader will recall that Barbara claimed to have 'Recorded most jazz luminaries of Chicago area'. Now, some seventy years later, we lack the evidence to assess such a claim.

However, leaving aside those sessions in which she assisted others, most notably Russell, her unpublished files do provide evidence of a number of hitherto unknown sessions she may have recorded. She has, for instance, left us quite detailed notes on recordings made of a 'Tribute to Sidney Catlett' session held at the Bee Hive on April 1, 1951. This session featured Art Hodes, piano; Jimmy Granato, clarinet; Floyd O'Brien, trombone; and Bill Pfeiffer, drums. Seven acetates are numbered, with three tunes named: 'Saints', 'Original Dixie', 'Jazz Band Ball'.

And from the same tribute session: Booker Washington, drums; Al Reed, cornet; Ernie Gollner, clarinet; Art Gronwall, piano; George Winn, trombone. Here there were a further eight acetates, with the following named tracks: 'Pennies from Heaven', 'Back Home in Indiana', 'Tin Roof Blues', 'Tennessee Waltz', 'That's a Plenty', 'Saints', and 'Do You Know What it Means'.

A further session was recorded at the Bee Hive on April 29, 1951, featuring Don Ewell, piano; Jug Berger, clarinet; Jim Ille, cornet; George Winn, trombone; Freddy Flynn, drums; and Ken White, bass. Two acetates are listed with no titles given.

Finally, the same set of handwritten notes detail a further six acetates attributed to Art Grunewall, piano; Scotty McLaury, clarinet; George Wynn, trombone; Ken White, bass; Al Reed, cornet; and Booker Washington, drums. Two tunes, both with vocals by Earl Murphy, are listed: 'Four or Five Times' and 'Black and Blue'.²⁰

These sessions are not mentioned in any of the relevant published discographies. What happened to the recordings? Were there more?

Like so many of Barbara's possible contributions in Chicago and, indeed,

elsewhere, they remain as hidden history awaiting the detective skills of future researchers. My aim in this article has been merely to scratch the surface of a new area of worthwhile research in jazz studies – the contribution of Barbara Reid to New Orleans jazz revivalism in her Chicago years. Much more work remains to be done.

NOTES

1. I thank Kelley Edmiston, daughter of Barbara Reid Edmiston, for providing me with much of the material that made this article possible. See, also, the Kelley Edmiston boxes at the Nation Jazz Archive, Loughton, Essex, UK. Kelley thanks Pete Lay for publishing this article in January, a special month for the Reid family: Barbara Reid was born on January 5, 1925 and died January 15, 1983. On numerous occasions Kelley wrote and said that her mother's birthday was January 5, 1928. It was in fact, January 5, 1925. Sarah, her daughter, and Kelley's half-sister (often spelled 'Sara' by Kelley) was born on January 15. I also thank Clive Wilson, Paige VanVorst, Fred Eatherton and Matthew Ekins for their contributions.

2. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, London, 1991, p. 145. For the music scene in Chicago that Reid would have been familiar with, see: Sandor Demlinger and John Steiner, *Destination Chicago Jazz*, Arcadia, Chicago, 2003.

3. Some of this material is on temporary loan; some has been deposited more permanently. I thank David Nathan, Archivist at the National Jazz Archive, for giving me access to all of the Kelley Edmiston material deposited with him.

4. Other than in the 'Discography', there is no mention of Barbara Reid in Frank J. Gillis and John W. Miner (eds.) *Oh, Didn't He Ramble: The Life Story of Lee Collins as Told to Mary Collins*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1974.

5. Fred Eatherton adds: 'There were only two recordings issued by Paramount and made in New Orleans, Raymond Burke's New Orleanians and Armand Hug plays Piron. The first was recorded by Doc Souchon and the second by Jack Babin.' Email to Richard Ekins, November 10, 2017.

6. Baby Dodds suffered his first stroke in New York in April 1949 which was followed by a second stroke in 1950 and a third in 1952. After his three strokes, he continued to tutor and play as much as he could until his death in Chicago on February 14, 1959.

7. 'Natty Dominique's Creole Dance Band', *American Music*, AMCD-18.
8. Quoted in *Bill Russell's American Music*, compiled and edited by Mike Hazeldine, Jazzology Press, New Orleans, 1993, pp. 139-140.
9. George Hoefler, 'THE HOT BOX: Lee Collins Marks his 35th Year as a Jazzman', *Downbeat*, 18 (21), October 19, 1951, p. 13.
10. Email, Paige VanVorst to Richard Ekins, August 30, 2017.
11. Alan Barrell, 'About Lee Collins', *Footnote*, 5 (4) April-May, 1974, pp. 4-9, 11-12; 5 (5), June-July, pp. 4-14; 5 (6), August-September, pp. 4-17; 6 (1), October-November, pp. 4-19, 22.
12. Chris Hillman, 'Lee Collins', *Footnote* 7 (6), pp. 4-11; 'Lee Collins – I Can Dish, Can You Take It – Forgotten Moments of a Great New Orleans Trumpet Player', *New Orleans Music*, 11 (3), March 2004, 12-17.
13. Lee Collins, *Oh Didn't He Ramble: The Life Story of Lee Collins as Told to Mary Collins*, edited by Frank J. Gillis and John W. Miner, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1974, p. 17.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
15. Barrell writes: 'the date mentioned in Rust [<https://78records.wordpress.com/category/brian-rust-jazz-records-discography/>] as having been subject to recording by Columbia in New Orleans in 1925, 23rd September. This was the Imperial Serenaders and the line-up which Rust gives as follows:- Lee Collins (cnt), George Lewis (cl), Tink Baptiste (pno) Alex Scott (bj). Only one rejected take is mentioned – CLIMAX RAG.' Alan Barrell, 'About Lee Collins', *Footnote*, 5 (5), p. 13.
16. Lee Collins, quoted in Alan Barrell, 'About Lee Collins', *Footnote*, 6 (1), p. 15.
17. All quotations from Clive Wilson are from an email he sent to Richard Ekins on October 13, 2017.
18. 'Stop the presses – I just happened to have a box of my NO slides handy . . . and the original slide was right where it belongs . . . Anyway, the slide was processed in September 1974 so the picture would date from August.' Email, Paige VanVorst to Richard Ekins, June 13, 2023. Clive Wilson wrongly dates this photograph as taken in 1978 in his *Time of My Life*, 2019, p. 150.
19. Email, Paige VanVorst to Richard Ekins, August 30, 2017.
20. This paragraph is based on Reid's handwritten notes in the Kelley Edmiston Boxes, National Jazz Archive, Loughton, UK.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The upper part shows a balcony with a decorative metal railing. Below the balcony, there are several doors. One door is white and has a diamond-shaped window. Another door is white and has a screen. A third door is dark and has a window. The number '26' is visible on the wall next to the dark door. The text is overlaid on the image.

CHAPTER 6

Revisiting
Barbara Reid,
William 'Bill' Russell
and Mahalia Jackson
in Chicago and New Orleans:
An Extended Footnote

Chapter 6

Revisiting Barbara Reid, William ‘Bill’ Russell and Mahalia Jackson in Chicago and New Orleans:

An Extended Footnote¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*

That man is a saint . . .

Mahalia Jackson to Barbara Reid
referring to Bill Russell
New Orleans, 1963

I believe that it is no coincidence that it is following Bunk’s death in July 1949 that Russell moves to Chicago in 1950 and, there, almost immediately begins his collaboration with Barbara. Although Russell and Barbara were following Mahalia in Chicago together and, as we have seen, even planned to write a book about her together, with Barbara now gone he can turn his full attention to Mahalia and that is exactly what he does. Indeed, he seems to have developed the same relationship with Mahalia Jackson as he did with Bunk and Barbara. He was deeply passionate about all of them but in all sorts of ways became their errand boy.

Richard Ekins

‘The Letters of William “Bill” Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953
with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident
and Mahalia Jackson, 1958-1963 – Part 2’
Just Jazz, No. 244, August 2018, pp. 26-31 at p. 30

Preamble

In Part 14 of my *Just Jazz* Barbara Reid Project, I wrote:

We know, for instance, from her correspondence with Bill Russell in November 1963, that she [Reid] was still seeking information about musicians – in this case Mahalia Jackson – we may suppose for her planned writing.²

I subsequently discovered a significant unpublished document that Barbara had written for Mel Leavitt of WDSU,³ providing him with information on Mahalia Jackson when he was preparing for his television broadcast with her in New Orleans in December 1963. It seems likely that Barbara was seeking help on Mahalia from Russell to pass on to Leavitt. The main purpose of the present article is to reproduce this Mel Leavitt document.

In my ‘Memorial Tribute to Kelley Edmiston’, I wrote in a footnote:

Unfortunately, for whatever reason, Mark Burford in his excellent recent work on Mahalia Jackson and Bill Russell did not have access to the Russell-Reid letters when he was researching the William Russell collection. As a result, he makes significant errors regarding the dating and early development of the relationship between Russell and Jackson and Russell’s intention to write a book about her. The earlier (possibly original) intention was for Russell and Reid to write this book together. Burford misses this.⁴

A subsidiary purpose of the present article is to clarify this statement with reference to Burford’s work and similar errors and omissions made by other writers.

Indeed, I feel the need to clarify and expand on what I wrote myself, in my previous two-part article on the Russell-Reid correspondence. This article should be read, therefore, as an extended footnote to those two previous articles.



Figure 6.1 Mahalia Jackson singing inside an unidentified church, c. 1949

On Erroneous Dating and the Erasing of the Contribution of Barbara Reid

The commonplace in the literature on Bill Russell and Mahalia Jackson is to focus on the time that Russell worked for Jackson as an unpaid assistant. In relation to this, the dates are frequently imprecise or wrong.

Ben Wagner, in his ‘Timeline of William Russell’s Life’, summarises thus: ‘**1953-1956**. Acted as an unofficial assistant to Mahalia Jackson, recording rehearsals and visits with musicians and doing many other odd jobs.’⁵ Similarly, the Historic New Orleans Collection, in their book on their holdings of the William Russell Collection, focuses on the period in ‘**the mid-1950s**’ when ‘Russell spent a great deal of time with Mahalia, meticulously recording the events of each day in his journals.’⁶

Smith and Pointon make the link between Russell’s early interest in the Gospel singing at Elder Beck’s Temple in **1947** and selections from Russell’s

1954 notes with the passage:

It reminds me of once I was around Mahalia Jackson's place. Beginning 1952 for about three or four years, I spent more time there than I did at home.⁷

However, they then go on to fill in the picture by providing quite lengthy passages from Russell's '1954 notes concerning Mahalia Jackson's radio programmes.'⁸

Finally, Mark Burford, in his chapter entitled 'Gospel According to Bill Russell', highlights 'the **summer of 1954**'⁹ as the time Russell decides to write a biography of Jackson, linking the decision with the exponential growth of his journal entries on her at that time:

Over the summer of 1954 . . . Russell's entries became more and more frequent, lengthy, and detailed. By June, he had apparently decided to write a biography on Jackson, with material gathered through close observations and oral interviews.¹⁰

Moreover, Burford continues this line of enquiry in his *The Mahalia Jackson Reader*.¹¹ Part IX (pp. 299-376) is the one section on Bill Russell and, apart from the first two pages, focuses entirely on the reproduction of Russell's journal entries from mid-1954 to September 1955.

What all these approaches ignore is the time that Russell and Reid spent with Jackson before Reid left Chicago for New Orleans in September 1952. They are yet more illustrations of the 'erasing' of and/or 'leapfrogging' over Barbara Reid's contribution to New Orleans music.

Reid's contribution is best seen by dividing Russell's involvement with Mahalia in the 1950s into three phases. Firstly, there is the initial period from approximately September 1950 to September 1952 when he and Barbara are researching together in Chicago – for a year of that time they are 'going everywhere together'. It is during this period that they are collecting preliminary material on Jackson and planning to write a book on Jackson together.¹²



Figure 6.2 Mahalia Jackson, 1952. Courtesy of Alamy.com

Soon after the departure of Barbara to New Orleans, Bill begins to spend more and more time at Mahalia's house. He is 'a welcome visitor' for two years up to the time he works for her as her unpaid assistant from September 1954 onwards. He then works for Mahalia for 'more than a year':

Every day for more than a year, when he wasn't working with music, he did whatever was at hand – from nailing poster on poles to washing dishes. And he strode happily with her to programs as never-defined general assistant.¹³

As I set out in my previous two-part *Just Jazz* article, the dating is important because it is only when Russell has ‘lost’ Barbara to New Orleans that he begins to spend more time with Mahalia.¹⁴ Moreover, when he finally accepts that his great love for Barbara is not going to be reciprocated, now that Barbara is attached to her future husband – Bill Edmiston – he is able to devote more of his time and energies to Mahalia. I date the time of his increasing involvement with Mahalia as being from **June 1953**, the time of the last instalment of his last 1950s letter to Barbara.¹⁵ Then Russell loses his job around **September 1954** and he is free to devote himself full time to Mahalia.

And now he’d lost his job; not a prayer of getting another for six months. ‘You can come out here Mr. Russell, if you want; I got plenty for you to do’.¹⁶

The Barbara Reid Unpublished Documents

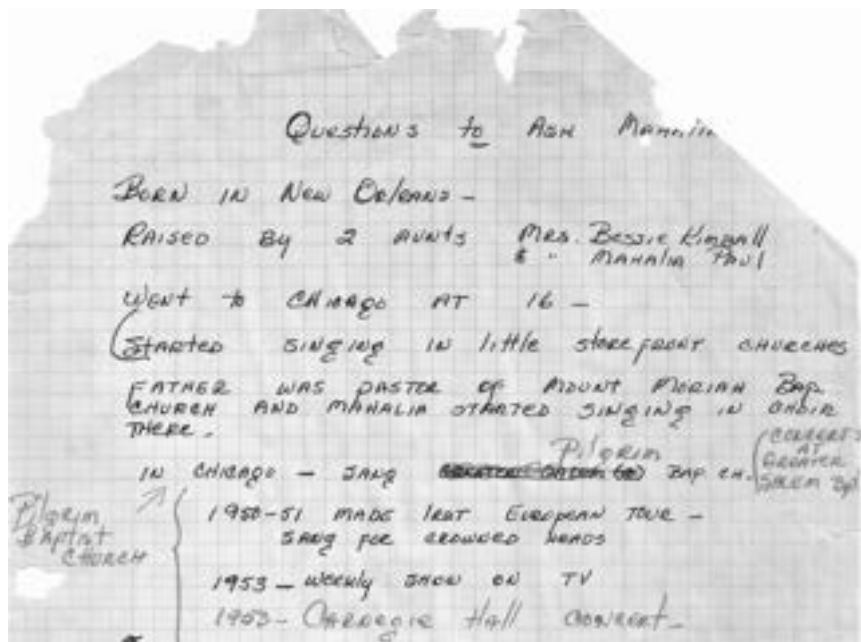


Figure 6.3. ‘Questions to Ask Mahalia’ by Barbara Reid, 1953
 Lord Richard Collection

In a preliminary document handwritten by Barbara in Chicago in the **early 1950s**, Barbara has written: ‘Questions to Ask Mahalia’. She then details a number of preliminary ‘facts’ about Mahalia’s life and music, several of which are wrongly dated. Barbara writes:

Born in New Orleans – raised by 2 aunts Mrs Bessie Kimball Mrs Mahalia Paul. Went to Chicago at 16 – Started singing in little store front churches. Father was pastor of Mount Morian Bap. Church and Mahalia started singing in the choir there. In Chicago – sang Pilgrim Bap Ch. Concerts at Greater Salem Bpt? 1950-51 Made first European tour – sang for crowned heads. 1953 – weekly show on TV. 1953 – Carnegie Hall Concert.¹⁷

My co-worker, Fred Eatherton, has suggested a corrected and expanded version of Barbara’s notes. According to this, the Carnegie Hall concert was part of the Negro Gospel and Religious Music Festival that took place on October 1, 1950. The first European tour began in October 1952. Mahalia was already unwell before she left the States and pulled out of the boat crossing, eventually flying to Paris. She sang in France, the UK (sharing the bill with Big Bill Broonzy and Charlie Galbraith) and then Denmark. She was due to perform in Italy but only got as far as Paris before she decided to return to New York by plane and was immediately hospitalised.

Turning to the document Barbara prepared for Mel Leavitt, it seems to have been typed up from notes made in Chicago in **1952** with the addition of nine-line note headed ‘(About and to Wm. Russell)’ and dated **1963**.¹⁸

I take it that the notes made in **1952** are fragments from the work with Jackson that Russell and Reid were doing together when they were inseparable. I find it unlikely that Barbara would have collected the interview material on her own. Rather, it was more likely that she was present acting as an assistant to Russell in his research, which is how and why she had possession of the material.

It is to be noted that in a ‘To Whom it May Concern’ reference Bill writes for Barbara a few months after she has left Chicago for New Orleans, Bill states in **December 1952**:

Miss Barbara Reid has been my assistant for two years. During that time she has proven an invaluable aid in research . . . Miss Reid has also written articles in collaboration with myself for publication on the subject of Jazz for periodicals . . . We consider Miss Reid highly qualified in the field of Jazz Music.¹⁹

**‘The Mahalia Jackson Interviews, 1952 and 1963’ by Barbara Reid:
‘For Mel Leavitt – WDSU’, dated December 11, 1963²⁰**

[Written in 1952]

In 1949 when Mahalia Jackson was beginning to be known on an international scale, and before the faddists had appropriated Gospel music and Gospel artists, she had shaken the solid convictions of recording business administrators by having a record sell over a million copies in the mid-40s. The record: *Move On Up A Little Higher*, recorded by Apollo on 78 and a record one had to turn over to hear both parts. Mahalia was singing at the Pilgrim Baptist Church and considered it her regular church while all her major musicales and revival singing engagements were usually held at the Greater Salem Church on Chicago’s South Side.

Most of the time Mahalia could be found in the ticket booth preceding these functions, selling tickets and signing autographs, usually with the admonition, ‘Move on up, Mahalia Jackson.’

When asked about doing all that extra work she told both Studs Terkel and William Russell (& B.R.); in Chicago –

You got to use your hands . . . work with them . . . God gave artists hands to work with. You think anyone can sing of saving grace and God’s wonders of this earth and not use their hands? I use my whole body to sing and tell what I feel. God makes you want to work with your hands.

As she talks she will gently rub the palms of her hands together and look at them pondering.

When the old people weren't home and I'd be scrubbing floors . . . to make the work go easier . . . I'd turn on a Bessie Smith record. The blues are fine, but I don't sing them . . . Remember I'm saved . . . (said humorously) Remember David of the Bible? 'Sing joyfully unto the Lord with a loud voice.' My, My, didn't I take his advice though? Tell me I don't even need a microphone. Just open the doors.

My father's people were theatrical . . . they worked with Ma Rainey and Bessie and the others . . . the great blues singers . . . They wanted me to travel with them. But my mother's people were very religious . . . They forbade it . . . My mother was so independent too . . . They told her I could make what was good money at the time . . . But she said no and she didn't have a dime . . . It's easy to be independent when you got money . . . But to be independent when you got no dime . . . My, my, that's the Lord's test.

People always telling me they'd get all kinds of money for me if I'd sing the blues . . . That's foolishness . . . They just don't understand; they don't mean bad but I just wouldn't feel right singing that kind of music. After all I've been saved and the good lord helped me so many ways I just can't let him down now. He spared me . . . Remember?

I've sung anywhere people have asked me to sing . . . hundreds of churches . . . From stone-front churches to the biggest . . . I've got to have people to sing to . . . I've got to see their faces right in front of me. . . . and when I close my eyes when I'm singing I still see their faces.

(About the early spiritual singers)

They sang the way I liked it . . . in places where the Holiness folks, the sanctified people gathered; with free expression . . . That's where jazz caught its beat . . . From the Holiness people . . . They were clapping their hands and beating their tambourines . . . and blowing their horns . . . Long before Buddy Bolden and Bunk Johnson and all them.

Spirituals can't be sung just like they used to be in slavery times because today the negro people have a new kind of hope . . . They don't have to hide anymore like the slaves and the Jews in Egypt

I'm so tired of singers who make a mess of things . . . making a gimmick out of this music, this music which is the hope of humanity They don't care about religion, or the Lord, taking his name in vain

the way they do . . . Taking our great music, like taking our country's flag on it . . . The hope and salvation of the people . . . All our peoples . . . Like you and me . . . It makes me so mad . . .

If the jazz people play spirituals for their own uplift and comfort, for their real feeling, it's fine . . . But if they gimmick it they're no better than the gimmicky juke-box singers . . .

In New Orleans when I was small and everybody sang or played jazz . . . The walls were so thin . . . The houses just spoke . . . They talked and spoke the music . . . Child, maybe they're reaching out for something today . . . But they don't know . . . They just don't know.

The Fisk University Choir, they had much to do with making all this popular; the jubilee songs that came right after the civil war led into what we call the gospel songs now . . . But they took out the beat that the Holiness people had made and they concretized those songs and they did pretty them up . . . Not much feel to it . . . My, my, it did sound so sweet . . .

[Written in 1963]

(About and to Wm. Russell)

That man is a saint. . .

I've begged him to let me help him and take care of him so he can rest awhile . . . Like he did for me when I was tired and had no strength . . . But he always wants to do for others and he just won't let anyone do for him . . . It hurts when you want to do for someone . . . Friends are meant to do . . . I've got lots of room for lots of people stay with me . . . Right now I'm going to write to him and ask him to come to me for Christmas . . . I'll make him know he will be doing for me then.



Figure 6.4 Mahalia Jackson by Art Shay, 1963 ²¹

NOTES

1. I thank Mark Burford for a fascinating email correspondence from July and August 2020 and his confirmation that he had not accessed the Russell-Reid letters when researching and writing for his excellent publications on Bill Russell and Mahalia Jackson. My thanks, too, to Fred Eatherton and Matthew Ekins for their contributions to this article.
2. Richard Ekins, 'Barbara Reid in New Orleans: Further Contributions and Legacy, 1964-1983 – Part 1', *Just Jazz*, No. 272, December 2020, pp. 20-24 at p. 21. Chapter 15 in this book.
3. Leavitt's 35-year broadcast career was primarily at WDSU-TV, a New Orleans television station. He has a section on Mahalia Jackson in his *Great Characters of New Orleans*, Lexicos, San Francisco, 1984, pp. 10-11, some of which seems to draw directly on the text Barbara Reid prepared for him.
4. Mark Burford, 'Gospel According to Bill Russell', chapter 8, in his *Mahalia Jackson and the Black Gospel Field*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2019, pp. 243-278; Mark Burford, ed., *The Mahalia Jackson Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2020. Burford makes no mention of Reid in this context. This book, chapter 1, note 11.
5. In Ben Wagner, 'William Russell: Jazz Lover, Collector, Musicologist – An Annotated Bibliography', accessed July 2, 2023, https://www.hnoc.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/russell_biblio.pdf, pp. 3-8 at p. 6.
6. Nancy Ruck, 'God's Music', in *Jazz Scrapbook: Bill Russell and Some Highly Musical Friends*, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, 1998, pp. 60-73, p. 66.
7. Ray Smith and Mike Pointon, *Bill Russell and the New Orleans Jazz Revival*, Equinox, Sheffield, pp. 216-219 at p. 218. Smith and Pointon do not give a date or reference for this quotation.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 219-225.
9. Mark Burford, *op. cit.*, p. 257.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Op. cit.*
12. Richard Ekins, 'The Letters of William 'Bill' Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953, with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident and Mahalia

Jackson, 1958-1963 – Part 2’, *Just Jazz*, No. 244, August 2018, pp. 26-31 at p. 25. This book, Chapter 4, p. 74.

13. Laurraine Goreau, *Just Mahalia*, Baby, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1979, p. 187.

14. Barbara left Chicago to live in New Orleans in September 1952. She returns to Chicago periodically. For two years from then, Russell is a ‘welcome visitor’ to Mahalia’s home. In September 1954, Russell comes to work for Mahalia as an unpaid assistant. Richard Ekins, ‘The Letters of William ‘Bill’ Russell to Barbara Reid, Part 2’, op. cit., p. 30. This book, chapter 4, p. 75.

15. In Freudian terms, Russell’s principal libidinal energies/drives have moved (with each loss) from Bunk, through Barbara to Mahalia. His anguish at the loss of Bunk is well illustrated by his comment to ‘C’: ‘If he [Bunk] could come back now for just one night I’d gladly pawn everything I have and give it to him.’ His anguish at the loss of Barbara is well illustrated by his unedited letters to her. His infatuation with Mahalia is excellently documented by Mark Burford. See, e.g., Mark Burford, ‘Gospel According to Bill Russell’, op. cit. Burford cites Russell’s comment on Bunk on p. 255.

16. Ibid.

17. Barbara Reid, ‘Questions to Ask Mahalia’ by Barbara Reid, 1953. Lord Richard Collection.

18. Reid has written the 1952 and 1963 dates on the relevant sections of the document. The addition marked 1963, in Barbara’s document prepared for Mel Leavitt, are cited in Smith and Pointon, op. cit., p. 225, and referenced ‘Bill Russell, Notes held at HNOG.’ (P. 310, footnote 4, chapter 8). Smith adds: ‘as I remember, the section in question was typed out on a smallish piece of paper and dated 1963.’ Email, July 24, 2020, Ray Smith to Richard Ekins.

19. Typed letter dated December 10, 1952 on headed notepaper issued by ‘American Music Records’, signed William Russell, Pres[ident].

20. I have reproduced the document and its punctuation as written.

21. Accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.morrisonhotelgallery.com/photographs/eB-Glrr/Mahalia-Jackson-1963>.



PART 3
Pre-Birthing
in New Orleans

PART 3

Pre-Birthing in New Orleans

Barbara deeply loved New Orleans jazz and the African American jazz musicians of New Orleans, in particular. She also loved New Orleans, itself, especially the bohemian French Quarter.

However, there was always something of an ambivalence in her attitude to French Quarter 1950s bohemianism. It provided her with untold opportunities to network with important figures in the worlds of art and literature, many of whom were bohemian in the extreme in their lifestyle, but there was also part of her that craved for stability and the conformity of old-fashioned tradition. Nowhere is this more clearly put than in an unpublished piece of her own writing, when she is musing on being a housewife and a mother in the French Quarter. As I include in a note in the chapter below:

Being an old-fashioned mother and coming from a family both strict and dedicated to the belief that children require intellectual stimulation, I suddenly found myself in the unenviable position of, at least according to my acquaintances, raising a ‘Quarter’ child [Kelley], implying it was something not done in proper circles.

Moreover, it must also be said that she was at the epicentre of a set of untypical – perhaps, unique – interrelations between African American traditional jazz and talented poets, writers and artists in New Orleans in the 1950s. Elsewhere, the links between the arts and jazz were more usually with those 1940s developments in jazz that had come to be called ‘modern jazz’, initially ‘bebop’ and, then ‘cool jazz’, for instance.

In Part 3 of this book, I reproduce the *Just Jazz* articles from February 2019, March 2019, June 2019, and February 2020 as originally published.

I use the opportunity presented in Chapter 7 (*Just Jazz*, February 2019) to muse more generally on the links between the arts and New Orleans jazz,

with reference to the bohemian rejection of a conventional 1950s lifestyle[s] relating to politics, race, and sexuality.

I use the opportunity presented in Chapter 9 (*Just Jazz*, February 2020) to reflect on the various meanings attached to the term New Orleans jazz revivalism.

Chapters 8 (*Just Jazz*, March 2019), 9 and 10 (*Just Jazz*, June 2019) introduce important and previously unknown photographs of New Orleans musicians by the photographer Lyle Bongé.

Barbara was above all a facilitator. Had Bongé been left to his own devices, there is no way these photographs would have been taken. Bongé's interest in photography in New Orleans was almost exclusively devoted to his annual trips to photograph Mardi Gras. However, once Barbara had befriended him it was inevitable, perhaps, that she would enlist him to support her work of documenting the African American old style New Orleans musicians.

However, Barbara was no obsessive collector in her own right. She was happy enough to let Bongé hold on to the negatives of his photographs of the musicians and most of the prints. It was only after her death, when Bongé realised that Kelley was beginning to archive her mother's material, that Bongé passed them on to Kelley.

Neither Bongé nor Kelley, far less Barbara, carried out any serious classification of the photographs. Neither did they identify the musicians except in the most obvious cases, such as those featured in Chapter 10 on George Lewis. This was left to me and my collaborators, most notably, Fred Eatherton, Per Oldaeus, and David Wyckoff. Sacha Borenstein was particularly helpful in identifying actors and others on the set of the 'Beatnik Film' (Chapter 8).



CHAPTER 7

**Flirting with the Beats:
Barbara Reid in 1950s
Bohemian New Orleans**

Chapter 7

Flirting with the Beats: Barbara Reid in 1950s Bohemian New Orleans¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*

As originators and role models of what came to be called the Beat Generation [Kerouac, Ginsberg and Burroughs], they took aim at the hypocrisy and taboos of their time – particularly those involving sex, race, and class.

David Sterritt, *The Beats*
Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 1



Figure 7.1 Barbara Reid, c. late 1950s
Photograph by Lyle Bongé, courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

Preamble

My discovery of ‘authentic’ New Orleans jazz emerged within a heady mix of my first-time reading of beat poetry,² jazz, jazz poetry,³ sexual liberation and radical politics in the England of 1961. I was 16 years of age at the time. As I was at boarding school, the nearest I could get to living the dream was to visit Studio 51, Ken Colyer’s Club in Great Newport Street, Leicester Square, London, in my school holidays. Especially bohemian and beat to me, in my adolescent imagination, was going to the all-night sessions at Studio 51 and getting my first (and last) beat poem published in the school magazine, *The Malvernian*, which voiced something of my experiences at the club.⁴

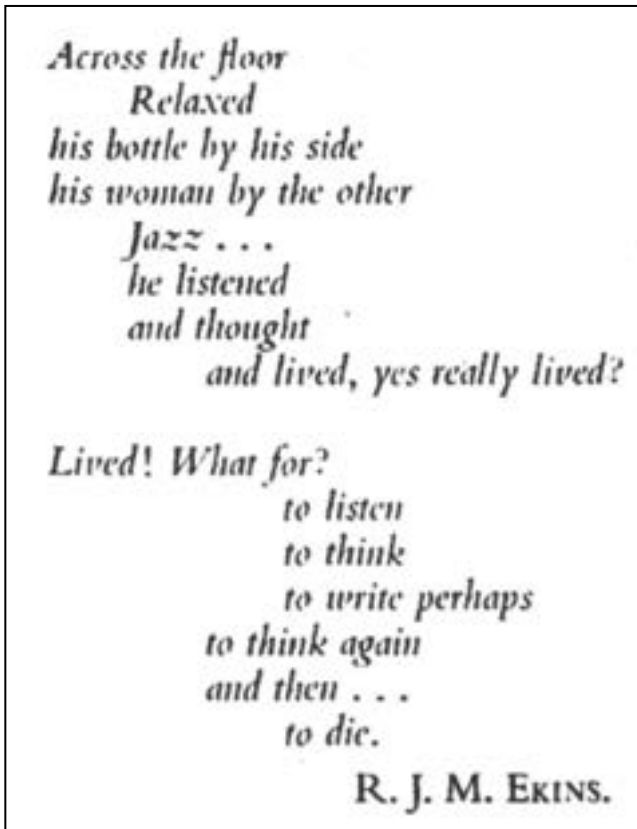


Figure 7.2 Beat Poem, 1963 by Richard Ekins

I was not alone in linking the themes of beat poetry and New Orleans jazz with all sorts of schoolboy yearnings. In an early stage of my collaboration with the great 1950s New Orleans record producer David Wyckoff, I wrote to him:

I have been reminded when dipping into the so-called beatnik literature, just now, that as a 15/16-year-old at boarding school (English public school) I was discovering, in the School library the well-known book on the 'Beatniks' – *The Holy Barbarians* (1959) and the 'Beat' poets, at just the same time I was discovering the paperbacks on jazz: Rex Harris; Harris and Rust which (together with Ken Colyer) led me to Bunk, as a 16 yr old. For a young middle-class boy brought up in the 1950s it was a heady mix - the 'rebellion' against all those restrictive 'middle-class' norms on race, sexuality, what counted as 'good' music, and so on.⁵

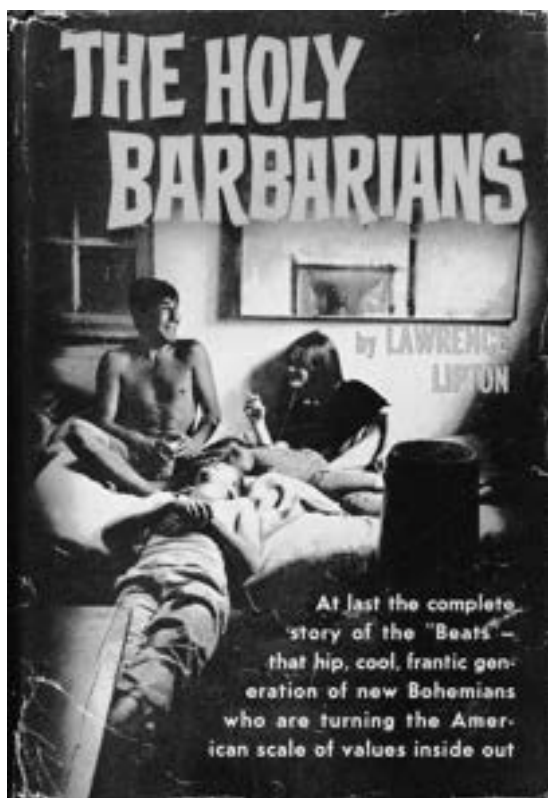


Figure 7.3 *The Holy Barbarians*, 1959

David replied:

I greatly enjoyed your very informative letter. Your story of your background, your exposure as a 16/17-year-old to the arts and New Orleans jazz, etc., very much coincides with my own experience, of course quite a few years earlier. For me it was Bill Russell and his AM records, and the books were Sidney Finkelstein's *Jazz, A People's Music*, and in *Jazzways* the NoLa photo and text section by Skippy Adelman and Eugene Williams. This coincided as well with my enjoying the writings of Henry Miller, Kenneth Patchen and a little later Ginsberg and Kerouac.⁶



Figure 7.4 ‘Patchen Parade’: David Wyckoff (trumpet), Alden Ashforth (clarinet), and Kenneth Patchen (doorway), Old Lyme, Connecticut, c. 1950

Courtesy of David Wyckoff

Interestingly, similar linkages are to be found in the biography of New Orleans jazz enthusiast and commentator Robert Greenwood who first came to the New Orleans jazz in the 1970s. The richness and detail of his reminiscence is worth quoting extensively because it sets the stage so well for the focus of this article, albeit with a more overtly English emphasis:

My own interest in jazz was also literary in origin. The first poetry I ever voluntarily read & enjoyed was the work of the so-called Liverpool Poets (Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, Brian Patten) who led me into the Beat Poets (Ginsberg, [Gregory] Corso, [Lawrence] Ferlinghetti) and their precursors such as Patchen & [Kenneth] Rexroth. We moved from Sunderland to Rugeley 50 years ago when I was 13/14, and I felt very homesick for my home town and was (in Rugeley) fairly friendless and found solace & interest in modernist/Beat poetry which gave me a window onto a more exciting bohemian world.

Absolutely noone in my world was into this sort of thing, but, coming from a working class background, noone ever said that I couldn't be. There were no middle or upper class pressures to conform to conservative notions of 'culture.' I didn't like school, hated sports, and hung around the school library and the art room, those traditional refuges for the intellectual & sensitive schoolboy. As I read more of the avant-garde (or 'underground') poets I realised that many of them were heavily into jazz, but mostly modern jazz. So I borrowed from the local library an LP by Monk and an LP by Coltrane.

I must say that when I listened to them they gave me a sensation akin to sea-sickness and I just could not get along with it. It was only a couple of years later when I heard some records by Ken [Colyer] that I found a jazz that I liked; then I heard Bunk & George & Thomas, et al. by the time I was 16/17. Jeff Nuttall's book *Bomb Culture* showed that he had played in traditional bands, and in the 1980s he did four short talks on Radio 4 about his career as a traditional jazz trumpeter. The series was called 'Conservative Blues'.

Along with George Melly's *Owning Up*, *Bomb Culture* was my favourite book. The poet Michael Horovitz also reviewed Ken's autobiography for *The Spectator*. While Nuttall & Horovitz had frequently given lip service to modernist jazz, they were really old Colyeristas, as was the DJ John Peel (a one-time hero of mine).

So I was a lone, aspirant, would-be bohemian when I started listening. But I still always love it when the literary stuff coincides with the music such as when I learned that Jonathan Williams had, in 1950, gone to NO specifically to hear George Lewis and met David [Wyckoff] & Alden [Ashforth]. Williams also saw to it that *The Black Mountain review* published some of William Russell's photographs. Patchen also was a huge fan of the AMs.⁷

Whereas David and I came from respectable middle-class families (respectively in the USA and the UK) who largely disapproved of our developing passions for New Orleans music, radical politics and alternative lifestyles, and Robert came from a working-class family who did not pressurise him 'to conform to conservative notions of "culture"', Barbara Reid came from variously well-to-do and theatrical families who very much espoused both jazz and bohemian values, in general.⁸ As Kelley Edmiston, Barbara's daughter, puts it:

Grandmother - Mama's mother - was Virginia Cronk Williams. There is a lovely photo of her dripping in pearls and looking very Mae West . . . she was called 'Ginny' - performed in Vaudeville - travelled with Ben Blue - she tragically died on the road in a hotel fire - luckily Ben wasn't in the room with her that night (he could have been my mom's real Dad). Grandmother Ginny died when my mother was only 16. Now, her father (?) was a Jazz drummer in Chicago in the roaming 20's, through the 40's - his name - Charles Williams - a bon vivant! Wealthy railway family from St Joseph, Missouri, New York and ranches in Beeville, Texas - [there is a photo of] the Auntie who raised Mama with family names on the back written in mom's hand - Bavarian German - von Swearigen!⁹

Aptly, when Barbara's daughter, Kelley Edmiston, deposited a large collection of her family's papers with the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, the Special Collections staff abstracted the collection thus:

The collection of papers, recordings, and photographs reflects the historical interests, passion for New Orleans jazz music, and bohemian lifestyles of Edmiston family members, Barbara Reid Edmiston, Kelley Todd Edmiston, and William Kelley Todd Edmiston, who lived in the French Quarter in New

Orleans, La., during the second half of the twentieth century. Papers include letters, printed items and publications, clippings, subject files principally about jazz music, jazz musicians, and the music venue Preservation Hall, which Barbara Reid Edmiston helped found, biographical files chiefly about New Orleans jazz musicians and artists, and writings, particularly about New Orleans voodoo. Other collection materials document Kelley Todd Edmiston's career in theater, and a few items pertain to William "Bill" Edmiston's career as a pharmacist and his support as a white southerner of racial integration. Audio recordings are chiefly of live jazz music and radio interviews and shows pertaining to jazz. Video recordings include a televised documentary about jazz musicians, a copy of a documentary about photographer Johnny Donnels, and live footage shot at the music venue Tipitina's and the pub Cosimo's. Photographs depict the Edmiston family, New Orleans Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz, Preservation Hall, mid-twentieth-century French Quarter street scenes, theatrical productions, and the 1964 demolition of the St. John Berchmans Orphanage, which was the Sisters of the Holy Family convent in New Orleans.¹⁰

The intermeshing of New Orleans jazz, politics, and support for racial integration with the arts – shows and the theatre – are plain to see. So is the bohemian theme, if we equate this with the recent formulation provided by Shawn Chandler Bingham:

Living on the margins, early bohemians valued creative expression and novelty; they experimented in all aspects of their lives, from their art to their dinner plates to their beds. City life allowed them eclectic experiences and access to diverse people and art. Living for the moment often meant geographic mobility and wandering in search of the unfamiliar.¹¹

New Orleans, and most particularly, the French Quarter, has long been associated with the bohemian. Following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, artists from France, Italy, Spain and England were drawn to the city, a number of whom founded the Bohemian Center. In 1872, they were to be joined by the French Impressionist Degas, among others. Many years after his time in New Orleans, Edgar Degas heard that his friend, the painter Paul Gauguin, was looking for an exotic place in the world free of the strictures of modern life. Gauguin was considering the South Sea Islands. Degas advised him to

go to New Orleans instead, but his friend considered it ‘too civilised’.¹²

The unique mix of the exotic, the decadent and the ‘civilised’ is, of course, just what so many creative artists (and would-be creative artists and their hangers-on) find so appealing and what has led them to New Orleans. This was the case in the more well-known ‘bohemian’ period of the 1920s when playwright Tennessee Williams referred to New Orleans as the ‘Last Frontier of Bohemia’ and he settled there in 1928.¹³

It was the case again with New Orleans bohemia of the 1950s with this period being particularly associated with the beat generation. Soon after Barbara’s move to New Orleans in 1952 she would begin to flirt with bohemian and beat worlds, notably at her favourite French Quarter hang-out Bourbon House.¹⁴



**Figure 7.5 Bob Cass (in dark jacket) at Bourbon House
c. mid-1950s**

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

As the biographical detail provided by Robert Greenwood makes clear, the Beat generation was closely allied to bebop and not New Orleans traditional jazz.

However, in New Orleans itself this was a different story, most particularly in the 1950s, through the life and work of Robert ‘Bob’ Cass. As Joanna Levin has made explicit, the ‘intersection between the romance of bohemia and specific locations has been forged through the medium of print.’¹⁵

In the 1920s, the magazine the *Double Dealer* played a major role in linking bohemia with New Orleans. Bob Cass revisited this role in the 1950s as editor and producer of the magazine *Climax*, subtitled ‘a creative review of the jazz spirit’.



**Figure 7.6 Bill Edmiston and Barbara Reid at Bourbon House
c. mid-1950s**

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

Dave Brinks is currently writing two biographies: one of Bob Cass and another of Emile Barnes. He is also the custodian of all of Bob Cass's papers. As Brinks puts it, recently, in a Facebook post:

The Shizzaz. Dig it. Published 1955 New Orleans. Full tilt boogie reveries on underground specialty bohemian New Orleans c. 1955 by visionary editor & publisher Bob 'Rainey' Cass from Climax, A Creative Review in the Jazz Spirit magazine. The flagship magazine of the Beat Generation.¹⁶

In my previous articles in *Just Jazz*, we have seen how Barbara had been drawn to the Victory Club in Chicago and other venues frequented by 'strange people', as Barbara liked to call them.¹⁷ When she left Chicago to live in New Orleans from 1952 onwards, she knew she was coming to a city renowned over the years for bohemians and 'strange people'. Little wonder she soon made the acquaintance of Bob Cass. Her future husband – Bill Edmiston – was a close friend of Cass's. Indeed, David Wyckoff describes Edmiston as Cass's 'best friend' and 'covertly "beat"', his cover being that of a fully employed pharmacist.¹⁸ All were close friends of a number of the New Orleans African-American musicians, Emile Barnes being a particular favourite, and there was often a seamless intermixing between the coterie of young white New Orleans music enthusiasts and more overtly bohemian and beat worlds.

Many enthusiasts and names more associated with old-style New Orleans music in 1950s New Orleans dipped into these worlds, such as Bill Russell, Larry Borenstein and Dick Allen. While Russell was primarily a collector, Borenstein a business man¹⁹ and Dick Allen a researcher, Cass could be portrayed as the 'quintessential 40s bohemian'. Dennis Formento describes Cass in these terms in his interview with Cass entitled 'Welcome to the Society of the Marvelously Damned', before continuing:

Robert Cass . . . allowed himself to be called New Orleans's 'oldest living beatnik' and poet . . . [His] creative life took various directions: poet, editor, essayist, nomad and inventor of identities, dance and theater impresario, jazz fanatic. . . . Bob Cass published *Climax: A Creative Review in the Jazz*

Spirit in 1955 and 1956 from the bar, A Quarterite Place, 733 Bourbon St.²⁰ Invoking the loas²¹ of traditional jazz and anarchistic bohemianism, Robert Cass published poetry, fiction, and essays by writers such as Lawrence Lipton (*The Holy Barbarians*) and small press mainstay Judson Crews. He knew Kerouac and Ginsberg and created the imaginary demimonde of writers and artists in 'The Society of the Marvelously Damned' that moved invisibly through the afterhours bars of the Vieux Carré. 'A handsome blond adventurer,' as poet Diane di Prima calls him in her *Memoirs of a Beatnik*.²²

Cass was interested in the links between voodoo and early jazz. It was on Mardi Gras day in 1952 that Bob Cass was holding rehearsals for his risqué voodoo dancing project when the rehearsal got busted by the police. The idea had been to raise money for the launch of *Climax*. Voodoo was also a major interest of Barbara's who was particularly proud of her book on voodoo.²³

However, unlike Cass, at this time Barbara had another more conventional side to her. Following the break-up of her marriage with her first husband, Bill Reid, she had left her two children behind in Chicago and missed them dearly. Indeed, during her early days in New Orleans in 1952 she frequently felt so down and isolated that she wrote of suicidal thoughts to her friend and mentor Bill Russell. In some of her unpublished writings she reflects on what it would be like to be a housewife in the French Quarter. Her wishes to have her children with her compete with her yearnings to associate with the types of child-free Bohemian characters that were permanent fixtures in her favourite haunts. There is a sense, perhaps, in which her vision of a particular kind of New Orleans music venue combines the various elements associated with her competing wishes. In 1950s New Orleans, for whites to associate as equals with African-American New Orleanians was, of course, illegal, quite apart from being bohemian. The Beats, in particular, as David Sterritt puts it: 'took aim at the hypocrisy and taboos of their time – particularly involving sex, race, and class.'²⁴ Barbara went further and wished such 'aim' to be a family affair.²⁵



Figure 7.7 ‘A Family Occasion’: Barbara Reid with Christopher and Sarah, her children from her marriage to Bill Reid, on a rare visit to New Orleans, at a New Orleans jazz parade, early 1950s

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

A couple of years after Barbara’s death, Alden Ashforth, who knew her well, suggests that Barbara’s emphasis on family occasions lay behind the origins of her concept of Preservation Hall. In May 1985, Barry Martyn had organised an old-style ‘Dancing at Confectioner’s Hall’ session with the purpose of recapturing the old days of the New Orleans Dance Halls. Ashforth recorded the session and wrote the sleeve notes for the LP that followed. He prefaced his notes with the following:

Arrive at the ‘Confectioner’s Hall,’ 2001 Burgundy Street, home of the Bakers Union. Steve Teeter and Kelly Edmiston help lug in the heavy suitcases. I reflect that in 1981 when, for the last time, I saw Kelley’s mother Barbara Reid (who first conceived of the idea of what became Preservation Hall) she talked at length about a new dream: a real old-fashioned dance hall for relaxed evenings of food, drink, dancing with jazz music, where families with children would feel comfortable. Now, thanks to Barry Martyn and Chris Burke it’s about to happen, at least once, but a couple of years too late for Barbara to enjoy it. Her spirit is with us tonight.²⁶

A similar theme appears from time to time in Barbara’s earlier collected memorabilia. One of the handwritten posters occasionally on display at Icon (Perseverance) Hall was ‘Kids of ALL ages welcome’, for instance. The same idea is also noticeable in Barbara’s piece published in *Climax* on the 1950s New Orleans dance hall which ends with a final paragraph extolling the fact that such places are ‘healthy’ and for the whole family to enjoy.²⁷

Barbara wishes to steer the visitor to New Orleans away from jazz on Bourbon Street to ‘some real New Orleans color’, to ‘an entirely different type of music’; and to places suitable for all the family. Indeed, the whole ‘family values’ flavour of the article sits somewhat uneasily with the tenor of the rest of *Climax*. So why did Cass include it? It was as if liking, supporting, and writing about the African-American New Orleans musicians was of itself ‘beat’ and bohemian. And for Barbara’s writing to be a published in such a publication no doubt fulfilled a bohemian dream and whetted her appetite for more.



