

# CHARLIE SPAND BACK TO THE WOODS!

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Charlie Spand circa 1929. Photo courtesy of John Teffeller and Blues Images.

## Introduction

Paramount and OKeh recording artist Charlie Spand is one of those blues artists who remains a kind of John Doe, given the lack of official recorded data and biographical details of his life. Several attempts have been made to compile articles on Spand through the years with whatever information was at hand. This article is intended to be a summary and update.

Based on his recorded output, Spand's place of birth may have been any southern state. In one case his birthplace was interpreted as Ellijay, in northwest Georgia. The basis for this was the resemblance to the word 'All'jay' in his 'Evil Woman Spell' (Pm 13101), his last recording for the Paramount 'race' series, made in Grafton, Wisconsin in July 1931. Francis Wilford-Smith originally suggested that this was a reference to Ellijay. In his book 'The Story Of The Blues' (revised edition, 1997, page 89), Paul Oliver writes that Spand may have come from Georgia and a Charlie Spann was remembered by Thomas A. Dorsey to have lived in Georgia.

Rolf von Arx published an article on Spand in Storyville, referring to the same 'Evil Woman Blues' and wrote that Spand was born in Algiers, 'or somewhere that sounds like that'.

In later years, researcher Chris Smith also mentions Algiers, Louisiana in his article on Spand, referring to Bob Hall's and Richard Noblett's article in Blues Unlimited. Smith's view was that the reference to Algiers was an authenticating touch in a blues about hoodoo, and not autobiographical. Algiers is on the south bank of the Mississippi river that splits New Orleans. Several titles that Spand recorded make reference to Louisiana, including: 'Back To The Woods Blues', 'Evil Woman Spell', and 'Hoodoo Woman Blues'.

The name Spand was not unknown in Louisiana, as several people by that name had lived in Baton Rouge, eighty miles north of New Orleans. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century at least two Spands were living in Louisiana.

However, Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama origins have also been suggested, especially since Spand's piano style resembles that of Birmingham, Alabama pianist Walter Roland (circa 1900-1972), according to Francis Wilford-Smith, commenting on Chris Smith's article in B&R 69.

## The 1920s

The first factual information about Charlie Spand is his residence in Detroit, Michigan, where he played piano on Hastings and Brady Streets in the Black Bottom, Detroit's black section. Pianist Floyd Taylor (1909), who came to Detroit with his parents in 1918, remembered seeing Spand in the early 1920s. Spand's 'Soon This Morning Blues' was 'a special number of his', Taylor recalled. As early as 1924 another pianist, Rufus Perryman (aka Speckled Red) saw him here as well. Perryman moved to Detroit during World War One.

Together with pianists James Hemingway, Hersal Thomas and Will Ezell (1892-1963), Spand formed the boogie nucleus of the city. By 1927-1928 these artists were 'floating' from one city to another. This much is true for Ezell (who arrived in Chicago from Louisiana in 1925) and Spand.

In his book 'Deep South Piano', Karl Gert zur Heide mentions that Spand was remembered as having played at rent parties or skiffles in Chicago during the 1928-1930 period. Zur Heide mentions that Spand played for Robert McGhee at 4048 S. Indiana, Malcolm and Weedy Jones at 5758 S. State Street and with Detroit-based pianist Hersal Thomas for Mrs. Booker Lumpkin at 5009 Vincennes. However, not all reported names are the same as they are listed in Peter Sylvester's 'A Left Hand Like God' (1990, page 85) and the time frame might be a little earlier since Hersal Thomas was dead by that time. According to the Chicago Defender of 12th June, 1926 (page seven) Thomas died in Detroit, Michigan on 2nd June, 1926. Before his death, Hersal Thomas professed religion.

If Spand did play with Thomas, this would indicate that Spand was visiting Chicago long before Thomas 'professed' religion. Given the fact that Ezell arrived in Chicago in 1925 and travelled to Detroit, Michigan, it is not impossible he met Spand there and that both Ezell and Spand 'floated' between Chicago and Detroit around this time. Blind Blake's apartment on 31st and Cottage Grove in Chicago became a meeting place for pianists, including Spand and Ezell, on Mondays and possibly Tuesdays, when they had a day off before they would hit the city again to play gigs.

## Recording for Paramount

Spand and Ezell became recording artists for the Paramount 'race' series, a label that was owned by the New York Recording Laboratories (NYRL), operating from Port Washington and Grafton, Wisconsin. The NYRL had a branch office in Chicago at 218 South Wabash Avenue, opposite to the Lyon & Healy Building, which housed Orlando Marsh's Marsh Recording Laboratories, a studio that had been used by the NYRL for recording sessions since June 1923.

When Spand first recorded in 1929, Aletha Dickerson was the recording manager for the Paramount 'race' series, operating her office at 208 South Wabash Avenue. Without officially being appointed, she became the new recording manager for Paramount in 1928, after J. Mayo 'Ink' Williams left the company to join Vocalion. According to Thomas A. Dorsey, in a letter to Max Vreede dated 26th February, 1961, 'Alexander Robinson and his wife Aletha ran the Race Record Department (of NYRL) and managed the Hokum Boys'. The Chicago Defender of 22nd June, 1929 has the following news item, confirming Dorsey's statement: 'Lethia (sic) Dickerson, prominent Chicago business woman and musician, has charge of the Paramount recording



Paramount advert courtesy A. Paul Pedersen



Jimmy Yancey, Summer 1948, taken by Gene Mayl at Yancey's apartment. Courtesy of Gene Mayl.

studios in Chicago and fills the bill well'. Three months later, the same Chicago Defender notes: 'Alethia (sic) Dickerson, the Paramount recording manager, is busy securing new talent for recordings to be made this month for Paramount. Several new artists have been added to Paramount's list'. The 1930 US Census Report lists her as 'Manager' of a 'Music Co'.

Hans Kratzer, brother-in-law to vice-president of the Wisconsin Chair Company's Otto Moerer, was listed as the official recording manager in the 1929 Chicago City Directories. Kratzer worked closely together with NYRL's general and recording manager Arthur Laibly and Orlando Marsh during recording sessions. A nice detail is, that Hans Kratzer was vocalist in his own dance band and is remembered to have made recordings in Grafton, Wisconsin, under a pseudonym.

Dickerson was involved in several of the Spand recording sessions. She remembered his surname as Spands, not Spand, as she wrote in a letter to John R.T. Davies in 1972. Interestingly, she corrected her typed letter by adding a written 's'.

Although the Gennett files for 6th June, 1929 list his first session for Paramount as by 'Charlie Spand', a registration card found in the Library of Congress for his song 'Soon This Morning Blues' (recorded during this session in Richmond, Indiana) lists him as 'Charles Spands!'. The Gennett file card for his 17th August, 1929 session lists him as 'Chas. Spands' as well! The probable explanation for this is that Aletha Dickerson was involved in the two recording sessions in Richmond, Indiana, and in the registration of the song for copyright.

Details of his third issued record, Pm 12856, first appeared in the Chicago Defender on 30th November, 1929, where he was listed Charley Spand. All other Paramount records and advertisements refer to him as 'Charlie Spand'.

Spand's piano style is described by Bob Hall and Richard Noblett (Maggie PY4416) as 'typical of the Detroit pianists of the day, and essentially consist(ing) of two main styles, an insistent rolling-boogie using a walking octave bass in the key of F or occasionally Bb, and a deliberate, at times almost majestic, barrelhouse style using a stride piano bass in the key of Bb, or very rarely Eb. The choice of keys suggests that Spand, in common with other Detroit pianists, may have been accustomed to working in bands with brass or woodwind instruments, though his records feature only piano, occasionally with guitar accompaniment'. According to Hall and Noblett it was Spand's lyrics 'which set him apart from his contemporaries. Instead of stringing together traditional verses, his songs frequently have a continuity that comes from a genuine sense of poetry. Spand was in fact one of the first real blues songwriters, foreshadowing the work of such 1930s artists as Leroy Carr'.