Figure 7.8 Front cover of Bob Cass’s, *Climax – A Creative Review of the Jazz Spirit, Session 1.*

For Bob Cass, the red-checked tablecloth is ‘The Cloth of Bohemian Letters, and the unfading emblem of the Swinging Scene’²⁸



Figure 7.9 DeDe and Billie Pierce
Photographer unknown

New Orleans Scene – Back O’ Town

by Barbara Reid²⁹

LUTHJENS

Everyone who comes to New Orleans hears jazz. Walk down Bourbon Street and you can’t help yourself; good, bad and indifferent. There are names known all over the world and names only known to Jazz fanatics. But for the visitor who wants to see some real New Orleans color and hear an entirely different type of music we suggest a little beer garden at the corners of Marais and Almonaster, named Luthjens.

It’s a strange little place that looks as though it might be too tired to stand. During the week the dance hall is closed but on Friday, Saturday and Sunday a four-piece band keeps the place packed. There are steamers, gaudy lights, soggy table cloths and wonderful music.

Billie Pierce, the warm friendly woman at the piano, has a voice reminiscent of Bessie Smith and a unique and thrilling blues style all her own. Her husband, DeDe, plays a strong wild trumpet in a rambling lyrical vein that stems directly from the mother lode of New Orleans Brass Band parade music, and he shouts his own inimitable Creole versions of all the favorite numbers with an explosive vitality that can only be described as Picnic Style Swing.

Luthjens has been known for some years among the musicians as the “Old Folks Home” because of its steady popularity with the people of the neighbourhood. Most of these people have been spending their nights out at this establishment since they themselves were young.

One is advised not to stand or dance too closely to the bandstand because of Harrison Brazely’s powerful trombone. It extends an awesome distance past the railing. Signs all around the wall warn against jitterbugging; but we might suggest you be beware what we term “The Cajun Stomp.” The Kitty is passed occasionally. No request is ignored and even the most boring of top tunes is made enjoyable by the band. Only beer or soft drinks may be had.

Visitors and celebrities may expect to be treated with indifference. Regular neighborhood customers have been found to be a paying proposition.

On record, you can hear Billie and DeDe with Emile Barnes and his New Orleans Joymakers (American Music LP 641), a full New Orleans ensemble including Harrison Brazely. Lawrence Toca's trumpet on Careless Love, Albert Glenný's bass, and Josiah Frazier on drums. Outstanding on the record are the hauntingly beautiful vocal and answering trumpet passages of DeDe and Billie's Blues, and when you go to Luthjens you can hear and dance to the latest version of it, and all the really happy music you'd expect from jazz in one of its oldest stomping grounds.



Figure 7.10 Mama Lou's
Photographer unknown

MAMA LOU'S

There was a time in the childhood of Jazz when the Lake Pontchartrain shore was speckled with dance halls built out over the water. There are plenty of Orleanians who still remember weekends at Milneburg, West End or Spanish Fort and the sea food, dancing and music.

In this historical area there is still one dance hall out over the lake that provides for the public as it did years ago. That establishment is Mama Lou's. The official address is Citrus, Louisiana (still a part of New Orleans) and it is right off Little Wood Road.

If you are willing to make a five-mile drive from the edge of town, park by the side of a narrow dark road with crickets and frogs, embark on a wooden walk which is lined with swamp weeds some ten feet tall, cross a mound of railway tracks still in use and continue approximately three city blocks along a very sketchy pier with the waves of the lake swishing beneath you, an unusual treat awaits you. For, on Saturday nights, only, Mama Lou provides one of the most uninhibited bands in the City.

It consists of trumpet, clarinet, guitar, bass, and drums. At present the combo is led by Andrew Morgan with Peter Bocage, top Parade trumpet man. Occasionally Emile Barnes' fine clarinet may be heard here.

Mama Lou keeps a close eye on her customers and when the hall starts rocking (literally) too much, she sees to it that a subdued blues calms things down a bit.

Estimates on Mama Lou's age are in the late eighties. Nevertheless if the mood takes her she joins in the dances. The lighting is glaring and the décor is not modern. There are granite top tables to permit the full indulgence of boiled crabs which are excellent.

The band cheerfully plays all requests but exceed themselves on the more standard and archaic New Orleans numbers; numbers like Careless Love Blues, Corrina, and Bill Bailey.

HAPPY LANDING

Of the many places in and around New Orleans devoted to dispensing authentic Jazz in combination with dancing and the inevitable sea food for the entire family's consumption, an establishment known as Happy Landing has long held a top rating.

It seems that one of the prime requirements in providing this type of pleasure consists of having a somewhat sinister appearing building in an almost inaccessible spot. In this respect Happy Landing is typical, and also in making the difficult venture worthwhile.

On Saturday nights five coloured gentlemen well along in years play blues, stomps, and rags for an audience ranging in age from those who toddle to those who totter; all equally appreciative.

Probably the best known member of the band is Johnny St. Cyr, the guitarist, who recorded with Louis Armstrong on the Hot Five records and with Jelly Roll Morton and the Red Hot Peppers; all of which are now collector's items. Charlie Love is on trumpet and can occasionally be seen and heard at the Brass Band parades for funerals and lodge or church affairs. Both Charlie and Johnny have been recently recorded by Joe Mares for his Southland label.

Happy Landing is located opposite the New Orleans Airport on Little Woods Road on the lakefront. The whole family is welcome and everybody dances, including the small children.

These musicians, and the people they play for, emphasize the important fact that New Orleans Jazz is healthy and something for the entire family to enjoy; it disproves the theory that Jazz had to hide in grimy dark bistros with members of the narcotics squad breathing in eager anticipation.



Figure 7.11 Front Booklet cover, American Music AMCD-114

Barbara Reid, Bob Cass and Emile Barnes

Alden Ashforth's excellent booklet notes for the Folkways releases of the early Emile Barnes sessions indicate something of the interrelations between Bob Cass, Barbara Reid and the New Orleans musicians. Writing of the first session. Ashworth notes:

Where to record was the first question. David [Wyckoff] and I had just begun sharing a second-floor apartment on the corner of Dauphine and Ursulines in the French Quarter (shown on the album's cover photo). It had been inherited from Bob Cass, who'd moved elsewhere, and had a living room just large enough to hold a band. Studios which would allow recording of black musicians were scarce, and there was the financial aspect . . . Mili was in a fine mood and spent a good bit of time joking with Bob Cass, of whom he was particularly fond.

[As the session was concluding] Bob Cass said "How about 'High Society'?" The band agreed and launched into a rollicking rendition, Barnes surprising us with a variant of the traditional clarinet obbligato that was quite his own. Everyone broke into spontaneous applause at the end. Toca reluctantly drained his final glass and packed up his trumpet - his wife didn't like him staying out late. Some of the musicians hung around a bit longer to hear playbacks, but the memorable evening all too soon came to a close.³⁰

Later, Bob Cass's memories of this session in his interview with Dennis Formento would be garbled on Emile Barnes and Dick Allen, in particular – perhaps by Dennis Formento, or an assistant, when the interview was written up:

When I got here [New Orleans] I had a little shop over Dumaine Street, first. And these two guys came down here from Harvard [Alden Ashforth and David Wyckoff]. Real intellectuals, they came down with a tape recorder because they had gotten interested in it. They came to my shop and we started talking all day about jazz, and so I started going around with them. They found out when all the parades were happening. A lot of white people weren't doing this at the time, you know. If I hadn't met those guys, I probably wouldn't have even gotten on that track. But once I did, it became a big thing, and I began to really dig it. They made a recording of Mamie Barnes, the blues singer,³¹ and they got a band together. I was moving out of this apartment when they had

this recording come up and they figured there was just about enough room to put a band in it. Anyway, they had a session there. And I met other people like Dick Allen (Tulane University archivist & bandleader),³² and I became a second-liner, definitely at the parades. Picked up the trumpet, started going back to learn how to play it again after I had played it a little bit in a school band. I played the French horn, which was just oom-pa. Pretty easy to pick up. I went to Dick Allen's pad, and he had this old beat-up trumpet in there. I picked it up and I blew a high note on it, and I just decided to keep it. I said "I'm going to take this home with me." He didn't care, I guess. He had a pad like this, you couldn't stuff more than two or three people in there.³³

Barbara Reid was not present at this first 1951 session, but for the booklet notes of the Emile Barnes session with trumpet player Charlie Love in 1952, Ashforth comments:

The late Barbara Reid was a great help in arranging this session; as a long-time friend of the Barnes family she arranged through Joe Mares to find a ground-floor studio in the Quarter where we could record late at night.³⁴

Bob Cass, New Orleans Jazz, Emile Barnes and *Climax Magazine*

Barbara Reid's article on the 1950s New Orleans dance halls is, of course, clearly and unequivocally about the old-style jazz musicians of 'back-o-town' New Orleans, written about in a short and focussed article.

In addition, in the first issue of *Climax*, Cass includes a number of direct references to New Orleans musicians that may be easily researched. For instance, Bob Cass is much taken with the theme of babies and childhood which he applies both to his magazine and to New Orleans musicians with 'Babe' or 'Baby' in their nicknames. Bob Cass's 'baby' (the magazine) was in its babyhood.

Those working on the magazine 'ended up calling each other Baby, out of respect for the man who had ultimately won back the wisdom and candor of the Child'.

Cass dedicates the magazine, among others, to the drummer Baby Dodds and the bass player One-Eye Babe Philip: 'To Baby Dodds, who swings a bridge to heaven with the woodblocks that will never bring you down';

‘To One-Eye Babe Philip, who’s been slapping the sound of sounds out of his patched up picnic bass longer than the trees can remember “...O saw it Baby, --now you’re goin’!...”’³⁵



Figure 7.12 Emile Barnes and Bob Cass, 1951

Courtesy of David Wyckoff

Again, Cass introduces his article ‘on the society’ with a quote from Bunk Johnson exploring the early days of New Orleans music. This is a transcript from Bill Russell’s American Music LP643 of Bunk talking. However, what would be missed without knowledge of Cass’s letter to Emile Barnes (dated November 21, 1957)³⁶ are the more hidden references to New Orleans music in the magazine, and, in particular, to the clarinet playing of Emile Barnes. In addition, the letter provides a fascinating insight into Cass’s plans for *Climax* after the publication of the first two issues and includes his proposal for what would be actualised by Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Reid at Preservation Hall – his proposal, that is, for ‘casual & rehearsal sessions where we would work to revive the memory and sound of the early days . . . and a lot of old tunes, stomp them back. . . .’

In its initial months, Preservation Hall proceeded along the lines suggested by Cass. Fittingly it would be Emile Barnes who featured so prominently in the opening sessions at Preservation Hall,³⁷ as he would do some months later at Icon Hall (Preservation Hall in Exile) which Ken Mills and Barbara Reid opened when they were summarily dismissed from Preservation Hall by Larry Borenstein in the September of 1961.

Climax Magazine, New York, N.Y.
Nov 21, 1957

Dear Emile Barnes

I am sending you, by other mail, 2 copies of *Climax* - Session 1, with the ‘Milneberg’ cover (red-checkered table cloth, crawfish, drink & music) all printed by hand by me out in Oklahoma about 2 years back, and Session 2 (with photo of Lori on cover . . . you’ll remember her, folk singer and played guitar, Don Martin’s girl, they came out to your place with me and David Wyckoff a couple of times before going to Mexico) and this issue I had printed in Mexico on a long visit there last year.

Now the 1st issue has mention of your playing on page 39 & 40, and session 2 has the fine photo of you taken by our friend Ralston Crawford, with those other wonderful shots of New Orleans.³⁸

And you may get a kick out of some of my writing in Session One (about half of it is my stuff under make-up names.) like the little poem on the back of the book called ‘Streeter Larkin’s Blues’ and ‘Baby, Baby, Baby’ the dedication in front, where I build around lines about Baby Dodds and Babe Philip. And there’s ‘On The Society’ starting at the quote from Bunk, and telling about our scene there in the good old year of 1952. ‘Why Police’ I wrote parts of, with Bill Edmiston, now Barbara Reid’s husband. And the selections from ‘A Harlot’s Garden of Verses’ by Singer Beasley, and the poem ‘To Greco’ by Swanee Gusta --- they are all mine too. The #2 issue is all stuff sent in by others. I stuck to editing, there.

Now you will know I am sorry I didn’t get out to see you all last time I was in New Orleans, back from Mexico. But I was always broke & struggling just to keep beans and rice in the pot, I never could get back to my old way of rambling and parades and beers and back o’ town music. I had since gotten a new lady & then of course a new baby to keep me hummin & I was trying to make a success of this shop I had in the Quarter, which went bust anyway, so now I’m up here and it’s no better. (Worse without Nola dreams!) But I hope to get a break soon --- which would be enough money to come back to New Orleans and stay by the music.

I am working on a book of poems (Harlot’s Garden of Verses) for publication, and looking for financial backing for *Climax*. I am hoping to interest a record company in a New Orleans recording project, so that there will be recording equipment and money for a ready playing hall with piano, drums, bass, for Informal practice and recording and study, a sort of New Orleans school, where everybody can get together and play and talk and relax with some juice and get some of the old ideas going again. I know this is something you have spoken of. I think it would be great, so I am going to try to find someone to back it. Because there has to be fund to pay needed musicians for casual & rehearsal sessions where we would work to revive the memory and sound of the early days . . . and a lot of old tunes, stomp them back. . . .

The reference to Emile Barnes’ playing on pp. 39 and 40 relates to

The hot clarinet was mightier than the police whistle, and nothing but the old righteous jazz was played after midnight – and after midnight everybody danced.

Prior to this reference, Cass gives his account of the bust. The links between ‘authentic’ music and voodoo and the busted attempt to raise funds for *Climax* are made explicit:

As Mardi Gras, 1952, rolled around the Society was tuned in on the highest carnival frequency, with the Toulouse Street Strugglers setting the pace in the roughest spasm band tradition. An exhibition of authentic Voodoo Dancing and Drumming was in production as a jazz background carnival attraction, by which we hoped to raise funds for future projects and expanded functions – public Climax Balls and recording sessions of New Orleans music, a national show of jazz-inspired paintings, and the ultimate publication of *Climax*. But the project was nipped in rehearsal by the police – at the behest of the nearby Bourbon Street Peep-Show Dynasty, which resented our black market rivalry in the skin trade.

The party was raided under a defunct law against inter-racial gatherings; persecuted by private police venom as a gang of communists’ (the only printable term they had for us); and publicly prosecuted in a courtroom farce for ‘disturbing the peace’ . . .

With our meagre finances incarcerated by the Bust, we were unable to capitalize on the publicity by carrying out the programme in a more legitimate format, and the damage was complete.

Conclusion and Further Work

This article has been concerned with introducing a number of matters relating to 1950s bohemian New Orleans with reference to African-American New Orleans revivalist jazz musicians and Barbara Reid’s involvement in various scenes that featured those musicians.

The ‘Flirting with the Beats’ in the title is suggestive both of the ‘beatniks’ and musical ‘beats’. The ‘Flirting’ is suggestive of Barbara’s proclivity to dip in and out of different bohemian and non-bohemian worlds with varying degrees of purpose, commitment and success. Inevitably I have been selective. A world that I have not touched on, for instance, is the film-world and it is this that will provide the focus for my next article in the Barbara Reid series.

NOTES

1. This is Part 4 of the *Just Jazz* series ‘The Barbara Reid Project’, see: <http://lacroixrecords.com/barbara%20reid.html>. It should be read in conjunction with the whole series. I thank Kelley Edmiston, David Wyckoff, Dave Brinks, Fred Eatherton, Robert Greenwood, Adele Tinman, and Matthew Ekins for their contributions to this article.
2. *‘Beat’ Poets*, selected by Gene Baro, Vista Books, London, 1961.
3. *Jazz Poems*, selected by Anselm Hollo, Vista Books, London, 1963.
4. *The Malvernian, DXXIII*, March 1963, p. 11. I thank Ralph Blumenau and the Malvernian Society for locating this poem.
5. Email, October 30, 2017, Richard Ekins to David Wyckoff. See: Lawrence Lipton, *The Holy Barbarians*, Messner, New York, 1959; Rex Harris, *Jazz*, Pelican, 1954; Rex Harris and Brian Rust, *Recorded Jazz: A Critical Guide*, Pelican, 1958. These books were soon followed by Charles Fox, Peter Gammond and Alun Morgan, *Jazz on Record: A Critical Guide*, Arrow Books, London, 1960; Rudi Blesh, *Shining Trumpets: A History of Jazz*, 1949, Cassell, London, and membership of the Jazz Book Club, accessed July 2, 2023, (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz_Book_Club). The Jazz Book Club (1956 to 1967) soon led me to Frederic Ramsey and Charles Edward Smith, *Jazzmen*, Jazz Book Club, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1958 (Reprint of 1939 first edition) and other classics in the jazz literature.
6. The core group of Beat Generation authors, including Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs, met in 1944 in and around Columbia University in New York City. Later, in the mid-1950s, a number of the central figures ended up together in San Francisco associating themselves with the San Francisco Renaissance. Kenneth Patchen, a major influence on the San Francisco Renaissance and the Beat Generation, had been writing in San Francisco for many years before. Ginsberg’s ‘Howl’ was published in 1956 and Kerouac’s *On the Road* was published in 1957. Henry Miller was an important influence on Kerouac.
7. Email, Robert Greenwood to Richard Ekins, September 17, 2018. Relatedly, fellow Porcupine Society [Leicester Square] member Adele Tinman told me that as a 13 to 14 year-old in 1959-1960, *The Holy Barbarians* caught her teenage imagination. She bought a copy, read it from cover to cover and it remained an important influence on her throughout her life and musical development.
8. However, note Barbara Reid in an unpublished typescript, 1967: ‘Being an old-fashioned mother, and coming from a family both strict and dedicated to the

belief that children require intellectual stimulation, I suddenly found myself in the unenviable position of, at least according to many of my acquaintances, raising a “Quarter child” [Kelley], implying it was something not done in proper circles.’ In ‘Barbara Reid Poetry and Writing’, Kelley Edmiston USB drive given to Richard Ekins.

9. Email, Kelley Edmiston to Richard Ekins, September 21, 2018.

10. Edmiston Family Collection on New Orleans, 1910s-2010s, accessed July 2, 2023, <https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/05750/>.

11. Shawn Chandler Bingham, ‘Bohemian Groves in Southern Soil’, in Shawn Chandler Bingham and Lindsey A. Freeman (eds.), *The Bohemian South: Creating Countercultures, from Poe to Punk*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2017, p. 5.

12. See: *The WPA Guide to New Orleans: The Federal Writers’ Project Guide to 1930s New Orleans*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1938, pp. 96-97; Christopher Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans*, 1997, accessed July 7, 2023, <http://movies2.nytimes.com/books/first/b/benfey-degas.html>.

13. Accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.biography.com/news/tennessee-williams-new-orleans>; John Shelton Reed, *Dixie Bohemia: A French Quarter Circle in the 1920s*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2012; Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, ‘Know Louisiana: The French Quarter (1920s)’, 2014, accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.vianolavie.org/2014/04/10/know-louisiana-the-french-quarter-renaissance-1920s-85836/>

14. David Wyckoff puts it this way: ‘Where to go in answering your request re. my experience with early ‘50s New Orleans [and bohemianism]? For one thing, for me the element of bohemianism was of very little importance, my friendship with Bob Cass notwithstanding. Of course Barbara also, a very good friend, certainly had many “Bohemian” interests. The glue that brought us all together, however, was our shared passion for New Orleans African-American traditional jazz. Different routes lead us to this.’ Email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, September 16, 2018.

15. Joanna Levin, ‘The Double Dealers in Bohemian New Orleans’, in Bingham and Freeman, op. cit., pp. 36-53 at pp. 37-38.

16. Dave Brinks, Facebook page, March 21, 2017.

17. Barbara uses this phrase when talking about certain people living at a certain French Quarter address in her (undated) cassette tape made with Barbara Reid and Bob Cass talking with each other. The recording of this cassette tape supplied to me

by the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, of this cassette tape contains only a few minutes of conversation. Perhaps the major part of the tape was accidentally erased or never recorded in the first place.

18. Bill Edmiston published in *Climax* under the name of Roger Stonehenge. See, for example, Roger Stonehenge, 'Why Police? An Examination of Behavior-Governing Influences in the Life of Grover Hicks, Middle-Class American', *Climax* – Session 1, pp. 31-34.

19. Cf. 'He [Borenstein] soon became an entrepreneur—buying buildings in the Quarter and eventually opening a gallery across from the Bourbon House. Larry wore glasses, a T-shirt, slacks, and sandals—sans socks—as long as the weather permitted. He not only looked bohemian, Larry was bohemian.' Rolland Golden, Rolland Golden: *Life, Love, and Art in the French Quarter*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS, p. 17.

20. This is the same address as the present-day Fritzel's which today markets itself as the 'Oldest Operated Jazz Club in New Orleans' and 'Fritzel's European Jazz Pub'. See: accessed July 2, 2023, http://www.fritzelsjazz.net/no_flash.php.

21. Loa (plural: loas) are the spirits of Haitian Vodou and Louisiana Voodoo, also known as New Orleans Voodoo.

22. The Blacklisted Journal List, Column 75, Dennis Formento, 'An Interview with Robert Cass: Welcome to the Society of the Marvelously Damned', 2002, accessed July 2, 2023, <http://www.blacklistedjournalist.com/column75k.html>. Diane Di Prima, *Memoirs of a Beatnik*, Olympia Press, Paris, 1965, p. 132, adds on *Climax* and Cass: 'The first of the pre-beat "little magazines" written in the "hip" argot we all devotedly and self-consciously spoke, had just come out of New Orleans. It was called *Climax* and was edited, typed, printed and stapled together by a handsome blond adventurer named Bob Cass. *Climax* combined literature and jazz news. Jazz was for us the most important happening art: the first spokesmen in our idiom spoke trumpet and sax. Bird in Louis' Tavern on West Fourth Street on weekday nights handed out posters for his incredible weekends at the Open Door on West Broadway, weekends when he would take us all with him, teach us all to fly.'

23. See: 'Barbara makes best-seller list with voodoo book', referring to 'Voodoo Primer by Barbara Reid', *The French Quarter Gazette*, October 12, 1967, p. 1. I have not been able to locate this book. I do have a copy of her 13-chapter proposal *Voodoo Today*, with accompanying text, for Pacesetter Publications, dated January 19, 1967. The article was a spoof. The book was never published.

24. Op. cit.

25. David Wyckoff writes: ‘Barbara made friends easily, and developed a close relationship, as did I, with the family of Emile Barnes, and she delighted in the very small great grandchildren.’ Email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, August 9, 2017.
26. Alden Ashforth, ‘Sleeve Notes’, *Dancing at Confectioner’s Hall*, LP, GHB 205.
27. Barbara Reid, ‘Back O’ Town’, *Climax – A Creative Review in the Jazz Spirit*, Session 1, 1955, pp. 37-38, at p. 38.
28. The sentence in quotes is taken from the inside front cover of *Climax*, Session 1.
29. Ibid. William Carter includes an abbreviated version of this article in his *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1991, pp. 100-101. Carter adds the title: ‘Those Marvelous Dance Halls: Prelude to Preservation’.
30. Dauphine Street Jam Session, Emile Barnes – Early Recordings, Volume 1 (1951), Folkways FJ2857, pp. 2 and 4.
31. This is nonsense. The reference here is to Emile Barnes, the clarinet player, who was renowned for his blues playing, not singing.
32. Dick Allen was never a bandleader, though he did take trombone lessons from Manuel Manetta.
33. The Blacklisted Journal List, Column 75, Dennis Formento, ‘An Interview with Robert Cass: Welcome to the Society of the Marvelously Damned’, 2002, op. cit.
34. Emile Barnes: The Early Recording Sessions, Vol. 2, 1951-52, Folkways FJ 2858, p. 2.
35. For quotations, see: *Climax* – Session 1, preliminaries and p. 1.
36. I thank Dave Brinks for his generosity in sending me a copy of this letter with the kind words: ‘Glad to help. All this means everything to you as it does to me my friend.’ David Wyckoff adds: ‘I do continue to respect Bob Cass. He was brilliant and a very pleasant man, but increasingly disorganized in his life as time went on. I consider Dave Brinks in some ways a latter day clone of his, but without the disorganization. Dave, a club owner, music lover and poet - also part Native American and devoted to the culture of the Mardi Gras Indian gangs, which he participates in - is really also a devoted and extraordinarily meticulous and thorough researcher. See his work on the genealogy, family connections, and biographical material on so many of the New Orleans musicians, especially, of course, Mr. Barnes.’ Messenger, Dave Brinks to Richard Ekins, March 6, 2018; email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, September 16, 2018. For Brinks’ work on Barnes, see, e.g., David Brinks, ‘Emile Barnes: The Meltdown Force of Poisons of Any Description (February 18, 1892-March 2,

1970)', *Entrepôt: The Brain Trust News in Arts & Letters*, Vol. 1, Nos 3 & 4, 2011, pp. 3-7, 9-12. Brinks is also the owner of an original portrait of Barbara Reid by Kay Johnson, aka Kaja, 'Beat Generation poet and painter', see: accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/beat/kaja>.

37. See: Ken Mills, 'Preservation Hall Premiere', Cassette, Getdown records, NOJ 0-001; also, 'Opening Night at Preservation Hall: Emile Barnes Louisiana Joymakers, AMCD-86; and 'Emile Barnes and his Louisiana Joymakers: First Night at Preservation Hall "Live" June 13, 1961', 504 CD60. In a two-page news release giving notice of the cassette, dated April 24, 1990, Mills specifically refers to himself as [Preservation] 'hall co-founder' [with Barbara Reid]. I thank Ken's friend, Len Klikunas, for sending me a copy of this document. As Mills puts it: '5 tapes of Preservation Hall's opening night found, November, 1989. Set for issue to the public in late May, cassette form.'

38. Ralston Crawford, 'A Selection of 8 New Orleans Jazz Photographs', *Climax 2*, Summer 1956, pp. 56-64. Emile Barnes features on p. 63.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. At the top, there is a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, the building has several doors. On the left, there is a white door with a diamond-shaped window. Next to it is an open doorway with a cushion on the floor. To the right of the doorway is another white door with a diamond-shaped window and a mesh screen. Further right, there is a dark door with a small window. The number '726' is visible on the wall next to the dark door. The overall scene is somewhat weathered and aged.

CHAPTER 8

Barbara Reid,
Billie and DeDe Pierce
and a 'Beatnik Film'
– The Photographs
of Lyle Bongé

Chapter 8

Barbara Reid, Billie and DeDe Pierce and a ‘Beatnik Film’ The Photographs of Lyle Bongé¹

Richard Ekins and Fred Eatherton, *Just Jazz*



Figure 8.1 Barbara Reid, c. late 1950s
All photographs in this chapter are by Lyle Bongé
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

In last month's *Just Jazz*, as part 4 of the Barbara Reid series, I considered Reid's contribution to New Orleans revivalist jazz in 1950s bohemian New Orleans. I noted her proclivity to dip in and out of different bohemian and non-bohemian worlds with varying degrees of purpose, commitment and success.

In this follow-up article, Fred Eatherton and I focus on another bohemian project that Reid participated in. On this occasion, it is unlikely that the project came to fruition, through no fault of Barbara's. However, it did lead to a very interesting collection of photographs by Lyle Bongé (1929-2009) which provides the focus of this article.

The starting point to this contribution is a series of photographs in the Barbara Reid Collection established by Barbara's daughter, Kelley Edmiston. This series comprises 56 photographs archived by Kelley as 'Beatnik Film, 1959'.² She recalls the negatives of the photographs being given to her by the photographer Lyle Bongé when she visited him a few years before his death.

Bongé had already had two books published of his photographs.³ Although he was particularly dissatisfied with the reproduction quality of *The Sleep of Reason*,⁴ he did feel that the two publications secured his legacy to some degree and his concern when Kelley visited him was that his additional work should be archived for posterity.

He was a friend of Kelley's mother, Barbara Reid, and had photographed her on numerous occasions. He had also photographed many New Orleans musicians, especially George Lewis.

Kelley duly fulfilled her obligations to Bongé when she deposited most of the Bongé negatives and photographs she owned with the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.⁵ These deposits are now housed and archived within the 'Edmiston Family Collection in New Orleans, 1910s-2010s'.⁶



**Figure 8.2 Negatives of the ‘Beatnik Film’ Lyle Bongé photographs
Courtesy of Biff Hollingsworth**

The 56 photographs are all taken on the ‘Beatnik film’ set⁷ and they include shots of the film crew directed by Eric Sayers working for the Motion Picture Advertising Service Co. (MPA), the Texas-based film company that had premises at 1032 Carondelet Street, New Orleans. Barbara was a friend of Eric Sayers and through this friendship would on occasions assist him in such matters as film location, bringing people together, props and costumes, script supervision, and so on.

Kelley labels the film ‘Beatnik Film, 1959’ based on what her mother had told her; that it includes a still of a very beat looking Barbara with her husband Bill Edmiston, and various French Quarter characters on the set in variously beat guise. Larry Borenstein is wearing a tall black hat in several of the pictures. A figure who is possibly Bill Russell features in one photo, also wearing a hat. Other figures on the bohemian scene include Gypsy Lou Webb who would soon be publishing *Outsider* magazine, with her husband Jon Webb.⁸ We like to imagine that Barbara drew upon assembled extras from ‘the strange people’ living at her favourite French Quarter addresses: 813 Toulouse; 912 Toulouse; 716 Dauphine; 620 Royal; 732 St. Peter; 700 Bourbon.⁹

What is most significant, however, to readers of *Just Jazz* is that the series features 14 photographs of Billie and DeDe Pierce and Alcide ‘Slow Drag’ Pavageau on the film set.

For the choice of musicians, Barbara was a regular visitor to Luthjens where Billie and DeDe had been playing for years every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. She had written about Billy and DeDe at Luthjens in her *Climax* article for Bob Cass.¹⁰ She also wrote on them in ‘What’s On’ articles for tourists.¹¹

Around the time of the ‘beatnik film’, Billie and DeDe were beginning to make a comeback after a period of Billie’s lengthy illness.¹² In October 1959, they recorded the session that would be released on Folk-Lyric in 1960 and later on Arhoolie and Storyville.¹³ It was entirely appropriate, therefore, that Billie and DeDe were selected for the 1959 film – with the addition of ‘Slow Drag’, who a year or so later would be giving his name to the nascent Preservation Hall – previously called ‘Slow Drag’s Hangout’.¹⁴

We have evidence here of Billie, DeDe and ‘Slow Drag’ appearing in a film that has totally evaded the discographers’ ears and eyes. It seems likely that if any part or parts of the film were released, this would have been spotted by a New Orleans jazz enthusiast and/or discographer, as was the case, for instance, with silent Bunk Johnson film footage and unreleased Kid Howard film footage.¹⁵

As indicated above, the film was directed by Eric Sayers for MPA. MPA produced several films in the late 1950s and early 1960s set in New Orleans. The company was also responsible for the syndicated TV series N.O.P.D. (New Orleans Police Department – from 1955) from which two films were later edited and released: *New Orleans after Dark* (1958) and *Four for the Morgue* (1962). Other films not connected with the TV series included *Invisible Avenger* (1958) and *Common Law Wife* (1963).

Jazz music of various sorts is often featured in these films and some of these films have a specifically jazz-centred theme. *New Orleans After Dark*

(1958) includes music scenes from the Paddock Lounge, Bourbon Street. Per Oldaeus has identified Ernest Cagnolatti, McNeil Breaux, Andrew Morgan, Bill Matthews, Happy Goldston and Noone Johnson amongst the visible or just audible musicians.¹⁶ Fats Pichon sings ‘Woman’ at the beginning of *Invisible Avenger* (1958).¹⁷ In this film, later released as *Bourbon Street Shadows* (1962), Lamont Cranston, aka The Shadow, investigates the murder of a New Orleans bandleader. However, there is no sign of any released footage from the film featuring Billie, DeDe and ‘Slow Drag’ that we have been able to locate. We assume that the project of which it was a part never came to fruition.¹⁸



Figure 8.3 New Orleans After Dark, 1958, movie poster
Film produced by Eric Sayers; directed by John Sledge

Subsequent to Kelley’s visit to Lyle Bongé, Lyle’s son Paul Bongé has been concerned to archive and market his father’s legacy more aggressively. On the Lyle Bongé website, for instance, Paul emphasises what is undoubtedly his father’s main legacy: his massive collection of Mardi Gras photos:

It was about 1954 when he [Lyle Bongé] . . . began his first assault upon the celebrants of Mardi Gras in the French Quarter of New Orleans. He missed

not one single Mardi Gras from 1954 to 1989 and for this one achievement his place in the pantheon of 20th Century photographers is secure. The Mardi Gras archive alone comprises an estimated 25 to 35 thousand images. Lyle was the first still photographer to seriously photograph Mardi Gras . . .¹⁹

In the Barbara Reid Collection of writings, memorabilia, and so on, there are over three hundred of Bongé’s photos, mostly of French Quarter scenes – places and people – including many of the New Orleans old-style musicians, especially George Lewis, and some nudes.²⁰

For the remainder of this article, we reproduce what is, perhaps, the most ‘beat’ picture of Barbara and her husband Bill taken on the film set of ‘Beatnik Film, 1959’, together with a selection of eight photographs taken by Lyle Bongé of Billie, DeDe and ‘Slow Drag’ on the film set.



Figure 8.4 Barbara Reid and Bill Edmiston



Figure 8.5 DeDe and Billie Pierce with Johnny Donnels²¹



**Figure 8.6 Featuring Eric Sayers, director (seated in hat)
Larry Borenstein (behind stepladder)**



Figure 8.7 Unidentified persons with Alcide ‘Slow Drag’ Pavageau and, possibly, Bill Russell (behind ‘Slow Drag’)



Figure 8.8 Featuring Maybelle (with hat)²²



Figure 8.9 Gypsy Lou Webb (wearing hat, left of DeDe Pierce, playing trumpet on stairs)



Figure 8.10 Barbara Reid and Gypsy Lou Webb on stairs above 'Slow Drag'



Figure 8.11 DeDe Pierce, Billie Pierce, Alcide ‘Slow Drag’ Pavageau

It would be fascinating if further research could reveal more about the ‘beatnik film’ and its sound track. Our immediate purpose, though, has been to have the film enter the jazz studies literature, with reference to the on-set photographs of Lyle Bongé.



Figure 8.12 Barbara Reid and Gypsy Lou Webb above ‘Slow Drag’

NOTES

1. I thank Kelley Edmiston, David Wyckoff, Robert Greenwood, Per Oldaeus, Sacha Borenstein Clay, and Matthew Ekins for their contributions to this article. We are especially grateful to Biff Hollingsworth at the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, for providing us with an image of the Lyle Bongé negatives as illustrated below.

2. The artist Rolland Golden, a regular at Bourbon House, and friend of Barbara Reid, Larry Borenstein and Noel Rockmore, distinguished ‘beatniks’ from beats and other bohemians. The latter had ‘solid convictions’ and a ‘core belief’ and they valued work, whereas the ‘beatniks’ had none of these attributes. As in: ‘Unfortunately, however, beatniks had come to town and discovered the Bourbon House. Many didn’t work, preferring to beg from those who did. Most seemed young and able, but unwilling. And they seemed to lack any solid convictions.’ Rolland Golden, *Rolland Golden: Life, Love, and Art in the French Quarter*, University of Mississippi Press, Jackson, 2014, p. 136.

3. Lyle Bongé and James Leo Herlihy, *The Sleep of Reason: Lyle Bongé's Ultimate Ash-Hauling Mardi Gras Photographs*, Jargon Society, New York, 1974; and Lyle Bongé, *Photographs of Lyle Bongé*, Jargon Society, East Haven, CT, 1983. On the Jargon Society, see: accessed July 7, 2023, <http://jargonbooks.com/>.

4. Paul L. Bongé quotes his father on *The Sleep of Reason* in his Amazon.com review of December 12, 2003: 'That piece of Sh** went through the tubes like a mango through a sick gringo!', accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Sleep-Reason-Ultimate-Ash-Hauling-Photographs/dp/091233004X>.

5. Kelley deposited some of Bongé's Mardi Gras material with The Historic New Orleans Collection, 533 Royal Street, New Orleans.

6. Edmiston Family Collection on New Orleans #5750, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Received from Kelley Todd Edmiston in April 2017 (Acc. 103123).

Catalogued thus:

Image Folder PF-5750/298

Beatnik Film - Barbara Reid Edmiston, William K. Edmiston and others, c. 1959, 1961

Black-and-White 35mm Roll Film, Black-and-White Contact Sheets

Photographs by Lyle Bongé

We thank Biff Hollingsworth for providing us with these details.

7. In a Facebook message to Richard Ekins, December 8, 2018, Sacha Borenstein Clay adds: 'I am not positive but I think the location in the photos is a building that my father owned at 624 Bourbon, the building where Vaucresson's Café Creole was located in the 1960s. The patio of that building connected to 732 St. Peter (my father's art gallery) location. That patio connected to 726 St. Peter (Preservation Hall). We no longer own that building as my mom sold it to Pat O'Brien's and it is now Pat O'Brien's annex bar.'

8. See: e.g., Michael Patrick Welch, 'A Pilgrimage to Gypsy Lou Webb, New Orleans's Patron Saint of Beat Literature', 2013, accessed July 2, 2023, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/dpwwg5a/a-pilgrimage-to-gypsy-lou-webb-new-orleanss-patron-saint-of-beat-literature.

9. On 'strange people', see last month's *Just Jazz* article, 'Flirting with Beats: Barbara Reid in 1950s Bohemian New Orleans'. Chapter 7 in this book. On these addresses, see Barbara Reid, unpublished typescript, 'The Holy Handbook, II. The Important Addresses', 1955-56.

10. Barbara Reid, 'Back o' Town', *Session One, Climax – A Creative Review of the Jazz Spirit*, 1955, pp. 37-38.
11. E.g., the tourist guide, *Blue Book*. Occasionally her name would be spelt wrong, as in Barbara Reed, 'JAZZ in Olde New Orleans', c. 1959. Extraordinarily, this misspelling is repeated in Rolland Golden, *Rolland Golden: Life, Love, and Art in the French Quarter*, op. cit.
12. Tony Standish, 'The Folk-Lyric Label', *Eureka*, 1 (4), 24-25 and 30. On p. 24, Standish notes that 'at one time it was rumoured that Billie had died of cancer.'
13. Folk Lyric FL. 110, Arhoolie 2016 and Storyville SLP 178.
14. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W. W. Norton, New York, p. 147.
15. The Bunk Johnson silent films were shot privately and can be viewed in the Hogan Jazz Archive, the New Iberia Parish Library and on AMVD-FOUR; The Brass Band recordings led by Kid Howard (31.8.46 and 1.9.46) were shot for the film *New Orleans* by Majestic Productions. This sequence appears to have been lost on the cutting room floor as it has never (apparently) seen the light of day, but is much commented upon. See, Richard H. Knowles, *Fallen Heroes: A History of New Orleans Brass Bands*, Jazzology Press, New Orleans, 1996, p. 179.
16. Per Oldaeus, Facebook secret group, 'New Orleans Music – for all genres from that city', posts of November 1-2, 2018. Both Gorm Valentin and Carlos Froggy May assisted in these identifications. Thanks to Robert Greenwood for locating and posting *New Orleans After Dark*, Part 1. See: accessed August 14, 2025 <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1zqk1b>
17. 'Woman' is a calypso and appears on a 504 CD (114) - Walter 'Fats' Pichon - Deep South Boogie.
18. *New Orleans After Dark*. Dir. John Sledge. Prod. Eric Sayers. MPA and others, 1958; *Four for The Morgue*. Dir. John Sledge. Prod. Brandon Chase. MPA and others, 1962. These films incorporated episodes of N.O.P.D., an MPA-TV series – 39 episodes were in the can by 1955 and aired between 1955 and 1957; *Invisible Avenger*. Dir. James Wong Howe, Ben Parker and John Sledge. Prod. Eric Sayers and Emanuel Demby. Released by Republic Pictures, 1958. Re-released by MPA in 1962, retitled *Bourbon Street Shadows*; *Common Law Wife* began life as *Swamp Rose*. Dir. Larry Buchanan, 1960, and not released. Eric Sayers added footage to this film which is shown as *Common Law Wife*. Dir. Eric Sayers. Prod. Fred Kadane. Cinema Distributors of America, 1963. The film was shot in Texas. On the MPA-TV

series, see: Sam Chase, 'MPA - TV Readies 39th "NOPD" Film', *The Bill Board*, April 30, 1955, p. 4, especially: "'N.O.P.D.'" has stressed it [authenticity], and saved plenty doing so. The series is shot entirely on location at the many colorful and picturesque sites in and around the Crescent City. Jazz, Dixie-style, is usually used as background music. Well-known New Orleans personalities play themselves.'

19. Paul Bongé, 'Bongé Photographic Archive: About Lyle and Paul', accessed July 7, 2023, <https://www.bongephotoarchive.com/about-lyle--paul.html>. In his Amazon.com review, op. cit., Paul writes: 'There is only one photographer that has captured Mardi Gras in the French Quarter of New Orleans and that is Lyle Bongé. Many have tried and none have gotten close.' It might be noted that Jack Robinson, Jr.'s New Orleans period preceded Bongé's. As the Jack Robinson Archive, in Memphis, puts it: 'He was back in New Orleans by 1950, working as a graphic artist for Charles Dolce's ad agency and taking photographs for pleasure. His early street portraits documented the rich culture of New Orleans and captured the charm and bustle of the French Quarter and the Central Business District. Robinson soon became a chronicler of New Orleans' extensive networks of creative and innovative people.' Accessed July 7, 2023, <http://robinsonarchive.com/about/jack-robinson/>.

20. See the materials collected by Kelley Edmiston and deposited in various formats in libraries in the UK and USA. The bulk of the original material is in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, and housed and archived within the 'Edmiston Family Collection in New Orleans, 1910s-2010s'.

21. I thank Sacha Borenstein Clay for identifying Johnny Donnels, a fixture in the French Quarter art community. He began as a painter and in the 1960s switched to photography. See, accessed July 7, 2023, <https://neworleansphotoalliance.org/photographer-johnny-donnels-84-dies>. His photographs of New Orleans musicians are featured in Howard Mitcham, *Creole Gumbo* and *All That Jazz: A New Orleans Seafood Cookbook*, Pelican Publishing, Gretna, Louisiana, 1992.

22. At one time Barbara planned to write a book about Maybelle: 'a fixture at the Bourbon House, a Quarter coffee house/bar, where she seemed to be a sort of the Queen Bee for the Quarterite regulars who spent a good deal of time there.' See, Richard Ekins (quoting David Wyckoff), 'The Letters of William 'Bill' Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953, with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident and Mahalia Jackson, 1958-1963, Part 2', *Just Jazz*, No. 244, August 2018, pp. 26-31 at p. 26.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The upper part shows a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, there are several doors and windows. On the left, a white door is slightly ajar. In the center, a doorway is open, revealing a window with a diamond-shaped pattern. To the right, another white door with a diamond-shaped pattern is visible. The building appears to be made of wood or brick. The overall scene is somewhat aged and historical.

CHAPTER 9

On New Orleans
Jazz 'Revivalism':
Barbara Reid,
Lyle Bongé and
the Marrero Family Band
at the Autocrat Club

Chapter 9

On New Orleans Jazz ‘Revivalism’ Barbara Reid, Lyle Bongé and the Marrero Family Band at the Autocrat Club¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*



Figure 9.1 Lawrence Marrero and Paul Barnes
visiting Barbara Reid Edmiston at her apartment
on 638 Royal Street (Apt. 302), 1958

**Courtesy of Ralston Crawford Collection,
Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University²**



Figure 9.2 Autocrat Social and Pleasure Club, 1967

**Gift of photographer William Russell
Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University**

Preamble

In his recent memoir, *Time of My Life: A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*,³ Clive Wilson relates the one occasion, in 1965, when Harold Dejan took Lars Edegran and himself to a private job at the Autocrat Social and Pleasure Club, 1725 St. Bernard Avenue near North Claiborne Avenue, New Orleans. The occasion was the South Siders Halloween Dance. Clive continues:

In those days, the musicians' union rules specified minimum numbers of musicians in the band, depending on the venue. With the Autocrat, the minimum was ten pieces.⁴

On that occasion the band was led by banjoist Julius Handy, along with Herbert Permillion and Andy Anderson, trumpets; Harold Dejan and Capt. John Handy, alto saxes; Jesse Charles, tenor sax; Clem Tervalon; trombone; Joe Jackson, piano; Eddie Dawson's nephew,⁵ electric bass; and Chester Jones, drums. The band featured swing standards as well as the usual New Orleans second line Parade tunes.⁶

Such an enlarged band, so different to what we are used to in most of the recordings of both first- and second wave revivalism, reminds us that the history of recorded jazz is very different from the history of jazz. Based on the size of the venue, the musicians' union requirement was a ten-piece band. And as Clive points out it was an African American club, 'not particularly posh. But quite nice, nevertheless.'⁷

I am not aware of the release of any recordings of old-style New Orleans jazz musicians at the Autocrat and yet it is a venue of significance for this music, both in terms of its longevity and the celebrity of the musicians who played there. The following edited piece by Jan Clifford, written for the *Louisiana Weekly*,⁸ gives the flavour of the club:

African-American founding members of the Autocrat Club combined racial activism with cultural vigor to form a social and pleasure club that still thrives today.