Spand's recording career started at the Gennett recording studio in Richmond, on 6th June, 1929; during the next two years he recorded 24 songs. He cut two titles at this first session: 'Soon This Morning Blues' (GE-15154) and 'Fetch Your Water' (GE-15155). The accompanying guitarist is believed to have been Blind Blake, although Blake did not make records under his own name during the two-day recording sessions. An alternative for the accompanying guitarist on the Spand session, according to Guido van Rijn, may be Freezezone, who recorded his 'Indian Squaw Blues' (GE-15156) directly after Spand on the same day.

'Blues And Gospel Records' lists Spand's second recording session in Richmond, Indiana on Saturday, 17th August, 1929, with an unknown guitarist as accompanist on Spand's recordings. It has been suggested in the liner notes of Maggie PY4416 that 'Good Gal' is really a feature for the superb guitarist, thought, according to Bob Hall and Richard Noblett, to be Josh White. The same information appeared in Howard Rye's liner notes for Document's DOCD-5108. When I asked Howard Rye why he included Josh White's name, he replied that 'Johnny Parth of Document Records had already incorporated this into the discography and I thought I had better acknowledge it' (e-mail, 2nd September, 2006).

In a recent communication between Bob Hall and Guido van Rijn (e-mail, 3rd September, 2006), Bob Hall comments: 'The guitarist on the session was always believed to be Blind Blake on aural identification, but I see that the latest edition (of Blues And Gospel Records) states 'unknown'. There must

be some reason for this change of heart, but I don't know what it is. The four Spand matrices (GE-15453 to GE-15456) appear in the middle of a long Blind Blake session on the same day so Blake was certainly present in the studio and to me it sounds like him, especially on 'Good Gal' (GE-15453). As for Josh White, I know of no connection between him and Spand, and White's only known Paramount session was a month later (with the Carver Boys)'.

All four titles from this session were also issued on NYRL's Broadway 5000 'race' series (Bwy 5079 and 5091) under the pseudonym of 'Charlie Chapman'; the motive was probably to cash in twice on the issued titles, without Spand knowing, thus avoiding the need to pay him an extra lump sum or royalties either. (In a similar case, country artist Sid Harkreader found out that his issued records were issued again under the pseudonym of 'Harkins and Moran'. When he questioned the NYRL about it and told them it was unethical, he was eventually paid an extra sum of \$300-\$400.) The same session included an instrumental duet with guitarist Blind Blake, 'Hastings St.' (GE-15457; issued on Pm 12863). The Gennett recording file card lists the title as 'Hastings St. Boogy' (sic) and credits the title to 'Chas. Spands, acc. Piano & Guitar'. The record was issued, however, under the name of Blind Blake.

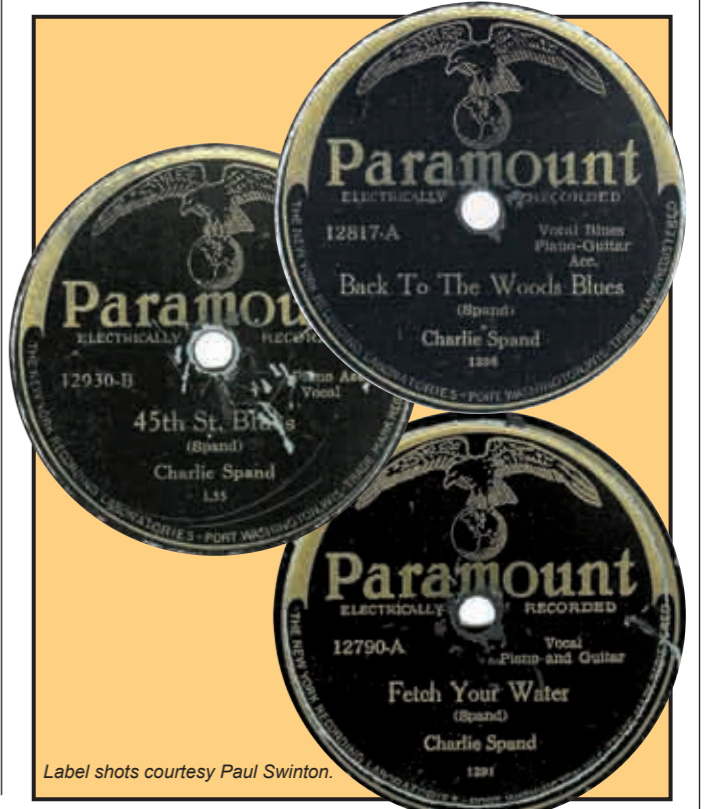
After only three issued records, including his signature song 'Soon This Morning Blues' (issued as B-side on Pm 12790), Spand's piano playing was used on a Paramount 'sampler': 'Hometown Skiffle Part I' and 'Part II' (Pm 12886), where he is introduced as 'Charlie Spand himself from Detroit'.