The Autocrat Club at 1725 St. Bernard Ave. in New Orleans' 7th Ward (once called 'The Creole Section') has operated continuously from September 14, 1914; and has published its newsletter, *The Autocrat Voice*, since 1934.

During its history, the club has not only provided a social haven for its members and guests; it has also been an important venue for jazz musicians, who played at the club's many dances and balls at least as far back as the 1920s.⁹

In 'History of the Autocrat Club,' A.P. Tureaud wrote, '...keep moving orders of police and arrests and humiliation contributed largely to the establishment of chartered clubs in New Orleans.' A 'keep moving' order was a police technique used to disallow groups of young men from congregating in public.

The order gave rise to a need for recreational facilities where young men could congregate in private — and avoid police hassles. Many clubs were founded for this reason, according to Tureaud.

Under protection of a charter, clubs were established to provide a safe place for entertainment and fellowship. These were sometimes referred to as 'poker clubs.' Autocrat Club members trace their organization's history to a man named Simon Bellau, who became the owner of a charter for the Autocrat Club (source unknown) around 1909 . . . The Autocrat Club . . . moved into the current St. Bernard location on Nov. 1, 1924.

The white, yellow and red brick building with its brace of 20 windows across the front is a familiar sight to anyone who travels St. Bernard Avenue today. A white marble plaque on the facade states that the building was erected on Aug. 31, 1924, though the auditorium that flanks it was added later. That auditorium has become a landmark, serving as a hub for civic and political organizing. In the 1960s, civil rights leaders including A.P. Tureaud, Dutch Morial and Clarence Henry held meetings there.

Many musicians and 7th Ward residents claim that Autocrat Club members discriminated among African-Americans on the basis of skin color, alleging that one could be 'no darker than a brown paper bag' for admission. Current members, however, deny that a culture of prejudice existed at the club.

According to spokesman Adelaide Roberts, there was no rule regarding skin color. In fact, Roberts said, 'seven or eight of the founding members were jet black.'

The same members point out that the Autocrat could be booked for events by members and non-members. Admission to those events was at the discretion of the client, they say, suggesting that the Autocrat's reputation may stem from the policies of one or more organizations that rented the hall over time.

As citizens gained enough financial security to care for themselves, social clubs became more prevalent than benevolent societies, which provided funds for funerals and medical assistance. Social clubs helped members establish connections and conferred status on the families of their leaders. Athletic competitions, soirées, dress balls and second-line parades enlivened their communities.

According to its constitution, the Autocrat Club exists to 'promote social intercourse, harmony, enjoyment, refinement of manners, and the moral, mental and material welfare of its members.' The club even has a library with a large collection of African-American materials.

In addition to civic and social activities, the Autocrat Club continuously hosted professional jazz musicians who played for balls and dances. One such musician was the great trumpet player Hypolite Charles, whose Maple Leaf Band was named after composer Scott Joplin's hit 'Maple Leaf Rag.' Charles had a contract with the Autocrat Club during the 1920s.

Jobs paid \$3.50 per night for each musician, and according to recorded interviews with band member Eddie Dawson, 'the band made lots of money.' The band also played the New Orleans Country Club, San Jacinto Hall, and most of the Creole balls.

The Maple Leaf Band included Camilla Todd playing piano, with Sonny Henry on trombone, Emile Bigard on violin, Joe Welch on drums, Lorenzo Tio, Jr., on sax and clarinet, and Albert Glenny on bass. Eddie Dawson also played tenor banjo and bass. Prior to 1910, bass players commonly played with a bow. It was around that time when Dawson became the first musician noted for plucking the strings.

An equally respected band that played the Autocrat Club was led by cornetist Chris Kelly . . . Kelly's band hardly ever read music, but had steady work at lawn parties, picnics, and halls such as the Economy, Perseverance and the Autocrat Club . . . Chris Kelly's Band was made up of Ike Robinson on trombone, Eddie 'Face-O' Woods on drums, Emile Barnes on clarinet, Lawrence Marrero on banjo, and Eddie Marrero on bass.

Some said that Kelly's was the best playing of anyone's, even compared with Louis Armstrong. According to Kelly's bass player Eddie Marrero, the Autocrat Club was 'classy.'

'Kid Avery' Howard, who played the Autocrat club in the 1950s, admired Kelly's trumpet playing. Other musicians who performed at the Autocrat Club during its ninety-year existence include Frank Lewis, clarinet; 'Wooden Joe' Nicholas, flute clarinet and piccolo; and George Fleming, trumpet . . .

A 1979 newsletter announcing the Autocrat Club's 1980 Carnival Ball with the theme 'Jazz Roots' gives an idea of the breadth of talent that played here. The newsletter lists Louis Cottrell, Paul Barbarin, Sidney Desvignes and Lester Santiago among the 'Autocrat Jazz' musicians. That same newsletter featured the Clyde 'Golden Trumpet' Kerr Band that played in 1946. Kerr employed 'Fats' Pichon, Robert Clark, Herbert Leary, Joe Robichaux, Oscar 'Papa' Celestin, and Captain John Handy.

The club on St Bernard Avenue has echoed with the sounds of some of New Orleans' most talented and enduring players. The building is one of several that fostered the development of jazz simply by hosting social events for their members - and calling on the best of the city's plentiful musical talent to make their parties swing.

First and Second Wave 'Revivalism'

In 1958, just as first wave revivalism was in its last phase and after Paul Barnes had returned from California the year before, Barnes teamed up with his cousin, Lawrence Marrero, to form The Marrero Family Band.¹⁰ They rehearsed at the Autocrat.

Barbara Reid, a good friend of both Marrero and Paul Barnes, seized upon the opportunity to invite her photographer friend Lyle Bongé to the rehearsal session to document the occasion. Ralston Crawford was also in town. There are several Ralston Crawford photographs of the same rehearsal in the Hogan Archive. Included, among others, are two full-length body shots featuring, respectively, Ernest Cagnolatti on trumpet and Paul Barnes on clarinet. One single photograph features the full band.¹¹

I have long found it useful for many purposes to make a distinction

between first- and second wave revivalism.¹² The first wave revivalism of the 1940s and 1950s may be dated from the recordings in New Orleans of Kid Rena in 1940 or two years later from the first Bunk Johnson recording. Some writers, conscious of the fact that these recordings resulted from the earlier mid-1930s work of ‘hot’ record collectors, the early discographers and the 1939 book *Jazzmen*, in particular, give a mid-1930s start date to the revival.¹³

Be that as it may, the question arises as to the extent this first wave revival - was it really a revival of the music or a revival of **interest** in the music? Dan Pawson, for instance, in a lecture he gave to the Birmingham Jazz Record Society on 22 October 1965 opined:

Contrary to all the history books there was no such thing as a New Orleans revival. The music had been there all the time just as it still is. New Orleans jazz is purely a functional music and the absence of records did not in any way mean there was an absence of music in the city. The so-called ‘revival’ was in fact a revival of interest in the music and the musicians who had stayed behind when all the better-known figures had strayed North to Chicago.¹⁴

I have long puzzled about the very different meanings attached by different writers to the term ‘revivalism’. To what extent does the term refer to a ‘revival’ of the actual music – whether in New Orleans, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, or worldwide? To what extent does it refer to a revival in interest in the music in these various places. I am impressed by David Wyckoff’s comment on the matter:

Concerning the revivalism issue, my sense is that the first, ’40s and ’50s, ‘wave’ was just a revival of outside interest, the music itself in New Orleans having steadily continued from before within that milieu, although with a decline in local interest. On the other hand it seems to me that the ’60s revival was probably truly a revival, promoted by Preservation Hall, at a time when opportunities for the musicians to play for traditional local community supporters - dance halls etc. - had largely ended, and the music was largely confined, it seems, to the Halls. So I don’t really know, but that’s my take on it.¹⁵

Revivalism and the Marrero Family Band: The Photographs of Lyle Bongé

The Marrero Family Band photographs document very well an example of the last phase of the steady continuance of the music, in the period leading up to the second wave ‘true’ revival.



Figure 9.3 From left to right: Cié Frazier, drums; Worthia ‘Showboy’ Thomas, trombone, Dave ‘Fat Man’ Williams, piano; Ernie Cagnolatti, trumpet; Paul Barnes, clarinet; McNeal Breaux, bass; Lawrence Marrero, banjo

This 1958 Marrero Family Band was, in a sense, recreating Paul Barnes’s teenage 1919 band, the Original Diamond Orchestra. The Original Diamond Orchestra included Barnes with his cousins Cié Frazier (drums), Eddie Marrero (bass), and Lawrence Marrero (banjo), along with Bush Hall (trumpet) and George Washington (trombone).¹⁶ The 1958 band went further and included another cousin – a second cousin – pianist Dave Williams.

Moreover, a focus on each musician, separately, illuminates the very different trajectories taken by different musicians in terms of the two major waves of revivalism, both in terms of ‘revivalism’ per se and a revival of **interest** in the music.



Figure 9.4 Left to right: **Brady Smith, Lawrence Marrero**
and Dave ‘Fatman’ Williams

Lawrence Marrero (1900-1959) is **the** first wave revivalist musician **par excellence**. He was the favoured banjoist for both of the two flagship bands of the revival: the Bunk Johnson New Orleans Band and the George Lewis Band. Although he retired from performing full-time with George Lewis in mid-1954 on the grounds of ill health, he continued playing in New Orleans with his own band until shortly before his death in June 1959, almost to the very end of first wave revivalism. His retirement date from the Lewis band meant that he did not make the trip to Europe with the Lewis band in 1959. However, the widespread availability of his earlier records with the

Lewis band, especially the touring band, meant that his influence on banjo players around the world continued unabated in the early years of second wave revivalism.



Figure 9.5 Unknown figure in the foreground. Left to right: Ernest Cagnolatti, Paul Barnes, Lawrence Marrero and Dave ‘Fat Man’ Williams

Paul Barnes (1901-1981), on the other hand, as well as part of being a stalwart of the New Orleans jazz scene in New Orleans in the 1920s and 1930s, toured with King Oliver on numerous occasions in the late 1920s and 30s and recorded with Jelly Roll Morton’s Red Hot Peppers in 1929.¹⁷ He was in Los Angeles from 1951 until his return to New Orleans in 1958 and was a significant figure in the early months of second wave revivalism, recording for both Icon and Riverside. Following periods in California in the early 1960s, he returned to New Orleans in 1964 and became an important figure in second wave revivalism from then on until his last recording in 1976.



Figure 9.6 Cié Frazier

Drummer **Cié Frazier** (1904-1985) was the exemplar of the New Orleans musician who stayed at home in New Orleans throughout all the phases of the development of the music and who became increasingly well-known and celebrated within what became the international New Orleans revivalist social world. In 1927, he recorded with Papa Celestin's Tuxedo Orchestra. In 1928, he replaced Paul Barbarin in the A.J. Piron Orchestra, with which he remained until 1932. In the mid-1940s and early 1950s, he recorded with both Wooden Joe Nicholas and Emile Barnes for American Music. Throughout the 1950s, Cié worked steadily with many of the musicians who would become most associated with second wave revivalism: Percy Humphrey, Sweet Emma Barrett and George Lewis. His recording and touring with Billie and DeDe's Preservation Hall band, particularly, brought him to worldwide prominence in the 1960s and 70s.



Figure 9.7 Dave ‘Fat Man’ Williams

As a young teenager, **Dave ‘Fat Man’ Williams** (1920-1982) played with Paul Barnes and Lawrence Marrero at the Cadillac Club on St. Claude Avenue. After the war he played with Freddie Kohlman and became associated with the Imperial Records rhythm and blues scene. He remained attached to both the traditional jazz and R&B scenes. He recorded for Icon in 1960 on Capt. John Handy’s first recording session and in 1964 for Nobility Records on Kid Howard’s Zion Hill Baptist Church session. His ‘I Ate Up the Apple Tree’ continues as a New Orleans favourite. It became brass band standard after being featured by the Dirty Dozen Brass Band on a 1984 album.¹⁸



Figure 9.8 Worthia ‘Show Boy’ Thomas

Previously a drummer, at sixteen, **Worthia ‘Show Boy’ Thomas** (1907-1994) came to New Orleans to study trombone with Professor David Jones but he always claimed that Bill Matthews was his principal teacher. From 1929 to 1960 he was constantly travelling. After joining Robert Taylor’s Knee-High Revue, he embarked on a long series of gigs with travelling carnivals, minstrel shows, and vaudeville troupes. He spent thirteen years playing with the famed Rabbit Foot Minstrels. He toured with the ‘Miss Broadway’ show out of Chicago and played with the Jay McShann band from Kansas City in 1945. At the end of first wave revivalism, he returned to New Orleans and played with Ernie Cagnolatti, Paul Barnes and Lawrence Marrero. He made the transition to Preservation Hall, slowly, with occasional appearances, particularly when Jim Robinson and Louis Nelson were out of town and, later, in his own right. In 1967, he accompanied Kid Sheik on his tour of Japan.¹⁹



Figure 9.9 Ernie Cagnolatti

As a young boy, **Ernie Cagnolatti** (1911-1983) listened to Bunk Johnson's band and it was his influence that led Ernie to choose the trumpet as his instrument. He came to New Orleans as a sixteen-year old and from 1932 to 1940 he played with Herbert Leary's society swing band. In 1951 he joined Paul Barbarin's band and from 1952 to 1958 he played with Bill Matthews at the Paddock Lounge. He was Jim Robinson's trumpeter of choice for Robinson's Riverside Living Legends recordings in 1961. He played infrequently in the kitty halls in the 1960s but was a mainstay at Preservation Hall from the mid-1970s until 1980.²⁰

Bass player **McNeal Breaux** (1916-2002) was born in New Orleans. He started on the tuba in Henry Allen, Sr.'s brass band before playing bass with Isaiah Morgan's orchestra in the early 1930s. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s he was mainly with groups led by Papa Celestin and Paul Barbarin. In the early years of second wave revivalism, Breaux recorded with Paul Barnes for Icon in 1959 and 1960 and with Peter Bocage, Louis Cottrell and Sweet Emma Barrett for Riverside in 1961. Soon afterwards, Breaux settled in Oakland, San Francisco, where he continued his musical career.²¹



Figure 9.10 McNeal Breaux



Figure 9.11

Drummer **Brady Smith** is the non-playing figure sitting next to Cié Frazier on drums. Little is known about drummer Brady Smith, though we do know, for example, that he played with Sweet Emma Barrett at a New Orleans Jazz Club party in 1959.²²

Work still needs to be done on the gig history of this rehearsal band. For example, apart from this one documented rehearsal, did they play at the Autocrat Club? Did they work elsewhere and, if so, where?²³ Although I have approached historians of the Autocrat Club with an interest in these matters, so far I have drawn a blank in answering these questions.

At the present time, we will have to be grateful for small mercies: at least we have Lyle Bongé's photographs of the rehearsal which now, over sixty years later, I am pleased to make public for the first time, courtesy of Barbara Reid, Kelley Reid Edmiston and the Reid Family Collection.

NOTES

1. I thank Kelley Edmiston, Fred Eatherton, David Wyckoff, Clive Wilson, Clint Baker and Matthew Ekins for their contributions to this article.
2. Barbara's husband, Bill Edmiston, wrote the following: 'Sunday, August 24, 1958 . . . Lawrence Marrero and Paul Barnes visited us at 2.30 pm. Nice visit in which many things – mainly the history of Paul Barnes were discussed. Paul Barnes left two of his journals with us to look at in our leisure. Very interesting material, especially accounts of 1933, 1934, and 1935 on road tours with [King] Oliver.' 'Wednesday, August 27, 1958 . . . L. Marrero called to let us know where his group was to rehearse this evening.' William Edmiston – Letters and Writings folder – Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston. See, also: Edmiston Family Collection on New Orleans, 1910s-2019, University of North Carolina, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/05750/>.
3. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life: A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2019.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
5. His name is not specified.
6. *Ibid.* pp. 182-184.
7. Email, Clive Wilson to Richard Ekins, September 29, 2019.
8. Jan Clifford, 'The Autocrat and Social Pleasure Club', posted October 7, 2008, accessed July 3, 2023, <http://www.frenchcreoles.com/CreoleCulture/creoleexperience/autocrat%20club%202009.html>.
9. Eddy Determeyer notes that some four years earlier trumpeter Don Albert, as an 8-year-old child, had debuted at the Autocrat Club. Here he sang 'Roses of Picardy' accompanied by a band that included Lorenzo Tio Jr. It is uncertain whether this gig was at the club's Onzaga Street or Lapeyrouse Street location, both pre-St. Bernard venues. Eddy Determeyer, *Big Easy Big Bands: Dawn and Rise of the Jazz Orchestra*, Groningen: RhythmBusiness, p. 98.
10. Barbara Reid and Lyle Bongé refer to the band as The Marrero Family Band. The Hogan Jazz Archive has seven Lyle Bongé photographs from this rehearsal session. Details are given as 'Marrero Family Band', 'Probably on a Thursday afternoon. Probably September 1958.' The Ralston Crawford photographs of the same session are titled the 'Lawrence Marrero Paul Barnes New Orleans Jazz Band', accessed

July 3, 2023, <https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A21889>. According to Mike Casimir, Marrero ‘was planning to form this band of his’ in March 1958. Mike Casimir, ‘Come After Dark’, *New Orleans Music*, 14 (5), 2009, p. 17.

11. Ibid. The drummer in this photograph is Brady Smith.

12. Richard Ekins, ‘Authenticity and Authenticating – the Case of New Orleans Jazz Revivalism: An Approach from Grounded Theory and Social World Analysis’, *Popular Music History*, 2012, 7 (1), 24-52. Another approach is to see New Orleans revivalism in terms of ‘the end of the beginning’, or ‘a final flowering’, as in: ‘Although generally called the New Orleans Revival, it’s more accurate to regard this music as a final flowering. When this musical generation has gone, its music was gone, too. But thanks to Heywood Broun, Sam Charters, Herbert Otto, Grayson Mills, Alden Ashforth, David Wyckoff, Joe Mares, Rudi Blesh, Barry Martyn, and – mainly – Bill Russell, recordings of this beautiful music survive.’ *Walking with Legends: Barry Martyn’s New Orleans Jazz Odyssey*, edited by Mick Burns, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2007, p. 18. For a very different formulation that does not privilege the old-style African American musicians and that does privilege what Suhor calls the ‘Popular Revival in New Orleans, 1947-1953’, see: Charles Suhor, ‘“Revivals” Beaucoup: Traditional, Dixieland, and Revivalist Jazz’, in his *Jazz in New Orleans, The Postwar Years through 1970*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Md and Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers – The State University of New Jersey, 2001, pp. 101-159.

13. Mike Hazeldine, ‘The New Orleans Revival’, Chapter 6 in *The Blackwell Guide to Recorded Jazz*, 2nd Edition, ed. Barry Kernfeld, Blackell, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 177-207 at p. 177-178.

14. Dan Pawson, ‘New Orleans in the 1960s’. The lecture is reproduced in the Booklet Notes to ‘Vintage Dan Pawson: The Lost Sessions, 1966-1985’, Dine-A-Mite/La Croix DJCD-008.

15. Email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, February 3, 2019.

16. Later, around 1924, Cié would join Bush Hall’s Golden Rule Band, which included his relatives, Lawrence and Eddie Marrero, and Paul Barnes. On George Washington, see Grayson Mills, ‘George Washington’, *Jazz Journal*, November 1960, 13 (11), pp. 17-18.

17. See; Paige VanVorst, ‘Paul “Polo” Barnes’, *Jazzology* posting, June 15, 2009, for an excellent summary of Paul Barnes’s life and work in Chicago, New York, California, and New Orleans ,https://www.jazzology.com/enewsletter_signup.

[php](#). According to VanVorst, it was Barnes' 1922 New Orleans recording of 'My Josephine' with Papa Celestin's Band that brought Barnes to King Oliver's attention. On the Jelly Roll Morton recording, VanVorst notes: 'Barnes' soprano sax solo on *Deep Creek* is breathtaking, a classic example of how New Orleans music can be simultaneously delicate and swinging.'

18. See: Clive Wilson, sleeve notes for 'Dave "Fat Man" Williams: I Ate Up the Apple Tree', New Orleans Records, NOR 7204; Paige VanVorst, booklet notes for 'Dave "Fat Man" Williams: I Ate Up the Apple Tree', GHB BCD511. Clive Wilson thanks Barbara Reid for her assistance in writing his LP sleeve notes.

19. See: 'Worthia G. ("Show Boy") Thomas – trombone', in Noel Rockmore, Larry Borenstein and Bill Russell, *Preservation Hall Portraits*, Louisiana State University Press, 1968, unpaginated.

20. See: 'Cagnolatti, Ernie – trumpet', Noel Rockmore, Larry Borenstein and Bill Russell, *ibid*.

21. See: Al Rose and Edmond Souchon, 'Breux, McNeal', in their *New Orleans Jazz Family Album*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1967, p. 20. Clint Baker, who played with Breux in the 1990s in Oakland, notes: 'He was Sweet Emma's first call bass player in the early 60's. That's what he told me.' Clint Baker to Richard Ekins, Facebook comment, May 30, 2019. Breux's career followed an unusual trajectory. After featuring quite prominently in the early second wave revival recordings, he left New Orleans for California in 1963.

22. Accessed July 3, 2023, <https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane:14415>

23. Photographic evidence indicates that the Marrero band, with Sam Dutrey, Jr. replacing Paul Barnes, played at the Sinton Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio, in February 1959. See: Grauman Marks collection, accessed July 3, 2023, <http://cdm16880.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16880coll20>.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. At the top, there is a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, the building has several doors. On the left, there is a white door with a diamond-shaped window. Next to it is an open doorway with a window and a cushion on the floor. To the right of the doorway is another white door with a diamond-shaped window and a mesh screen. Further right is a dark door with a sunburst design above it. A small sign with the number '726' is visible on the wall between the white door and the dark door.

CHAPTER 10

George Lewis at Home:
George Lewis, Barbara Reid
and the Photographs
of Lyle Bongé

Chapter 10

George Lewis at Home: George Lewis, Barbara Reid and the Photographs of Lyle Bongé¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*

*As long as George Lewis's music continues
to excite and edify listeners, there will always
be something new to say about his legacy.*

Bruce Boyd Raeburn, 'George Lewis and Friends'
in *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story*
Barry Martyn with Nick Gaglian,
2010, pp. 7-8 at p. 8

In my booklet notes introducing the 504/La Croix CD of the first recordings of George Lewis at Preservation Hall on November 12, 1961,² I wrote:

The 1940s and 50s first-wave revival of New Orleans jazz produced just two flagship bands. [The Bunk Johnson and George Lewis Bands]. The Bunk Johnson Band recordings made between 1942 and 1946 set the initial parameters for so-called 'authentic' old-style New Orleans jazz. Indeed, the sides cut for Bill Russell's American Music record label – particularly those recorded in 1944 – provided what remain to this day, to many, the definitive recordings of the entire history of the New Orleans revival.

Interestingly, Bunk soon tired of what he came to call his 'emergency band' – the group formed around George Lewis – and by the end of 1945 the writing was on the wall for Bunk's New Orleans Band. Increasingly, Bunk turned to more sophisticated, often non-New Orleans musicians and, in any event, was to die quite soon, on July 7, 1949.

Lewis formed his own band in 1946, using those who played with him in Bunk's band plus Joe Watkins on drums. He played weekends at Manny's Tavern at Benefit and St. Roch, at many parties, mostly for white audiences.

Up until 1952, Lewis used a variety of different trumpet players before finally settling for Avery 'Kid' Howard for his touring band. My booklet notes continued:

From around 1953 onwards, the George Lewis Band established itself as the premier New Orleans touring band and by the end of the decade had attracted a worldwide following. For many, the band, with Kid Howard at his best surpassed even Bunk's band in the genius of its 'ensemble polyphony'. Many others, however, detected a slow decline in the band's performances as the demands of touring and concert audiences led to a loss of spontaneity and creative edge. In particular, the white spectator audiences' preferences for a limited repertoire and 'race horse' tempos inevitably led to the emergence of a 'concert hall' style quite different from the Lewis Band's earlier sessions in New Orleans. It must be said, too, that as the 1950s advanced, Lewis's health was often poor and Howard often had lip trouble.

Around September 1961, following his last trip to Cincinnati, Lewis finally gave up the attempt to maintain a regular touring band. At the beginning of the 1960s, there was little or no work for old-style jazz musicians in New Orleans and Lewis must have thought he was coming home to a bleak musical future. Little did he realise that while he was playing in Cincinnati, second wave New Orleans revivalism was taking root back in New Orleans with the opening of the old-style jazz venue, Preservation Hall, a naming claimed by no less than Alcide 'Slow Drag' Pavageau, bass player with both the Bunk Johnson and George Lewis Bands.³

As Lewis's regular touring band career was coming to an end and with the belief that there was likely to be little work for him at home in New Orleans, he might well have thought that now was the time to focus more on his family, as his career as a musician looked set to decline.⁴

As if to mark this potential new future, there is one photograph in the Tulane University Hogan Jazz Archive that captures quite brilliantly the loving grandfather Lewis with his daughter and newly-born grandson. George Lewis's elegance, gentleness, strength and happiness are plain to see. It reminds me of what Bill Bissonnette once wrote to me concerning Israel Gorman and George Lewis:

Is [Israel], like George Lewis, had that wonderful softness of character and gentleness of demeanour but without the stainless-steel underpinning George had. In both those gentlemen those character attributes shone brightly in their playing and, in my opinion, was the thing that made them the most important reedmen of the Great Revival period.⁵



**Figure 10.1 David Watkins, Shirley Lewis and George Lewis
December 1960**

Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University

Up until recently, it may have been supposed that this picture was a one-off rarity. The Hogan Jazz Archive describes it thus:

PH002337 LEWIS, GEORGE, right

With his daughter Shirley Lewis and grandson, David Watkins.

December 1960 – New Orleans, Louisiana

Photographer: Lyle Bongé, 1433 W. Howard, Biloxi, Mississippi

Gift of Barbara Reid, April 20, 1975⁶

Thanks, however, to the careful archival work of Kelley Edmiston, Barbara Reid's daughter, it has now emerged that this photograph is one of a number taken by Lyle Bongé at George Lewis's home on the same occasion.⁷

As I set out in my two previous articles in *Just Jazz*, which featured Bongé's previously unknown and unpublicised photographs of New Orleans musicians,⁸ Bongé's reputation as a photographer has been built up on his almost obsessive photographing of New Orleans Mardi Gras every year from 1954 to 1989.

However, he frequently came down to New Orleans on other occasions. Over the years he became a close friend of Barbara Reid's and in due time their respective spouses, children and other family members and friends met with each other. While Barbara was with Bongé in New Orleans, she would on occasion take him to musical events or musicians' homes. I have seen no evidence to suggest that Bongé was particularly interested in photographing musicians per se. It seems more likely that Barbara had him accompany her to secure his expertise in documenting those aspects of New Orleans life that interested her. Whatever the truth of this, what we do know is that some years before Bongé's death in 2009, he contacted Barbara's daughter, Kelley, with an invitation for her to visit him in Biloxi, Mississippi. Sacha Borenstein Clay, Larry Borenstein's daughter, drove her friend Kelley up to Bongé's home and recalls Bongé's hospitality:

We were planning to go over for the day, over an hour's drive each way, but then Lyle invited us to stay for dinner, and of course we accepted, but dinner was served late in the evening and was a very special meal with delicious freshly prepared shrimp and he opened up some bottles of vintage wine. He welcomed us and he made us feel like we were very special guests. We were very late getting home that night. Lyle was very warm and friendly, telling old stories about my dad. I do remember Lyle from many Mardi Gras of my childhood, when he would come to visit our home and often he would take photos at our Mardi Gras Party. We lived in the French Quarter and had a balcony on Royal Street. He was always very happy to share his photos of me and my friends with me, which he would bring the following year. I only ever saw him once a year usually on Carnival Day.⁹

Barbara Reid had died in 1983 and Lyle probably knew that she had been depositing jazz material with the Archive of New Orleans Jazz, Tulane University, for many years before her death. She may have deliberately procured material from Bongé to deposit. It seems more likely, however, that Bongé gave Barbara selected photographs from their trips out together. A few of these she then passed on to the Tulane Archive, through its Curator Dick Allen.

Lynn Abbott of the (now) Hogan Jazz Archive¹⁰ sent me copies of all fifteen Bongé photographs held by the Archive.¹¹ I will explore all these photographs in subsequent articles but here it need only be said that there is only one photograph from the visit to George Lewis's, namely the one reproduced in Figure 1.

At some point during the evening with Kelley and Sacha, Bongé produced files of approximately 300 of his negatives and related material and entrusted them with Kelley, with the understanding that she would archive them or have them archived. Internal evidence of the relevant photographs makes it clear that there are fifteen from the visit to George Lewis's home, which are part of the set accompanying the photograph of Lewis, Shirley and David above. More specifically, there is the mailbox photograph featured in Fig. 10, and there are three additional family shots, eleven photographs of Lewis sitting in a chair, and three, which include his clarinet or clarinets. Five of these shots have various superimpositions on them. It is not clear who was responsible for these superimpositions.

My main purpose in this article is to publish a selection of these photographs for the first time. I will leave others to consider them in the context of the vast body of photographic work centred on George Lewis.

It is worth indicating, however, how they are perceived by my co-worker and collaborator Fred Eatherton, who comments:

For me these photos are some of the very best portraits of George Lewis that exist. I think this is primarily because of the empathy that exists between the

photographer and his subject. The shots aren't posed and George Lewis looks completely at ease. The location clearly helps and there is evidently a mutual respect between the participants.¹²



Figure 10.2



Figure 10.3



Figure 10.4



Figure 10.5



Figure 10.6



Figure 10.7



Figure 10.9

As I have indicated several times in the Barbara Reid *Just Jazz* series so far, Barbara had a special talent as a facilitator. The unconditional respect and love she showed to many of the musicians put them at their ease and enabled them to give of their best. No doubt, too, her close friendship with Bongé added to the chemistry of the occasion. Fred Eatherton is quite right to add: ‘As Barbara was responsible for this “shoot”, she deserves a lot of credit.’¹³



**Figure 10.10 U.S. mailbox, George Lewis, 3327 De Armas Street,
New Orleans, Louisiana**

**Lewis lived at this address from early 1952 until he died on
December 31, 1968**

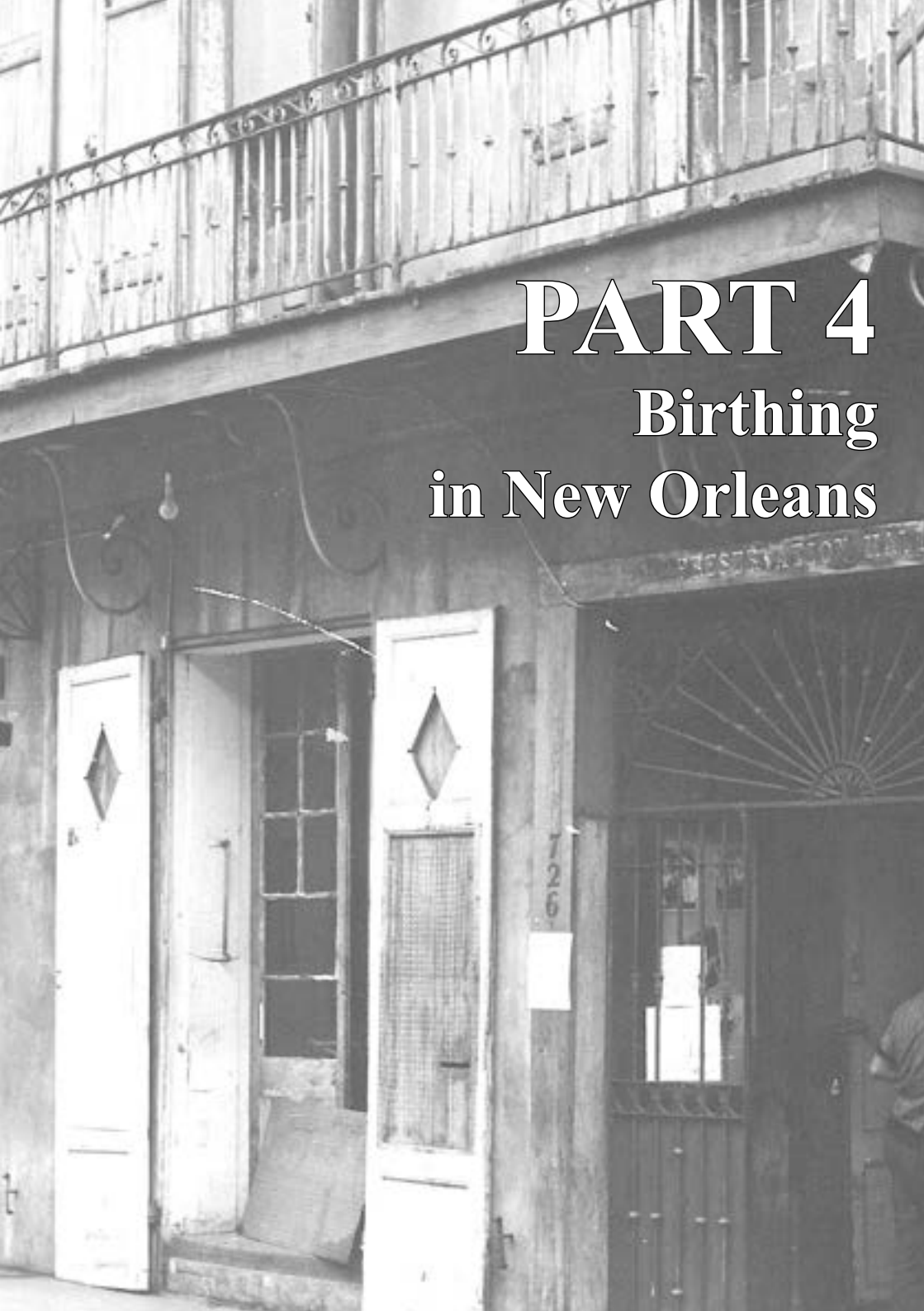
Photograph by Lyle Bongé, December 1960

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

NOTES

1. I wish to thank Kelley Edmiston and Lynn Abbott, Associate Curator, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, for making this article possible. I also thank Eberhard Kraut, Fred Eatherton and David Wyckoff for their contributions.
2. A small part of the recording was included in 'David Brinkley's Journal' for NBC-TV in early 1962.
3. Richard Ekins, 'Booklet Notes', Kid Thomas Valentine 1961 & 1968, 504/La Croix CD 92, p. 3. It should be said that George Lewis did play at Preservation Hall from the earliest days. Indeed, William Carter has him playing at the 'official opening . . . night of June 10, 1961', wrongly, according to Ken Mills who dates the 'official' opening night as June 13 when Emile Barnes' Louisiana Joymakers were playing. 'The first union gig was Tuesday June 13. We held non guaranteed preps from June 7 to 11. We were closed on June 10.' Ken Mills, 'Letters – Opening Night at Preservation Hall', *New Orleans Music*, 1991, 3 (1), p. 25.
4. Ken Grayson Mills of Icon Records was not interested in recording Lewis on his first trip to New Orleans in June and July 1960. Lewis was precluded from appearing in the Riverside Living Legends recordings of January 1961 because of his contractual relationship with Verve Records. It was the opening of Preservation Hall in June 1961 that launched Lewis on his 'second wave revival' of the 1960s. He was the 'star feature' in the celebrated Dave Brinkley Show Preservation Hall recording of November 1961. He recorded for Atlantic Records in July 1962 and by August 1963 he was touring in Japan, farther afield than ever before.
5. Email of October 4, 2017, Bill Bissonnette to Richard Ekins. Bill Bissonnette died on June 26, 2018.
6. This photograph is reproduced on p. 132 in Barry Martyn with Nick Gagliano, *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2010. Barbara Reid is wrongly credited as the photographer on p. 5. Lyle Bongé is not mentioned. In Chapter 8 – 'George Lewis' Genealogy', Gagliano details what he knows of George Lewis's complicated family relationships. For all their complications, however, what shines through is Lewis's especial love for his daughter, Shirley, and his concern that his mother, Alice Zeno, would be properly looked after 'when he would have to leave town in the future', as his touring career took off in the 1950s. Alice Zeno was living at Lewis's De Armas Street home when she died on 5 July 1960 some five months before Bongé's photographs. See: Tom Bethell, *George Lewis: A Jazzman from New Orleans*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1977, p. 248.

7. All subsequent photographs are by Lyle Bongé, courtesy of Kelley Edmiston. I worked from a USB drive given to me by Kelley. The negatives and related material are now part of the ‘Edmiston Family Collection in New Orleans 1910s to 2010s’, The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
8. Richard Ekins and Fred Eatherton, ‘Barbara Reid, Billie and DeDe Pierce and a “Beatnik Film” – The Photographs of Lyle Bongé’, *Just Jazz*, No. 251, March 2019, pp. 22-26; Richard Ekins, ‘Steve Angrum, Preservation Hall and the Photographs of Lyle Bongé’, *Just Jazz*, No. 252, April 2019, pp. 14-19.
9. Facebook Messenger message, November 15, 2018, Sacha Borenstein Clay to Richard Ekins.
10. See: accessed July 3, 2023, <https://jazz.tulane.edu/about>, for the history of the Archive and its name changes.
11. One of these photographs is classified as ‘? Bongé’. Arguably, there is at least one other photograph held by the Archive that was taken by Bongé. I will return to this photograph in a future article.
12. Email, January 27, 2019, Fred Eatherton to Richard Ekins.
13. Ibid.



PART 4

Birthing in New Orleans

PART 4

The Birthing of Preservation Hall

Although Barbara Reid fancied herself as a writer, it must be said she published very little.

Her writing on the 1950s dance halls of New Orleans (included in Chapter 7) is especially apt, because of the focus she gives to jazz in a family setting. Little did she realise when she wrote that piece for the 1955 avant-garde journal *Climax*, that some five years later she would be involved in a project far better suited to her skills as facilitator, as opposed to writer.

Indeed, it was a heaven-sent opportunity when she was presented with the chance of co-founding Preservation Hall with Ken Grayson Mills. Mills could focus on the musicians with some preliminary writing up of his activities. Barbara could focus on the networking and the advertising for the new venture.

Chapter 11 (*Just Jazz*, July 2019) provides an introduction to Barbara's role in the founding of Preservation Hall.

Chapter 12 (*Just Jazz*, August 2019) elaborates on the way her talents combined with those of Mills. Mills arranges the band; she arranges the filming – the first filming at Preservation Hall. This chapter also clarifies previous confusions about the dating of the official opening night at Preservation Hall and the first filming that took place there.

Because the content of this article is so important, I make no apologies for including it in both this book and in its companion volume, *The Genesis and Exodus of Preservation Hall: The Ken Grayson Mills Story*. Chapter 12 epitomises the strengths of their working together.

Chapter 13 (*Just Jazz*, March 2021) is constructed around a vital short document that Barbara wrote, dated January 24, 1963, as she reflects on the first four months of Preservation Hall. By this time, it must have been

evident to her how her contribution was in danger of being erased entirely, and how increasingly all the kudos for the origins and development of her 'baby' was being attributed to Allan and Sandra Jaffe.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. At the top, there is a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, the building has several doors. On the left, there is a white door with a diamond-shaped window. Next to it is a doorway with a window and a cushioned seat. To the right of that is another white door with a diamond-shaped window and a screen. Further right, there is a dark doorway with a sunburst design above it. A person's arm is visible on the far right. The text 'CHAPTER 11' is overlaid in large white letters across the upper part of the image.

CHAPTER 11

On the Origin
of Preservation Hall:
Barbara Glancey Reid and
the 'Media Blitz' of 1961

Chapter 11

On the Origin of Preservation Hall: Barbara Glancey Reid and the ‘Media Blitz’ of 1961¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*, July 2019

In the light of the strong coverage which would continue to be afforded Preservation Hall over the next quarter century, a media blitz like this might not seem so special. But against a previous silence reverberating back for decades – the musicians hungry and demoralized, the local jazz establishment virtually decreeing the old music dead – such sudden attention was an inspiring turnaround.

William Carter, *Preservation Hall:
Music from the Heart*, 1991, p. 151.

*Takes a lot of work to overcome powerful forces
intent on rewriting history.*

John Swenson, *author of New Atlantis:
Musicians Battle for the Survival of New Orleans*, 2011.
Facebook comment to Richard Ekins, February 22, 2019

Preamble

In the November 2017 issue of *Just Jazz*, I published my article ‘PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills’, which presented the definitive statement on the origins of Preservation Hall from the standpoint of Mills.² The purpose of the present article is to provide a companion piece³ that sets out a definitive statement on the origins of Preservation Hall from the standpoint of Barbara Glancey Reid, who co-

founded the Hall with Mills in 1961. The two articles, taken together, are designed to become the authoritative text on the founding and early months of Preservation Hall.



Figure 11.1

As I was preparing to write this article, Louis Lince, former publisher of *New Orleans Music* magazine,⁴ notified me of a recent trailer for the film about the Preservation Hall band trip, 'A Tuba to Cuba'. The trailer, he said, featured Allan Jaffe's son, Ben Jaffe, telling us how his father founded Preservation Hall. I thanked him for the notification, to which he replied: 'Not a problem. I am still pissed off with the way history is being re-written. Makes Stalin look like an amateur.'⁵

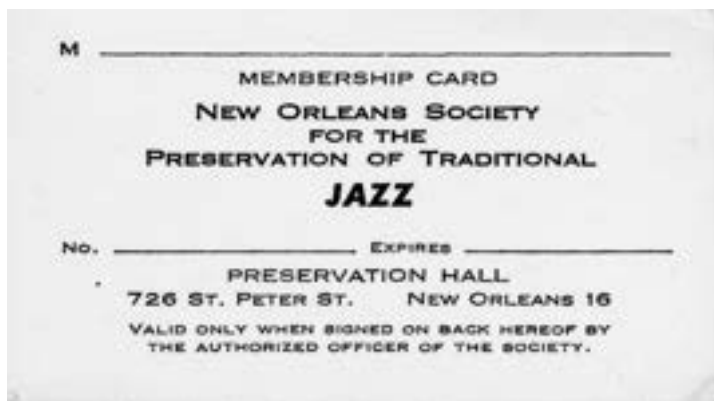


Figure 11.2

Right at the start of my *Just Jazz* Ken Grayson Mills Project in November 2016, I had written:

Most significantly, although he [Mills] is known as the founder, or co-founder, and first manager of Preservation Hall by a small circle of scholars and New Orleans jazz enthusiasts, most of the time these facts are erased from the majority of the literature. This is the case regardless of whether the literature is advertising blurb for Preservation Hall, New Orleans tourist publicity literature, or in many of the more serious sources, such as Shannon Brinkman and Eve Abrams' *Preservation Hall*, 2011.⁶

Throughout my Ken Mills and Barbara Reid *Just Jazz* series I have made explicit the importance of Ken Mills and Barbara Reid for New Orleans jazz revivalism, and their importance as co-founders of Preservation Hall in particular. Allan Jaffe had no particular axe to grind with Mills or Reid and would, I believe, have been appalled by the attempted erasure of his mentors.⁷ Swenson again:

All I can say is that to keep insisting that his father 'founded' Preservation Hall is an injustice not only to history but to his own [Ben Jaffe's] enormous contributions to keeping the institution alive and his father's remarkable stewardship over the years. From everything I know about père Jaffe he would never have allowed this myth to go unchallenged but would set the record straight himself.⁸

I made sure that my Ken Mills and Barbara Reid projects were freely and easily available online just as soon as they were published,⁹ so I must confess to being a little piqued by Ben Jaffe's continued attempted erasing of both Mills and Reid. The simplest of Google searches now reveals his error. On a whim, I Googled 'Preservation Hall – Wikipedia' and was delighted to discover the following:

In the 1950s art dealer Larry Borenstein from Milwaukee managed what would become Preservation Hall in the French Quarter as an art gallery, 'Associated Artists'. To attract customers, he invited local jazz musicians to play for tips. After a time, the music started drawing more attention than the art. Borenstein turned management over to Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Reid, who turned it into a music venue and named it 'Preservation Hall'.¹⁰

I was even more delighted to find that of the four ‘External links’ provided in the Wikipedia entry, one was to my *Just Jazz* article ‘PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills’, Introduced, Illustrated and Annotated by Richard Ekins, with a Footnote by Larissa Mills. The link was given correctly with the article’s title changed, suitably, perhaps, to ‘Ken Grayson Mills on the early days of Preservation Hall’. In this article, Mills takes issue with the way he has been presented in William Carter’s book *Preservation Hall* and seeks to set the record straight. So now Mills’ account of his own contribution and his ousting from Preservation Hall is easily available to even the most casual enquirer and novice researcher on the topic.