The idea of producing a sampler of the best selling artists from Paramount's stable may have sprung from the brain of Alexander Robinson and his spouse Aletha Dickerson. By then, Aletha Dickerson had been involved in recording sessions with The Hokum Boys, Blind Blake, Blind Lemon Jefferson and others. A skiffle is a house rent party organised by tenants to raise money to pay the rent. Frank Driggs, in his 'Jimmy Yancey: A Permanent Requiem' (Record Research, 1956), wrote about skiffles in general terms: 'The exchange of musical interpretation and evolution of ideas were quite strong in the house rent parties where Jimmy Yancey (could have) met and played with Cripple Clarence Lofton, Charles 'Cow Cow' Davenport and Charlie Spand'.

Spand's presence as a recording artist on the Paramount sampler, together with Blind Blake, Papa Charlie Jackson, Alex Hill, Will Ezell, possibly Georgia Tom Dorsey and Blind Lemon Jefferson, may indicate that his records sold well. A St. Louis Music Company advertisement sheet of 1930 lists The Hokum Boys and even Charlie Patton (note spelling!) as present on the record.

At that time Alex Hill and Thomas Dorsey were The Hokum Boys. Will Ezell is listed as Willie Ezell. The 1900 US Census also lists him as such. For a while, Alex Hill had free space in Aletha Dickerson's office at 208 South Wabash, Chicago. Alex Hill became an arranger and songwriter for the NYRL after Thomas A. Dorsey left. He is listed as co-writer of 'Moanin' The Blues' (Pm 12856) with Spand.

Another indication of Spand's popularity as a Paramount recording artist is a 1929 publicity portrait of him in an advertisement for 'Back To The Woods Blues' (Pm 12817). Although the first advertisement for Pm 12817 in the Chicago Defender of 12th October 1929 (page eleven) does not include a photo of Spand, collector John Teffeller found subsequent advertisements for this record, one of which includes the photograph of Spand, reprinted in the 2007 'Blues Images' calendar. The same photo appeared in a 1929 Paramount four-page catalogue, which is in the possession of Paul Swinton. Here, however, it is captioned George Hannah! Comparison with the 1940s photo of Spand and Jimmy Yancey sitting next to each other at the piano proves, however, that it is Spand.



Label shots courtesy Paul Swinton.

Vocal Numbers	
12795—My Pullman Porter Man—Vocal—Piano Acc.	Elsie Robinson
Ain't Got Nobody—Vocal—Piano Acc.	Elsie Robinson
12794—Hookworm Blues—Vocal—Guitar-Piano Acc.	Blind Blake
Slippery Rag—Vocal-Guitar-Piano Acc.	Blind Blake
12793—Fony Blues—Vocal—Guitar Acc.	Charley Patton
Basty Rooster Blues—Vocal—Guitar Acc.	Charley Patton
12791—Sing Sing Blues—Vocal—Guitar Acc.	Bob Coleman
Smiling Blues—Vocal—Piano-Guitar Acc.	Jack O' Diamonds
	