Barbara Reid and the Early Days of Preservation Hall

Heartened by this turn of events, I decided to write an article whose substance was ‘Barbara Reid and the Early Days of Preservation Hall’. This would set forth the record on the relevant contributions of Reid, as opposed to Mills, in these early days. Reid had been involved in New Orleans jazz since the late 1940s and after settling permanently in New Orleans in the early 1950s brought to the opening of Preservation Hall in 1961 her great knowledge of and friendship with many of the old-style New Orleans musicians. Mills could draw on this. But it was the music and the musicians that Mills focussed on leaving Reid to handle the bulk of the administrative matters of founding and establishing Preservation Hall and, in particular, of initiating, maintaining and developing publicity for the Hall.

Anyone researching Reid’s role in the early days might usefully start with Carter’s book *Preservation Hall*. In a little over two pages Carter details Reid’s main contributions regarding what he calls the ‘media blitz’ she orchestrated. However, there are errors and omissions in this account that need to be put right. I will, therefore, reproduce the bulk of Carter’s findings and add my own commentary.

Right from the start of Carter's treatment of the 'official opening' of Preservation Hall there are problems. Carter writes:

The official opening was the night of June 10, 1961. Mills remembered that the band consisting of trumpeter Kid Sheik Colar, clarinetist George Lewis, trombonist Eddie Summers, banjoist Harrison Verrett, bassist Slow Drag Pavageau and drummer Alex Bigard. Helping pass the hat were Barbara Reid, Sandra Jaffe, Marge Kidorsky¹¹ (Mills' fiancée) and an off-duty Playboy Club bunny named Pat Gordon.¹²

Mills later corrects this as follows:

With regard to . . . the exact date that Preservation Hall opened. The first union contract gig was Tuesday June 13. We held non-guaranteed preps from June 7 to 11. We were closed on June 10. June 10 is misinformation without reference to refreshing documents when I was interviewed in 1987. My diary opens June 16 with Jim Robinson's Back O' Town Band. Earlier records were kept in a sturdily bound Victor Viewer and that source was unavailable until its rediscovery in about December of 1989.¹³

Carter then refers to television publicity that he implies accompanies this first session:

A local television station WYES, filmed the band playing such tunes as *I Thought I Heard my Mother Pray* and *I Can't Escape from You*, and interviewed Kid Sheik, Ken Mills and Barbara Reid. One of Barbara's statements on camera, when broadcast later, seemed to strike everyone as impressive: 'We tried to restore the musicians' old pride in themselves.'¹⁴

Yet, James Asman in his article 'The Living Legends of New Orleans' states that he arrived in New Orleans 'towards the end of June' and comments:

The best session so far luckily occurred the second night we were in New Orleans, and this had been filmed by a local television company earlier in the evening. George 'Kid Sheik' Colar . . . fronted a distinguished group with George Lewis . . . trombonist Eddie Summers, Harrison Verret on banjo, Slow Drag Pavageau on string bass . . . pianist Louis Gallaud and Alex [Bigard] on drums.¹⁵

Either Carter got his dates wrong or there were two such television recordings of the same band, which seems not so likely, perhaps. Carter then warms to

his theme of Barbara's flair for publicity:

Mills remembered, 'Barbara had this marvelous hawking style that was totally fresh and innovative and in keeping with what we were trying to achieve in there. And yet it was still, 'Come on in here, have a look.' She stood in the doorway, smoking a cigarette, hawkin'.' Reid's flair for publicity was much in evidence. Spreading the word about the Hall, she told everyone she knew and had a flyer printed up in 15 different typefaces. Versions varied slightly over the first few weeks (see illustration)¹⁶

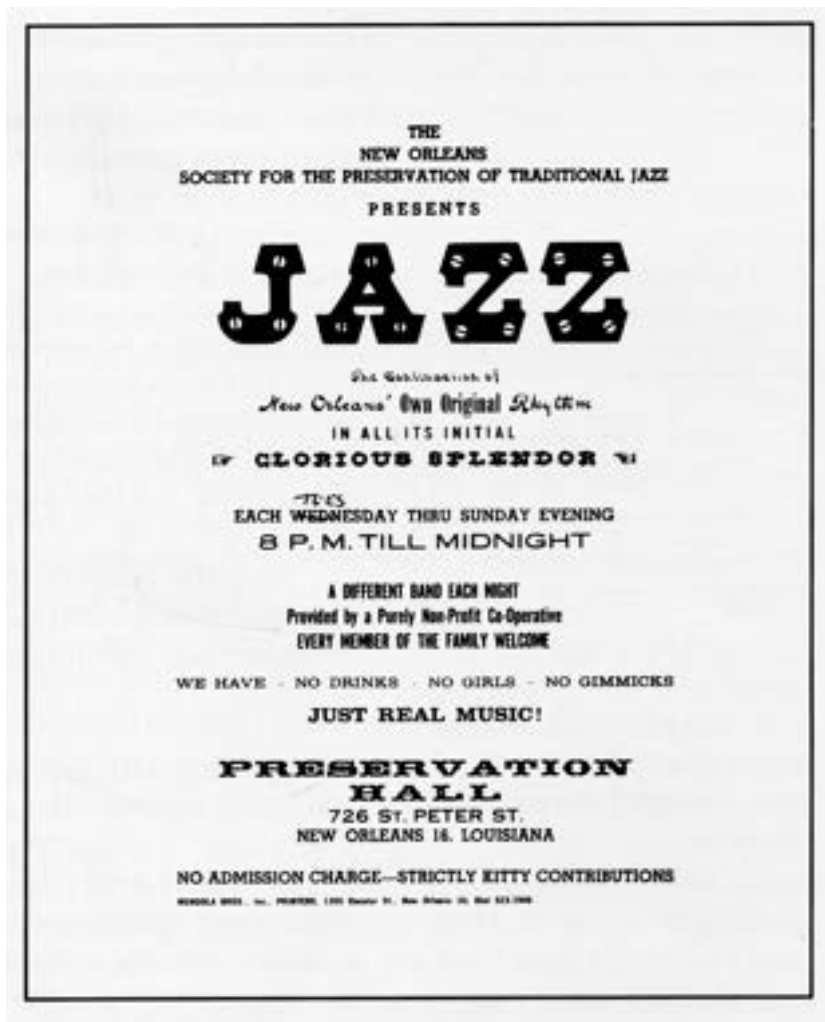


Figure 11.3 Early Preservation Hall flyer, courtesy of William Carter

Carter continues:

Reid appeared on at least two radio programs, and her friendship with local reporter Bill Stuckey led to his writing a long, favourable piece for an important local paper, the *New Orleans States-Item*.¹⁷

Carter gives no references for either the ‘at least two radio talk programs’ or the *New Orleans States-Item* report. I can shed no light on the radio talk programmes but I reproduce (below) the Bill Stuckey report I have located in the issue of Monday, July 24, 1961.

STRAINS RECALL EARLY 1900’s

‘Kid’ Jazzmen Play to Preserve Art Form.

By Bill Stuckey

Rainy evening in the French Quarter, summer, 1961.

The sidewalks are empty. The barkers on Bourbon Street have pulled in behind the swinging doors. St. Peter Street is quiet, except for the muted tearing sound that auto tires make on wet pavement, and the wind humming through a rain gutter.

“ . . . *she was stretched out on a long, white table . . .*”

Wait. What was that?

“ . . . *so cold, so pale, so fair . . .*”

Up ahead, a shaft of light from an open door falls on the sidewalk. The sound, the mournful elegy to a dead beauty of St. James Infirmary, came from inside.

Looking in the casual stroller sees seven old men with musical instruments, Negroes, oblivious of the intemperate weather outside, their ears filled with the sounds of half a century ago. Their listeners are seated on the floor, or leaning against the walls.

Tacked to the wall is a small sign which announces, “Authentic New Orleans Jazz.”

* * *

AT THAT MOMENT, the band breaks into “*Over the Waves*,” and the white-haired man on the bass, 73-year-old Slow Drag Pavageau, bounces like a child jumping rope. The serpentine veins on the small head of clarinetist George Lewis stand out in bas relief. Sixty-seven-year old Louis Nelson uncoils slowly from his chair and draws figures in the air with his trombone

A brief inquiry will inform the stroller that he has stumbled into a non-commercial living museum, dedicated to the preservation of an original art form – and to the preservation of the men who made it what it was.

William Russell, a musician who is conducting a five-year study into New Orleans jazz through a \$75,000 Ford Foundation grant, will tell you that most of the men playing in this unfurnished room are significant fixtures of jazz history. Their oral recollections of jazz as it was have been tape-recorded by Russell and filed in Tulane University’s archives, to form the core of a jazz research center planned there.

* * *

THIS LOOK INTO the musical past happens six nights a week, Tuesday through Sunday, in this room at 726 St. Peter.

Two French Quarter jazz buffs, Grayson Mills and Barbara Glancey Reid, were the principal organizers of the jazz series. They and others operate under the name of the Society for the Preservation of Traditional New Orleans Jazz.

The unfurnished room has been named “Preservation Hall.”

Since the series started about two months ago, more than 50 Negroes in advanced age, many of them in retirement until recently have played here. Some have not played together in the same band since the 1920’s.

THE MUSICIANS take a break, and go next door where an ice chest full of beer waits for them.

A member of the informal audience takes his dog out for an intermission stroll in the rain.

“This is the final flowering of traditional jazz,” Mills will tell you. *“When these men die, jazz will die with them.”*

Mills, a writer of polemics for British and American jazz periodicals, is one of a number of purists who sniff at “Dixieland,” etc., as a shiny but shallow imitation of the real unpolished article.

The jazz spirit is peculiar to that generation of performers who now play at this concert hall on St. Peter, he says.

* * *

AT THESE CONCERTS, no admission is charged and nothing sold. Signs on the wall will tell you that “Every cent of the kitty goes to the musicians.”

The musicians operate as a sort of co-operative. They are paid entirely out of contributions from their audience.

The break is over.

Dave Bailey, 87, the dean of the performers to date, takes his place at the drums. The baby of the evening, Kid Sheik, 53, picks up his trumpet. Clarinetist Lewis, a Carnegie Hall performer in 1949 and a veteran of four European tours, slumps back into his chair, and the group rolls into “*See, See, Rider*,” a number almost as old as jazz itself.

A woman sticks her head in the door, and asks one of the buffs carrying the kitty:

“Kid Who is playing tonight?”

This is a laughing reference to the musicians who sport such titles as Kid Howard and Kid Thomas.

The use of the title “Kid” has its ironies. Only a handful of the “Kids” and their fellow performers are under 60 years of age.

* * *

MANY OF THEM have been unable to get jobs in the regularly working bands of the area. Their music is out of date, they are told, and they are too old.

Barbara Glancey Reid, the other principal organizer of the series, will tell you that retirement and inactivity is precisely the thing which will shorten the lives of these performers. Mills agrees.

“We lost a bunch of them last year,” Mills says. *“They kept hearing the critics say that jazz was dead. I guess they just decided not to wait any longer.”*

The performance ends at about 11.30 p.m. The final number, a jazz hymn, is “*Take My Hand, Precious Lord.*”

The musicians rest awhile, pick up their hats off the piano, tuck their instruments under their arms, walk off into the rainy summer night, and end another episode in what might become the last big ramble of jazz, New Orleans style.

James Asman, from England, had been in Preservation Hall, as we have seen, ‘towards the end of June’, several weeks before Stuckey. However, Asman’s article was not published until September 1961. As a writer for *Jazz Journal*, and as a man with a burning passion for jazz, and, particularly, New Orleans music, his article was more exclusively devoted to the music and the musicians. In particular, it was more devoted to the Hall’s links with Ken Mills’ Icon record label and Icon’s three recording sessions to date at the time. Strangely, perhaps, there is no mention of ‘Preservation Hall’ by name. Neither is Barbara Reid mentioned in the article,¹⁸ presumably because of the focus on the music, the musicians and the recordings. According to Carter, Asman ‘happened to be in town’ at the time, so although Asman wrote a major article for a major British jazz magazine – important early publicity – it seems as though Barbara Reid cannot take the credit for this particular article.

Similarly, perhaps, she cannot take the credit for Roger Dunkley’s article that according to Carter is probably the earliest article on Preservation Hall to be printed in England and Europe. Carter, however, makes at least two errors when referencing this article. He states that it appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* on July 9. The *Manchester Guardian* became the *Guardian* in 1959. Moreover, July 9, 1961 was a Sunday and the *Guardian* was not published on a Sunday.¹⁹

Carter’s lack of scholarship in these matters is exacerbated by his failure to reference other newspaper articles publicising the early Preservation Hall. Barbara Reid gets a brief mention in ‘ONCE IT GETS IN YOUR MIND . . .

The Old Men of Jazz are Back, Swinging in a Small, Bare Room’, *Richmond Times – Despatch*, August 22, 1961.²⁰ A major focus is on Mills and his intentions for Preservation Hall. However, it is an article by William Lawson in the *Kansas Daily Star* that is of particular importance when assessing Barbara Reid’s contribution to the ‘media blitz’ of the early Preservation Hall.

The *Kansas City Star* is a significant newspaper with a celebrated history. The writer Ernest Hemingway, who worked for the *Star* in 1917 and 1918, credited *Star* editor C.G. ‘Pete’ Wellington with ‘changing a wordy high-schooler’s writing style into clear, provocative English.’ As the *Star* style guide puts it: ‘Use short sentences. Use short first paragraphs. Use vigorous English. Be positive, not negative.’²¹

Willard Lawson’s feature on Preservation Hall, titled ‘The Old Jazz Sounds Again in New Orleans’ evidences all these features. In the article, Barbara Reid is referred to as ‘Miss Barbara Glancey Reid, a former resident of St. Joseph, Mo., and a freelance writer.’ Reid came from St. Joseph originally before her family settled in Chicago and, indeed, attended St. Joseph Junior College. St. Joseph is only some 50 miles from Kansas City. Among Reid’s papers was a letter from William Lawson together with its original envelope which enclosed a cutting of the relevant article. Having regard to all the circumstances it may well have been the case that William Lawson’s article was a direct result of Barbara’s networking and friendship circles in Missouri.

The first paragraph cuts to the chase immediately:

NEW ORLEANS – Just off Bourbon Street in New Orleans, the old-time jazz of the city blared forth from Preservation Hall,

before continuing:

It cut through the shouts of Bourbon Street girlie-show barkers and pulled their potential customers around the corner to 726 St. Peter Street. There were no flashing neons, no names in lights. There were two modest cardboard

signs saying this was “Authentic New Orleans Jazz” and that there were “No Drinks, No Tricks, No Girls – Just Good Music.”

Pulses quickened in momentary doubt of what was being heard, but there was no mistaking it. It was the end of the pilgrimage.

After some seven tightly written paragraphs on Kid Thomas and the ‘old-timers’, Lawson turns to the history of the hall:

Collectively they [the musicians] have been playing about five months,²² since a group of patrons, many of them young writers and artists, founded Preservation Hall and the New Orleans Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz.

Of the ‘group of patrons’ only Barbara Reid and Bill Russell are mentioned by name. No mention is made of Ken Mills. Barbara Reid is quoted extensively, as in the following section:

The patrons are the business managers of Preservation Hall. They see that the musicians are paid union-scale wages and that the rent is paid, and sometimes dig into their own pockets to do it . . .

“The kitty is sometimes not enough but, so far, we are encouraged,” said Miss Barbara Reid . . . *The musicians decided entirely on their own to use what money was left each night in excess of their part to build up a general fund that can be used for emergencies.*

The important thing to us is reinstating in the union and putting back into circulation. There are about 175 on the list and about 50 of them have played here so far.”

As I have indicated above, while it was Ken Mills who focused on the music and the musicians, it was Barbara who focused on the administrative procedures necessary to constitute Preservation Hall as a legal entity. Lawson pays proper respect to these latter aspects. He continues:

The Society has had a city permit for the hall a little more than two months and received its state charter about seven weeks ago.²³ Its members are also members of the New Orleans Jazz club. The permit for the Hall prohibits the sale or consumption of alcoholic beverage.



Figure 11.4 Framed originals of the Charity Hospital License and the Mayoralty Permit for Preservation Hall, July 17, 1961.

Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University

Following detailed and quite extensive reporting of interview material with George Lewis and De De Pierce, Lawson concludes by setting the context and possible future scenarios for the musicians and for Preservation Hall:

Riverside Records recently undertook a 13-volume series of long-play records to bring their music to attention outside New Orleans, and several groups have played at a series of concerts at Tulane University. Tulane has

also given William Russell, owner of a music shop near Preservation Hall and a board member of the Preservation Society, a 5-year grant to record the music.

For some of them, this will be too late to bring anything except satisfaction that their music will be among the recorded history of classic jazz. For others, it could mean more. William Geary (Bunk) Johnson, legendary New Orleans cornetist later turned trumpeter, made no known records until he was 62, then went on to a major role in the jazz renaissance of the 1940s.

Whatever happens, though, most of them likely will continue to play their music for the satisfaction it gives them rather than for money or fame it might bring. Things happen, as DeDe says, to keep them going.

The nuance, detail and accuracy of much Lawson's report bears all the hallmarks of a considered input from Barbara Reid. Compare this with Ben Jaffe on his father's role in the founding of Preservation Hall in the 'A Tuba to Cuba' Trailer of 2019:

New Orleans, this is the place where jazz was born. Understanding our history is understanding the elements that formed who we are and part of that is understanding Cuba.

I got my start playing jazz in New Orleans brass bands. My father played tuba.

Voice-over: It was his [Allan Jaffe's] idea in 1961 to open up a club in New Orleans. He called it Preservation Hall.²⁴

To add insult to injury, the photograph that accompanies the bridge from Ben Jaffe talking, to the voice-over, is a photograph of (left to right) Sandra Jaffe with her arms around the younger Jaffe son playing a baritone horn; Allan Jaffe playing the helicon; and the older Jaffe son playing a tuba.²⁵ The picture could well have been taken outside Preservation Hall, thus adding a subliminal untruth to the nonsense spoken by the voice-over. Moreover, the film footage preceding the still shows an adult Ben Jaffe playing sousaphone in Preservation Hall.²⁶

Such is the stuff of fabricated 'history'.

Culmination and Aftermath



Figure 11.5 Letter and envelope from Willard Lawson to Barbara Reid, October 4 and 5, 1961. Lawson seems to have been particularly taken with Billie and DeDe Pierce and his article on Preservation Hall includes a sketch of Billie and DeDe playing together. The reference to the *Times* in the letter is to the morning *Kansas City Times*, under ownership of the afternoon the *Kansas City Star*, and published from 1867 to 1990.

The letter and envelope from William Lawson to Reid is particularly poignant because of the span of their relevant dates. I have been unable to locate the precise date of publication of Lawson's article, but internal evidence suggests that it was around September 4, 1961, the period of Mills and Reid's final weeks operating Preservation Hall.²⁷

In the weeks before their final eviction from Preservation Hall, Mills had tried to persuade Barbara to move Preservation Hall to a different address. However, Reid felt unable to do this, in part because Larry Borenstein had threatened to evict her and her family from where they were living at 732 St. Peter Street unless she acquiesced to handing over the rights to the Preservation Hall name and venue to Borenstein. And yet it seems from the re-addressed letter that by October 5 the Reid family had already left 732 St. Peter Street and moved to 827 Burgundy Street.

Barbara's 'media blitz' culminated in the publicity that Mills was most proud of, namely, David Zinman's Associated Press article which ran nationwide.²⁸



Figure 11.6 Kid Howard (left & centre) and John Casimir, August 22, 1961

Courtesy of Associated Press

I have a copy of the Associated Press Photo included in the Associated Press notice. It is dated ‘Aug 22 1961’ on the reverse.²⁹ Each photo of the tryptic has the following newspaper cutting pasted on the back: ‘PIONEER JAZZMEN, who helped spawn jazz in New Orleans many years ago, have returned to the bandstand at Preservation Hall in the city’s Vieux Carre. They are Kid Howard, 53 (left and center photos) and John Casimir, 62, at right. (AP Photo)’

Mills reproduced the entire article in the notes for his cassette release – ‘Live! Opening Night at Preservation Hall’.³⁰ It was this article that Mills credits with leading to the beginnings of the Preservation Hall band tours, a development first pioneered by Mills and not by Allan Jaffe as is often said.³¹ As Mills, himself, puts it:

The Hotel Essex³² sent two envoys down to secure a contract for three bands to play in their Cleveland nightclub. I selected Kid Sheik’s Storyville Ramblers, Kid Howard’s La Vida and Punch Miller’s New Orleans Band. It was Zinman’s news feature which caused them to think the music would be a big hit in Cleveland. And, boy, was it a smash. Full house every night hearing Gallaud, John Joseph, Sheik, Handy, Warner and Cie. The hotel manager and CEO (Sam Gerstner) paid Marge and my way up – free travel and accommodations. The band played a press conference and the reviews were rave notices. We were on Dorothy Fulheim [actually Fuldheim] and Douglas’ TV shows and the band played *Ice Cream and Hindustan*. Don Marquis, who wrote ‘In Search of Buddy Bolden’ and is currently curator of the New Orleans Jazz museum, did a long piece for the Cleveland Plain Dealer’s Sunday magazine. This was the start of the Preservation Hall tours.³³

So now the final piece of the groundwork was in place for the future development of Preservation Hall. To add to the permanent venue and the ‘Preservation Hall’ branding, the basis had been laid for the tours of the coming decades organised by Allan Jaffe. Indeed, the present day Cuban tour ‘A Tuba to Cuba’, far from being rooted in Allan Jaffe and his sons tuba playing, as Ben Jaffe would have us believe, is rooted in the very first tours of the Preservation Hall bands to Cleveland. These tours are themselves

rooted in Zinman's Associated Press article, itself a culmination of Barbara Reid's 'media blitz' of the early Preservation Hall.

Let us give praise where praise is due.

Appendix 1

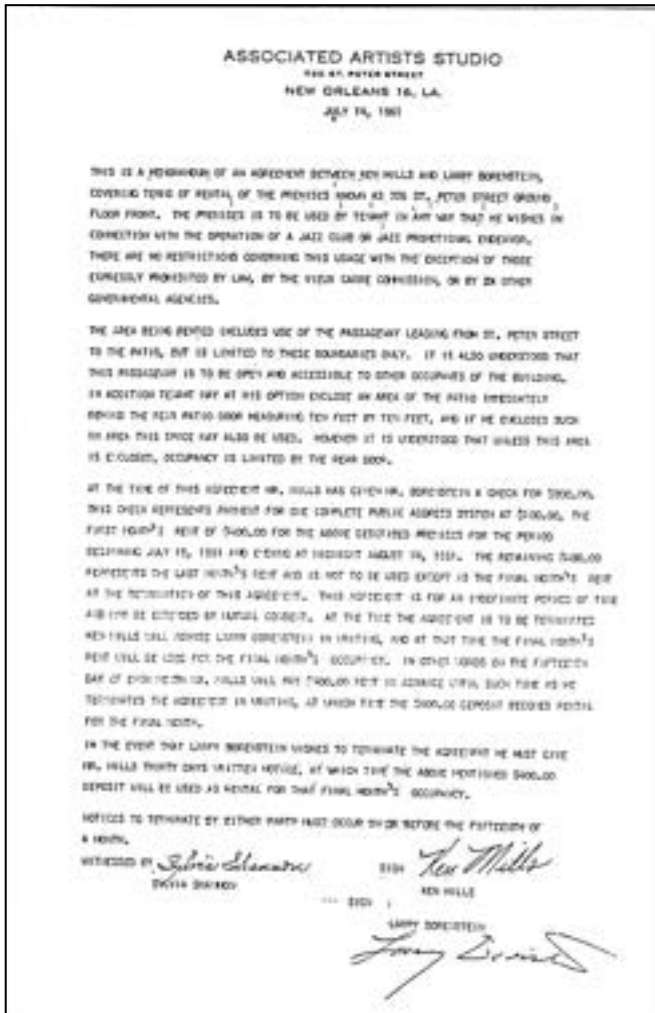



Figure 11.7 Original lease agreement for Preservation Hall between Ken Mills and Larry Borenstein, July 14, 1961.

Courtesy of Ken Grayson Mills and Bill Bissonnette



State of Louisiana
R. Kyle Roberts
 SECRETARY OF STATE

The Secretary of State of the State of Louisiana, I do hereby certify that

In response to your request we are pleased to provide the information on the subject Non Profit Corporation which filed articles of incorporation in this office on July 31, 1961.

Name: TRADITIONAL JAZZ ASSOCIATION
Type: Non Profit Corporation
City: NEW ORLEANS
State: LOUISIANA
Business: TRADITIONAL JAZZ ASSOCIATION
Owner Number: 00000000
Registration Date: 7/31/1961

Residing Address:
 126 ST MICHAEL ST
 NEW ORLEANS, LA 70116

Mailing Address:
 126 ST MICHAEL HILLS
 126 ST MICHAEL ST
 NEW ORLEANS, LA 70116

State: LOUISIANA
Executive Director: MICHAEL
Last Report Filed: N/A
Type: Non Profit Corporation

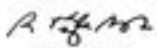
Registration Agency:
Name: LOUISIANA HILLS
Address: 126 ST MICHAEL ST
City, State, Zip: NEW ORLEANS, LA 70116
Registration Number: 0707000


Agency: LOUISIANA HILLS
Address: 126 ST MICHAEL ST
City, State, Zip: NEW ORLEANS, LA 70116
Registration Number: 0707000

Appropriation Fee:
Name: Registration
Amount: \$100.00

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and the official seal of this office in the office of the City of Baton Rouge, La.

April 3, 2019


R. Kyle Roberts
 Secretary of State
 666-2700/2701



Certificate ID: 119070000000

To verify this certificate, and the following web site, go to Louisiana Secretary of State for Louisiana Secretary of State, available at www.sos.la.gov

**Figure 11.8 State Charter Certificate – ‘Information on the subject Non-Profit Corporation which filed articles of incorporation in this office on July 31, 1961’ – Traditional Jazz Association [Preservation Hall].
 Provided for Lord Richard Ekins on April 3, 2019**

The above document is the ‘Information Certificate’. The original ‘Articles of Incorporation’ runs for seven pages. Article I specifies that ‘The name and title of this corporation shall be TRADITIONAL JAZZ ASSOCIATION’.

Article II states that ‘Its registered office shall be 726 St Peter Street, New Orleans, Louisiana’. Article III, inter alia, specifies that:

This corporation is organised, and it shall be operated, exclusively, to cultivate and promote the art and science of, the preservation and promulgation of traditional jazz music; to promote public welfare by elevating the standards of traditional jazz music, art and literature; to promote among said profession mutual improvements, social intercourse and fraternalism; to buy, sell, lease, erect, or otherwise acquire lands, club houses and all necessary buildings and appurtenances to further such ends, to hold, maintain and operate same; to sell, lease or dispose thereof and generally do all things necessary or proper to achieve such ends.

The Articles detail the corporation’s registered agents as Grayson Mills and Barbara Reid. The signatories to the state charter who ‘PERSONALLY CAME AND APPEARED’ are listed as Grayson Mills (President), Barbara Reid (First Vice-President), Sylvia Shannon (Secretary), William Russell (Second Vice-President), and William Edmiston (Treasurer).

It should be noted that Sylvia Shannon was Larry Borenstein’s Secretary. William Edmiston was Barbara Reid’s husband. On William ‘Bill’ Russell’s involvement, see the important unpublished notes written by Barbara Reid dated January 24, 1963:

May [1961] – Mills discussed rec. sessions with L.B. [Larry Borenstein] – Mills asked B.R. [Barbara Reid] to assist – Further discussion (L.B. in Mexico) resulted in 3 nights wk – B.R. talked Mills into fronting (Pres.) for society & therefore plying more nights each wk until – six nights a week – Wm Russell consented to help B.R. – but not Mills alone (or L.B.).

This original handwritten material was in the Kelley Edmiston boxes at the National Jazz Archive, Loughton, Essex, UK, in August 2017.

In view of the proliferation of alternative and competing Preservation Hall origin stories, it should be emphasised that Larry Borenstein declined to be on the board of directors and that Allan and Sandra Jaffe had nothing whatsoever to do with this founding and this legal incorporation of Preservation Hall as a non-profit corporation.³⁴

Appendix 3

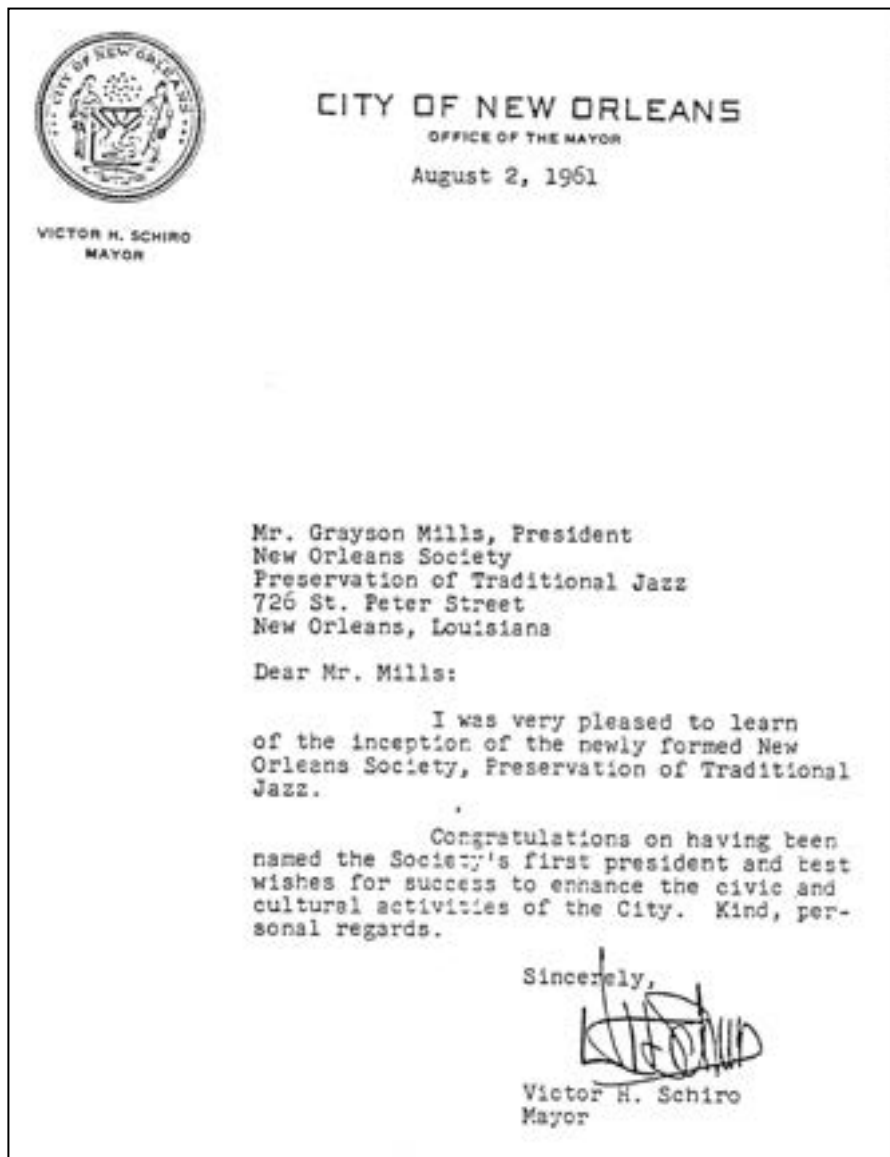


Figure 11.9 Letter from Mayor of New Orleans to Grayson Mills congratulating him on the opening of Preservation Hall, August 2, 1961
Courtesy of Ken Grayson Mills and Bill Bissonnette³⁵

Appendix 4



Figure 11.10 Preservation Hall notice of revocation letter to Grayson Mills,
October 15, 1997
Lord Richard Ekins Collection

Although ‘The Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz’ had long since been dissolved as part of the eviction of Mills and Reid from Preservation Hall in 1961, it is important to note that the formal letter of notice of revocation of ‘the articles of association and franchise’ of the ‘Traditional Jazz Association’ [Preservation Hall] was not issued until October 15, 1997, some fourteen years after Barbara Reid’s death and some seven years before Mills was to die. The letter was addressed to Grayson Mills, 726 St Peter St. There is no evidence that he ever received it.

NOTES

1. I thank Lynn Abbott, John Swenson, Alyn Shipton, Louis Lince, Dutch Uithoven, John McCusker and Matthew Ekins for their contributions to this article. Special thanks go to Kelley Edmiston and Fred Eatherton for their contributions since the inception of my *Just Jazz* Barbara Reid Project.

2. Richard Ekins, “PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills”, Introduced, Illustrated and Annotated by Richard Ekins, with a Footnote by Larissa Mills’, *Just Jazz*, No. 235, November 2017, pp. 18-25, <http://www.lacroixrecords.com/part11.html>

3. It is both a companion piece to ‘PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills’ and a homage all its own. The article is dedicated to Kelley Edmiston, daughter of Bill Edmiston and Barbara Reid.

4. Louis Lince was the publisher of *New Orleans Music* magazine between December 1995 and December 2010.

5. Facebook comment, Louis Lince to Richard Ekins, January 29, 2019. To be strictly accurate, Ben Jaffe introduces the relevant sequence and the erroneous credit to his father follows immediately in a voice-over. ‘A Tuba to Cuba Official Trailer’ (Documentary, 2019), accessed July 3, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmUenpdDbNc>, 0.00-2.16 minutes at 0.25-31 seconds. See, also, Loren Ghiglione, ‘Ben Jaffe, Heir to Preservation Hall, Philosophizes about New Orleans Jazz’, January 8, 2012, accessed July 3, 2023, <http://www.travelingwithwain.org/2012/01/08/new-orleans-la/ben-jaffe-heir-to-preservation-hall-philosophizes-about-new-orleans-jazz/?fbclid=IwAR15fXqnDkkX31JuyvthKdODehJwQYqilE8N533TkrV2WXUPB9PN1soPYh8>

6. Richard Ekins, 'Lacroixrecords.com and the Ken Grayson Mills Project: An Announcement', *Just Jazz*, No. 223, November 2016, pp. 27-28 at 27. Photojournalist, author and jazz authority, John McCusker comments: 'I first heard the revised history in 2012 at jazz fest. It was the narrative I assume Ben [Jaffe] provided to mark the hall's 50th.' Facebook comment, John McCusker to Richard Ekins, February 4, 2019. See, also, accessed July 3, 2023, <http://cradleofjazztour.com/>. Similarly, Brinkman and Abrams' book *Preservation Hall* marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of Preservation Hall. Mills and Reid are not mentioned. As I have detailed frequently throughout my Ken Grayson Mills *Just Jazz* series, the attempted erasing of Mills (and Barbara Reid) as founders of Preservation Hall started within months of their ejection from Preservation Hall. I have no evidence that Allan Jaffe was a party to this erasing story. Indeed, there are stories that Allan was quite helpful to Mills on occasion. The erasure is now being transported into academic Jazz Studies, as is evidenced by jazz historian Alyn Shipton's comment: 'I was at a conference in Dublin last month (Documenting Jazz) and a woman from the US gave one of the most glaringly inaccurate presentations on Preservation Hall I had ever heard – all her info came from Ben [Jaffe]!', *Documenting Jazz*, January 17-19, 2019, Dublin Institute of Technology, Conservatory of Music and Drama. Facebook Messenger message, Alyn Shipton to Richard Ekins, February 28, 2019. Numerous extraordinarily glaring inaccuracies also appear in Jason Berry, *City of a Million Dreams: A History of New Orleans at Year 300*, University of Northern Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2018. Berry has Allan Jaffe starting Preservation Hall after a preliminary pre-Preservation Hall period run by Mills and Reid. See, pp. 246-247.

7. As my *Just Jazz* Ken Grayson Mills Project has set out, the foundations for subsequent developments of Preservation Hall were all laid down by Ken Mills and Barbara Reid in its first three months of operation. In the context of his critique of Carter, op. cit., Mills writes: '[Carter] didn't credit Barbara [Reid] and me for establishing the modus operandi and laying down what [Allan] Jaffe called in the 1970s a "good foundation". Carter didn't say Jaffe learned the ropes by observing and listening to the bands' every performance, standing only by the hitching post in front of the carriage way.' Richard Ekins, 'PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills', op. cit., p. 20.

8. Facebook Messenger message, John Swenson to Richard Ekins, February 25, 2019. See, also: 'Ben has done an outstanding job rescuing Preservation Hall after Katrina. His heroic work reached deep into New Orleans culture, saving some of the old timers who were devastated by the tragedy and marshaling newcomers to make the Hall a key element of the post-Katrina revival. I am at a loss for any good reason he might have to perpetuate this falsehood about the Hall's founding. It undermines

all the great work he has done.’ Op. cit., thread of March 27, 2019.

9. http://www.lacroixrecords.com/grayson_menu.html;

<http://www.lacroixrecords.com/barbara%20reid.html>.

10. Accessed, July 3, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preservation_Hall.

11. ‘Kidorsky’ is a mistake for Fedorsky.

12. William Carter, *Preservation Hall*, op. cit., p. 149.

13. Ken Mills, ‘Letters – Opening Night at Preservation Hall’, *New Orleans Music*, 1991, 3 (1), p. 25.

14. William Carter, *Preservation Hall*, op. cit., p. 149.

15. James Asman, ‘The Living Legends of New Orleans’, *Jazz Journal*, September 1961, 14 (9), pp. 2-3, and 40, at p. 3. Asman revisits his ten-day trip to New Orleans in much greater detail in James Asman, ‘New Orleans in Retrospect’, *Footnote*, 4 (1), pp. 2-20. Here, Asman says he arrived in New Orleans on Wednesday, June 28, 1961. The television filming, which is described more fully, was on Thursday, June 29, and was held ‘all seated in the garden patio of Preservation Hall.’ James Asman, ‘New Orleans in Retrospect’, *ibid.*, p. 8.

16. William Carter, *Preservation Hall*, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

18. In the extended *Footnote article* of 1972, Preservation Hall is mentioned by name, e.g., ‘This was the stormy beginnings of Preservation Hall’. James Asman, ‘New Orleans in Retrospect’, op. cit., p. 5. Barbara Reid is not mentioned.

19. As a result, I have been unable to locate this article.

20. I thank Lynn Abbott, Associate Curator, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, for bringing this article to my attention.

21. ‘The Kansas City Star’, accessed July 3, 2023, https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypijzW3WknFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/The_Kansas_City_Star.html.

22. The regular rehearsals began in May 1961.

23. Carter puts it this way: ‘In Borenstein’s absence, Mills and Reid made rapid progress. The Charity Hospital License and a Mayoralty Permit were both finally issued on July 17 . . . The state charter of the non-profit corporation was formally filed and issued in Baton Rouge . . . on July 31.’ Carter, *Preservation Hall*, op. cit.,

p. 147. Earlier, Carter notes – from his interview material with Ken Mills – that Mills had said to Barbara: ‘Look, I know music, and I know musicians, but God, I don’t know nothing about this other stuff.’ Once again, it was a Barbara contact that delivered the goods. Mills’ interview material continues: ‘She knew a lawyer, Tony Vesich. He went to the State Legislature and got us a non-profit license.’ Carter (p. 146). Similarly, according to Carter (p. 153), it was Barbara Reid who obtained a formal letter from the Mayor of New Orleans sending congratulations to Mills on the opening of Preservation Hall. The original lease agreement for Preservation Hall of July 14, 1961 was between Ken Mills and Larry Borenstein. The letter from the Mayor of New Orleans was addressed to ‘Mr Grayson Mills, President, New Orleans Society, Preservation of Traditional Jazz.’ See Appendices 1-4, below.

24. See note 5.

25. In the event, the first-born son, Russell Lorenz Jaffe, named after Bill Russell and E. Lorenz ‘Larry’ Borenstein, came to have no interest in the music. Whereas, Benjamin ‘Ben’ Jaffe, the second-born son, whose godfather was Harold Dejan, leader of the Olympia Brass Band, grew up to become ‘Creative Director’ of Preservation Hall, having taken an increasingly important management role from 1993 onwards following his graduation in music from Oberlin College and Conservatory. See, Carter, op. cit., p. 171; Tom Sancton, ‘Hall that Jazz’, *Vanity Fair*, January 2012, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2012/01/preservation-hall-201201>. For the purposes of ‘A Tuba to Cuba’, ‘tuba’ is the generic term used to include both the sousaphone and the helicon as marching tubas, as well as the standard tuba and, more controversially, the baritone horn.

26. The brass instrument expert, Dutch Uithoven, combines comment on the still and preceding footage thus: ‘On the left is a baritone horn (what we call a baritone in the US, not the UK version). Hard to tell from the photo but I think it could be an old J.W. York. Next is Allan playing his four valve Buescher BBb helicon made about 1898 as I recall. (Ben let me have a look at it and have a blow on it). It played pretty nicely except for the fourth valve – which I think Allan hardly ever used. Lastly a BBb upright tuba, perhaps a Conn or Yamaha. They are all tubas. As is the Sousaphone in the earlier shot.’ Facebook Messenger message, Dutch Uithoven to Richard Ekins, 24 March 2019. Thanks to Alyn Shipton for alerting me to Anthony C. Baines, ‘Baritone (ii)’, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, ed. Stanley Sadie, Macmillan. London, 1985, p. 157. This article clarifies the different terminology in Britain, France, Germany and ‘America’.

27. The Board of Directors’ meeting dissolving ‘the Traditional Jazz Association’ took place on August 29, 1961. The resolution of dissolution was attested and signed

on September 7. Mills continued to run the sessions at Preservation Hall, assisted by Ralph Collins and Allan Jaffe, until Jaffe finally took over the sessions on September 13. Barbara Reid came back only once following the dissolution. She was crushed. See ‘Resolution adopted at the regular meeting of the officers and Board of Directors of the Traditional Jazz Association held on August 29, 1961.’ Also, Carter, pp. 158-160. Carter cites Dick Allen on p. 160.

28. J. Mark Souther, *New Orleans on Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2006, p. 256, cites ‘David Zinman, “New Orleans Jazzmen, Staging Last Stand,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Aug. 22, 1961’. Extraordinarily, there is no mention of either Ken Mills or Barbara Reid in Souther’s treatment of Preservation Hall which moves seamlessly from Larry Borenstein’s contribution to Borenstein’s turning ‘the Hall over to Allan and Sandra Jaffe’ in ‘1962’ [sic]! Ibid. pp. 113-114 at p. 114.

29. It is, of course, possible that newspaper articles, TV appearances, film sequences and so on that followed Zinman’s feature were in part or wholly a consequence of it. The next major nationwide publicity occurred after Mills and Reid had left Preservation Hall, namely the featuring of Preservation Hall in ‘David Brinkley’s Journal’ for NBC-TV, recorded on November 12, 1961 and transmitted on January 10, 1962. See, ‘Preservation Hall on the Brinkley News Hour (1961)’, accessed August 13, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqoNxLImE7g>. The voice-over gives an example of just how soon the erasure of Ken Mills and Barbara Reid as founders of Preservation Hall began. See, at 0.28-0.36: ‘An art dealer named Larry Borenstein furnished the hall and a young couple named Allan and Sandra Jaffe started this.’ It is shocking that contemporary academic historians are equally slap dash. See, e.g., Souther, note 28, above.

30. ‘Live! Opening Night at Preservation Hall: Emile Barnes’ Louisiana Joymakers’, Getdown records. Also, American Music, AMCD-86, ‘Booklet Notes’, p. 5.

31. ‘Preservation Hall Foundation: Our History’ puts it this way: ‘As time went on, Allan believed the success of both the Hall and its mission of preservation would require these bands to tour, and in 1963, he organized the newly minted Preservation Hall Jazz Band for a string of performances in the Midwest.’ Accessed July 3, 2023, <https://www.preshallfoundation.org/history>.

32. This is puzzling. The bands played at the Tudor Arms Hotel, Cleveland.

33. See, Richard Ekins, ‘PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills’, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

34. Note Mills: ‘The business license and Preservation Hall’s fictitious name

statement belonged to the Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz . . . Just exactly why was there a Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz? It is a crucial and overlooked factor. The union rate at the time was \$24.50 per man/woman, double for the leader. Borenstein and I (we were friends at the time) asked Pres. Louis Cottrell to come to the Associated Artists Studio's office and discuss my plans to present oldtime jazz on a nightly basis. I told Louis that \$24.50 was too ferocious, was there anything he could do? He was pensive, then after a few moments he said that the union had a special rate for non-profit/charitable corporations. It was \$13.50 per person and double for the leader. Well, all right, as Joe Turner used to shout.' Richard Ekins, 'PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills', op cit., p.22.

35. Ken Mills attached especial value to this letter, procured by Barbara Reid. It was also important because Larry Borenstein hung a copy in Preservation Hall and police harassment at Preservation Hall ceased at this point. See: Carter, *Preservation Hall*, op. cit., p. 153.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The upper part shows a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony are several doors and windows. On the left, there is a white door with a diamond-shaped window. Next to it is a doorway with a cushioned seat. To the right of the doorway is another white door with a diamond-shaped window and a screen. Further right is a dark door with a small window. The number '26' is visible on a wooden post between the white door and the dark door. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font with a drop shadow.

CHAPTER 12

Kid Sheik, Barbara Reid,
Ken Grayson Mills
and the First Television
Filming at Preservation Hall,
with an Afterword from
Larissa Mills

Chapter 12

Kid Sheik, Barbara Reid, Ken Grayson Mills and the First Television Filming at Preservation Hall, with an Afterword from Larissa Mills¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*, August 2019

*This is the band George Lewis should have brought to
England! This music would have made a million converts.*

James Asman

‘New Orleans in Retrospect’, *Footnote*, 4 (1), 1972, p. 8

*Unfortunately, we have no records of any of this. Hurricane
Katrina ruined our whole downstairs media lobby. Even with a
library, I don't think there were any records kept or programs
on media from the 1960s. There is no one here working from
that time as well to ask.*

Kirk Demoruelle

WYES, ‘Filming at Preservation Hall’
email to Richard Ekins, May 1, 2019

Preamble

The purpose of this article is to clarify confusions, correct errors and fill in some of the gaps in the literature and material on the official opening night of Preservation Hall and the first television filming at the Hall. Pivotal to this is my acceptance of Ken Mills’s re-dating of the official opening night as June 13, 1961; James Asman’s dating of the television filming as June 29, 1961;² and my reconstruction of events centring around my re-dating and re-describing of a series of photographs allegedly taken in ‘early July’ or ‘during opening week’ by the *Times-Picayune* photographer James Pitts.

Firstly, I detail the available inconsistent evidence, the building blocks of my argument. Secondly, I set forth my own view. Thirdly, I select a number of James Pitts' photographs to illustrate the events being filmed. Fourthly, I provide 'An Unexpected Bonus'. And finally, I end with a short conclusion and an interesting 'Afterword from Larissa Mills', Ken Grayson Mills' granddaughter.

The article may be read as a free-standing contribution extending our knowledge of the early months of Preservation Hall when it was co-founded and run by Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Reid. It may also be read as an addendum to last month's *Just Jazz* article on Barbara Reid's 'Media Blitz' of 1961.³ Insofar as the events described involve both Mills' main focus in selecting the musicians and Reid's input in arranging for the television filming and the presence of the *Times-Picayune* photographer James Pitts, I regard this article as both Part 18 of my Ken Grayson Mills Project and Part 8 of my Barbara Glancey Reid Project.⁴

Building Blocks

William Carter combines the Preservation Hall official opening night and the WYES first filming at Preservation Hall, as follows:

The official opening was the night of June 10, 1961. Mills remembered the band consisting of trumpeter Kid Sheik Colar, clarinetist George Lewis, trombonist Eddie Summers, banjoist Harrison Verrett,⁵ bassist Slow Drag Pavageau and drummer Alex Bigard. Helping pass the hat were Barbara Reid, Sandra Jaffe, Marge Kidorsky [actually Fedorsky] (Mills' fiancée) and an off-duty Playboy Club bunny named Pat Gordon. A local television station, WYES, filmed the band playing such tunes as *I Thought I Heard my Mother Pray* and *I Can't Escape from You*, and interviewed Kid Sheik, Ken Mills and Barbara Reid. One of Barbara's statements on camera, when broadcast later, seemed to everyone as impressive: 'We tried to restore the musicians' old pride in themselves.'⁶

On dating the official opening as June 10, 1961, Carter is following numerous published precedents, including, for example, Noel Rockmore, Larry

Borenstein and Bill Russell's 1968 *Preservation Hall Portraits*.⁷ However, following his correspondence and conversations with Carter in 1985-1986⁸ which Carter drew on for his book, Mills corrected that date to June 13, 1961.



Figure 12.1 Kid Sheik's Storyville Ramblers, with George Lewis and Kid Howard. Left to right: Eddie Summers, Kid Sheik, George Lewis, Alex Bigard, Harrison Verret, Kid Howard.

Not shown: Alcide 'Slow Drag' Pavageau, bass, Louis Gallaud, piano.

Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University

Mike Hazeldine noted that Kid Sheik had told him that on the opening night Sheik thought that George Lewis was playing clarinet, whereas on June 13, it was Emile Barnes who was featured. Forced to choose between the two dates, Hazeldine favoured the 10th on the basis of Kid Sheik's memories of

the occasion. For some, perhaps, there was a lingering suspicion that Mills might have re-dated the official opening night to accord with the fact that he had re-discovered the tapes of the music played that night by the band featuring Kid Sheik and Emile Barnes. Accordingly, Hazeldine wrote in 1991:

The publication of the book [Carter's *Preservation Hall*] is timed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the creation of Preservation Hall. If you want to have a celebration drink on the 30th anniversary, then you have a choice. You can either have it on June 10 (as stated by Ken Mills on page 149 of the book) or on June 13 (as stated by Ken Mills as the date of the 'Opening Night' recording on the recent Sheik/Emile Barnes cassette). Kid Sheik once told me that he thought George Lewis was with him on the opening night. It would seem that the 10th is the more likely date.⁹

Mills responded speedily and sought to set the record straight when he wrote as follows:

With regard to . . . the exact date that Preservation Hall opened. The first union contract gig was Tuesday June 13. We held non-guaranteed preps from June 7 to 11. We were closed on June 10. June 10 is misinformation without reference to refreshing documents when I was interviewed in 1987. My diary opens June 16 with Jim Robinson's Back O' Town Band. Earlier records were kept in a sturdily bound Victor Viewer and that source was unavailable until its rediscovery in about December of 1989.¹⁰

At least three questions then come to the fore. Firstly, why did Sheik think that he had played with George Lewis on the opening night? Secondly, what was the date of the filming? And thirdly, was Carter's detailing of the personnel on the opening and/or filming night correct?

In my previous article on the 'Media Blitz' of 1961, I drew on James Asman's September 1961 *Jazz Journal* piece, 'The Living Legends of New Orleans', to note that Asman had dated the filming to 'towards the end of June',¹¹ and pointed out that on the more lengthy and detailed account Asman later wrote up for *Footnote*, we could precisely date the filming to Thursday June 29.¹² Now is the time to draw on Asman's article more fully.

In his *Jazz Journal* he writes:

The best session so far luckily occurred the second night we were in New Orleans [June 29], and this had been filmed by a local television company earlier in the evening. George ‘Kid Sheik’ Colar, one of Crescent City’s greatest veteran jazz trumpeters, fronted a distinguished group with George Lewis playing at his best, a brilliant and grievously under-rated trombonist named Eddie Summers, Harrison Verret on banjo, Slow Drag Pavageau on string bass, Creole pianist, Louis Gallaud and Barney Bigard’s brother Alex on drums.¹³

Such was the position when I finished my July 2019 *Just Jazz* article. I found Mills’ argument as to the date of the official opening of Preservation Hall persuasive. I also found Asman’s dating of the filming persuasive. Both were drawing on their respective detailed notes taken at the time.

However, as is the way with these things, a short time later I happened to be browsing the Louisiana Digital Library site. I searched for ‘Preservation Hall’ and came across a series of photos, titled ‘Preservation Hall Jazz Band’, almost all dated ‘early July’, with no year given and no photographer given. Rather, the relevant details, most typically, stated ‘Gift of Photographer 1970s’; date: ‘early July’.¹⁴

It was soon clear to me from the content of the photographs that the year must have been 1961. As I studied the photographs more closely it became evident that all of them were of the musicians specified in Asman’s personnel of the filming. Asman referred to two locations for the evening: ‘the garden patio back of Preservation Hall’,¹⁵ where the filming was done ‘earlier’¹⁶ and the evening session in the Hall itself. In the *Footnote* article, Asman had also referred to the band as being ‘extended’.¹⁷ The series of photos dated ‘early July’ all accorded with Asman’s depiction of the evening. It became evident to me that the photographs had been wrongly dated. The photographs were in fact taken on June 29, 1961 and they were, indeed, taken on the evening of the filming. Moreover, the smaller number of photographs interspersed with the ‘early July’ photos, labelled ‘during opening week’, I was now inclined

to think were from the same date. These photographs, however, were of the audience, with no musicians being photographed.¹⁸

Although I had accessed all the photographs on the Louisiana Digital Library site, all of those I was interested in were listed as part of the Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University site. Naturally, I contacted Lynn Abbott of the Hogan Archive, outlined my ‘findings’ and asked if he was able to identify the photographer. The reply I received was most gratifying:

The Preservation Hall photos you were asking about were taken by *Times-Picayune* photographer James Pitts; all are dated ‘early July 1961 [opening week?]?’ He donated them to the Jazz Archive during the mid-1970s.¹⁹

Contention

I have no doubt now, therefore, that all the relevant photographs were taken on the evening of June 29, 1961 by James Pitts, including both those labelled ‘early July 1961’ and those few labelled ‘during opening week’.

Given the development of the early Preservation Hall sessions held by Mills and Reid as moving from overt ‘rehearsals’ (May to early June 1961), to ‘non-guaranteed preps’, to the ‘official opening’, to the first television filming, it is, most likely, in my view, that Kid Sheik’s recollection of his playing with George Lewis on the ‘opening night’ was not correct. This recollection seems to be, in fact, a mistake for the first ‘filming night’, a mistake easily made from Kid Sheik’s point of view.

In short, Carter is wrong in his dating of the official opening night. Carter is wrong in conflating the official opening night with the filming by WYES. James Pitts and/or the relevant staff at the Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, are wrong in dating the photographs to ‘early July’ or ‘during opening week’. Rather, this series of photographs were all taken by James Pitts of the *Times-Picayune*, either on the garden patio behind Preservation Hall or in the Hall itself on June 29, 1961, on the evening of the actual filming by WYES or later that same evening.

It is not impossible that there had been a previous television filming, but on the evidence available this seems highly unlikely. I therefore conclude that this television filming was another ‘first’ for Preservation Hall; another ‘first’ for Ken Mills and Barbara Reid.

The Photographs

The series of photographs by James Pitts consists of 20 images of the musicians designated (wrongly) as ‘early July’ and three images of the audience only designated (wrongly) as ‘opening week’. Most of the photographs of the musicians are taken inside the Hall.

One image shows Ken Mills, Kid Thomas, Emile Barnes, and Kid Howard sitting together outside on the patio. Kid Howard is shown singing with the band in one photograph and sitting with the band in another. It seems most likely that while Kid Howard may have played some numbers with the band in the Hall,²⁰ Kid Thomas and Emile Barnes did not. Rather they were visiting the Hall for the occasion. Nevertheless, it should be said that one of the patio pictures includes Emile Barnes, ‘? Kid Thomas Valentine’ and Ken Mills as one of the ‘Musicians’. Another photograph includes Ken Mills, Kid Thomas Valentine and ‘Emile Barnes ?’ as one of the ‘Musicians’ performing.²¹

It seems most likely that these descriptions were provided by James Pitts as this information cannot be gleaned from the photographic evidence alone. None of these named people can be distinguished in the photographs, themselves.

Moreover, it seems most likely that to describe Mills as a musician ‘performing’ is an error. However, Mills is listed as playing ‘percussion’ in the May 19, 1961 session ‘Emanuel Sayles and his Conti Street Boys’, a trio comprising Punch Miller, Emanuel Sayles and Ken Mills, so it is not impossible.²²

Conceivably, Mills was performing with the band.

Fred Eatherton immediately recognised James Asman in the picture below. Mills is sitting next to Asman.²³



**Figure 12.2 Ken Grayson Mills, James Asman, Kid Sheik, Eddie Summers.
Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University**

Of the eight photographs that follow, the final picture was Photoshopped to remove a halo of light resting on the top of Ken Mills' head. The result is an improvement on the original. The other seven photographs were selected to give a representative sample of the band and each musician. I have added my own personnel details.



**Figure 12.3 Kid Sheik, Alex Bigard, George Lewis, Kid Howard
Louis Gallaud, Harrison Verret.**

Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University



Figure 12.4 Eddie Summers and Kid Sheik.
Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University



Figure 12.5 Louis Gallaud, Alcide ‘Slow Drag’ Pavageau, Harrison Verret
Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University



Figure 12.6 Harrison Verret and Alcide ‘Slow Drag’ Pavageau
Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University



Figure 12.7 Harrison Verret
Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University



Figure 12.8 George 'Kid Sheik' Colar, George Lewis, Louis Gallaud, Harrison Verret, Alcide 'Slow Drag' Pavageau
Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University



Figure 12.9 Ken Grayson, Mills, Kid Thomas Valentine, Emile Barnes, Avery 'Kid' Howard. Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University

An Unexpected Bonus

It will be recalled from the opening section of this article that, according to Carter: ‘WYES, filmed the band playing such tunes as *I Thought I Heard my Mother Pray* and *I Can’t Escape from You*’. In 1973, Stagg and Crump had listed ‘I Can’t Escape from You’ as a single unissued track from ‘Kid Sheik’s Swingsters’, recorded in New Orleans on June 29, 1961.²⁴

A closer examination of the entry in Stagg and Crump reveals that its personnel is identical to the Kid Sheik’s Storyville Ramblers band with George Lewis filmed by WYES. Moreover, as Fred Eatherton and I listed in our Ken Mills Discography, we know of three tunes recorded on that same occasion.²⁵ Indeed, Barry Martyn included all three of these tracks on his American Music CD (AMCD-56) under the heading ‘George Lewis with Kid Sheik’s Band’. Martyn added them as a filler to this CD release of what had originally been Icon LP 6: Steve Angram with Kid Sheik’s Storyville Ramblers. However, although we know that Mills sold these three previously unissued tracks to George Buck as part of his sale of the Icon catalogue to GHB/Jazzology, Martyn adds no commentary about them, except to list the personnel, add ‘Recd. N.O. 6/29/61’, and make a comment in his CD booklet:

We have added three numbers by George Lewis with Kid Sheik’s Band. These three tracks have the same exact rhythm section [as the Steve Angram tracks] and so they fit the whole concept of the CD.²⁶

From the evidence set out in this article, it is clear that these three tracks were recorded on the same WYES filming occasion. Most likely, perhaps, Mills secured the recordings from WYES, although it is possible, of course, that he, or persons unknown, were recording the session, or part of it, at the same time.

More significantly, thanks to the American Music AMCD-56, all of us now have a portion of the evidence to assess James Asman’s lavish praise of the band’s playing that evening:

The TV limelight played on Lewis as he jerked his thin legs and joyously wailed his clear high notes through BURGUNDY STREET BLUES and I managed to catch some of the proceedings on film. Eddie Summers was the trombonist and the drumming, crisp and reminiscent of Baby Dodds, was by Barney Bigard's younger brother, Alex. Slow Drag plucked his string bass with enormous gusto, snapping a string and, at the same time, showing just how much a band relies on foundation work. George 'Kid Sheik' Colar played in a commanding fashion, proving himself a natural leader among so many star figures and I remember, too, pianist Louis Gallaud, perhaps in some ways the very last of the New Orleans' piano players. Harrison Verret was good but failed on this occasion to give George Lewis the right setting for his solo work. Indeed, when I look at the notes I scrawled at the time I wrote, 'This is the band George Lewis should have brought to England! This music would have made a million converts. Why the hell don't they record a band like this while there is still time?'²⁷

Conclusion and an Afterword from Larissa Mills

Ideally, of course, we would have access to the WYES programme itself. We can take it from the quotation from Carter on the filming that it was not broadcast live. Rather, it was broadcast at an unknown time and at a date recorded as 'later'. It is possible that some unknown person or persons made a recording of the transmission. However, when I approached WYES recently, I drew a sad blank. As WYES employee Kirk Demoruelle put it:

Unfortunately, we have no records of any of this. Hurricane Katrina ruined our whole downstairs media lobby. Even with a library, I don't think there were any records kept or programs on media from the 1960s. There is no one here working from that time as well to ask.²⁸

I replied that, as I understood it, Bill Carter was infirm and not in a position to respond to queries. I wondered what material or people, if any, he consulted in writing what he did. However, from my point of view, I had done what I could.

No sooner had I replied to WYES²⁹ than an unexpected email arrived from Larissa Mills, Ken's granddaughter:

Hi Richard,

Hope that you are well. I am not sure if I sent this photo to you before, it is attached below.³⁰



Figure 12.10 Pat Gordon and Ken Grayson Mills, June 1961

Courtesy of Larissa Mills

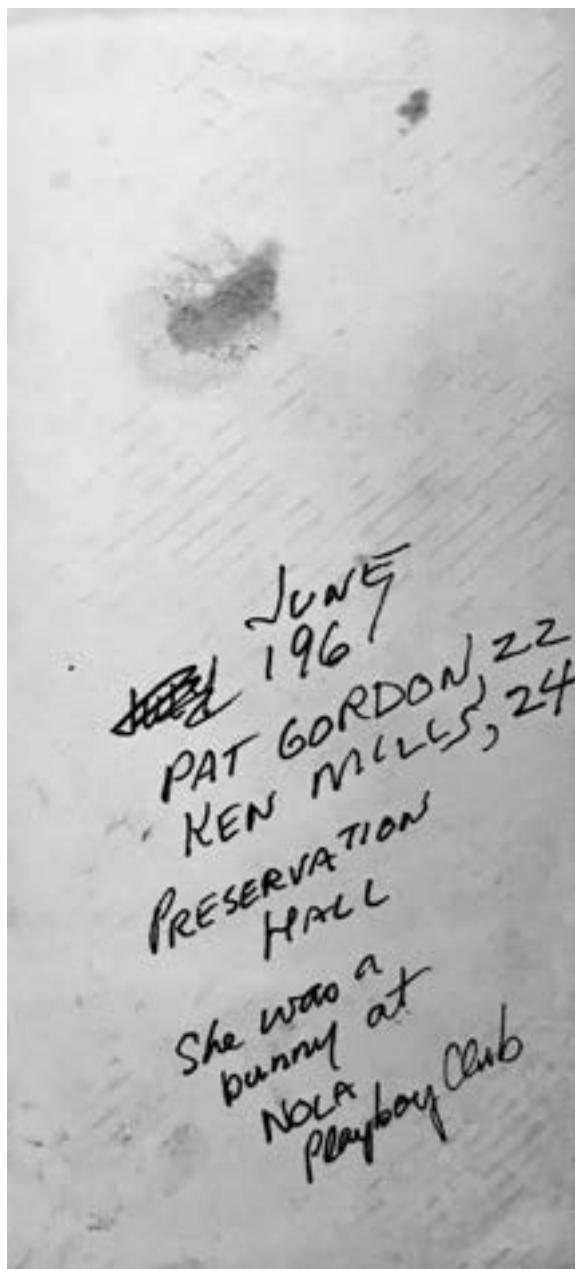


Figure 12. 11 Inscription by Ken Mills on the back of his photo with Pat Gordon, June 1961

Courtesy of Larissa Mills

I replied:

That's a great pic of Ken. Thank you for sending it. I have just made a great find of photos to do with a particularly important Preservation Hall gig which I've dated to the end of June (another article coming - just as I thought I had finished! [the Ken Grayson Mills Project]) So it intrigues me that 'July' is crossed out and turned into 'June'. The photos I have located are also classified as 'early July', but I think I have incontrovertible proof that this is a mistake. More later!³¹

In the same email, I added:

The two pics (back and front) you did send are totally new to me. Thank you so much. Pat Gordon is acknowledged by both Carter and Mills as one of the kitty basket handlers.

It would be gratifying if Larissa's photograph was taken on the occasion of the filming on June 29, 1961 and Mills had corrected his own date from July to June, accordingly.

Carter states that Pat Gordon was, indeed, passing the hat around at the WYES recording and/or the opening night.³² Also, Mills includes Pat Gordon in his list of 'wonderful volunteer kitty basket handlers who liked the music and wanted to help.'³³

However, given Mills' fresh look in Larissa's photograph, together with the pristine state of his white t-shirt – and this does not appear in James Pitts' photographs of June 29 – it is more likely that the photograph was taken on another day between June 9 and June 30, 1961. Mills' birthday was on June 9th and on that date in 1961 he was just 24 years of age as specified in Larissa's picture.

NOTES

1. I thank Lynn Abbott, Larissa Mills, Fred Eatherton, Thumbs Hughes and Matthew Ekins for their contributions to this article.
2. This is the WYES [**We're Your Education Station**] filming. Fred Eatherton adds: WYES-TV Channel 12 as it is known today is an independent TV channel owned by the Greater New Orleans Educational Television Foundation. It first broadcast in 1957. Over the years its speciality has been long-running Louisiana cookery programs! It has a studio on Navarre Avenue and its call sign is WYES - 'We're your education station'!
3. Richard Ekins, 'On the Origin of Preservation Hall: Barbara Glancey Reid and the "Media Blitz" of 1961', *Just Jazz*, No. 255, July 2019, pp. 20-29. This book, Chapter 11.
4. For Barbara Reid's early 1970s take on the division of labour between Ken Mills and herself, see Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life: A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2019, p. 133: 'Ken Mills was the manager, I was the idea person and promoter . . . My priority was in getting the musicians working again and getting their music heard by the kids. I think Ken's main interest was in experimenting with different combinations of musicians and then recording them for his Icon label.'
5. 'Verrett' is variously spelt 'Verret' or 'Verrett'. Mills uses both spellings in his sleeve notes for 'Steve Angrum with Kid Sheik's Storyville Ramblers', Icon LP 6. On his tombstone it is 'Verrett'; accessed July 3, 2023, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/98112119/harrison-verrett>.
6. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, New York, p. 149.
7. In Larry Borenstein's introduction, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, unpaginated.
8. Carter states: 'Grayson 'Ken' Mills corresponded and conversed with the author in 1985 and 1986.' Carter, p. 314. Whereas, Mills gives the date as 1987 in his quoted passage on page 258.
9. Mike Hazeldine, 'Editorial', *New Orleans Music*, 1991, 2 (5), pp. 4-5 at p. 5.
10. Ken Mills, 'Letters to the Editor: Opening Night at Preservation Hall', *New Orleans Music*, 1991, 3 (1), p. 25.

11. James Asman, 'The Living Legends of New Orleans', *Jazz Journal*, 14 (9), September 1961, pp. 2-3 and 40, at p. 2.
12. James Asman, 'New Orleans in Retrospect', *Footnote*, 4 (1), October 1972, pp. 2-20, at pp. 8-9.
13. James Asman, 'The Living Legends of New Orleans', op. cit., p. 3. This is the same personnel as detailed by Carter in the first of the 'building blocks' above, with the addition of Louis Gallaud.
14. Accessed July 3, 2023, <http://louisianadigitalibrary.org/islandora/search/Preservation%20Hall?type=dismax>.
15. James Asman, 'New Orleans in Retrospect', op. cit., p. 8.
16. James Asman, 'The Living Legends of New Orleans', op. cit., p. 3.
17. James Asman, 'New Orleans in Retrospect', op. cit., p. 8.
18. See, accessed July 7, 2023, <http://louisianadigitalibrary.org/islandora/search/Preservation%20Hall?type=dismax>.

A single photo (of banjoist Harrison Verret) was dated as 'during opening week at Preservation Hall in early July.'

19. Email, Lynn Abbott to Richard Ekins, May 1, 2019.
20. In early May 1961, 'Kid Howard was just coming back from illness. Sheik [Colar] was nursing him, and Sheik had him play second trumpet.' Ken Mills, quoted in Carter, *Preservation Hall*, p. 142. Charlie Devore misses the significance of this when he criticizes Mills for using 'inferior' trumpet players: 'but there was a wonderful trumpeter, Kid Howard, who wanted to play desperately, sitting out in the carriageway, kind of wistfully looking in.' Carter, *ibid.*, p. 154. The 'nursing' and encouragement from Sheik and Mills led to the excellent 'Kid Howard and his La Vida Jazz Band' session of 3 September 1961 first issued as Icon LP 4.
21. I refer to the descriptions provided by James Pitts and/or the Hogan Jazz Archive.
22. Fred Eatherton, assisted by Richard Ekins, *Ken Grayson Mills' Icon Discography: A Discography*, La Croix Publications, 2018, <http://www.lacroixrecords.com/mills%20discography.html>, p. 17.
23. Mills often looks very different in photographs taken at a similar time. The consensus of my informants is that this is Mills. Thumbs Hughes adds: 'He seems to be taking notes.' Richard Ekins Lord Richard, Facebook page comment, May 11, 2019.

24. Tom Stagg and Charlie Crump, *New Orleans, the Revival*, Bashall Eaves, Dublin, p. 47.
25. Fred Eatherton, assisted by Richard Ekins, *Ken Grayson Mills' Icon Discography: A Discography*, op. cit., p. 19.
26. Booklet accompanying Barry Martyn, 'Steve Angrum & George Lewis with Kid Sheik's Band', American Music AMCD-56, p. 3.
27. James Asman, 'New Orleans in Retrospect', op. cit., p. 8. Note, also, Asman in his 'The Living Legends of New Orleans Jazz', op. cit., pp. 2-3: 'I have been a constant visitor to the club [Preservation Hall] since I have been here in Crescent City and the quality of most of the jazz presented by these old men is incredibly high. Every night has been a magic, live creation of Bill Russell's American Music sessions, even to the benign, white-fringed head of Russell himself bowing appreciatively in the background.'
28. Kirk Demoruelle, WYES, 'Filming at Preservation Hall', email to Richard Ekins, May 1, 2019.
29. Email, Richard Ekins to Kirk Demoruelle, May 1, 2019.
30. Email, Larissa Mills to Richard Ekins, May 2, 2019. Such synchronicity has been a regular feature of my Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Glancey Reid Projects. Kelley Reid Edmiston, Barbara Reid's daughter, is firmly of the view that the spirits of Ken Mills and Barbara Reid are at work through their respective family members.
31. Email, Richard Ekins to Larissa Mills, May 3, 2019.
32. Carter, op. cit., p. 149, quoted previously.
33. Richard Ekins, "Preservation Hall: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills", Introduced, Illustrated and Annotated by Richard Ekins, with a Footnote by Larissa Mills', *Just Jazz*, No. 235, November 2017, pp. 18-25 at p. 25.



CHAPTER 13

The First Four Months of Preservation Hall: Barbara Reid's Notes for a Preliminary Timeline

Chapter 13

The First Four Months of Preservation Hall: Barbara Reid's Notes for a Preliminary Timeline¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*, March 2021

PRESERVATION HALL

The New Orleans Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz has established 'Preservation Hall' at 726 St. Peter, where they are currently sponsoring nightly jazz concerts (Mondays excluded), featuring retired jazz Greats. The shows are 8-12 PM, admission free.²

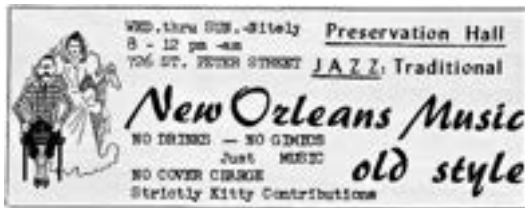


Figure 13.1 New Orleans Blue Book, August 1961, p. 5

STAY ANOTHER DAY in New Orleans!

Israel Gorman, Old Style N.O. jazz clarinetist who began his career in the district in 1912, appears weekly at Preservation Hall with his Camelia Band.

Air Conditioned
Lafitte Guest House
Private Balconies
Private Baths * Telephones
Free Parking * Complimentary
Newspaper - Free Coffee
Telephone 521-5016 1965 BOULEVARD STREET

Stay Another Day in New Orleans Page 9




Figure 13.2 New Orleans Blue Book, August 1961, p. 9

1-24-63

~~May~~ - Missionary (non-union) would wonder in - or be asked to come in by L.B. - would make maybe 2-3 dollars playing 4 hrs for publicity -

George Lewis attended town meeting as guest - was introduced to Mills & L.B. - Mills discussed rec. sessions with L.B. - Mills asked B.K. to assist - further discussion (L.B. on previous) resulted in 3 weekly wk - B.K. talked Mills into forming for Society & Wardens playing more nights each wk until 1st night a wk - Wm. Russell volunteered to help B.K. - but not talk alone (or L.B.)

June. Mills original investment paid back (whatever some. L.B. & J. had neg. session) agreed to extend get that some arrange. separate for soc. L.B. agreed to full arrange. (letter from Tomlin)

- { Ch. Hosp. rec. hg. : 17 July - 1961
- { Municipality Permit : 17 July - 1961
- { Staff - Steve Story - : 24 July - 1961 (Wm. Stuckey)
- { Charter : 31 July 1961

check date: appearance on Monday - original Society check for charter - also bank dep & withdrawal

Stuckey will conform (interview) Paid rent to L.B. by \$15.00 - + \$15.00 for detail exp - Wm. Russ association & disapproval of L.B. -

Dep Allen disassociation with soc. ad beginning - (found by Jaffer)

Key Hill interview with B.K. - & Tomlin letter - payments to Ken DeKane for handbills - cards, etc. - (by check)

K.C. Tunn Story (Richard Lawson) - kept 20-61 - (here in August)

check on Jaffer's arrival in town (think June or July, after Sunday, P.H. -

② " licenses for Booking & Managing & taking any out at all

③

affidavit from: Union officials & Missionaries - Tiller - Jone Anderson

Figure 13.3 Barbara Reid, 'Notes on the first four months of Preservation Hall', 1963³

In a document dated January 24, 1963, Barbara Reid set forth a preliminary timeline on the origins of Preservation Hall before listing several dates she needed to check. I have drawn on a small part of this document in both my Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Reid projects to date.⁴

The purpose of this article is to publish Barbara Reid's original document in its entirety with annotations and illustrations. For all its brevity and omissions, it remains the clearest statement that we have of a detailed chronology of the first months of Preservation Hall, 726 St. Peter Street, New Orleans.

Document as Reproduced and Annotated

MAY [1961]

Musicians (non-union) would wander in – or be asked to come in by L.B.⁵
Would make maybe 2-3 dollars playing 4 hrs for passersby

George Lewis attended housewarming as guest – was introduced to Mills⁶ & L.B. – Mills discussed rec. sessions with L.B. – Mills asked B.R. to assist – Further discussion (L.B. in Mexico)⁷ resulted in 3 nights wk – B.R.⁸ talked Mills into fronting (Pres.) for society⁹ & therefore plying more nights each wk until – six nights a wk – Wm Russell¹⁰ consented to help B.R. – but not Mills alone (or L.B.)

JUNE [1961]

Mills original investment paid back (whatever conc. L.B. - & included rec. sessions) agreed to stand pat¹¹ that same arrange. operate for soc. L.B. agreed to full arrange. (Letter from Souchon)¹²

JULY [1961]

Ch. Hosp. Lise [License] La. 17 July – 1961

Mayorality [sic] Permit 17 July – 1961

States-Item Story 24 July – 1961 (Wm. Stuckey)

Charter: 31 July 1961¹³

Check dates: Appearance on Midday¹⁴ –

Original Society check for charter – also Bank dep & wdral



Figure 13.4 Preservation Hall bank account

Stuckey will – confirm: (Interview)

Paid rent to L.B. py \$15.00 - + \$15.00 for detail cap¹⁵

Wm. Russ. association & disapproval of L.B. –

Dick Allen¹⁶ disassociation with Soc. at beginning (friend of Jaffes)

Ray Hill interview WBOK - & Souchon letter¹⁷

Payments to Ken De Rene [sic]¹⁸ for handbills – cards, etc. – (by check)

K.C. Times Story (Willard Lawson) – Sept. 24 – '61¹⁹ (Here in August)

Check on

- (1) Jaffee's [sic] arrival in town (think June or July after starting P.H.)²⁰
- (2) Jaffee's licenses for Booking & Managing & taking any cut at all
- (3) [left blank]

Affidavits from: Union officials & Musicians – Tilden²¹ – Ione Anderson²²



**Figure 13.5 The original ‘Kitty’, or collection basket, used by Barbara Reid during the first four months of Preservation Hall
Given to Yoshio and Keiko Toyama by Kelley Edmiston on their return to Japan from New Orleans in 2004**

Photograph, courtesy of Yoshio Toyama

Appendix: Document of Dissolution of the Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz²³

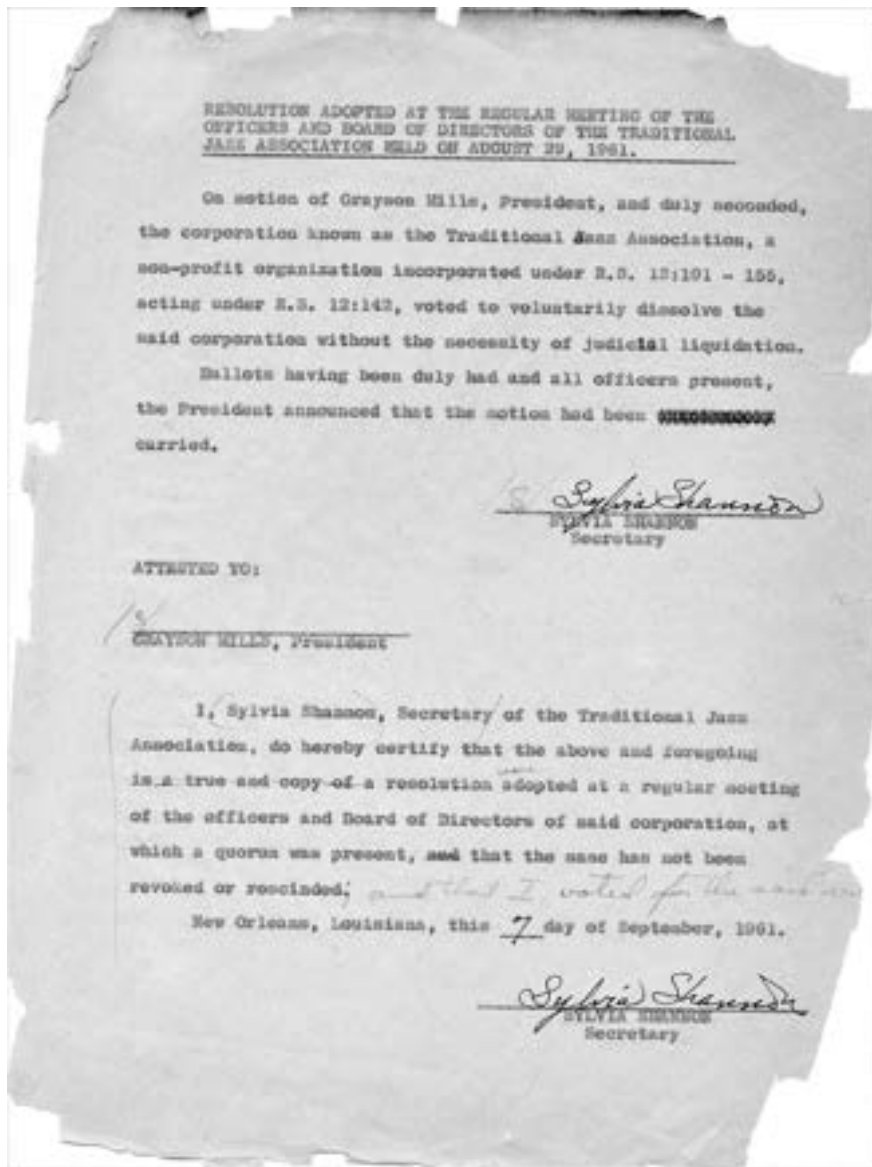


Figure 13.6

NOTES

1. I thank Kelley Edmiston for making this article possible. I also thank Fred Eatherton, William T. Clark, Sacha Borenstein Clay, Tom Sancton, Yoshio Toyama, Matthew La Croix Ekins, and Luke Baptiste Ekins for their contributions.
2. New Orleans *Blue Book – The Digest of New Orleans Entertainment*, Vol. 127, August 1961, p. 4.
3. Lord Richard Collection. Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston.
4. Richard Ekins, “PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills”, Introduced, Illustrated, and Annotated by Richard Ekins, with a Footnote by Larissa Mills’, *Just Jazz*, No. 235, pp, 18-25 at p. 19; Richard Ekins, ‘On the Origin of Preservation Hall: Barbara Glancey Reid and the “Media Blitz” of 1961’, *Just Jazz*, No. 255, pp. 20-29 at p. 28.
5. Larry Borenstein, lessee of 726 St. Peter Street, New Orleans.
6. Ken Grayson Mills, co-founder of Preservation Hall; founder and sole proprietor of Icon Records.
7. Mills had a meeting with Borenstein and Louis Cottrell, the President of the Musician’s Union Local, ‘real early May, maybe the last days of April’, to discuss the future of the sessions. Afterwards, Borenstein leaves for Mexico. See, William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, London, p. 143. There is no record of how long Borenstein went to Mexico for. It seems that after Mexico, Borenstein went to Chicago, from where he returned by June 9, leaving New Orleans again, on June 20, bound, via Mexico, for his marriage in San Francisco on July 1. The Borenstein couple then headed straight back to New Orleans. See, ‘Letters from Larry Borenstein to Pat Sulzer’, detailed in Richard Ekins, ‘PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story’, op. cit., p. 19. The July 14, 1961 written lease agreement between Borenstein and Mills for ‘St. Peter Street Ground Floor Front’ is signed by both parties. Borenstein, in his 1970 *Travel and Camera* article, dates ‘the birth of Preservation Hall’ to the time ‘I moved my gallery to an address next door, and after that the old building [726 St. Peter Street] was used exclusively for music.’ In view of the new arrangement with Mills and Reid (and Borenstein’s pending travels to Mexico, Chicago and San Francisco, in May, June and July), it seems likely that this move was in early May before he went on his May trip to Mexico, leaving Mills and Reid in exclusive charge of the music at 726 St. Peter. See, Larry Borenstein, ‘Jazz: Rhythms from Africa help create a special New Orleans sound’, *Travel and Camera*, September 1970, pp. 33-35 and 78 at p. 35.

For Mills' account of the signing of the written lease agreement on July 14 after Mills and Reid had been running Preservation Hall for some months, see, Richard Ekins, 'PRESERVATION HALL – The Rest of the Story', op. cit. p. 21. The circumstances and context suggest that Borenstein intended to use the written lease agreement to evict Mills shortly afterwards, as he did.

8. Barbara Reid, co-founder of Preservation Hall.

9. Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz, Ken Grayson Mills, President. By becoming a Society, Preservation Hall could take advantage of the Musician's Union's reduced musicians' rates for non-profit/charitable corporations. In addition, the Society was not liable for an entertainment licence or entertainment tax.

10. William 'Bill' Russell, former proprietor of American Music Records.

11. To 'stand pat' is an American informal phrase from draw poker, to indicate the refusal to change an opinion, decision, or intention. I take it that Reid is noting her view that Mills and Borenstein have agreed that Borenstein's 'full' arrangement with Mills will continue with the Society. The original signed lease agreement for Preservation Hall was between 'Ken Mills' and 'Larry Borenstein' and dated July 14, 1961.

12. Dr Edmond Souchon. While it is possible that Barbara is referring to two letters from 'Souchon', it seems more likely that this letter is the one she has to 'check dates' for, mentioned in the section below. In fact, the letter is dated July 25, 1961. The letter and envelope are included in Richard Ekins, 'Barbara Reid in New Orleans: Further Contributions and Legacy, 1964-1983, Part 3', *Just Jazz*, No. 274, 2020, pp. 6-10. It is addressed to 'Mr. Larry Borenstein, Miss Barbara Reid, Mr. Grayson Mills, "PRESERVATION HALL"'.

13. Copies of the Charity Hospital License, The Mayoralty Permit, the State Charter, and the William Stuckey story are all included in Richard Ekins, 'On the Origin of Preservation Hall', op. cit. at pp. 22-25, 27. The William Stuckey story is 'Bill Stuckey, STRAINS RECALL EARLY 1900s – "Kid" Jazzmen Play to Preserve Art Form', *New Orleans States-Item*, 24 July 1961. In addition, Richard Ekins, 'On the Origin of Preservation Hall', op. cit., includes a copy of the written lease agreement for Preservation Hall between Ken Mills and Larry Borenstein, dated 14 July 1961. Mills gives his explanation of how the contract came to be written, and how and why Borenstein reneged on the agreement, in Richard Ekins, 'PRESERVATION HALL: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills', Introduced, Illustrated, and Annotated by Richard Ekins, with a Footnote by Larissa Mills', *Just Jazz*, No. 235, pp. 18-25 at p. 21 and 22. For completeness, I now add a copy of the 'Document of Dissolution

of the Society for the Preservation of Traditional Jazz' [Traditional Jazz Association], in the Appendix (Fig.6). Allan and Sandra Jaffe took over the management of 726 St. Peter Street on a profit (or loss) basis on September 13, 1961. For some months, they dropped the name 'Preservation Hall', preferring '726 St. Peter Street', instead. See, Andy Lockhart, 'Who Blows There? New Orleans', *Jazz Report*, 1962, 2 (5), p. 6. Initially, the rental remained the same as it had been under Mills' contract, namely \$400 per month. See, Tom Sancton, 'Hall that Jazz', expanded online version, *Vanity Fair*, January 2012, <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2012/01/preservation-hall-201201>.

14. The *Midday Show* (WDSU-TV), New Orleans.

15. I am unable to make sense of this. Bill Stuckey was at Preservation Hall in July and interviewed Barbara Reid for his article in the *New Orleans-States Item*, see note 13 above. Possibly Reid is referring here to a rental arrangement made before the Mills-Borenstein written agreement of July 14.

16. Richard 'Dick' B. Allen, then Associate Curator, Tulane Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

17. See, note 9.

18. Ken De Renne, of Mendola Bros. Printers, 1305 Decatur St., New Orleans. The handbill and cards are illustrated in Richard Ekins, 'On the Origin of Preservation Hall', op. cit., pp. 20 and 22.

19. Willard Lawson, 'The Old Jazz Sounds Again in New Orleans', *The Kansas City Times*, September 24, 1961.

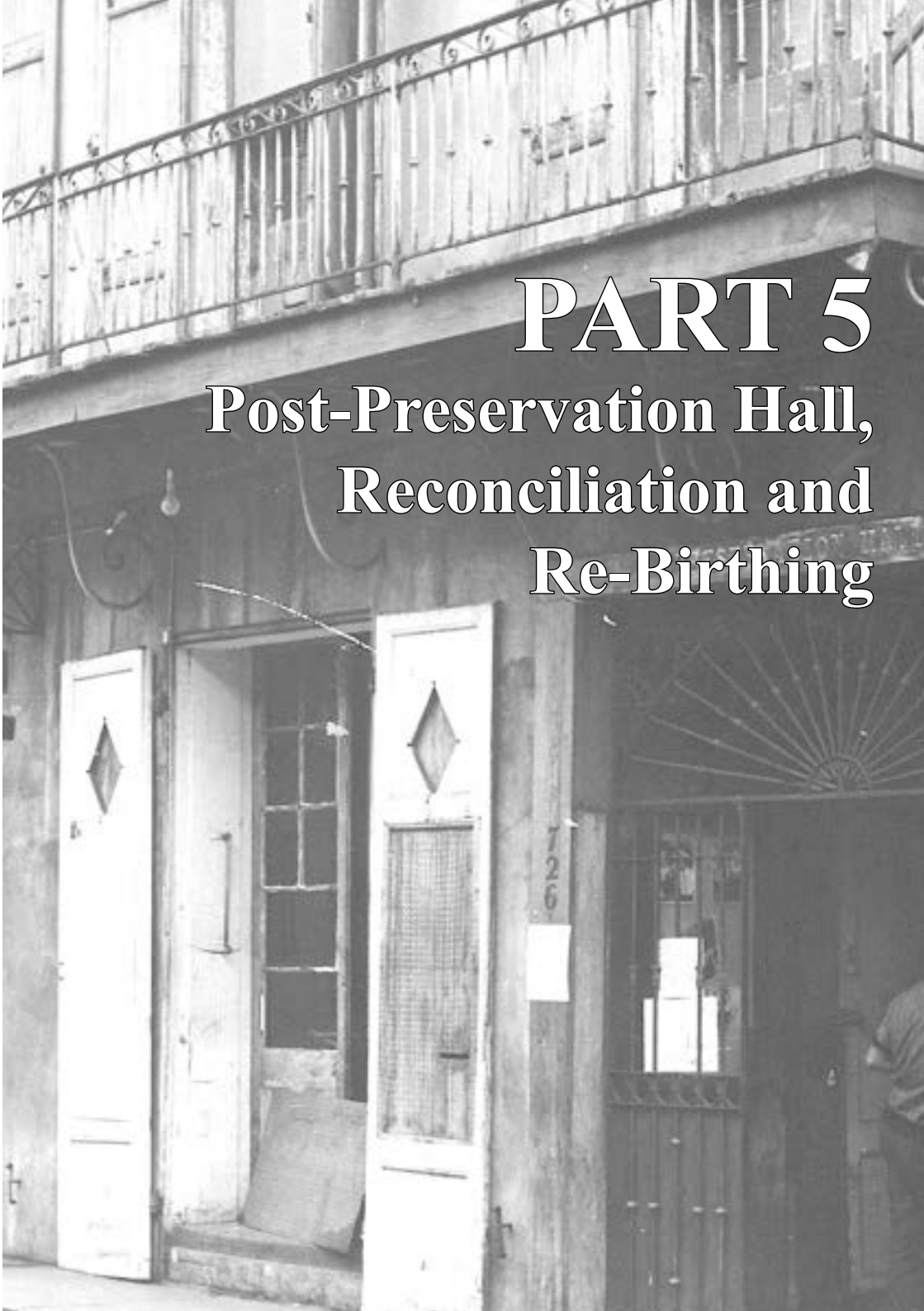
20. Carter (based on discussions with Allan Jaffe between 1984 and 1987) says: 'the Jaffes arrived [in New Orleans] in late March or early April of 1961 . . . but 'were in town several weeks before they could connect with the jazz scene.' William Carter, Preservation Hall, op. cit., p. 176. Sandra Jaffe told Tom Sancton that they arrived 'in March 1961'. Tom Sancton, 'Hall that Jazz', op. cit. Intriguingly, a newspaper report of their marriage, on December 25, 1960, states: 'The couple is attending Mexico University after which they will tour Mexico and will reside in New Orleans.' See, *Pottsville Republican*, Pottsville, Pennsylvania, February 22, 1961, p. 15; <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/34865746/allen-jaffe-sandra-smolen-wedding/>.

21. Tilden Landry, Editor of *New Orleans Spring Fiesta Guide Book*.

22. Ione Anderson, an early Kitty basket handler at Preservation Hall, went on to write many liner notes for Nobility, Dulai and Shalom record releases. William T. Clark adds: 'Ione Anderson was a great friend to my uncle, Alford G. Clark, the founder

of Dixieland Hall. In fact, she was a constant presence at evening performances as a sort of “hostess” for the establishment, always available to answer questions and promote general respect for the music and the musicians, all of whom greatly respected her, and she knew them all.’ Email, William T. Clarke to Fred Eatherton, July 3, 2020.

23. Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston.



PART 5

Post-Preservation Hall, Reconciliation and Re-Birthing

PART 5

Post-Preservation Hall, Reconciliation and Re-Birthing

Following Barbara's devastation at being evicted from Preservation Hall in mid-September 1961, she worked in partnership with Mills at his Preservation Hall in Exile – Icon Hall, later renamed Perseverance Hall – from February to late July 1962, when she disassociated herself from the project. Moreover, Mills left town in October 1962, never to return, and this marked the final nail in the coffin of Barbara's involvement with the Kitty Halls.¹

I believe that in 1963 she was still entertaining the possibility of maintaining her involvement with New Orleans jazz – hence her approach to Bill Russell with idea of writing about Mahalia Jackson – but like so many of Barbara's writing plans, this did not amount to anything of substance.