12796—Fetch Your Water—Vocal—Piano-Guitar Acc.	Charlie Spand
Soon This Morning Blues—Vocal—Piano-Guitar Acc.	Charlie Spand
12788—Guitar Man Blues—Vocal—Inst. Acc.	George Hannah
Wobblin' In The Mud—Vocal—Inst. Acc.	George Hannah
12786—The Switchers Blues—Vocal—Inst. Acc.	George Hannah
The Ducks Yas Yas—Vocal—Inst. Acc.	Jack O' Diamonds
12777—Caught Him Doing It—Vocal—Piano-Guitar Acc.	The Hokum Boys
Better Cat That Out—Vocal—Piano-Guitar Acc.	The Hokum Boys

Advertisement with photo of 'George Hannah'. This in fact is a picture of Spand, with Hannah credited, from a 1929 Paramount catalogue. Courtesy of Paul Swinton.

### The 1930s

The last Chicago Defender Paramount advertisement mentioning Spand appeared in the issue of 30th April, 1930, and was for 'Got To Have My Sweetbread' (Pm 12917). The record label credits the mysterious composer 'Lamoore', thought to be a pseudonym for Alexander Robinson, but the registration of the song for copyright at the Library of Congress credits 'John Green'.

By 1929 Spand had moved to Chicago, and recorded '45th Street Blues' at Grafton in 1930, the title being an indication of his recent Chicago address. The NYRL had opened the Grafton studio opposite their pressing plant in late 1929.

Bob Hall comments on the suggestion that Spand might be the accompanying pianist on James 'Boodle It' Wiggins' recordings made directly after Spand's 'Room Rent Blues': 'Spand has been suggested for the 'unknown' accompanist on Pm 12916, on the basis of adjacent matrix numbers (Spand's 'Room Rent Blues' is L-102-2 and Wiggins 'Corrine Corrina Blues' is L-103-2). I can't say I'm convinced, however. There's no reason to suppose that Spand and Wiggins knew each other and there's nothing about the accompaniments that suggests Spand's usual phrases. Both 'Corrine Corrina Blues' and 'Gotta Shave 'Em Dry' are popular songs that have an arranged structure and would have required some rehearsal and premeditation for the vocalist and pianist to get it together. I think it more likely that the pianist is Blind Leroy Garnett, who definitely played on some of the other Wiggins recordings and whose style is more closely akin to the 'raggy' passages in the Wiggins accompaniments. The keys are F and G, common and easy keys for a pianist, so there's nothing to be learned there. My guess, however, is that Spand was called in to the studio to make one more track to go with the previously recorded '45th Street Blues' for Pm 12930 and that the proximity of Spand and Wiggins is just coincidence. Of course we'll never know for sure'. (E-mail to Guido van Rijn, 3rd September, 2006)

In September 1930 Spand travelled to Grafton to record some more titles, six in total. The big mystery recordings from this session are 'She's Got Good Stuff' (L-506-2) and 'Big Fat Mama Blues' (L-509-2), which are listed in 'Blues And Gospel Records' (1997) as issued on both Pm 13005 and Bwy 5108. In the 1960s a Broadway 5000 'race' series discography appeared in Matrix magazine No. 48. Broadway 5108 was listed under the pseudonym 'Jazzlips Williams'. Although 'Blues And Gospel Records' lists this name as a pseudonym for Spand on page 1039, the actual record has not surfaced since the publication of the article. However the record may well be in the hands of a collector, as happened with one of the Broadway issues of Blind Lemon Jefferson. Paul Swinton, noted Jefferson authority and in the process of finishing a biography on the artist, reports he had never seen a Jefferson release on Broadway, but he heard from a man working at the Smithsonian who said that he had used a Jefferson Broadway copy during a re-mastering project. (Author's note: If anyone can confirm the existence of a copy of Bwy 5108, please let me know). To further complicate matters, the online discographical project at <http://setlist.fateback.com/Broadway5000.htm> gives the artist names on this record as 'George Williams' and 'Charles Spaulding' on 'She's Got Good Stuff' and 'Big Fat Mama Blues' respectively. No corroborating evidence is known to exist for a Broadway record issued under these names.