We may suppose that her disillusionment with music took hold quite soon and she became increasingly dependent on her favoured non-musical bohemian haunts, most especially the flamboyant lifestyle celebrated at the bar and restaurant Bourbon House.

And then in late 1964 came the shock closure of Bourbon House – another great loss for Barbara. It had been her 'home from home' since the early 1950s. It is no surprise to me that Barbara featured as the corpse in the coffin at the funeral which was held to mark the death of Bourbon House. This symbolised, in a sense, her own living death, having returned to a bohemian lifestyle as a way of trying to deal with her cumulative losses.

For some years, she engaged in a flurry of activity relating to her involvement in local politics, occult countercultures, as well as working on a book on Voodoo and attempting to get it published. Meanwhile, her marital relationship with Bill Edmiston was deteriorating, presaging separation – yet another loss.

Chapter 14 focuses on the Bourbon House funeral (*Just Jazz*, May 2020). This sets the scene for Barbara's withdrawal from the then current New Orleans music scene, which forms the content of Chapter 15 (*Just Jazz*, December 2020). Though even in this chapter, it is noticeable that Preservation Hall musicians are occasionally featured in her Voodoo writing.

Half of Chapter 16 (*Just Jazz*, January 2021) continues with documenting Barbara's involvements in various counter-cultural activities.

The other half and the final chapter 17 (*Just Jazz*, February 2021) documents Barbara's partial reconciliation with her previous losses. She now turns her attention to supporting the new younger generation of traditional jazz musicians – both black and white – in New Orleans. It must be said, though, that much of this reconciliation took place within the confines of her own home. As Paige VanVorst put it to me:

When I knew Barbara [in the early to mid-1970s] she was a perfect recluse except that she'd have enormous parties; there were times if felt like there were fifty people in her apartment. But she wouldn't (or couldn't) go anywhere – you'd have to walk to the corner to buy her a bottle of Mateus. In fact, I don't think I saw Barbara after 1975.²

Fittingly, the book concludes with a consideration of Reid's legacy, the vital role of her daughter Kelley in that legacy and a concluding comment structured around my view that 'All Barbara's roads do, it seems, lead back to her vision for Preservation Hall.'

NOTES

1. For the best overview of 'the Kitty Halls', see Richard Ekins, 'Ken Grayson Mills, the Start of the New Orleans Kitty Halls, and the Final Months at Perseverance Hall', *Just Jazz*, 2020, No. 270, pp. 26-34.

2. Email, Paige VanVorst to Richard Ekins, June 13, 2023.



CHAPTER 14

Fantasy and Reality

at Bourbon House:

Barbara Reid,

the Olympia Brass Band

and a Most Unusual Funeral

Chapter 14

Fantasy and Reality at Bourbon House: Barbara Reid, the Olympia Brass Band and a Most Unusual Funeral¹

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*, May 2020

One of my favorite haunts in the heart of the French Quarter was the Bourbon House, a lovely old building with magnificent cast- or wrought-iron lacework on its two balconies located at the corner of St. Peter and Bourbon Streets . . . There were a lot of other bars and restaurants throughout the Quarter, but they weren't the same . . . the House was filled with its 'children' day and night.

Rolland Golden, *Life, Love, and Art in the French Quarter*, edited by Lucille Golden, University of Mississippi Press, Jackson, 2014, p. 15-16.

It's The End . . .

The Bourbon House, beloved hangout and second home of many French Quarterites, closed Wednesday and its customers marked its passing with a mock funeral. Barbara Reid an old habituee, played the part of the corpse. A jazz band was included in the funeral possession. Tennessee Williams and Earl Stanley Gardner were among the famous customers of the 28-year-old restaurant bar.

The Biloxi-Gulfport Daily Herald
– 27, Thursday Afternoon,
October 1, 1964



Figure 14.1 The ‘corpse’ of Barbara Reid in the R.I.P Bourbon House coffin, 1964

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston, Barbara Reid Collection

Preamble

The French Quarter New Orleans bar and restaurant known as Bourbon House has appeared from time to time throughout my Barbara Reid Project.

It appeared first as Barbara Reid’s ‘home from home’ in the French Quarter when she arrived in New Orleans from Chicago in 1952.² From the outset, Reid was attracted to its long and infamous history as the number one New Orleans haunt for writers, artists and bohemians going back to 1936 to the days of the playwright Tennessee Williams. Bourbon House appeared again in my February 2019 *Just Jazz* article examining Barbara’s involvements with the bohemian worlds of New Orleans in the 1950s.³



Figure 14.2 Bourbon House, 1964

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston, Barbara Reid Collection



Figure 14.3 Bourbon House menu cover, 1964
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston
Barbara Reid Collection

While in Chicago, Barbara had been particularly attracted to the Victory Club where the resident Lee Collins band played for a bohemian crowd.⁴ However, Bourbon House must have exceeded her every dream in terms of her identification with bohemian spaces and places. Journalist Carolyn Kolb gives the flavour of Bourbon House and its attractions for Barbara:

For such a beloved venue, the Bourbon House was an unassuming spot. The front room, on the street corner, served as a restaurant. There was a jukebox, and on the way to the restrooms, a pay phone. The back bar had bar stools, a bench along the wall and tables. On the walls hung paintings by artist Knute Heldner,⁵ a transplant who took to New Orleans. . .

The Bourbon House clientele was a mixture of native Orleanians and those who came from elsewhere to make their home in the French Quarter. In the years from 1936 to 1964, the French Quarter was still a neighborhood – the residents represented all the ethnic groups and income levels New Orleans had – besides, it was also a place where housing was affordable (that is, really cheap). The newcomers included a motley assortment of artists and writers, bohemians and students, and young people eager for the experience of French Quarter living. It was a heady mix. . .

Besides all that drinking, there was a lot of talking going on, nonstop conversations about, art, philosophy, life, politics (lots of politics dropped in), and sometimes this led to something substantial.⁶

The Visitors

Certainly, many of those who visited Bourbon House over the years produced ‘something’ very substantial indeed. Perhaps the most famous ‘regular’ to do so was the playwright Tennessee Williams, but there were many others.⁷ Erle Stanley Gardner, the creator of the lawyer/sleuth Perry Mason, would set up a ‘fiction factory’ wherever he happened to alight. While working in Bourbon House he found photographer Wood Whitesell, arguably the real-life inspiration for Gramp Wiggins⁸ in *The Case of the Turning Tide and The Case of the Smoking Chimney*.⁹ In her article, Kolb warms to her theme:

Even the non-conformists could be depended on to conform at the Bourbon House. Did Jack Kerouac and his pal William S. Burroughs come in during their On the Road-era visit? Probably so, but no one exactly remembers them. . .

Presumably the Californian poet Charles Bukowski spent time at the House (the film made from his autobiography was aptly titled ‘Bar Fly’)¹⁰ because he visited the city and his work was first published in the New Orleans publication *The Outsider*, edited by Jon and Gipsy Lou Webb,¹¹ whose studio was down the block. Nationally known photographer Lee Friedlander, writer Calvin Trillin, artist Kay Johnson (Kaja) and artist/photographer Ralston Crawford all visited the Bourbon House when in town.¹²

Lee Friedlander and Ralston Crawford will be well known to many readers of *Just Jazz* for their photographs of the old-style New Orleans musicians,

both on the streets and in their private settings.¹³ Particularly, throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, Bourbon House became a favoured meeting place for those New Orleans visitors and residents doing what they could to variously follow, document and further the music. Some very significant figures in the 1950s literary and art worlds were also drawn to New Orleans and New Orleans music following the release of Bill Russell's American Music Records. Of the jazz enthusiast visitors, I am reminded of Robert Greenwood's comments:

I still always love it when the literary stuff coincides with the music such as when I learned that Jonathan Williams had, in 1950, gone to NO specifically to hear George Lewis and met David [Wyckoff] and Alden [Ashworth]. Williams also saw to it that 'The Black Mountain review' published some of William Russell's photographs. [Kenneth] Patchen was also a huge fan of the AMs.¹⁴

Jonathan Williams also met Jim McGarrell for the first time in early 1950s New Orleans. Later, in 1990, when McGarrell was well established as a major American artist, Williams would write:

We met occasionally over the years . . . The first time was a summer evening in 1952 at Luthjen's in a black neighborhood of New Orleans. I was on army furlough. Jim was there with the redoubtable and inimitable jazz historian and musician, Bill Russell, to hear George Lewis and one of his finest bands: Alcide 'Slow Drag' Pavageau, Lawrence Marrero, Jim Robinson, Joe Watkins, Alton Purnell, Percy Humphrey – the names are still fresh in my mind. I hitch-hiked 550 miles to the Crescent City to hear these men play. (Jim, by the way, had hitched some 830 miles from Indiana for this pleasure.)¹⁵

Barbara Reid was an important facilitator within these networks. In the Edmiston Family Collection is a fascinating letter the young McGarrell wrote to Barbara when he returned from his 1952 trip to New Orleans.¹⁶ No doubt they had spent considerable time together in Bourbon House.¹⁷ The letter is a good illustration of some of the interrelations between several of the participants in the various social networks and social worlds of New Orleans music and art at the time:

August 26 [1952]

Dear Barbara

I have completely forgotten your address and am not even sure you are still at the Saba,¹⁸ so I am trying this without the assurance that it will reach you. This gives the dull practice of letter writing an element of risk and excitement.

I really feel guilty for not having written sooner but I take consolation in the fact that you too have been negligent on this score. Also I really have been busy . . . I wrote to David [Wyckoff] care of [Bob] Cass but as I expected I have received no reply. I would have written Alden [Ashworth] but I am not at all sure where he is now. If he is there tell him to write me his address as of this fall.

I am going to start the wheels rolling for a George Lewis jazz concert here in B-town sometime this winter. The Union here is interested in sponsoring it. It is just a matter of when and how much. I will definitely be there Xmas & will probably have 2 or 3 others with me. Be sure that there will be plenty of good music and gin.

Still have not received a subpoena from Chicago. Maybe your husband's informant was never able to find out what my name was. Seriously, how are your husband's troubles?

I am working in an exciting new medium now – movies – I draw directly on 16 mm film using colors & abstract shapes in rhythmic patters, next I am going to correlate this with the Baby Dodds drum solos, then perhaps with some band jazz. All in all it is fascinating! What I have been looking for for years. But it is also a tremendous amount of work.

PLEASE write and give me the whole scoop, as only you can, about what is happening in the sacred city.

Tell me about Bill R, Harvey [Robert Whiteside]¹⁹ (hello to both of them) David, Alden, Francine,²⁰ (then too if they are around) Truman,²¹ Billy H.,²² [Bob] Cass,²³ Rhonda, Bathsheba, Nappy,²⁴ George L + his syncopators, Bourbon Street, the NO Police Force, David the garbage man, Mal,²⁵ Dick Allen, and anymore who turned up after I left.

passionately yours

Jim Mc

It is worth elaborating, too, on Kenneth Patchen's involvement with New Orleans music and Barbara Reid's insistence that she had spent time with him in Bourbon House. Barbara was fond of telling her daughter, proudly, that Kenneth Patchen had given Bill Edmiston and herself one of his art works in Bourbon House. According to Kelley Edmiston, Barbara said she met Patchen in Bourbon House around 1954 or 1955. She got Patchen to do 'a piece of artwork for her on a piece of brown paper.' Apparently, it was called 'Hey baby, this is your ice cream piece.' Barbara was so taken with it that she had it framed - around 10" by 5" - in a black frame. Then around 7 or 8 years ago Kelley gave it to Alden Ashworth to cheer him up when he was unwell. I can confirm that the framed piece by Patchen now in Steve Teeter's possession is as follows:

As Kelley said, it's framed, but quite loosely and is in danger of falling apart if handled poorly. It's double glazed, so you can look at the back as well as the front, although there's nothing on the back of the print. And on the back pane of glass is a printed sticker, which reads as follows: 'FROM THE ORIGINAL MS PAGE BY KENNETH PATCHEN. This and 199 other copies in silk screen reproduction were hand-run by Frank Bacher during the summer of 1955.'²⁶

Complications from his spinal injuries make it unlikely that Patchen could have travelled to New Orleans in the early 1950s up to 1955. It is, however, possible that he visited New Orleans between 1956 and 1959, when 'during these pain-free years he toured in the United States and Canada doing poetry readings to jazz, an art form he pioneered back in 1938.'²⁷ Writing in 1958, Allyn Ferguson states: 'In recent years however, Pat[ch]en has been a writer and a painter exclusively. At various times he's lived in New York, Boston, Santa Fe, Phoenix, New Orleans and Conn.'²⁸

If the locations are mentioned chronologically, that would mean he lived in New Orleans in the 1950s.

Where and how Barbara acquired the silk screen reproduction is uncertain, as is her acquisition of any possible additional now lost accompanying

artwork signed by Patchen with the words 'Hey baby, this is your ice cream piece.' It seems likely, however, that Barbara's meeting Patchen in Bourbon House is not a Bourbon House fantasy.²⁹



Figure 14.4 From the original MS page by Kenneth Patchen.
One of 200 copies in silk screen reproduction run by Frank Bacher, 1955
Photograph, courtesy of Steve Teeter

Whatever the truth of all this, we do know that Patchen was so enthused by the music of George Lewis that on at least one occasion he added it to one of his poetry readings. Patchen had become good friends with Alden Ashforth, David Wyckoff and Jonathan Williams. Patchen was a conscientious objector and Larry Smith tells us that, while Alden and Williams were claiming to be conscientious objectors, the FBI interviewed the Patchens, presumably to verify the claims of their young friends.³⁰ He also relates the occasion when a photographer friend, Harry Redl, visited Patchen one day with a tape recorder. Redl recalls:

We started doing a twenty minute tape of Kenneth reading. We played it back for a check and Kenneth said, 'Wait a minute, that sounds rather naked.' He returned with a recording of George Lewis doing Dixieland jazz, and we recorded it. This was way before the poetry and jazz scene got started in San Francisco with [Kenneth] Rexroth and [Lawrence] Ferlinghetti. I remember Kenneth closing the recording with 'We want to thank George Lewis whose fine music you hear in the foreground here.'³¹

Moreover, this Patchen poetry reading with New Orleans jazz was not a one-off. David Wyckoff recalls: 'Concerning Patchen poems set to Jazz, he did record an album of reading to a local band on the West Coast, after he and Miriam moved to California . . . [Also] Alden and I made [a recording] when visiting the Patchens in their Old Lyme, CT home, probably 1951, in which he read one poem to the music of Billie and Deedee's Blues, on our recent Barnes recording. It was really quite wonderful, but, catastrophically, I seem to have lost my copy!'³²

Patchen's connections with New Orleans were considerable and it was entirely appropriate that later, on December 23, 1960, Larry Borenstein would support a fundraising event for him at his Associated Artists Gallery, 730 St. Peter Street.³³

Jonathan Williams
Reads Kenneth Patchen
A Tribute to the Poet
Friday, 8 p. m., December 23
Associated Artists Gallery
730 St. Peter Street

To Anyone Who Has Ever Responded To KENNETH PATCHEN—
To His Poems, To His Prose Works, To His Drawings, To His
Poetry And Poetry/Jazz Readings, Or To His Recordings:

Consider what this man has been asked to face: for 19 years (from 1937 through 1956), Patchen, the most widely-read poet in the U. S., endured almost total disability from a painful spinal condition for which a first surgery brought no relief. In 1956, he underwent a second surgery (a spinal fusion) which did bring mobility; for the first time, he was able to tour in public and was invited to the Brussels Worlds-Fair. However, he was tragically prevented from accepting this honor. Instead, on July 13, 1959, Patchen underwent throat surgery; and it was during this procedure, while under total anesthesia, that he suffered another injury to his spine and once again rendered helpless and painfully invalided.

NOW ANOTHER MAJOR SPINAL OPERATION IS SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 16, 1961. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT PATCHEN WILL BE SAVED, BUT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY MANY WELL-KNOWN POETS ARE STAGING TRIBUTE READINGS IN AN EFFORT TO RAISE THE LARGE SUM OF MONEY NEEDED FOR THIS OPERATION. AMONG THOSE AIDING IN THIS EFFORT ARE: E. E. CUMMINGS, WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, W. H. AUDEN AND ARCHIBALD MACLEISH.

In the reading Friday night Jonathan Williams, poet and publisher of Jargon Books, will read from Patchen's many works. You are cordially invited to attend. A collection will be made during the course of the evening, the proceeds going into the Patchen Surgery Fund.

Issued by Loujon Press, publishers of THE OUTSIDER.

Figure 14.5 Flyer for Kenneth Patchen tribute, 1960
Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston, Barbara Reid Collection

Bourbon House Fantasies

Present-day New Orleans restaurateur, JoAnn Clevenger ‘recalls that as a 19-year-old she was awed by the experience of the Bourbon House – “It was like reading Colette or being in Guys and Dolls.”’³⁴

She was not the only person to be so awed. Shortly after publishing my February 2019 *Just Jazz* article, which traced many of Barbara Reid’s involvements concerning 1950s bohemian New Orleans, I received the following Facebook message from poet, editor and book design artist Geoff Munsterman: ‘What are your thoughts on the Del Weniger novel *Otherworldly One*?’ I had no inkling of what he meant. Subsequent speedy messaging revealed the following. According to Munsterman, the novel is set in New Orleans in 1954, and its main characters are all some iteration of the bohemian figures of the day. Weniger had tried to get the novel published in the 1970s, but with no success. Munsterman continued:

A few self-pubbed copies float around, but they’re getting pricey. Barbara becomes ‘Marcia’. Bob Cass. Judson Crews. Alden Ashforth. David Wyckoff. Etc. My knowledge of the period is limited to only a few resources, so placing real names to fictional characters isn’t always easy. Fingering Emile Barnes as the ‘mattress-making clarinet player’ was easier than identifying, as example, Lawrence Marrero.

It was with some excitement that I managed to obtain the one single copy of Del Weniger’s book available for sale on the internet and research Weniger’s identity. *The Otherworldly One* – a mammoth tome of almost 600 pages in small typeface – was self-published in San Antonio in 1973. From his late 30s, Weniger worked as a university academic, joining the faculty of Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio, Texas. He later became the chairman of the Biology Department there. After teaching general biology and ecology for nearly forty years, he retired from O.L.L. in 1988 as Professor Emeritus. Although born in Kingman, Kansas, he saw himself as an adopted Texan and focused his life’s academic work on researching the plants and animals of the state, publishing many articles and books on these topics.³⁵

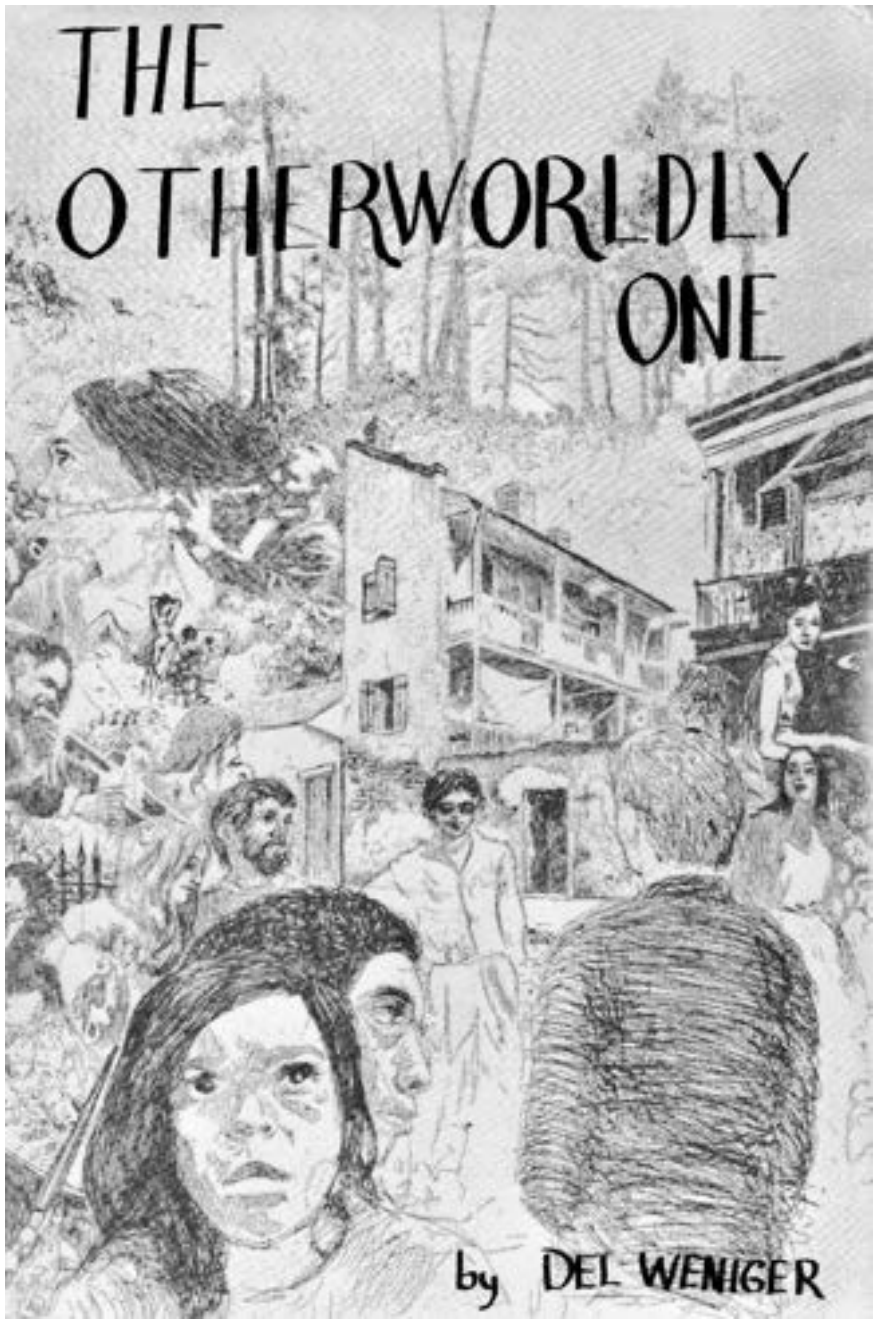


Figure 14.6 Front cover of the self-published *The Otherworldly One* by Del Weniger

However, as a 31-year-old man in 1954, he found himself in New Orleans in a state of some crisis about who and what he was and used the Bourbon House³⁶ as his ‘home from home’ to try to ‘find himself’ and work on his identity and directions for the future. He refers to himself as the ‘Otherworldly One’, following a Bourbon House regular:

the kid with the curly hair who had announced in his brash way. ‘He’s strange. He doesn’t fit anywhere. Didn’t you notice that? He’s different, like from another realm. He can’t function here. He’s—He’s the Otherworldly One!’

The whole book is structured around his arrival at Bourbon House, his taking a place alone on a bar stool and then gradually becoming friends with some of the Bourbon House regulars and being initiated into their worlds, trying to find himself in the process. Weniger states in his Foreword that ‘The old New Orleans jazz as well as the beginnings of modern jazz plays a big part [in the book].’ Alas, I was to be disappointed. There are occasional mentions of ‘primitive jazz’ and the citing of lyrics – as, for example, ‘See See Rider’ – but his writing is at this kind of level:

The old musicians knew all the facets of this mysterious thing, and they expressed them one after the other:

‘See See Rider

See what you have done

Lawd, Lawd, Lawd

You made me love you

Now your gal’s done come.’

Moreover, when he writes about those who I do recognise from the music scene, most notably Bob Cass, Barbara Reid, and David Wyckoff, the writing seems almost entirely divorced from reality. Alden Ashforth and David Wyckoff’s recording session at Bob Cass’s house is turned into a recording session at a party in Weniger’s account.

As I wrote to David Wyckoff:

I am wondering what truth, if any, there is in Book 2: Chapter VIII of Weniger's *The Otherworldly One*. Ken [Del Weniger] has now joined the bohemians. He is looking the part; rooming with Judson Crews [Bob Cass] and getting turned on by the 'primitive jazz' he is hearing.

[*The Otherworldly One*, p. 272]:

'A few days later David, the poet, made the rounds of the Quarter, not to visit but with an invitation. He came by Judson and Ken's room, making his announcement at once:

'There's going to be a big recording session at my place tonight, Man. A cat appeared with a tape recorder, and we're all gathering to do poetry readings and whatever other swinging things that anyone has to give. It should be the greatest, Man, so come on over. And - uh, bring your own juice.'

For Del: the mysterious concept of love had been brought to him in the primitive jazz he had found. He hadn't yet organized all this into a philosophy, so he listened and watched and waited, holding himself in reserve.

Finally something happened. A stranger appeared, lugging a sleek new tape recorder. The newcomer was quite clearly not a Bohemian. He wore suit and tie, and appeared the young sophisticate. A quietness edged with wariness descended on the room when he entered.

'He's a fellow at Harvard,' David explained. 'He's down here for a few days, and he wants to record whatever we have. You know - like to get a record of the New Orleans sound.'

There was the necessary flurry of activity as the machine was set up and tested. The operator wanted to close the window because of the auto horns which sounded repeatedly . . . and because of the shouts which echoed . . . from the more boisterous of the revelers . . .

*But David objected. 'No, Man, leave them open! Those are some of the voices of the Quarter. This won't be right if it sounds like it comes from an insulated studio. It needs the background to be alive.'*³⁷

Then followed a recording of a poem about a girl - Stella, the heroine of the Bohemian Fellows . . . Then Gabriel, the musician plays sax on his own - bebop. Then there is music and poetry reading from Patchen, E.E. Cummings, Elliot Paul and Eugene Joas.³⁸

Meanwhile Del is musing on the difference between this sort of 'new' music and 'primitive jazz' and their relationship to 'love' - 'the greatest, the end, the much sought goal of them all.' At this point Del realises that 'It was the truth which was Love', and he decides to become a painter. [He is around 30 years of age, and does, indeed, become a painter, after getting the advice of Bob Cass and others.]

*And the young man, pacing there among them all, was reborn that instant as the artist.*³⁹

Eventually, the mattress maker (Mr Emile Barnes) and Marcia (Barbara) will appear, but they haven't as yet.⁴⁰

David replied:

What a mishmash! You must be stupefied with all this unexpected confusion – Weniger, Munsterman, etc. This is a fictionalized montage – perhaps from what he heard of our Barnes session, and the general interests of the Beat group - with almost no resemblance to the actual event, as you are obviously aware. No poetry reading, no modern jazz saxophone, etc!

It is interesting that he chose the name Marcia for Barbara. Perhaps coincidental, but Marcia⁴¹ was the name of Bob Cass's firstborn, a little girl of about 3 at the time. Her mother was Nancy [Buetti] from who he was estranged. I remember she took up with the modern jazz tenor player Brew Moore, who was in New Orleans for a period.

I replied:

Thanks so much for your reply. To be honest, it gets worse as it goes on. I just finished Book 2. Del has just finished his first genius picture and everyone is shunning him. He is otherworldly again. More later. I will hold fire until I have got to the end of it.⁴²



Figure 14.7 Portrait of Bill Edmiston, probably by Del Weniger
Courtesy of Pat Borenstein, Kelley Edmiston and Sacha Borenstein Clay



Figure 14.8 Orange Kellin and ‘Father’ Al Lewis playing at
Barbara Reid’s Thanksgiving Party, November 22, 1973
below Del Weniger’s painting ‘Adam and Eve’

**Painting acquired by Barbara Reid from Del Weniger
Photograph, courtesy of Kelley Edmiston, Barbara Reid Collection**

In fact, when he does meet the striking and imperious ‘Marcia’ (Barbara Reid), he has their first date at her large and swanky place on the Lake Pontchartrain side of town. While ‘Marcia’ is something of a Queen Bee and impresario for the local art scene, there is no mention of her serious commitment to New Orleans jazz. Weniger has transmuted her into a wealthy woman, a patron within the art world of New Orleans.

As I wrote to David:

It is very good to hear from you. I have temporarily ground to a halt on reading Del Weniger's book. I still have some 200 of 600 pages to go. If Marcia is Barbara Reid, then what he writes on her seems to have as much relation to the truth as the section on your recording session did. Basically, the Marcia situation is this. He meets her and is invited to her place, to a top-class party by Lake Pontchartrain. Here he meets affluence and the 'art' fancier brigade. Del is now an 'artist' and Marcia enjoys showing him off. And Marcia is very elegant and glamorous and Del enjoys such company. Can there be ANY truth in this? In short, the more of the book I read, the more it disappoints me.⁴³

Residents and Realities

Useful for the ‘reality’ aspects of Bourbon House is Rolland Golden’s recent book, *Life, Love and Art in the French Quarter*, published in 2014. This is a memoir structured, in the main, around Golden’s great love for his wife Stella and his becoming a painter in New Orleans from the mid-1950s onwards. Golden is very level-headed, takes his art very seriously and as a vocation, and has no time for those who associate with the bohemian New Orleans art scene in any way as hangers-on, or unserious dilettantes. From his earliest days as an art student in New Orleans in the French Quarter, he became a regular at Bourbon House. Golden reiterates many of the points already made about Bourbon House and highlights its democratic characteristics:

. . . In a way, the Bourbon House was the epitome of democracy. All walks of life together in this relatively small bar/restaurant, agreeing or arguing, drinking or just thinking with a cup of coffee on the table.

At any time of the day or night, you could count on seeing someone there that you had seen the day before, and the day before that, and would be there tomorrow. The Bourbon House was a habit for many . . .⁴⁴

The three most important habitués of Bourbon House for the development of African American New Orleans jazz in the 1950s into the 1960s were Larry Borenstein, Barbara Reid and Dick Allen. Carolyn Kolb's 2004 article on Bourbon House suggests that one of the 'substantial' things that resulted from conversations held in Bourbon House was 'the beginning of the regular concerts at Larry Borenstein's nearby art gallery.' These concerts led to the establishment of Preservation Hall. Kolb specifically mentions 'the urgings of Barbara Reid and Dick Allen' to secure these concerts.⁴⁵ Rolland provides interesting pen-portraits of these three important figures:

One person I saw almost every day was Larry Borenstein. After being discharged from the army following World War II, Larry migrated from the Midwest south to the Crescent City. He soon became an entrepreneur – buying buildings in the Quarter and eventually opening a gallery across from the Bourbon House. Larry wore glasses, a T-shirt, slacks and sandals – sans socks – as long as the weather permitted. He not only looked bohemian. Larry was bohemian.

. . . Barbara Reid was a self-avowed witch who once ran for mayor. I was so disgusted with the other choices that I voted for her providing one of the seven-hundred-odd votes she received.

. . . Dick Allen who became the first director of the Tulane University Jazz Collection, was also a regular at the Bourbon House . . . One of his greatest achievements was to teach himself how to be a primitive painter, despite his extensive education. He set himself up in Pirates Alley on weekends, selling his primitive works to tourists. With his dry sense of humor, he was one of my favourites.⁴⁶

Once a year, Bourbon House would close for three or four days for top-to-bottom cleaning. The regulars were bereft. Barbara's unpublished writings includes material describing the dramatic effect of this annual event. She focuses on the lost souls in limbo, gathered like zombies on the street nearby.

Golden deals with this event somewhat more prosaically:

Those to whom Bourbon House had become a habit could be seen wandering the streets or leaning against a sun-drenched wall. They didn't know what to do with themselves. Bourbon House regulars gathered in small groups talking, trying to emulate the atmosphere of the House. It didn't work.⁴⁷

Golden also touches on the febrile atmosphere at Bourbon House when rumours were rife of its closure. This time it is artist Noel Rockmore, Larry Borenstein and Barbara who are featured as the relevant discussants:

When I popped in one morning . . . the tables were occupied by small groups of the faithful discussing this nerve-racking information.⁴⁸

The 'nerve-racking information' was that the Bourbon House would be sold, closed, and then reopened as a different business. Barbara was 'beside herself with anger'. Borenstein declared he would buy the place himself, 'but it seems to be an inside deal'. Rockmore exploded: 'Who are these fucking people??!!'⁴⁹

The Bourbon House Funeral

The die was cast. Bourbon House shut its doors for the last time on September 30, 1964. It was agreed that there would be a funeral for the closure – a New Orleans-style funeral with a New Orleans brass band.

Golden continues:

Those of us who were die-hard devotees of the Bourbon House gathered on St. Peter and Bourbon to lay this tireless haven of malcontents and optimists to rest. Barbara (the witch) Reid was the 'corpse' of the House, and properly so, I thought. Dressed in black, she lay in the open coffin, and crossed her chest. A traditional brass band was there and began playing the slow, soulful music of the dirge. With the open coffin being carried by 'pallbearers,' the band led the procession through the quarter, ending up in front of the St. Louis Cathedral. I don't know how many followers there were, but the crowd, filling the street, was almost a block long . . .

The place many called their second home was gone and it appeared nothing could replicate it . . .

I think it was the beginning of the end of the bohemian life in the quarter – how sad.⁵⁰

Golden's focus was on his wife and on his painting. He was a friend of the clarinetist Pete Fountain and he did occasionally go to Preservation Hall, but these things apart, he expressed little serious interest in New Orleans jazz. Fortunately, we have the writings of English trumpet player and bandleader Dan Pawson to provide more detail both on the brass band and on the gig. In a brief diary entry, Pawson notes:

The band [Harold Dejan's Olympia Brass Band] started playing at 12 noon, with Harold [alto saxophone], Emanuel Paul [tenor saxophone], Andy Anderson, Sheik, Teddy Riley [trumpets], Booker T [bass drum], Cié Frazier [snare drum], Louis Nelson and Albert Warner [trombones]. There were two grand marshalls, Slow Drag and Fats Houston. They played *Just a Little While, Closer Walk, What a Friend, The Saints, Second Line, Funky Butt* and *Oh! Didn't he Ramble*.⁵¹

Pawson omits Anderson Minor [sousaphone] but, that apart, his entry is accurate.

It was Barry Martyn's recording of the Olympia Brass Band for his MONO Records label on February 5, 1962 that gave Harold Dejan the momentum to make the Olympia the most popular brass band in New Orleans in the 1960s and beyond.⁵² Of the Bourbon House band, Sheik, Warner, Nelson, Dejan, Cié Frazier, Booker T, and Anderson Minor were all on the MONO recording some three years earlier.

Pawson notes that, during the September and October 1964 period that he was in New Orleans, the trumpet section was made up of Kid Sheik, Andy Anderson and Teddy Riley, who did all the hot stuff.⁵³ Soon afterwards, Riley would be replaced by Milton Batiste. Albert Warner would remain with the Olympia until shortly before his death in 1966, to be replaced by Paul Crawford. Louis Nelson would not stay with the band for very long. Emanuel Paul was a stalwart of the band for many years. Of the drummers, Cié Frazier would soon be replaced by Andrew Jefferson on snare drum,

while Booker ‘T’ Glass continued with the Olympia for many years.⁵⁴

In the ‘Bourbon House Jazz Funeral’ files in the Kelley Edmiston Collection there are eighteen black-and-white photographs of the funeral parade; eight colour photographs of the parade; and one poorer quality colour snapshot taken of Dick Allen in the coffin with Barbara Reid at his side in Barbara’s apartment.

I do not know who the photographers were. I assume the three sets are taken by different photographers. Kelley Edmiston has suggested Jonny Donnell or Mona McMurray as possible photographers.

I have selected seven photographs of the funeral parade, as shown below.



Figure 14.9 Left to right: Pat Borenstein Nicholas, unidentified (with cup), Max Clevenger (with hat), Barbara Reid (in coffin), unidentified, unidentified, Dick Allen (far right)



Figure 14.10



Figure 14.11



Figure 14.12



Figure 14.13



Figure 14.14



Figure 14.15

Endnote

There are an additional two photographs in the Kelley Edmiston Collection filed under the heading ‘Rutgers NY Disc 2’. These seem to have been taken by a different photographer to the one(s) filed under ‘Bourbon House Jazz Funeral’. In terms of subject matter, one is of a section of the parade band and does not command great interest. However, the other photograph provides an interesting endnote to this article. In this piece, I have drawn on Dan Pawson’s chapter included in Mick Burns’ book, *The Great Olympia Band*, in order to provide certain additional detail of the Bourbon House parade Dan Pawson witnessed and wrote about.

Although there are no known photographs of Dan at the funeral, the Kelley Edmiston Collection does include a photograph of Dan’s soon-to-be wife – Pat – together with Kid Sheik, ‘Slow Drag’ Pavageau and Albert Warner. It seems to be taken outside Buster’s Bar where we may assume many of the band and second liners retired to when the funeral parade was over.



Figure 14.16

Within a couple of years Dan and Pat married, on August 20, 1966. They moved into a new marital home in Great Barr, Birmingham, England, which, fittingly, they named 'Bourbon House'. It still stands.

NOTES

1. I am especially grateful to Kelley Edmiston and Fred Eatherton for their help with this article. I also thank David Wyckoff, Steve Teeter, Jim McGarrell, Robert Greenwood, Per Oldaeus, Pat Pawson and Matthew Ekins for their contributions. Copies of all the photographs, except ‘Bill Edmiston, probably by Del Weniger’, are included in The Edmiston Family Collection on New Orleans, 1910s-2019, the Southern Historical Collection at the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections, University of North Carolina.
2. Richard Ekins, ‘The Letters of William “Bill” Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953, with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident and Mahalia Jackson, 1958-1963 – Part 1’, *Just Jazz*, No. 243, pp. 23-28; Chapter 3 in this book; Richard Ekins, ‘The Letters of William “Bill” Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953, with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident and Mahalia Jackson, 1958-1963 – Part 2’, *Just Jazz*, No. 244, pp. 26-31; Chapter 4 in this book.
3. Richard Ekins, ‘Flirting with the Beats: Barbara Reid In 1950s Bohemian New Orleans’, *Just Jazz*, No. 250, 2019, pp. 22-31.
4. Richard Ekins, ‘Barbara Reid as Bill Russell’s Protégée in Chicago 1950-52 – On Natty Dominique, Sidney Bechet, Jimmy Yancey and Lee Collins’, *Just Jazz*, No. 249, pp. 24-29.
5. Knute Heldner (1877-1952), originally Knut Svensson, was born in Sweden. He married Colette Pope, a student of his in Duluth, Minnesota. The couple befriended Tennessee Williams and introduced him to the French Quarter in New Orleans. Heldner divided his time between Duluth and New Orleans. Accessed July 3, 2023, https://64parishes.org/entry/knute-heldner?fbclid=IwAR0ietkaNBBolT0MM8yrmxRrPiC3YxCkAKVeC9UHn3Zp5T_RUaqKLAFnaxU
6. Carolyn Kolb, ‘The Original Bourbon House: A Living Room for the Quarter’, *New Orleans*, June 2004, pp. 140-141 at p. 140.
7. ‘After his daily writing regimen – sustained by several cups of robust New Orleans coffee – Williams could retire to a place like the Bourbon House at the corner of St. Peter and Bourbon streets, an establishment described by mystery writer Erle Stanley Gardner as “something of a Bohemian place. . . . Quite a few of the prominent authors, playwrights, and actors ate there when in New Orleans.”’ Louise McKinney, *New Orleans: A Cultural History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 201.

8. Joseph Woodson ‘Pops’ Whitesell was one of the early dwellers of what became Preservation Hall. Carter refers to him as ‘Woods’ and Gramp Wiggins as ‘Gramp Wiggams’. See, William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, New York, p. 29.
9. Francis L. Fugate and Roberta B. Fugate, *Secrets of the World’s Best-selling Writer: The Storytelling Techniques of Erle Stanley Gardner*, Graymalkin Media, Los Angeles, 2014.
10. Actually, *Barfly*, presented by Francis Ford Coppola, directed by Barbet Schroeder, written by Charles Bukowski, 1987.
11. On *The Outsider* and their coverage of old-style New Orleans music, see, Richard Ekins, ‘A Final Flurry: Ken Grayson Mills, Icon Records and Jeunes Amis Hall, with a Footnote on “The Outsider” and the Return of the Repressed’, *Just Jazz*, No. 234, pp. 12-22 at pp. 19-21.
12. Kolb, op. cit., p. 141.
13. See, most notably, Lee Friedlander, *Playing for the Benefit of the Band: New Orleans Music Culture*, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 2013; *Ralston Crawford and Jazz*, Essays by Olivier Lahe-Gonzales and John H. Lawrence, The Sheldon Art Galleries, St. Louis in association with Virginia Publishing, 2011. Kaja painted separate portraits of Barbara Reid and her husband Bill Edmiston, now owned, respectively, by New Orleans residents Dave Brinks and JoAnn Clevenger.
14. Richard Ekins, ‘Flirting with the Beats’, op. cit., p. 23.
15. Jonathan Williams, “I Don’t Care if I Never Get Back”: A Splash with James McGarrell in Max Beckmann’s (Not Pierre Bonnard’s) Bathtub’, from ‘The Art of James McGarrell’, Frances Wolfson Art Gallery, Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, Florida, 1990.
16. Published with the permission of Jim McGarrell. Email, Jim McGarrell to Richard Ekins, February 28, 2019.
17. David Wyckoff adds: ‘Alden [Ashforth], Jim [McGarrell] and I, separately or together, often spent time in the Bourbon House, enjoying the coffee, meeting and chatting with friends or others, etc. It was definitely the most favored place in the Quarter to “hang out” in – for hipsters, artists and creative people, jazz aficionados, etc. The dates involved, for Alden and myself, include late 1950, most of ’51 and part of ’52. Jim spent somewhat less time in the city.’ Email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, December 3, 2019.

18. According to Kelley Edmiston, the ‘Saba’ apartments were owned by a Dick Saba ‘beloved by the mafia of Bourbon Street.’
19. David Wyckoff adds: ‘Robert Whiteside, sadly recently deceased, was an excellent bass player and delightful person who travelled with Alden and me from NYC to NoLa, already at that time a modern jazz devotee as well, who played in that style. He was a professional musician for many years thereafter.’ Email to Richard Ekins, March 1, 2019.
20. ‘Francine was Francine DuPlessix (later Grey), who as you know in later years became a well-known writer. She had spent time at Black Mountain College and was a good friend of Jonathan Williams (publisher of Jargon Press). Again, sadly, in recent months she passed away.’ David Wyckoff, *ibid*.
21. John Truman, a writer, editor and teacher, according to Kelley Edmiston.
22. Billy Huntingdon, well known to *Just Jazz* readers as the young friend and student of Lawrence Marrero who played banjo on the Ken Colyer recordings made in New Orleans with Emile Barnes and others.
23. On Bob Cass, see, Richard Ekins, ‘Flirting with the Beats’, *op. cit.* P. 24 features a photograph of Bob Cass in the Bourbon House, c. mid-1950s.
24. Rhonda was a girl friend of Bob Cass. Bathsheba and Nappy were a couple, according to Kelley Edmiston.
25. ‘Rhonda I knew as a frequent presence who enjoyed the music, but nothing more about her. Truman, Bathsheba, Nappy, Mel, are unknown to me. The New Orleans Police were indeed a nightmare, and I hope I am not David the garbage man!’ In the early 1950s, Barbara was much enamoured with ‘Mal’ both as a person and ‘as a great artist and genius’. See: Richard Ekins, ‘The Letters of William “Bill” Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953 – Part 1’, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
26. Email, Steve Teeter to Richard Ekins, March 6, 2019.
27. ‘Guide to the Kenneth Patchen papers. MS 160’, Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz. Accessed July 3, 2023, <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt3r29q25b/admin/>. There is no mention of New Orleans as one of Patchen’s residences in Larry Smith, *Kenneth Patchen, Rebel Poet in America*, Bottom Dog Press, 2000. Nor is there any mention of Kenneth Patchen visiting Jon and Lou Webb in New Orleans in Jeff Weddle, ‘*Bohemian New Orleans: The Story of the Outsider and Loujon Press*’, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2007.

28. Allyn Ferguson on ‘Kenneth Patchen with The Chamber Jazz Sextet’, Hardbop, 1958, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://hardbopjazzjournal.wordpress.com/archives-alanysis/allyn-ferguson-on-kenneth-patchen-with-the-chamber-jazz-sextet/>.

29. As has been claimed (wrongly, I think) for Barbara’s observation of Lee Harvey Oswald and Kerry Thornley together in Bourbon House. Jim Garrison, District Attorney of Orleans Parish, relied heavily on Reid’s sworn affidavit of her sighting of the pair in his investigations into the assassination of President J.F. Kennedy. For Adam Gorightly: ‘Whether Reid actually saw Thornley with Oswald in New Orleans, we’ll probably never know at this point. Whatever the truth, she was just the type of witness Garrison cultivated, a charismatic personality with incredible tales to tell, placed against the sordid backdrop and intrigue of French Quarter bohemia.’ Adam Gorightly, *Caught in the Crossfire: Kerry Thornley, Lee Oswald and the Garrison Investigation*, Feral House, Port Townsend, WA, 2014, p. 28. The sworn affidavit and the relevant dates in 1963 are set out in J. G. Biles, *In History’s Shadow: Lee Harvey Oswald, Kerry Thornley and the Garrison Investigation*, iUniverse, Bloomington, Indiana, 2002, pp. 193-194.

30. Here I follow Fred Eatherton’s reading of Larry Smith, *Kenneth Patchen, Rebel Poet in America*, *ibid.*, p. 219.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 227. Patchen’s 1945 listing of ‘the disks you’ll have to get if you want a basic jazz library’, includes two George Lewis and his New Orleans Stompers recordings. In his 1999 ‘Introduction’, Jonathan Williams adds: ‘That’s a pretty interesting list of old jazz 78s that KP lays out for us on page 56 . . . I wonder if the late composer/violinist/archivist, Bill Russell, was his guide? . . . Jim [McGarrell] was a protégé of Bill Russell, and did some very important recordings of New Orleans music in the early 1950s. The Barnes-Bocage Big Five CD on American Music label would have been a Patchen favourite – if he had ever heard it.’ Kenneth Patchen *Memoirs of a Shy Pornographer*, New Directions, New York, 1999 [1945], pp. 56-57; Jonathan Williams, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-5 at pp. 4-5.

32. Email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, March 3, 2019. An account of David Carpenter [Wyckoff] and Alden Ashworth’s recording session with Kenneth Patchen is provided by Larry Smith, *Kenneth Patchen, Rebel Poet in America*, *op. cit.*, p.196.

33. Jon and Lou Webb of the Loujon Press had proposed a Patchen book. Partly as a consolation for shelving the book, the Webbs (with Ed Blair) organised a Patchen paintings exhibition at Glade Gallery, New Orleans, June 14 – 9 July 1965. Accessed July 3, 2023, <https://www.divisionleap.com/pages/books/25048/kenneth-patchen/lithographed-poster-for-the-1965-patchen-paintings-exhibition-at-glade-gallery>.

34. Carolyn Kolb, op. cit., p. 140.
35. See, Marjorie Fohn Epler, 'De Weniger (1923-1999), Remarkable Teacher and Naturalist', BRIT.ORG/SIDA 20(2): pp. 865-866.
36. Called 'the Quarterite Place' in *The Otherworldly One*, as in the opening two sentences: 'The babble of voices fell away as the door of the Quarterite Place swung open. People turned to see what the ceaseless waves of Bourbon Street restlessness had cast up this time.' *The Otherworldly One*, p. 1.
37. *The Other Worldly One*, p. 274.
38. Ibid., pp. 275-283.
39. Ibid., p. 285.
40. Email, Richard Ekins to David Wyckoff, March 23, 2019.
41. Marna, according to Kelley Edmiston. Marna's mother, Nancy Buetti, was one of the many poets who read with jazz accompaniment, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://hipsantacruz.org/stories/the-war-on-drugs-the-worst-addiction-of-all/>.
42. Email, Richard Ekins to David Wyckoff, March 23, 2019.
43. Email, Richard Ekins to David Wyckoff, April 11, 2019. Kelley Edmiston suggests that just as Weniger has combined his accounts of 'primitive jazz' and 'modern jazz' at the recording session/party, so he has combined two women in his representation of her mother, Barbara Reid.
44. Rolland Golden, *Life, Love and Art in the French Quarter*, p. 16.
45. Carolyn Kolb, 'The Original Bourbon House', p. 149.
46. Golden's scholarship leaves something to be desired. There are many mentions of Barbara Reid in his book. Golden always spells her 'Reed'. On Dick Allen, it would be more accurate to say that he was Associate Curator to Bill Russell from 1958 and Curator from 1965 to 1980. Bruce Raeburn, 'Dick Allen', Accessed, July 3, 2023, <https://64parishes.org/entry/dick-allen>, 64 Parishes, 2018.
47. Rolland Golden, op. cit., p. 18.
48. Ibid., p. 139.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., p. 142.
51. 'Dan Pawson', 1993, in *The Great Olympia Band*, ed. Mick Burns, Jazzology Press, New Orleans, 2001, pp. 83-89 at p. 86.

52. Richard H. Knowles, *Fallen Heroes: A History of New Orleans Brass Bands*, Jazzology Press, New Orleans, p. 238.
53. Dan Pawson, op. cit., p. 85.
54. See, Tom Stagg and Charlie Crump, New Orleans, *The Revival*, Bashall Eaves, Dublin, pp. 56-66.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. At the top, there is a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, the building has several doors. On the left, there is a white door with a diamond-shaped window. Next to it is a doorway with a window. To the right of that is another white door with a diamond-shaped window and a screen. Further right, there is a dark door with a window. The number '726' is visible on the wall between the white door and the dark door. The text 'CHAPTER 15' is overlaid on the upper part of the image in a large, white, serif font.

CHAPTER 15

Barbara Reid
in New Orleans:
Further Contributions
and Legacy, 1964-1983
Part 1

Chapter 15

Barbara Reid in New Orleans: Further Contributions and Legacy, 1964-1983¹ - Part 1

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*, December 2020

*The rituals of Voodoo attempt to ‘heat things up’ –
‘to raise luck, to raise life energy, to intensify sexuality.’*

Richard Brent Turner, quoting Karen McCarthy Brown
in his *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans*
Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2009, p. 119

*I began to realize that Barbara had a gift for seeing
future trends, and for having the vision that an idea like
Preservation Hall could succeed, though somebody else
would always have to follow it through.*

Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life:
A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*
University of Mississippi Press, Jackson, 2019, p. 137

Preamble

Clive Wilson, the English trumpet player, band leader and author, first came to New Orleans in 1964 and settled there not long afterwards. However, he did not meet Barbara Reid until the end of 1970. By way of explanation, Clive adds: ‘for some reason our paths had never crossed. These days Barbara was a recluse, only rarely making a public appearance.’²

Following her role as the ‘corpse’ in the 1964 Bourbon House funeral coffin,³ Barbara did, indeed step back from her previous prominence in

the worlds of New Orleans music. Her removal from Preservation Hall in September 1961 was devastating to her. She was not able to bring herself to attend the last evenings at the Hall before Allan and Sandra Jaffe took over the management and she rarely returned thereafter. Her withdrawal from the New Orleans music scene was phased, each phase being marked by yet another disappointment. She worked with Ken Grayson Mills in the running of Icon (later Perseverance) Hall⁴ when Mills returned to New Orleans to run his new ‘Kitty’ Hall between February and September 1962.



Figure 15.1 Barbara Reid

Photograph, undated, attributed to Lyle Bongé by Kelley Edmiston

Lord Richard Collection

However, she felt obliged to dissolve her partnership with Mills some two months before the new Hall closed. She wrote as follows in her letter of resignation.

Ken:

After discussing the matter fully with Bill [Edmiston – her husband], we feel that under the circumstances that it would be better all the way around that we dissolve our partnership in the Hall.

Bill was hoping to talk to you for two weeks & upon not hearing from you we decided it would be better for me to bow out –

Frankly I prefer to operate strictly union. I feel that for all practical purposes now & at any future date that union operation is the only way.

Records show an expenditure of \$574 –. ⁵

Mills felt he was, in effect, being run out of town by those with connections with the local Mafia who were making it difficult for him to run his new Hall.⁶

There are several plausible possibilities relating to his going non-union in his final period at Icon (Perseverance) Hall, none of them mutually exclusive. In the first place, Mills may have chosen to save what finances he did have for his planned recording finale at Jeunes Amis Hall.⁷ In other words, he may have gone non-union in the last weeks of Icon (Perseverance) Hall primarily to save money. In the second place, his priorities may have been to hire mostly unrecorded non-union musicians with a view to recording them for his Icon label. He did record three sessions with non-union bands during this final period at Icon (Perseverance) Hall.⁸

Finally, Barbara may have been repeating a pattern in her resignation letter. When she saw ‘the writing on the wall’ for her future at Preservation Hall, she withdrew. As Mills put it to Bill Carter: ‘Barbara and Bill [Edmiston] handed their proxies to Bill Russell, they gave their vote to him, and then they walked out.’⁹

It is more than possible that seeing the end of Icon (Perseverance) Hall

coming, possibly following mafia-related harassment, she repeated the pattern with Mills. In this case, the non-union ‘reason’ was a rationalization for her to ‘voluntarily’ leave before any pending closure.

Nevertheless, Barbara was not yet ready to leave the music scene entirely. We know, for instance, from her correspondence with Bill Russell in November 1963, that she was still seeking information about musicians – in this case Mahalia Jackson – we may suppose for her planned writing.¹⁰ However, so little of this writing ended in publication, which was another disappointment.¹¹

After the Bourbon House funeral in October 1964, it does seem that Barbara more or less left the music scene until her chance meeting with Clive Wilson some six years later. Rather, she turned her main attention to two matters that had long been an interest of hers, namely politics and the occult. The two were to become intertwined in extraordinary ways as, indeed, was a third social world she occasionally entered – the New Orleans Mafia.

Essential to Barbara’s life and work in New Orleans from September 1964 onwards was the publication of the Warren Commission Report that month. Following the assassination of John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, President Lyndon Johnson had set up the President’s Committee on the Assassination of President Kennedy, known as the Warren Commission after its Chairman Chief Justice Earl Warren. The Commission report endorsed the official view that the assassination was the work of the lone gunman Lee Harvey Oswald.

Jim Garrison, New Orleans District Attorney, had long suspected that the murder was the work of a New Orleans-based CIA conspiracy which set Lee Harvey Oswald up as a patsy. Garrison had, however, dropped his initial investigations.¹² With the publication of the Warren Report, he resumed his investigatory work with a vengeance. Garrison was a personal friend of Barbara’s and he employed her as one of his investigators.¹²

She became particularly important to him as a key witness in what eventually culminated in the trial – and speedy acquittal – of New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw in early 1969.¹³ Barbara gave a sworn affidavit that she had seen Lee Harvey Oswald in the Bourbon House with Kerry Thornley – former acquaintance of Oswald and co-founder of Discordianism – ‘around the middle of September in the year 1963’,¹⁴ a piece of especially important evidence for Garrison in building up his case against the Warren Commission’s view.

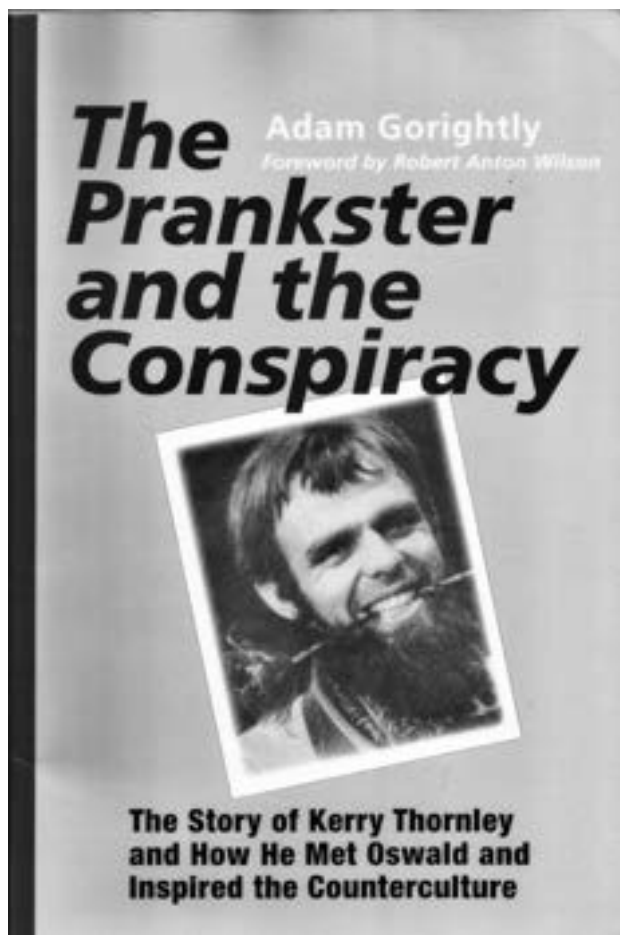


Figure 15.2 Front cover of *The Prankster and the Conspiracy*, 2003

Barbara Reid, the Discordia Society and Voodoo

This is not the place to explore these matters in any depth. Suffice it to say that when the two founders of the Discordia Society – Gregory Hill and Kerry Thornley - arrived in New Orleans to spread the word about their new philosophy/religion, Barbara made it her business to become a significant member of the Society.

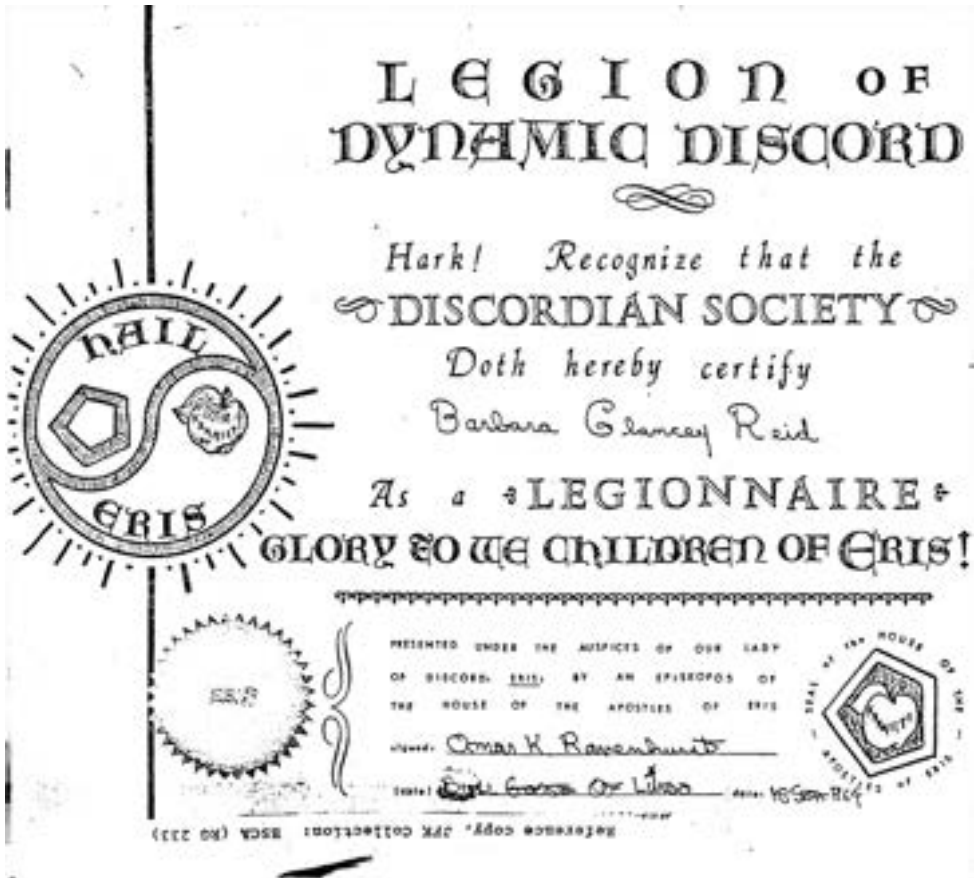


Figure 15.3 Barbara Reid's Legion of Dynamic Discord certificate issued by Lord Omar K. Ravenhurst, September 18, 1964
From the House Select Committee on Assassination files
National Archives

The Wikipedia entry on the Discordia Society makes the relevant points:

Discordianism is a paradigm based upon the book *Principia Discordia* written by Greg Hill with Kerry Wendell Thornley in 1963,¹⁵ the two working under the pseudonyms Malaclypse the Younger and Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst. According to self-proclaimed ‘crackpot historian’ Adam Gorightly, Discordianism was founded as a parody religion. Many outside observers still regard Discordianism as a parody religion, although some of its adherents may utilize it as a legitimate religion or as a metaphor for a governing philosophy.¹⁶

Greg and Kerry had moved to New Orleans together in 1961¹⁷ and worked on various ideas for what would become *Principia Discordia* with its related society. As Adam Gorightly puts it: ‘In ’64 and ’65 they really got serious about this craziness.’¹⁸ Barbara played an important role in this seriousness. In particular:

The *Principia Discordia*, if read literally, encourages the worship of the Greek goddess Eris, known in Latin as Discordia, the goddess of disorder, or archetypes and ideals associated with her. Depending on the version of Discordianism, Eris might be considered the goddess exclusively of disorder or the goddess of disorder and chaos. Both views are supported by the *Principia Discordia*.¹⁹

Barbara took on the role of the reincarnated Goddess Eris. Indeed, from the standpoint of the Discordia Society, she was the Goddess Eris.²⁰ She also played a key role in what was thought to be the long lost original first edition of *Principia Discordia* which ended up in the John F. Kennedy archives in Maryland.²¹

An early by-line of the Society was ‘Or How I Found Goddess and What I Done With Her When I Found Her’. In the papers thought to be the first edition of *Principia Discordia* was a certificate of recognition: ‘Hark! Recognise that the DISCORDIAN SOCIETY do hereby certify Barbara Glancey Reid as a legionnaire.’²²

At this point the reader may ask: what has all this got to do with New Orleans music?

I think Barbara's absorption in these activities directly followed her disillusionment after her ejection from Preservation Hall and her failure to re-engage satisfactorily with the music scene in New Orleans for the rest of the decade. As Clive Wilson reports in one of his conversations with Barbara:

You won't find many women who are as deeply moved by the music as I am . . . That's one reason I don't go around listening to it anymore. I feel so strongly about it, and then because of what happened . . . it's just too painful.²³

Wilson, rightly, picks up on the fact that in trying to deal with the loss of her first husband and two children in Chicago when she came to live in New Orleans in the early 1950s, she 'buried her feelings by immersing herself in the abundant distractions of the bohemian French Quarter of the 1950s.'²⁴

However, her vision for Preservation Hall combined her love for the music, giving the musicians back their dignity, and a family-friendly environment where children were made particularly welcome. To be ousted from this project must have been particularly soul destroying for her, so fully did it embody so many trends in her life and work.

She did, however, have her interest in the occult and Voodoo to fall back on. At the time of her involvement with Kerry Thornley and Greg Hill, she was spending a lot of her time on research and preliminary writing for her projected book on Voodoo, variously called *A Voodoo Primer* and *Voodoo Today*.²⁵

It is easy to see how appealing this would have been to Kerry and Gregg and how perfectly it would have fitted the zeitgeist of 1960s youth culture. It also enabled Barbara to continue to think and write about music, albeit in a different context. As Wilson makes clear, for Barbara the musical element in Voodoo was particularly important.



Figure 15.4 Barbara Read with African drums
Photography by Bill Russell, Chicago, early 1950s

**On the bottom of this mounted picture, Bill Russell has written
'Voodoo Woman from New Orleans'²⁶**

Clive Wilson writes:

‘Did you notice,’ she [Barbara] once said, ‘the gods come when they are called by the drums? Each god has his or her own rhythm. The drums are sacred you see, and to become a drummer you have to spend many years as an apprentice.’ I [Wilson] began to realize that music, especially the music that moved us, held this implicit, sacred element that had somehow survived the transition from Africa.²⁷

The draft of her typescript *Voodoo Today*²⁸ seeks to bring in the musical element with specific reference to New Orleans music. Particularly important for Barbara’s initiation into Voodoo was a New Orleans musician well known to *Just Jazz* readers, namely the bass player Alcide ‘Slow Drag’ Pavageau.

When Barbara first came to New Orleans in the 1950s, Slow Drag took her to where Marie Laveau (1801-1881) is said to be buried in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, in the tomb of her husband’s family, the Glapions. In the presence of Slow Drag, she duly drew an X on the tomb (to be granted a wish) and left an offering. Marie Laveau was, of course, the most celebrated New Orleans ‘Voodoo Queen’²⁹ of them all and, according to Barbara, Slow Drag claimed descendancy from both sides of the family. On Marie Laveau, Reid writes in her draft:

Marie Laveau was, and is, and will be one of the beautiful women of history, ranking with Helen of Troy, Aphrodite, the Circe Mysterious, alluring and unknown, though so intimately familiar that of necessity she must be cloaked in beauty that we may believe in with clear unshaken Catholic conscience.

Reid draws especially on interview material with the Reverend James and Miss Pearl, two New Orleans Voodoo practitioners. Slow Drag put her in touch with Miss Pearl and Barbara writes a chapter specifically on Miss Pearl entitled ‘Voodoo Bath’. But, more than that, it was Miss Pearl who initiated her into Voodoo.

Kid Sheik is specifically mentioned in the draft. In a list of photographs to be shot for the book, Barbara notes: ‘Art - Kid Sheik’s African Statue’ – ‘African statue of Voodoo God, Damballah.’ A projected chapter 6 of *Voodoo*

Today was headed: ‘New Orleans and southern United States Voodoo . . . History . . . Updated . . .’ As part of another chapter, Barbara focuses on a detailed comparison of the rituals and ceremonies of New Orleans Brass Band Parades with rituals and ceremonies in Dahomian society. She writes: ‘Because the majority of the ritual and ceremonial patterns to be observed in New Orleans appear to be Dahomian in origin, that will be the comparison source.’



Figure 15.5 Marie Laveau's Tomb, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, 1978

Photograph by Salvador Camacho

In a later passage on funerals and funeral parades, she continues:

From national publicity in all media one has become familiar with the funeral, lodge or carnival parade among the negroes. Usually this is shown with a nostalgic commentary on the dying out of another quaint ethnic practice. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Since the turn of the century this has been a significant activity for the entire black community.

There are variable patterns of participation according to the occasion, requiring only certain people to be active during different stages of the affair but with all onlookers welcome and expected to become involved toward the conclusion of the parade. The Second Line dancers, and occasionally chanters, might be compared to the onlooker at an African ritual ceremony who is invited to join in the festivities after the business at hand has been taken care of.

. . . During the funeral procession itself behavior is subdued and circumspect, the music consists of dirges and the keening of an Eb clarinet emphasizes the temporary interlude called life. Here it must be emphasized again, that where in Africa these rituals are of Voodoo, the duplication and maintenance of these same rituals today is Voodoo though not consciously labelled as such by the people utilizing them.

There are several passages in *Voodoo Today*, as, for instance when Reid reports her visit to Voodoo practitioner the Reverend James, where the practices are not acknowledged as Voodoo, even though they ‘really’ are, according to Barbara. This, she argues, is because of the stigma and/or illegality attached to Voodoo in the New Orleans of her day. She writes:

He [the Reverend James] discusses Voodoo of the past in the manner of a tourist, but when talking of his own activities he couches them in terms of spiritualism and mysticism, mostly inaccurately applied. This is only to be expected because of local laws, and the current Voodooist’s means of dissembling is under the guise of spiritualism.

This sits strangely with the contemporary pride taken by many people in Voodoo – most notably in the context of New Orleans music – through the links between Voodoo, New Orleans funerals, second lining, and getting in touch with the African diaspora. Richard Brent Turner’s *Jazz Religion, the*

*Second Line and Black New Orleans*³⁰ is paradigmatic in this regard. For Turner, for instance, fragments of historical memory about the healing arts of Voodoo play an important role in contemporary jazz funerals that are to be understood, consciously labelled as such, and celebrated.

NOTES

1. This article draws upon the very different life's work of Clive Wilson and Adam Gorightly. I thank them both for their support and generosity. Special thanks are also due to Fred Eatherton, Dave Senior, David Wyckoff, Richard Milward and Matthew Ekins. It goes without saying that my principal debt is to Barbara Reid's most loved and significant legatee, her daughter Kelley Edmiston.

2. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life: A Jazz Journey from London to New Orleans*, University of Mississippi Press, Jackson, 2019, p. 130.

3. Richard Ekins, 'Fantasy and Reality at Bourbon House: Barbara Reid, the Olympia Brass Band and a Most Unusual Funeral', *Just Jazz*, No. 265, May 2020, pp. 6-16; Chapter 14 in this book.

4. Ken Grayson Mills opened Icon Hall, 734 St. Louis Street, in February 1962 and renamed it Perseverance Hall the following June. However, many people continued to refer to it as Icon Hall, hence I refer to it in this article as Icon (Perseverance) Hall.

5. I am working from an undated handwritten note written by Barbara Reid and given to me by Kelley Edmiston. I am assuming it was Barbara's copy of a letter she gave or sent to Mills. Dick Allen noted in a memo dated July 23, 1962: 'Perseverance Hall is now non-union. Barbara Reid has disassociated herself from this project. She wanted it to stay Union.' Copies of this and other Allen memos relating to Icon (Perseverance) Hall are housed in the Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University. In a memo dated June 25, 1962, Allen writes: 'Grayson "Ken" Mills establishment, Icon Hall, is now called Perseverance Hall. Ken has turned most of the business management over to Barbara Reid.' Mills tells of his debt to Eddie Richardson's Jane's Alley Six who 'kept him from starving to death'. They shared the tips from the kitty basket with him, in July and August 1962. Grayson Mills, 'Eddie Richardson's Jane's Alley Six', *Record Finder* 8 (49), pp. 13-14. I am grateful to Howard Rye for bringing this article to my attention. See, Richard Ekins, 'Ken Grayson Mills, the Start of the New Orleans Kitty Halls, and the Final Months of Perseverance Hall', *Just Jazz*, No. 270, October 2020, pp. 26-34.

6. Bill Bissonnette, who befriended Mills in New Orleans during Mills' Icon (Perseverance) Hall period, wrote to me: 'And I don't personally know the true facts of the matter. What I do know is that Ken blamed all of his New Orleans troubles directly on Larry [Borenstein] and his affiliation with the "Bourbon Street Mafia."' I never heard of a larger mafia although I'd bet my house that the real mafia controlled the docks of New Orleans as they did in most large cities back in those days. When Ken talked about the Bourbon Street Mafia, I never took it to mean the actual Sicilian mafia but rather a bunch of French Quarter toughs & rogue cops.' Email, Bill Bissonnette to Richard Ekins, February 27, 2017.

7. Richard Ekins, 'A Final Flurry: Ken Grayson Mills, Icon Records and Jeunes Amis Hall, with a Footnote on 'The Outsider' and the Return of the Repressed', *Just Jazz*, No. 234, October 2017, pp. 12-22.

8. Richard Ekins, 'Ken Grayson Mills and Icon Hall, 734 St. Louis Street, New Orleans: A Reminiscence from Big Bill Bissonnette, and Further Notes on Icon Records, Icon Hall and Perseverance Hall', *Just Jazz*, No. 231, July 2017, pp. 24-30 at pp. 20-21.

9. William Carter, *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1991, p. 158.

10. Richard Ekins, 'The Letters of William "Bill" Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953, with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident and Mahalia Jackson, 1958-1963, Part 2', *Just Jazz*, No. 244, August 2018, pp. 26-31 at p. 31. While in Chicago, in the early 1950s, Barbara and Bill Russell had planned to write a book on Mahalia Jackson together.

11. For both Bill Russell and Barbara Reid, what mattered were the musicians and not acknowledgement and publicity for the writers or for the record producers, for that matter. As a result, we may never know quite how much of Barbara's writing ended in publication. In a 'To Whom it May Concern' letter from 'William Russell, Pres.' written on American Music Records headed paper, dated December 10, 1952, Russell wrote the vague and bland: 'Miss Reid has also written articles in collaboration with myself for publication on the subject of Jazz for periodicals . . . We consider Miss Reid highly qualified in the field of Jazz Music.'

12. He also hired Tom Bethell of San Jacinto Records, well known to many *Just Jazz* readers. Bethell has written extensively of his time with Garrison, e.g., Tom Bethell, 'Was Sirhan Sirhan on the Grassy Knoll?', in Tom Bethell, *The Electric Windmill: An Inadvertent Autobiography*, Washington, D.C., 1988, pp. 60-71.

13. Shaw was found not guilty on March 1, 1969. Garrison played Earl Warren in Oliver Stone's 1991 film *JFK* which starred Kevin Costner as Jim Garrison. The film was partly based on Garrison's book *On the Trail of the Assassins: One Man's Attempt to Solve the Murder of President Kennedy*, Skyhorse, New York, 2008. Up until her death in 1983, Barbara kept files on the Garrison case at her home and was regularly approached by all manner of people for access to them. Wilson adds: 'Ever since she began working for the Garrison investigation . . . she had always assumed her phone was bugged'. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life*, op. cit., p, 142. Kelley Edmiston sold much of Barbara's Garrison material to M.S. Rau Antiques, Royal Street, New Orleans. They were bought by an unknown buyer in late 2018. To illustrate what a mover and shaker Barbara was, I reproduce a small part of the contents as described. 'Most incredibly, this exclusive collection contains not one, but two copies of the infamous Zapruder film of the assassination. Shot by private citizen Abraham Zapruder with a home-movie camera, this film is a complete film of the shooting . . . Besides the film bought by the United States government for the National Archives, these are the only copies of the film to have ever been on the market. These two films, **perhaps the most famous films in non-professional film history**, are fully documented and were copied in the United Kingdom [by the British Film Institute] specifically for Garrison.' [My emphasis]. I thank Adam Gorightly for these details of the sale.

14. A photograph of Barbara Reid's 1968 affidavit is included in: Adam Gorightly, 'Barbara Reid: Voodoo Practitioner, Discordian Society Member, and Dealey Plaza Irregular (Part 00001)', 2015, <http://historiadiscordia.com/barbara-reid-voodoo-practitioner-discordian-society-member-and-dealey-plaza-irregular-part-00002/>.

15. Key dates in the history of *Principia Discordia* are contested, as are the dates of the various editions of the work itself. In summary: 'Around 1958 or 1959 while still a teenager, he [Gregory Hill], Kerry Thornley and others began working on the Discordian religion. In 1965, the first edition of *Principia Discordia* was printed, allegedly in five copies. The most famous edition was the fourth.' Accessed, July 3, 2023, <http://www.kerrythornley.com/greghill/>.

16. Accessed, July 3, 2023, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discordianism>.

17. Brenton Clutterbuck, 'Chasing Eris', accessed July 3, 2023, www.chasingeris.com 2018, p. 100. Kerry used Bourbon House as his unofficial writing office from early 1961 onwards. There he worked on *The Idle Warriors*, Atlantic Books, Kent, 1991, which would eventually develop into his book *Oswald*, New Classics House, Chicago, 1965, on Lee Harvey Oswald.

18. 'Chasing Eris, Adam Gorightly presents the COMPLETE first edition Principia Discordia', 2013, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LODe5z8Ob4E>, 0.00-7.12 at 3.52-3.57.
19. Accessed July 3, 2023, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discordianism>, op. cit.
20. Adam Gorightly, *The Prankster and the Conspiracy: The Story of Kerry Thornley and How He Met Oswald and Inspired the Counterculture*, Paraview Press, New York, 2003, p. 282.
21. 'Chasing Eris, Adam Gorightly presents the COMPLETE first edition Principia Discordia', op. cit.; accessed July 3, 2023, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKCAMP1960/1058/JFKCAMP1960-1058-019>.
22. The certificate may be read as 'Barbara Glancey Reid'. Clutterbuck reads it as 'Clancey'. Brenton Clutterbuck, op. cit., p. 24. I have copied the certificate from Adam Gorightly, 'Barbara Reid: Voodoo Practitioner, Discordian Society Member, and Dealey Plaza Irregular (Part 00002)', 2016, accessed, July 3, 2023, <http://historiadiscordia.com/barbara-reid-voodoo-practitioner-discordian-society-member-and-dealey-plaza-irregular-part-00002/>. See, also, Adam Gorightly, *Historia Discordia: The Origins of the Discordian Society*, RVP, New York, 2014, p. 131.
23. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life*, op. cit., p. 132.
24. Ibid., p. 135. See, Richard Ekins, 'Flirting with the Beats: Barbara Reid in 1950s Bohemian New Orleans', *Just Jazz*, No. 250, February 2019, pp. 22-31.
25. Vodou, and Vodun, alternative spellings for Voodoo, are not used by Reid. Following Martha Ward, 'I make certain to capitalize it as the name of a major religious tradition.' Martha Ward, *Voodoo Queen: The Spirited Lives of Marie Laveau*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2004, p. xv.
26. According to Ben Wagner, Russell's nephew, Bill Russell visited Haiti in 1932 for over a month to research voodoo drum rhythms. This research inspired his Haitian ballet *Ogou Badagri* of 1933.' Ben Wagner, 'William Russell: Jazz Lover, Collector, Musicologist An Annotated Bibliography', <https://fliphtml5.com/jujt/vqer>, p. 4.
27. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life*, op. cit. p. 140.
28. My copy is headed 'Voodoo Today for Pacesetter Publications' and is dated January 19, 1967. Barbara had been interested in Voodoo since the 1950s when she was living in Chicago. It is uncertain which courses she attended while in Chicago and, later, in New Orleans. In her 1967 draft, she acknowledges 'Mr. Charles Boiles, Ethnomusicologist in the Anthropology Department of Tulane University'. There

is no mention of ‘journalism at the University of Chicago – with further lessons from Robert Tallant who taught at Tulane College,’ as Wilson states (Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life*, op. cit., p. 135). When I sought further details from Clive, he replied: ‘This is what she told me. But I have no way of verifying it. She was at Northwestern University studying something. I thought it was Anthropology at first. She met [Melville J.] Herscovits, I think – but she told me she studied Journalism. Her lessons with Tallant might have been private, but she was proud of that as Tallant learned from Lyle Saxon. So she felt it was a lineage. Then Barbara taught me.’ Email, Clive Wilson to Richard Ekins, May 17, 2020. Key texts include Lyle Saxon, Edward Dreyer and Robert Tallant, *Gumbo Ya-Ya: Folk Tales of Louisiana*, Pelican, Gretna, 2015 [1945]; Robert Tallant, *Voodoo in New Orleans*, Pelican, Gretna, 1974 [1946]. Barbara included Melville Herscovits’ *Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom*, 1938, in her top five list of books. She cites it in *Voodoo Today*. Herscovits also influenced Alan Lomax.

29. Martha Ward, *Voodoo Queen: The Spirited Lives of Marie Laveau*, op. cit. Chernoff, rightly, refers to Voodoo ‘as that great symbol of the virtuosity of Western misinterpreters of Africa’, John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 124. For a useful brief reappraisal of Marie Laveau from the standpoint of contemporary feminist African American Voodoo studies, see, Carolyn Morrow Long, ‘Marie Laveau: Voudou Priestess’, in *Louisiana Women: Their Lives and Times*, edited by Janet Allured and Judith F. Gentry, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 2009, pp. 54-72.

30. Indiana University Press, 2009, p.119.

A black and white photograph of a building facade. The upper part of the image shows a balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing. Below the balcony, there are several doors. On the left, a white door is partially open, featuring a diamond-shaped window. Next to it is a doorway with a window divided into several panes. To the right of this doorway is another white door, also with a diamond-shaped window. Further right, a dark door is visible, with a small sign that reads '726'. The overall scene is an urban street scene in New Orleans.

CHAPTER 16

Barbara Reid
in New Orleans:
Further Contributions
and Legacy, 1964-1983
Part 2

Chapter 16

Barbara Reid in New Orleans: Further Contributions and Legacy, 1964-1983 – Part 2

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*, January 2021



Figure 16.1 Greg Hill and Kerry Thornley, late 1960s

Courtesy of The Discordian Archives

In the centre foreground is what appears to be the 1st edition of *Principia Discordia*, or, possibly, just the image of the Sacred Chao

In Part 1 of this article, I touched on Barbara Reid's involvement with the counterculture in New Orleans which she embraced while researching for her planned book on Voodoo. I concluded with selected passages on Voodoo and music. In this second part, I develop aspects of her relationship with major figures within that counterculture before detailing her return to the music of New Orleans.

Some Reflections on Barbara Reid by Greg Hill

This emphasis on music is a far cry from what drew Kerry Thornley and Greg Hill to Barbara. Especially instructive here is a letter Hill wrote to Thornley that illustrates particularly well Barbara's main participations in the social worlds on which they were focused.

The letter runs to five pages of single-space type. It is headed 'SOME REFLECTIONS ON BARBARA REID – March 1965-Aug 1965'.¹ It is divided into sections that develop different topics after quite a lengthy discussion centred round activities at 'Roberts'. The letter explains that Roberts had become a favoured hang-out for many of the Bourbon House crowd after Bourbon House was closed.² The sections – all on Barbara – are labelled, respectively: 'WITCHCRAFT'; 'MAFIA'; 'HELLS ANGELS'; 'GARRISON'; and 'PEOPLE'. There is no mention of music.



Figure 16.2 Robert of Bourbon House and then of Robert's, Toulouse Street, New Orleans

Courtesy of Kelley Edmiston

Snippets from the letter will give the flavour and indicate how Barbara spent much of the 1960s following her withdrawal from the music scene. The Introduction illustrates her continuing concern with her daughter Kelley and her enthusiasm to pass on to Kelley her own interest in art. It also describes the move to Robert's:

Probably Roger Lovin³ introduced me to her at Roberts. Roberts is 'French Quarter Restaurant' or some silly thing that was always called 'Roberts'. He's the same Robert of the Bourbon House who was laid off . . . Then Robert opened his own little place on Toulouse, across from Brandenburg Studios.

. . . Everybody hung at Roberts.

When I first knew Barbara, Roberts was all covered with drawings that looked like the work of a child about 10 or 12. Some of these were quite mystic and lyrical . . . It was a project of Barbara's, they were by her daughter (age 7 or so), who Barbara felt should have a show . . .

. . . Somewhere I have one of her drawings. It is of a horned man-beast seated on a throne, with demoniac creatures at his feet . . . She got the idea from 'one of mommy's books'.

There follows some three pages on Barbara's 'WITCHCRAFT'. Barbara claims . . . to have learned voodoo from an Orleanian creole who was a spiritual descendant of Marie Laveau, and that she (Barbara) is the only white woman to be honored by such a teacher . . .

. . . Barbara was a 'white witch', ie she practiced only magic that would help people, not hurt them. She always insisted on this but never explained it. I think she was afraid of what she believed to be her own potential powers . . . I am convinced that Barbara is not a charlatan.

Hill relates how he still has in his possession the gris-gris bag [a Voodoo amulet] Barbara made for him and provides a thirty-line description of its contents, before going on to describe the altar at her apartment – 'Barbara's altar was an impressive thing. She also had a library which held many volumes of medieval and voodoo witchcraft.'⁴

Clive Wilson is one of the few writers on Preservation Hall who does not steer clear of mentioning the New Orleans Mafia. Wilson relates how Barbara told him that both the creation and continuance of Preservation Hall depended on the Mafia's acceptance of it:

You couldn't just go ahead and open a club in the French Quarter in those days. All the joints on Bourbon Street were run by the local Mafia and no outsider could move in on their turf. So I went to visit Carlos Marcello,⁵ the boss and I acted real cute you know . . . When I told him my idea and what I wanted to do, I think he was amused. I seemed so off-the-wall and non-threatening that he said go ahead and told his boys to lay off.⁶

Again, on the possible closure when Barbara left:

You know that contractor . . . Well, he's Mafia. He came to me and said if I said the word, he'd blow the place up in the middle of the night. And that would be that. Same thing, I told him No! The Musicians have to work.⁷

Hill's letter provides considerably more detailed evidence of Barbara's involvement with individual members of the New Orleans Mafia, including potential threats to Hill if he was seen in public with her; visits by Barbara and a Mafia friend to a particular bar and, indeed, to weekends at an alleged 'Mafia hangout resort' - 'an island in the delta'.

There follows a short three-line section on 'HELLS ANGELS', the details of which Hill has no memory. However, at least one incident did feature in the local press.⁸

In the 'GARRISON' section, Hill deftly welds together Barbara's running for the local council with her involvement with Jim Garrison and her role as one of his investigators and as his key witness. Hill relates how Barbara was annoyed with Garrison for 'not backing her attempted sojourn into city politics.'



Figure 16.3 Campaign card for the election of Barbara Reid, 'Councilman District C', New Orleans, 1965
Lord Richard Collection¹⁰

When Barbara ran for City Council, G was absolutely against it and, she told me, repeatedly warned her to stop playing around where she might get hurt. I was going to be her Campaign Secretary, but the draft caught up with me and off I went to Ft. Polk. When I returned for a day, 8 weeks later, the election was all over and she placed #3 out of four (not bad, considering). She was pushing for the black vote, and had some kind of lowdown on corruption with the fed housing section of the city. She also had the boheme vote; her posters depicted a caricature of her, all glasses, beret and cigarette holder.⁹

The final section on ‘PEOPLE’ lists ‘some of the Den Mother’s cubs’, describing them in such terms as ‘typical beat type’ and ‘rebel type’, before concluding:

Note: it is unfair to call these people Barbara’s ‘cubs’. She was known as Den Mother because she always had a bunch of young people hanging about, but at no given time could you call any given person a follower of hers or under her influence or anything. She was an interesting person and a good focal point for the ever changing Quarter scene. None of these people were necessarily ‘regulars’. I include them only because in my memory I associate them with her (or her with them). Some I associate at her place, some at Roberts, some at both.

Barbara Reid and the Process Church of the Final Judgement

Barbara had clearly made a big impact on Hill, as she did on so many people she met. We may suppose she made a similar impact on the Process Church of the Final Judgement when the Process came to New Orleans in 1967.

Barbara’s time as a Discordian has been written about in considerable detail by Adam Gorightly.¹¹ Her time as a member of the Process Church needs further work. Suffice it to say, here, that when Kerry Thornley wrote to Adam Gorightly about his first encounter with the Process Church in New Orleans, Barbara’s name comes up almost immediately:

I first encountered the Process Church in New Orleans in Feb. ’68 when I was there to testify reluctantly, to the Grand Jury. Barbara Reid, the principal witness against me, and a friend (!) of mine was said to be ‘up to her ass’ in The Process, which, indeed, maintained a coffee house half a block from Barbara’s apartment. I went over there with Slim [Brooks] and saw pamphlets

about *Satan on War* and *Lucifer on War* and *Jehovah on War* – which I found confusing because I thought Satan and Lucifer were both the same guy . . . A bunch of pale, thin zombies were sitting around in this place. I was telling very funny Garrison stories but nobody was laughing.¹²

Gorightly continues:

In his controversial tome, *The Ultimate Evil*, author Maury Terry fingered The Process as being the major player behind a vast Satanic underground network that dealt in pornography, drugs and ritual murder.¹³

The Process Church, originally from London, England, had moved to New Orleans via a group from Xtul, Mexico, in 1967. They started a Chapter on Royal Street in the French Quarter. Later that year it became incorporated in Louisiana as The Process Church of the Final Judgement. However, the New Orleans Chapter was closed in 1968. We have no reason to suppose that Barbara remained in contact with them when the community moved for a brief period to Los Angeles in February 1968.¹⁴

Rather, by the end of the 1960s, these ‘distractions’ had largely run their course in New Orleans. Both the Discordians and the Processeans changed locations and developed different organisations many times subsequently but their time in New Orleans was never repeated.

Notwithstanding the counter-culture’s celebration of Barbara as ‘Mother Witch’ and Voodoo expert, Barbara never did manage to find a publisher for her treasured manuscript on Voodoo.¹⁵ Yet another major disappointment.

It should be noted, too, that by 1966, she and her husband Bill had separated. Although, the arrangement was amicable and Bill kept very much in contact with her and daughter Kelley, it did mark the end of married life for Barbara – another loss.¹⁶

Barbara Reid and the New Orleans Music Scene of the 1970s

After a period of reclusion and reflection – and not a little paranoia, perhaps, consequent upon the aftermath of the Garrison affair – the time was ripe for

Barbara's return to the music scene. This is exactly what her chance meeting with Clive Wilson seems to have triggered. Barbara's forte had always been as exotic and exuberant enthusiast, helpmate and facilitator. Clive was a level-headed man on both a mission and a journey – and once he had met Barbara it was inevitable their friendship would blossom. Quite soon, Clive would be involving Barbara in his various projects.

Clive and I had recorded our 'Thomas Valentine at Kohlman's Tavern' session for my La Croix record label in 1968.¹⁷ At the beginning of the 1970s – just at the time Clive was developing his relationship with Barbara – I was moving on to other things and sold nine tracks of this session to Clive and Paige VanVorst to launch their New Orleans Records label. It was gratifying to learn many years later that Barbara had had a hand in this release and made some fascinating comments about the original La Croix front cover photograph which was used again for the New Orleans Records release. Clive takes up the story in an article for *New Orleans Music*, written in 2007:

Barbara Reid . . . wrote the blurb for the flyers or the catalogues, which were called 'hand-dodgers' in those days by the locals. Dick Allen suggested we resurrect the old 'New Orleans' label, which belonged to Oren and Harvey Blackstone and himself. . . . After a quick call to Oren [Blackstone], we had permission and New Orleans Records was reborn.

We began by buying enough takes for an LP of the La Croix Kid Thomas at Kohlman's Tavern session, which appeared as NOR 7201 in 1972 with the addition of some wonderfully evocative liner notes by Dick Allen.¹⁸ The alternate takes and remaining tunes have since been issued on 504/La Croix CDS 92.¹⁹ It became our best seller when Allan Jaffe began featuring it at Preservation Hall, thereby paying for all our subsequent issues. Mike Casimir designed the front cover (originally for La Croix), using a high contrasting print of Kid Thomas' face that we later reproduced on a T-shirt. When Barbara Reid saw the cover, she was amazed at the likeness of the photo to an old wooden carving she had of Papa Legba. Papa Legba is an African god, the trickster figure, roughly equivalent to Hermes or Mercury, the go-between god of communication. I like to think that is why the record sold so well!²⁰

As the 1970s progressed, Barbara's friendship with Clive developed. We saw in previous parts of the Just Jazz Barbara Reid Project how this led to their extensive collaboration on the third of the New Orleans Records releases – 'Lee Collins – A Night at the Victory Club' – which issued for the first time a selection of recordings she had made during her time in Chicago.²¹



Figure 16.4 The original 'Papa Legba' La Croix LP 4 and 5 front cover.
Photograph by Mike P. Smith; artwork by Mike Casimir

Also, Clive specifically acknowledges her assistance in writing the liner notes for his fourth LP – Dave 'Fat Man' Williams.²² Indeed, by the mid-1970s, Barbara was helping others with their record releases, such as the English drummer and pianist Andrew Hall.

When I was in New Orleans in 1968, a 'must-go-to' event was the weekly residency of the International Dixieland Band at Luthjen's, organised by

Lars Edegran. At that time, it was the only regular old-style dance-hall gig still functioning in New Orleans. The band continued playing at Luthjen's until 1969, when at the end of the engagement Tony Fougerat joined them. As the 1970s progressed, Tony Fougerat became a favourite with the young European New Orleans enthusiasts and musicians,²³ and Barbara was happy to assist them in their recording endeavours.

There is an interesting handwritten fragment in Barbara's papers which illustrates her approach, both to her writing at the time, and her support of the young European and Australasian musicians in New Orleans in the mid-1970s.

'Man, we just play what people want to hear' –

The same night at Munster's he casually welcomed a guitarist from Australia, a drummer from Nottingham, England and a marvelously talented lady pianist from the same city to sit in with the band – He then proceeded to enter the dance floor and enjoy the music –

Tony displays the same casual matter of fact attitude when he discusses the way he has spent the majority of his 74 years (born April 25, 1900) in the business –

'Man, I don't need to go any place any more, tour and that sort of stuff – I been there – one-nighters on the circuit (Orpheum).' ²⁴

The 'Tony' in this fragment is the trumpeter Tony Fougerat and some of this preliminary draft will eventually find its way into the sleeve notes Barbara wrote for Andrew Hall's LP 'Tony Fougerat at the "Maple Leaf Bar"', recorded on April 18, 1974. There is no reference in the sleeve notes to the 'talented pianist' – Maggie Kinson – who is featured in the recording, or, indeed, to the other young musicians featured, namely, Andrew Hall on drums and Bob Culverhouse on string bass. Rather, Barbara evokes the 'legendary dance halls' of the 1950s and focuses exclusively on Tony Fougerat. Very reminiscent of her earlier pieces written in the 1950s are the following paragraphs of her 1970s sleeve note. For all her seeming waywardness, the return to 'family' is again highlighted:

Saturday night in New Orleans has always something to reckon with. But in recent years some things, sadly, were missing. The legendary dance halls with exotic names like MOULIN ROUGE, HAPPY LANDING, and MAMA LOU'S have disappeared by fire, hurricanes and varied acts of God. In the same way the neighborhood corner salon where the whole family gathered on Saturday night to eat crawfish, drink draft beer and dance to New Orleans music by a small group, they too are fading into the mists of time.

One oasis of reassurance still remains at the corner of Lyons and Laurel in the heart of the Irish Channel. MUNSTER'S is a bar and dance room with a long serving bar, that is mostly stand up service, and tucked away in the darkest corner is the small bandstand. Here a legend holds sway for some four hours on Saturday nights.

TONY FOUGERAT is known only to New Orleans Jazz fans, European admirers, his neighborhood loyalists and to other musicians. Under the circumstances, that is quite a substantial crowd. Only recently at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, Tony Fougerat (and part of his Munster's band) showed, with the able assistance of British visitors, just why he is recognized as one of New Orleans most gracious hosts.

Positioned up high on the bandstand on a hot spring afternoon, with colored bunting flying above and surrounded by hundreds of fans from the world over, Tony's band played music of the 20's, and everything through to today.

'Man, we just play what people want to hear.'²⁵

Barbara's reflections on the Munster's of the mid-1970s no doubt made her make her own comparisons with the New Orleans dance halls of the 1950s. These reflections seem to have triggered a round of mid-late 1970s deposits by Barbara of some of her earlier collected material to the Tulane Jazz Archive. Details of these include deposits made variously between January 1975 and November 1978. Examples include 'One scrapbook of postcards' (January 6, 1975); twenty-four slides (January 8, 1976); miscellaneous newspaper clippings (November 2, 1978); a letter from Joel Palmer to Barbara Reid (July 11, 1978) and eleven (11) photographs of Jolly Bunch parade (February 1, 1978).



B. G. Reid
921 Chartres Street
Apt. 21
New Orleans, La. 70116

THE TULANE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
Acknowledges with Thanks and Appreciation
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eleven (11) photographs
Jolly Bunch parade

Jazz Archive
February 1, 1978

Reid *XXX*
Curator ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Figure 16.5

Nine of these eleven photographs, duly catalogued, now appear as the first nine photographs listed when the Louisiana Digital Library is googled and 'Jolly Bunch Parade' is searched for.²⁶



Figure 16.6 Jolly Bunch Parade, 1950s

**‘A photograph of parade participants holding a sign that reads:
“The Original 4th Ward Second Liners”’**

Gift of Barbara G. Reid

Courtesy of Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

NOTES

1. I thank Adam Gorightly for sending me a copy of this unpublished letter. It is part of the Greg Hill papers given to him by Discordian Bob Newport. Gorightly has drawn upon parts of this letter in his own writings. Hill also sent a copy of the letter to David S. Lifton who wrote *Best Evidence: Disguise and Deception in the Assassination of John F. Kennedy*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1992.
2. This is actually, ‘Robert’s’. According to Clive Wilson, ‘[Larry] Borenstein set him up at Robert’s. Borenstein owned or leased the property on Toulouse Street.’ Email, Clive Wilson to Richard Ekins, May 17, 2020.
3. On Roger Lovin, see, especially: ‘You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling and the Dark Side of Discordia (Part 00004)’, 2017, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://historiadiscordia.com/you%e2%80%99ve-lost-that-lovin%e2%80%99-feelin%e2%80%99-roger-lovin-and-the-dark-side-of-discordia-part-00004/>. Lovin became friends with Hill and Thornley at around the same time they all became friends with Barbara – in 1964 or 1965. ‘After Hill and Thornley split New Orleans, Lovin became the official head of the Discordian Society’s French Quarter cabal.’ According to Gorightly, after he indirectly passed on some Discordian materials to Jim Garrison, Garrison came to suspect that the Discordian Society was a CIA front involved in JFK’s assassination.’ For a while ‘as the beatnik scene segued into the hippie era’, Lovin ran a coffee house/art gallery in the French Quarter. Reading the whole series on Lovin (Part 00001-00004) is probably the best way to grasp the full range of variously shady, ‘far out’ and downright criminal sub-words and interrelated social networks that Reid had access to and, in varying degrees, participated in – all grist to the mill in her dual roles as writer/researcher and Garrison investigator. Lovin left New Orleans in 1969.
4. Gorightly writes: ‘Reid’s apartment – where Thornley and Hill hung out on occasion – featured an enormous voodoo altar that took up nearly half a room.’ Gorightly then quotes an extensive passage on ‘Barbara’s altar’ from Hill’s letter to Thornley. Adam Gorightly, *Caught in the Crossfire: Kerry Thornley, Lee Oswald and the Garrison Investigation*, Feral House, Port Townsend WA, 2014, p. 129.
5. There is a large literature that argues that New Orleans crime boss Carlos Marcello and his co-conspirators assassinated John F. Kennedy. E.g., Richard N. Billings and G. Robert Blakey, *Fatal Hour: The Assassination of President Kennedy by Organised Crime*, Berkeley Books, New York, 1992.
6. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life*, op. cit., p. 132

7. Ibid., p. 134.

8. In February 1965, Reid was arrested with members of the Hell's Angels and charged with 'bringing the Hell's Angels to New Orleans.' A February 25, 1965 *New Orleans States-Item* article stated that the charges against Reid had been dropped. The article is reproduced and accessed July 3, 2023, <http://historiadiscordia.com/barbara-reid-vooodoo-practitioner-discordian-society-member-and-dealey-plaza-irregular-part-00001/>.

9. See, also, with more extensive quotes from the 'Garrison' section of the letter: Adam Gorightly, *Caught in the Crossfire*, op. cit. p. 130. Reid researchers should be mindful of Hill's comment in this section of the letter: 'Like everything else she told me, I didn't know whether I should believe it or not and so, like everything else she did and said, I just enjoyed the circus and didn't bother believing or disbelieving.' Ibid. The election was in late 1965, not in 1964, as Gorightly inserts in the letter. 'Circa 1964' is stated in the University of North Carolina 'Finding Aid' to the Edmiston Family Collection, accessed July 9, 2023, <https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/05750/>.

10. Tellingly, Barbara has written on the back of her own copy of the card in her collection: 'Emmalyn says We're Mad, we are. – She said as she saw us standing there – "I wouldn't go where you have been – It's far too far – to get back again."' Barbara was convinced that a series of prosecutions – all later dropped – that were brought against her around the time of the election were attempts to frighten her off entering New Orleans politics.

11. Most notably, in Adam Gorightly, *The Prankster and the Conspiracy*, op. cit. and Adam Gorightly, *The Best of Adam Gorightly: Collected Ramblings (1992-2004)*, 2005, Virtualbookworm.com, College Station, TX.

12. Adam Gorightly, *The Prankster and the Conspiracy*, op. cit., pp. 115-116.

13. Ibid., p. 116. Maury Terry, *The Ultimate Evil: An Investigation of America's Most Dangerous Satanic Cult*, Doubleday, New York, 1987. An altogether more benign view of The Process is put forward in Timothy Wyllie, edited by Adam Parfrey, *Love Sex Fear Death: The Inside Story of the Process Church of the Final Judgement*, Ferral House, Port Townsend, 2009. Clive Wilson adds: 'She knew the couple who started The Process [Mary Ann MacLean and Robert de Grimston Moor]. They lived on the North Shore. She began to suspect their motives. It was a money laundering scheme. The FBI investigated. But that was all before I met Barbara, so I only heard it from her.' Email, Clive Wilson to Richard Ekins, May 17, 2020.

14. This paragraph follows ‘The Process Church Timeline’, in Timothy Wyllie, *ibid.*, pp. 20-22. There were still some members of The Process in New Orleans, thereafter. Indeed, I bought a copy of their journal, *Process #5 ‘Fear’*, from one of their members in the French Quarter in the summer of 1968.

15. There was a spoof edition of *The French Quarter Gazette*, numbered Vol 0 No. 0 and dated October 12, 1967. At the top of the page was written in small letters: ‘This is an entirely imaginary future page one. None of it is true. None of it is improbable, either.’ A photograph of Reid headed ‘Mother Witch’s Gris Gris Pays’ is followed by a headline – ‘BARBARA MAKES BEST-SELLER LIST WITH VODOO BOOK’. The feature starts ‘Voodoo Primer by Barbara Reid, the irrepressible city editor of the *French Quarter Gazette*, this week appeared in sixth place on a national tabulation of nonfiction leaders in the book stores.’ A wish, indeed.

16. Jim Turner, then a TV news reporter at WVUE, was Barbara’s partner from late 1966 to early 1968. Turner writes: ‘I first met Barbara in Oct 1966. We hit it off, I was accepted by her protectors, and I moved in with her. . . . We stayed there until I got a good job (with Barbara’s connections). Then we moved to 534 St. Philip, probably in December. . . . As for music, she expressed no interest in it to me. She never went to a music venue that I know of, and none of our friends were involved in it. She told me she was writing a book about voodoo, and I went with her on a couple of research field trips around town.’ In a letter to his mother, dated October 1, 1967, Bill Edmiston writes: ‘The house at 1136 Dauphine St has been sold . . . we have separated, presumably permanently. I am at 921 Chartres.’ Emails, Jim Turner to Richard Ekins, August 2 and 3, 2020; Letter, Bill Edmiston to Olive Edmiston, courtesy of Kelley Edmiston.

17. First released on La Croix, LP 4 and 5.

18. The Barbara Reid files in the Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, include a New Orleans Records ‘Hand Dodger #3’ annotated by RBA [Dick Allen] in which Allen verifies that the opening statement of the hand dodger was written by Barbara Reid. Reid writes: ‘Now more than ever, continuity in music and the arts is important as a means of reassurance in the fundamentals of communication. Therefore, we present this music in the hope of bringing back a little of that “joie de vivre” from the days when being sinful was fun and not an obligation.’

19. Kid Thomas Valentine 1961 & 1968, 504/La Croix CD 92.

20. Clive Wilson, ‘Record Producing – Perspectives and Pitfalls’, *New Orleans Music*, 13 (6), pp. 6-11 at pp. 8-9.

21. Richard Ekins, 'Barbara Reid as Bill Russell's Protégée in Chicago 1950-52 – On Natty Dominique, Sidney Bechet, Jimmy Yancey and Lee Collins', *Just Jazz*, No. 249, 2019, pp. 24-29 at pp. 27-29.
22. Dave 'Fat Man' Williams, 'I Ate Up the Apple Tree', New Orleans Records, NOR 7204.
23. See the sleeve notes by Alan Ward and Tom Stagg, 'New Orleans Dance At Luthjens – Tony Fougerat with the International Dixieland Band', NoLa LP 8.
24. The original fragment in the Barbara Reid collection is undated. It should be dated 1974.
25. The original typescript for these sleeve notes is in the Barbara Reid Collection. It has been wrongly dated 1969. In a letter to Kelley Edmiston, dated December 26, 1974, Barbara Reid writes: 'Clive [she means Andrew Hall] was here this afternoon. I helped him with the Tony Fougerat album he is putting out – you know how exhausting that can be – We end up arguing about each phrase . . . I think I told you that Andrew asked me to go to the Maple Leaf with them but I can't imagine anything more ghastly than being in a college hang out on N. Years Eve -.'
26. Accessed, July 3, 2023, <https://louisianadigitallibrary.org/islandora/search/Jolly%20Bunch%20Parade?type=dismax>.



CHAPTER 17

Barbara Reid
in New Orleans:
Further Contributions
and Legacy, 1964-1983
Part 3

Chapter 17

Barbara Reid in New Orleans: Further Contributions and Legacy, 1964-1983 – Part 3

Richard Ekins, *Just Jazz*, February 2021

Barbara Reid and the New Orleans Music Scene of the 1970s

As early as 1973, Barbara Reid's support of visiting musicians from Europe was legendary.

The English trombonist, Dave Senior, now resident in Belgium for many years, wrote to me:

Neither can I forget the time we spent in New Orleans in 1973 and of course that we were fortunate enough to have met and been helped by Barbara.

We went there as a band (Chris Burke Band) in July and August 1973. . . . Eventually we arrived in New Orleans but we did not have a lot of money. In fact, it was important that we should pick up some work in New Orleans itself if at all possible. I don't know how the contact with Barbara came about exactly but I suspect that Chris (Burke) or Andrew (Hall) knew her perhaps from previous visits. Anyway, what I do recall is that Barbara took an interest in us and she arranged for us to do some late night sessions at Dixieland Hall (Heritage Hall?) which I think was now only functioning as a gallery . . . Barbara arranged the gigs for us and I think it worked in a similar fashion to Preservation Hall, i.e., that people paid a small admission at the door or some kind of kitty. What I do recall is that we played there some good few times and each time there would be a pay-off of a few dollars which in my case was exceedingly welcome.

Which leads back to my story that I left the city with the same amount in my pocket as when I arrived and I think that was about \$80. In other words, I suppose one could say that I survived those weeks by making a very modest living from playing. We also got a gig or two from local sources. In fact, Kid Thomas helped us in that respect. I think we played a couple of non-union jobs that he couldn't accept for his own band. It was an experience that made a deep impression.

A final note on Barbara. When we played those gigs quite a few musicians dropped in for a sit in with us. Even Allen Toussaint, would you believe – and without Barbara none of that would have happened. Meanwhile, I feel that I went to New Orleans as a musician and not as a tourist, if you see what I mean. And this partly in thanks to Barbara as well as the native musicians and people like Buster who provided plenty of down-home nourishment . . . Of course, it was not insignificant that Chris, Andrew and Maggie [Kimpton] all jumped ship and settled in N.O. and perhaps but for the grace of God there go I.¹

We know, too, that Barbara began to hold parties, again, in the 1970s. Now, finally, some fifty years later, people are writing about these and publishing what they have written.



**Figure 17.1 Tony Fougerat at Barbara Reid’s party, 538 St. Philip Street, August 29, 1973. The young boy behind Fougerat is C.J. DeVoe
Courtesy of Richard Milward**



**Figure 17.2 Leroy Jones and Gregg Stafford at Barbara Reid's party,
538 St. Philip Street, August 29, 1973. Seated person unidentified
Courtesy of Richard Milward**

Richard Milward, prompted perhaps by my *Just Jazz* Barbara Reid Project, recently published a two-part article in *Just Jazz* reminiscing on his time in New Orleans and Los Angeles in August and September 1973. The first of these articles gives details of his time at one of Barbara's parties, the one held on August 29, 1973:

We all arrived at Barbara Reid's at about 7.30pm. Tony Fougerat was there and also Father Al Lewis who played his banjo and gave out trinkets. Some members of the Hurricane Brass Band turned up. They included clarinetist Joe Torregano and trumpeters Leroy Jones and Gregg Stafford. Lars Edegran played amplified guitar and Butch Thompson played clarinet.²

In his article, Milward includes three photographs of the occasion.³ What is striking is the evidence they provide for the mix of musicians featured at Barbara's party – old-timers, such as Father Al Lewis, the European migrants such as Lars Edegran, and the then new generation of young

African American traditional jazz musicians such as Gregg Stafford and Leroy Jones. Leroy Jones was just fifteen at the time of these photographs. In 1970, Danny Barker had organised the Fairview Baptist Church Marching Band which Leroy Jones was leading when he was just 12 years of age. When the Musician's Union forced Barker to disband the Fairview Baptist Church Marching Band, Jones joined the Union and took over the running of the group and named it the Hurricane Brass Band, as on the drum in the photograph 'Tony Fougerat at Barbara Reid's Party' above [Figure 17.1]. The date of the formation of the Hurricane Brass Band is normally given as 1974, so it is puzzling that members of the named Hurricane Brass Band should be at the party in August 1973.⁴

Orange Kellin gave his very interesting take on those parties when I sent him a copy of the photograph of himself playing with Father Al Lewis at Barbara Reid's thanksgiving party of November 1973:⁵

Don't recall seeing this photo before, nor any photos from those parties (or jam sessions, as we thought of them) and there were quite a few. There was a time when we got together at Barbara's, maybe monthly or more, just to play and socialize. I loved it, both the music and the company. Being with Father Al was being with a constant entertainer, who was an irrepressible extrovert that loved everyone, besides having an inexhaustible supply of tunes at the ready. Within no time, he automatically became the focus of any social gathering. Barbara and he became instant buddies – but who didn't.

I didn't know Barbara nearly as well as Clive did but we were on good terms and I thought she was fascinating in her quirkiness. I was only hazily aware of her private history which just added to the color...Back then (60s – 70s), you constantly crossed paths with interesting and mysterious people in the French Quarter.⁶

For the history of New Orleans jazz revivalism, these party/jam session photographs are especially important because they document the time when second wave New Orleans jazz revivalism was coming to an end in the mid-1970s. The beacon was being handed over to the now not-so-young foreign musicians. They had come to New Orleans to learn from the old-

style musicians in the 1960s. The beacon was also being handed to the new generation of young African American musicians who had returned to traditional jazz after a long period when this style of music had been scorned by New Orleans African Americans as ‘Uncle Tom’. From this point of view, Barbara was witness, facilitator, and helpmate, in a small way, in the transition from the end of second wave New Orleans jazz revivalism (1960-1976), to what I consider to be the period of post-revivalism that followed.⁷ Once again, she had her finger on the pulse, in this case, the post-revivalist pulse.

Mother, Daughter and Legacy

As the mid-seventies led into the 1980s, Barbara was increasingly concerned about the long-term future of her daughter Kelley. She thought it important that Kelley did not confine herself too exclusively with New Orleans, or, indeed, with the USA. She supported Kelley’s time in England at Clarendon College in Nottingham, pursuing a performing arts programme from 1975 onwards. Kelley was back in New Orleans in time for the filming of Louis Malle’s *Pretty Baby*, released in 1978. This film recreated the New Orleans of 1917. It provided the perfect opportunity for mother and daughter to share their enthusiasms for the combined worlds of film, New Orleans music and celebrity.

The famed horror and art-house movie star, Barbara Steele, was in town to play Josephine in *Pretty Baby*. Kelley takes up the story:

John Godsill⁸ took Mama & me to lunch at La Cuiller Gras café (The Greasy Spoon) on Royal Street (across from the Cornstalk Hotel) . . . As we were at lunch, Barbara swanned in, flowing garb and hat – John said with glee ‘It’s Barbara Steele!!’ . . . we all had a lovely lunch! Barbara & Barbara bonded and later she visited Mama at home (921 Chartres St.) Good times.⁹

On set, Kelley was understudy to Brooke Shields, the young star of the film. As filming proceeded, the music played on. For the soundtrack, Lars Edegran

was directing the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra, with Bill Russell on violin and Orange Kellin on clarinet. Other New Orleans musicians featured in the soundtrack included Paul Crawford, James Prevost, Walter Payton, Louis Cottrell, Raymond Burke, John Robichaux, Louis Barbarin, Bob Greene, Jeanette Kimball, Emanuel Paul, Louis Nelson, Kid Thomas, Lionel Ferbos, Walter Payton, and James Booker.¹⁰



**Figure 17.3 Autographed lobby card (Pretty Baby)
signed by Barbara Steele, Keith Carradine and Brooke Shields**

Lord Richard Collection

In the summer of 1979, Barbara encouraged Kelley to tour Italy with Bill Russell. Kelley comments:

We saw Jazz friends in New York and London – then through to the Côte d'Azur – Cannes and Menton (Cocteau Museum) on to Italy – Genoa, Padua, Milan, Trento, Venice. We were supposed to go to Florence – and on to Spain and Morocco but I got the mumps in Venice – thankfully not Morte a Venezia

– and then I got the hump with the road trip – we went separate ways.¹¹

The ‘hump’, not surprisingly, perhaps, was about the feelings of betrayal Kelley still harboured over Russell siding with Borenstein against her mother over the Preservation Hall debacle.

In 1982, Barbara supported the marriage of Kelley to the English drummer Trevor Richards. As Clive Wilson puts it, speaking of an earlier time in the early 1970s when Barbara met Trevor: ‘She (Barbara) warmed to Trevor immediately.’¹² For Barbara, the main goal of this marriage was that Kelley should become ‘a citizen of the world’.¹³

Perhaps, Barbara sensed that this would ensure that her own legacy would travel. Certainly, that was exactly what happened. Kelley spent long periods living in the UK, always seeking to publicise her mother’s life and work. Indeed, my entire Barbara Reid Project has been very largely sourced by Kelley’s various deposits with and loans to the UK National Jazz Archive, together, even more importantly, with her digital archiving of the Edmiston Family Collection on New Orleans, 1910s to 2019.¹⁴

Kelley remained in contact with her mother while away from her during this time. Nevertheless, Barbara did have to come to terms with the loss of her daughter from their shared apartment in New Orleans.

Of these last years, Clive Wilson adds briefly, but perceptively, and with characteristic English understatement: ‘Nevertheless, she was drinking too much and her health was steadily deteriorating, though none of us was sufficiently aware of these warning signs.’¹⁵ It seems that her intoxication varied. David Wyckoff put it this way:

I only saw her 2 or 3 times, in the late ’70s and early ’80s. On the first occasion she was severely intoxicated, but at the other meetings she was clearheaded, pretty much her old self. She had much to say about what she felt were the negative repercussions of her work for Garrison, stating that for quite some time she felt fearful, threatened, keeping Kelley out of school for a time because of this, etc.¹⁶

Once again, we see the unfortunate legacy of the Garrison affair and how Kelley remained very much in her mind.



**Figure 17.4 A rare Marshall Stearns photograph
in the Barbara Reid Collection**

**Handwritten on the back: ‘Sweets Williams (pf.), Lee Collins (tpt.)
Victory Club, Chicago – Stearns – Fall 1949’**

**Frank ‘Sweet’ Williams moved to Chicago from New Orleans
in the mid-1920s after a trio stint with Chris Kelly (cornet)
and Papa Crutches (drums)¹⁷**

And yet there is always hope in the music. In previous parts of my *Just Jazz* Barbara Reid Project, I emphasised Bill Russell’s 1950s view that Wooden Joe Nicholas was Barbara’s favourite New Orleans trumpet player. Russell regretted that Barbara did not follow up her friendship with Wooden Joe when she moved to New Orleans.¹⁸

Clive Wilson, however, takes a different view, citing Barbara’s enthusiasm

for Lee Collins. In a particularly important and perceptive passage, Clive writes:

In spite of Barbara's increasing disillusionment, there was always one element in her life which lifted her spirits and that was the music, music when played with passion. The musician who spoke to her heart most directly was the trumpeter Lee Collins whom she had known in Chicago. For Barbara, Lee's playing expressed the longing and the struggle of humanity for something higher, beautiful, free. It gave her hope. On occasion, she began visiting Preservation Hall again to sit with the tourists on the cushions against the wall near the band, loving every minute of it, chatting with Bill Russell as old friends, and even dancing one time with Allan Jaffe in the carriageway. It was reconciliation.¹⁹ The vision that Preservation Hall would succeed her was hers: that it would succeed not only commercially but also give the musicians the dignity and recognition they deserved, provide a forum for millions of people from all walks of life and around the world to hear them in person.²⁰

Indeed, here we have the New Orleans musicians themselves becoming 'citizens of the world'. All Barbara roads do, it seems, lead back to her vision for Preservation Hall. Whatever her various activities from 1964, through the 1970s and up to her death on January 15, 1983, it is her vision for Preservation Hall that remains her most important legacy.

And on this vision a final note.

Buried away in Barbara's collected papers, not previously commented upon, not copied, far less published, is an original letter from Dr Edmond Souchon.²¹ The envelope is addressed as follows:

Mr. Larry Borenstein,
Miss Barbara Reid,
Mr. Grayson Mills,
"PRESERVATION HALL"
726 St. Peter Street,
New Orleans, La.

The envelope is postmarked July 25, 1961.



Figure 17.5

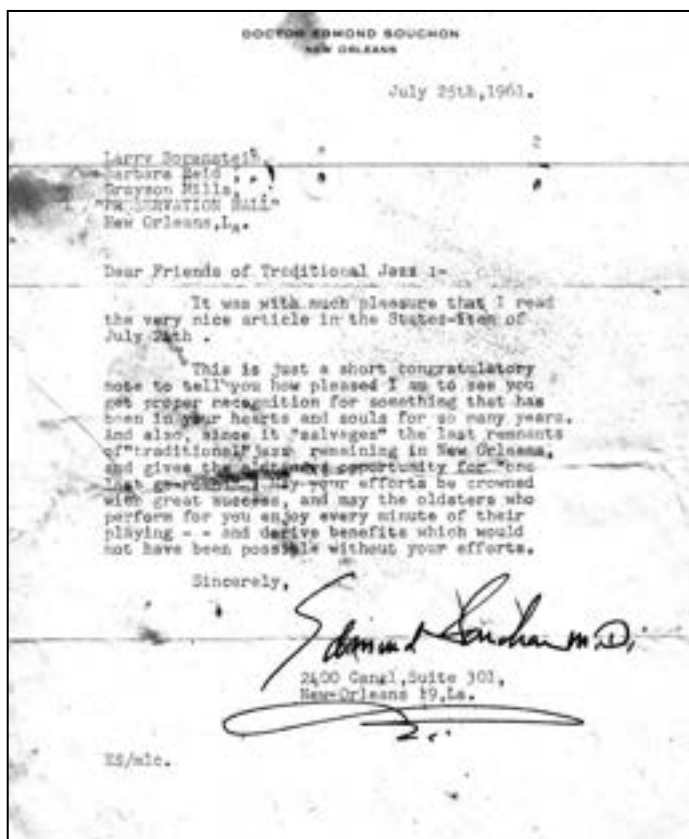


Figure 17.6

The enclosed reads as follows:

Dear Friends of Traditional Jazz :

It was with much pleasure that I read the very nice article in the States-Item of July 24th.²²

This is just a short congratulatory note to tell you how pleased I am to see you get proper recognition for something that has been in your hearts and souls for so many years. And also, since it “salvages” the last remnants of “traditional” jazz remaining in New Orleans, and gives the oldtimers opportunity for ‘one last go-round’: May your efforts be crowned with great success, and may the oldsters who perform for you enjoy every minute of their playing . . . and derive benefits which would not have been possible without your efforts.

Sincerely,

Edmund Souchon MD
2400 Canal, Suite 301,
New Orleans 19, La.

It remains the supreme irony in New Orleans jazz revivalism that now, almost sixty years since Dr. Souchon’s letter, the ‘proper recognition’ of which Souchon speaks has yet to be freely and fully given to the recipients of this letter. As to why this is the case, Adam Gorightly has a brief and simple answer:

However, Reid’s participation in the early days of Preservation Hall has been mostly expunged from the historical records due to a falling out she had with Larry Borenstein, the owner of the venue.²³

Alas, with the passing of the years, things have become very much more complicated.

Much of my Ken Grayson Mills and Barbara Reid Projects may be read as a massive elaboration, endorsement, and occasional minor correction of Chapters Three and Four of William Carter’s book *Preservation Hall*,²⁴ ‘banned’ by successive managements at Preservation Hall.

I offered Bill the right to reply to my Mills and Reid Projects. Still smarting from the fact that Preservation Hall would never sell his book, now available for nearly thirty years – and knowing that I am a (retired) psychoanalyst – he commented:

Thanks for all. ‘Faith systems in a faithless age’ could be a title for your next article given your psychoanalytic training . . .²⁵ If anyone could diagnose Sandra Jaffe and her efforts to promote her fairytale version of the Hall [that it was founded by Allan and Sandra Jaffe] that would be a gift to jazz history. [Alyn] Shipton can tell you some of her unexplained efforts to ban my book, a sadness I sometimes still encounter in the byways of my own memory.²⁶

Afterword

I set about giving my version of this ‘gift to jazz history’ in my preliminary 2023 announcement in *Just Jazz*²⁷ of the forthcoming *The Genesis and Exodus of Preservation Hall: The Ken Grayson Mills Story* and *The Birthing of Preservation Hall: The Barbara Glancey Reid Story*.

In my Epilogue to the Ken Grayson Mills book, I explained how I intended to rise to Bill Carter’s challenge, as quoted above, in the book about Barbara Glancey Reid.

Carter sensed that it was not just a simple matter of her [Sandra Jaffe] wanting to claim kudos and glory for giving birth to Preservation Hall and its subsequent development. He thought there could be deeper psychological reasons.

Wary of diagnosis and analysis of a woman I met but barely knew, I will merely make some general points about what I will call ‘birthing’ – birthing, that is, as a social process taking place from the time of the initial ‘twinkle in the eye’, to the conception, to the ‘actual’ birth and its aftermath.²⁸

The Introduction of this book covers the same ground. Rather than dwell on this matter any further, I will conclude with a summary of the depth and extent of Barbara Reid’s contribution to both the first wave New Orleans jazz revival of the 1940s and 1950s and the second wave New Orleans jazz

revival of the 1960s, '70s and '80s. This has been my principal focus of research.

Despite being almost entirely overlooked in most of the relevant literature, Barbara Glancey Reid played a key role in the history of the New Orleans jazz revival in New Orleans.

As Bill Russell's protégée in the 1950s, she navigated the postwar jazz scene with a blend of archival precision and bohemian flair, later relocating to New Orleans in September 1952 where her influence deepened. Barbara's work with American Music Records, her ties to musicians like George Lewis, Billie and DeDe Pierce, and her role as co-founder of Preservation Hall in 1961 positioned her as both witness and architect of a cultural renaissance in New Orleans jazz. She documented and photographed jazz musicians with an eye that was attuned to both musical artistry and social justice.

By drawing together my multi-part series of articles about Barbara Reid, published by *Just Jazz* between 2018 and 2021, I hope to restore Barbara to the centre of the story she helped shape, throughout both the first and second waves of New Orleans jazz revivalism, from the late 1940s through to the early 1980s.

However, this book could not and would not have been written without the life-long advocacy of Barbara Reid's importance by her daughter Kelley Edmiston, who sadly died from an accident at home in Paisley, Scotland in January 2021, aged only 63.

It was Kelley's belief that Barbara's participation in so many talented, esoteric and exotic worlds in New Orleans from the 1950s onwards, merited a film being made about her mother. One that focused, for instance, on Barbara's involvement in the J.F. Kennedy assassination investigation in New Orleans; on her life in the French Quarter as 'Mother Witch'; on her role as the Goddess Eris in the Discordia Society, and on her participation in the Process Church of the Last Judgement during their New Orleans phase. This is not forgetting the memorable image of Barbara as 'the corpse of Bourbon

House;²⁹ or the significance of Barbara's friendships more generally with prominent writers, artists and musicians in 1950s French Quarter Bohemia.

For Kelley, my *Birthing of Preservation Hall, the Story of Barbara Glancey Reid* was only the start of honouring the legacy of her mother. Had Kelley still been alive, she would not have rested until a film had been made about her mother. After all, she herself had been the stand-in for Brooke Shields, who starred in the 1978 film *Pretty Baby*, set in 1917 New Orleans.

New Orleans jazz was key to the success of *Pretty Baby*, and Barbara was a strong supporter of two young Swedish jazz revivalist musicians, whose talents were made use of in the film. Orange Kellin and Lars Edegran went on to play a major role in the development of New Orleans jazz, both in New Orleans and outside it up to the present day. They attended Barbara Reid's parties in the early 1970s. It was during this period that Barbara was promoting a new wave of young black African Americans who had started playing traditional jazz – after a long time rejecting it as 'Uncle Tom' music.

The New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra was featured prominently on the soundtrack of *Pretty Baby*, for which Orange Kellin played clarinet and Lars Edegran was the musical director, as well as playing banjo and piano. Both musicians went on to be involved in the 1979 musical revue, 'One Mo' Time', a tale of black vaudeville, set in the Lyric Theatre in New Orleans in 1926. This featured music arranged by Lars and Orange who played piano and clarinet respectively, as members of the New Orleans Blue Serenaders. 'One Mo' Time' was a success both off-Broadway and in London's West End. It was revived on Broadway in 2002. Indeed, in her wilder moments, Kelly imagined Broadway shows featuring her mother.

Who knows what a future generation of film makers and Broadway producers might make of Barbara Reid's life and work in 1950s-1970s New Orleans?

May this book set them on their way.

NOTES

1. Email from Dave Senior to Richard Ekins, December 6, 2019.
2. Richard Milward, 'New Orleans and Los Angeles Vacation 1973 Part 1', *Just Jazz*, No. 259, 2019, pp. 6-9.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
4. 'Leroy Jones' Original Hurricane Brass Band', accessed July 3, 2023, <https://spiritofneworleans.com/HURRICANE.htm>. An important historical document on the details of the transition from The Fairview Band to the Hurricane Brass Band is Joseph C. Torregano, 'Leroy Jones and his Hurricane Brass Band', *Footnote*, 6 (2), 1974/75, pp. 30-31. Unfortunately, the article is vague on precise dates. However, on page 10, it does refer to the Fairview Band being 'formed in 1970', breaking up 'after three years' and making 'appearances at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festivals from 1970-73.' That Festival is held in the last weekend of April and the first weekend of May. Apparently, at the time of Barbara's party the new band was in a state of transition. Presumably, Torregano's spelling 'Hurricane' throughout the article is deliberate. He refers to 'a hurricane brewing' in the article when comparing the band to a tropical cyclone. On the same page in *Talk that Music Talk*, Gregg Stafford gives the start date of the Fairview as 1971, and Danny Barker gives it as 1972! Stafford says: 'The Hurricane Brass Band lasted from about 1974 to 1976.' See, Bruce Sunpie Barnes and Rachel Breunlin, *Talk that Talk: Passing on Brass Band Music in New Orleans the Traditional Way*, Center for the Book, University of New Orleans, 2014, pp. 58-59. The best overall source, but with the usual inconsistencies in precise dating, is 'Danny's Boys Grow Up', in Thomas W. Jacobsen, *Traditional New Orleans Jazz: Conversations with the Men Who Make the Music*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2011, pp. 66-109.
5. Reproduced in Richard Ekins, 'Fantasy and Reality at Bourbon House: Barbara Reid, the Olympia Brass Band and a Most Unusual Funeral', *op. cit.*, p. 12; see this book, Chapter 14, p. 307.
6. Facebook Messenger, Orange Kellin to Richard Ekins, January 21, 2020.
7. Richard Ekins, 'Authenticity as Authenticating – The Case of New Orleans Jazz Revivalism: An Approach from Grounded Theory and Social World Analysis', *Popular Music History*, 2012, 7 (1), pp. 24-52.
8. John Godsill is an English New Orleans-style saxophonist.
9. Reid was a great admirer the film director Federico Fellini. Barbara Reid had worked with Fellini in his film, *8½*.

10. 'Pretty Baby' (Music from the Soundtrack of the Paramount Motion Picture), ABC Records, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://www.discogs.com/Various-Pretty-Baby-Music-From-The-Soundtrack-Of-The-Paramount-Motion-Picture/release/3318461> <https://www.loc.gov/item/jots.200018587/>. The LP had separate releases in the US, Spain, Venezuela, Australia, France, Germany, and Japan. Interestingly, Orange Kellin adds: 'Not sure about all the musicians on the soundtrack credits. I remember they tried having Louis Cottrell's band mime to our sound-track but it didn't work so they decided to have the real thing and just paint us up a bit to appear creole. Perhaps some got credit even though they were cancelled (but were on the payroll)'. Facebook Messenger, Orange Kellin to Richard Ekins, June 1, 2020.
11. Facebook Messenger message, Kelley Edmiston to Richard Ekins, May 24, 2020.
12. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life*, op. cit., p.143.
13. The witnesses to the marriage at New Orleans City Hall continued the 'citizens of the world' theme. They included Clive Wilson and Andrew Hall, both originally from England, Geoff Bull from Australia, as well as Sacha Borenstein Clay, Larry Borenstein's daughter, from New Orleans.
14. It became known as the Edmiston Family Collection when a large part of the collection was deposited by Kelley Edmiston at the University of North Carolina. See, Edmiston Family Collection on New Orleans, 1910s-2019, accessed July 3, 2023, <https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/05750/>.
15. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life*, op. cit., p. 145.
16. Email, David Wyckoff to Richard Ekins, May 18, 2020.
17. Karl Gert zur Heide, 'Frank "Sweet" Williams', in *Deep South Piano: The Story of Little Brother Montgomery*, London, Studio Vista, 1970, p. 87.
18. Richard Ekins, 'The Letters of William "Bill" Russell to Barbara Reid, 1952-1953, with a Postscript on Punch Miller, the Judge Babylon Incident and Mahalia Jackson, 1958-1963, Part 1', *Just Jazz*, No. 243, July 2018, pp. 23-28 at pp. 26-27.
19. This was in 1978. Email, Clive Wilson to Richard Ekins, May 21, 2020. I think Clive underestimates his own role in that reconciliation.
20. Clive Wilson, *Time of My Life*, op. cit., p. 144.
21. Dr Edmond Souchon combined a medical career with a prestigious career as a New Orleans jazz guitarist, writer, editor, and administrator variously with the New Orleans Jazz Club, the National Jazz Foundation, and the New Orleans Jazz Museum. He edited *Second Line* from 1951 until he died in 1968.

22. Bill Stuckey, 'Strains Recall Early 1900s – "Kid" Jazzmen Play to Preserve Art Form', The New Orleans-States Item, reproduced in Richard Ekins, 'On the Origin of Preservation Hall: Barbara Glancey Reid and the "Media Blitz" of 1961', *Just Jazz*, No. 255, pp. 20-29 at pp. 22-23.
23. Adam Gorightly, accessed July 3, 2023, <http://historiadiscordia.com/barbara-reid-vooodoo-practitioner-discordian-society-member-and-dealey-plaza-irregular-part-00001/>, op. cit.
24. William Carter, *Preservation Hall*, op. cit. Chapter 3 – 'Mr Larry's Art Store' – is mainly on Larry Borenstein. Chapter 4 – 'Smitten with Kaleidoscopic Variegation' – is mainly on Ken Mills and Barbara Reid. Mills took strong exception to these chapters and, indeed, the whole book. Carter did not engage with Mills, further. As he commented to me, in an email of August 1, 2019: 'I did what I could to cover their roles fairly and needed to move on.' He did so. For Mills on Carter, see, Richard Ekins, "'Preservation Hall: The Rest of the Story by Ken Grayson Mills", Introduced, Illustrated and Annotated by Richard Ekins, with a Footnote by Larissa Mills', *Just Jazz*, No. 235, pp. 18-25.
25. Email, Bill Carter to Richard Ekins, August 2, 2019.
26. Email, Bill Carter to Richard Ekins, August 1, 2019. Alyn Shipton was the publisher of Carter's book.
27. Richard Ekins, 'The Birthing of Preservation Hall: An Announcement', *Just Jazz*, No. 304, August 2023, pp. 24-9.
28. Richard Ekins, *The Genesis and Exodus of Preservation Hall: The Ken Grayson Story*, La Croix Publications, 2025, p.386.
29. See, p. 314 of this book; Figure 14.1 on p.296.

Biographies

‘Lord Richard’ Ekins

Long since known as ‘Lord Richard’, Richard Ekins’ history of involvement with ‘old style’ New Orleans jazz is a long and colourful one.

He was ‘christened’ Lord Richard in New Orleans by Joseph ‘Kid Twat’ Butler on July 29, 1966. Butler, bass player with the Kid Thomas Band, was finishing playing a set in Preservation Hall when Richard came sauntering in. Never before having seen such a man in New Orleans – tall, long-haired and heavily bearded – Kid Twat bowed down, then threw up his arms and exclaimed, ‘Here come de Lord!’ The name stuck and, from that moment on, Richard was known as ‘Lord Richard’ throughout his recording career; to the Japanese full ensemble New Orleans parade band that welcomed him on his arrival at the port of Kobe in 1968; and amongst New Orleans jazz enthusiasts around the world, who continue to seek out and exchange the early recordings.

Lord Richard’s love affair with New Orleans music began as a 16-year old schoolboy after first hearing Bunk Johnson’s November 1945 recordings for Decca. He played trumpet with his first band the Burgundy Street Stompers in 1964, before teaming up with pianist Bob Barton to co-lead the Crescent City Stompers from 1965 to 1968.

He first visited New Orleans in 1966 and founded the La Croix Record label the following year. Between 1967 and 1972, he released seven albums on La Croix, including his recordings of the Kid Thomas Band and Ernest ‘Doc’ Paulin’s band. He moved to London in 1971, quit playing at the same time, and dissolved La Croix records the following year.

His last visit to New Orleans was in 2015.

Memories of New Orleans for Lord Richard live on in his two sons, named Matthew La Croix Ekins (1974-), as in the record label, and after Joseph La Croix ‘DeDe’ Pierce, the trumpet player; and Luke Baptiste Ekins (1977-),

in the style of the French Creole, and after William ‘Willie’ Baptiste, the banjo player.

His 504/La Croix CD series celebrates and shares the best of Lord Richard’s New Orleans recording sessions, adding some material which has remained unreleased until now, and making all these difficult-to-find recordings available in CD format for the first time.

Wendy Saunderson

May 2015

Barbara Glancey Reid (1925¹-1983)

Barbara Glancey Reid was a pivotal yet often overlooked figure in the New Orleans jazz revival.

Born in St. Joseph, Missouri in 1925, she was the daughter of Charles Mendel Williams (1901-1956) and Virginia Cronk-Glancy (1909-1943²). Her mother, known as ‘Ginny’, was a vaudeville performer who died tragically in a hotel fire when Barbara was only 16.³ Her father re-married in 1944. Barbara was brought up by Anna Marie Reese, her widowed paternal grandmother. Barbara’s first husband was William Reid (1916-1976), whom she married in March, 1945.

Barbara’s early correspondence with William “Bill” Russell revealed a precocious passion for traditional jazz and a fierce commitment to its preservation.

Following her relocation to New Orleans in 1952, Barbara managed ‘The Gallery’ at 734 St Peter Street, handling representative work of French Quarter artists.

In 1961, along with Ken Grayson Mills, she founded Preservation Hall at 726 St Peter Street, creating a successful venue for New Orleans jazz musicians that would become a worldwide tourist attraction.

Barbara was devastated when management of the venue was suddenly handed over to Allan and Sandra Jaffe. This loss propelled her away from live music, and into other interests, though before her death she returned both emotionally and in person to Preservation Hall. Barbara died in January 1983 and a memorial party in her honour was subsequently held at the Hall a few months later.

Barbara’s collaboration with Lyle Bongé, most notably, has left behind photographic evidence of the relationship she forged with many jazz musicians of the period, including George Lewis, Emile Barnes, and Billie and DeDe Pierce.

Barbara had a complicated personal life, leaving behind two children from her first marriage to Bill Reid, to relocate to New Orleans and pursue her enthusiasm for jazz music and the bohemian world. She was, however, equally aware of the benefits of a stable family life and remained utterly devoted to Kelley,⁴ her daughter with her second husband, William Kelley Edmiston (1921-2001) whom she married in April 1955.

It is Kelley who has done so much to preserve and promote her mother's talents as archivist, activist and muse. Indeed, without the ceaseless toil of daughter Kelley, Barbara's life and work would have remained hidden history.

Richard Ekins and Debbie Radcliffe
August 2025

NOTES

1. On numerous occasions Kelley wrote and said that her mother's birthday was January 5, 1928. It was, in fact, January 5, 1925.
2. Barbara's mother's birth and death dates come from the back of a family photograph, courtesy of Kelley Edmiston.
3. Email, Kelley Edmiston to Richard Ekins, September 21, 2018; page 140 of this book.
4. Kelley Todd Edmiston (1957-2021)

Peter Lay (1947-2025)

Peter Lay was a drummer, bandleader, and promoter. He led Pete Lay's Gambit Jazzmen, organized jazz weekends and festivals, and was deeply embedded in Britain's traditional jazz scene.

He became editor of *Just Jazz* in the early 2000s, taking over the stewardship after co-founding editor, Mike Murtagh, stepped back. Lay remained in that role for over two decades, guiding the magazine until its closure in 2025. His editorship documented UK trad jazz bands, venues, and fans, while also keeping an eye on events in the United States.

Lay's editorial success ensured that *Just Jazz* remained the UK's central publication for traditional jazz until his death, at age 78, in September 2025.

Publisher's Note

This volume is published by La Croix Publications, in association with *Just Jazz*. Although *Just Jazz* has now ceased publication, following the untimely death of its editor, this book stands as a tribute to the magazine's enduring contribution to jazz enthusiasm and scholarship.

It is offered in memory of the companionship and editorial support that *Just Jazz* provided, and as a token of gratitude to its readers.

By re-publishing many of the articles originally produced by *Just Jazz* between July 2018 and May 2021, La Croix Publications ensures that the spirit of *Just Jazz* continues to resonate in the preservation of jazz history.

This note both honours the editor and the magazine, while confirming La Croix as the permanent publisher. The book thereby carries forward the association with *Just Jazz*, even after the magazine's demise.

A journey into the heartland of New Orleans jazz.

A tale of private passions, bohemian rhapsodies and public impact.

And what it really means to be the creator of Preservation Hall, 726 St Peter Street, New Orleans.

RICHARD EKINS. After studying at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Chicago, Richard Ekins completed his doctorate in the sociology of knowledge at the University of London in 1978. A sociologist, psychoanalyst, and musicologist, Ekins has been Emeritus Professor of Sociology and Cultural Studies at Ulster University, UK, since 2009. He published *The Politics of Authenticating: Revisiting New Orleans Jazz*, with Robert Porter, Lexington, 2023. Most recently, Richard published *The Genesis and Exodus of Preservation Hall - the Ken Grayson Mills Story*, La Croix Publications, 2024.

Cover image: Preservation Hall, early 1960s
Courtesy of Pat Borenstein and Kelley Edmiston

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