In his 'Thirsty Woman Blues' (L-507-2, Pm 13047), recorded during this same September 1930 session, Spand sings about a woman whom he misses, saying that she's in Alabama. David Evans hears the line as: 'Her name is Ardella Lee'. A young woman by the name of Ardella Lee is listed in the 1930 US Census as born about 1912 and living in Jefferson County (Alabama).

A request to Bob Eagle to check the 1930 US Census for Ardella Lee resulted in the conclusion that a sixteen-year old Ardella Lee ('negro') was the most likely candidate. During the enumeration in April 1930 she was living in Evergreen, Conecuh County, Alabama, which is on Highway 65, halfway between Mobile and Montgomery. It is possible, though, that 'Lee' was her middle name.

Spand's last session for the Paramount label was recorded in Grafton, Wisconsin in July 1931, by which time the company was on its last legs. Aletha Dickerson may have been responsible for getting him to Grafton, given that she was responsible for his two recording sessions in Richmond, Indiana in 1929. Aletha was still working for the NYRL in 1931, but got the word that business was at a low ebb.

She was offered a job bringing artists to Grafton against a \$20 fee, as opposed to the fixed salary she previously enjoyed. Dickerson refused because, as she said to John R.T. Davies, she was not aware of the effects of the Depression. She was soon to find out, though, as she recalled.

With Dickerson's disappearance from the recording industry, a lot of blues artists vanished, both from records and from the public eye, or so it seemed, including Will Ezell and Charlie Spand. One of Spand's last songs recorded for the NYRL was 'Hard Time Blues' (matrix number L-1038, issued on Pm 13112). The song was found listed in the Columbia files as 'Depression Blues' on a manila master file card, which had originally belonged to the NYRL.

Columbia leased about one hundred metal masters of the by then defunct NYRL in November 1933, and the file cards evidently accompanied them. In 1955, researcher Walter C. Allen typed a list of the cards, which were loaned to him by Helene Chmura of Columbia after their discovery in the Columbia archives. According to Michael Brooks, the cards are no longer in the Sony archives, now owners of Columbia, but they may still exist, perhaps in the possession of Walter C. Allen's son.

Little Brother Montgomery, who met and played with Spand during the 1928-1930 period, and recorded in his own right for Paramount with Irene Scruggs in 1930, left Chicago in 1931 and lost touch with Spand.

Nothing much is known about Spand's activities during the 1930s, although it is rumoured that he returned to Detroit. According to Sunnyland Slim, Spand and Jim Jackson played in minstrel shows around 1931-1932 (letter from Karl Gert zur Heide, 1st July 2004).

William Russell visited Chicago in 1938 to do research on boogie-woogie. Russell's research originally appeared in two parts in the French magazine 'Le Jazz Hot' in the summer of 1938. His article in issue 26 (Août-Septembre, page eleven) deals with Spand in detail and in admiring terms: 'Charlie Spand, a pianist of most compelling swing, is known principally as a vocalist. But, although he is one of the most moving of the male blues singers, with a voice of sympathetic and agreeable quality, it is unfortunate that we do not have a number of piano solos by this marvellous musician'. A year later his research on boogie-woogie was included in Jazzmen (1939). Of Spand he then said: 'another pianist lost somewhere between Chicago and Detroit', although he might easily have been unaware of Spand's presence in Chicago. Will Ezell vanished in the same way during the Depression. At the time of his research in Chicago in 1938, he had not heard of Jimmie Yancey, who features prominently in 'Jazzmen', a year later.

Trumpeter Lee Collins gave the following recollection in his autobiography, 'Oh, Didn't He Ramble': 'After I closed at the Derby Club (circa 1939) I took to hanging out in a tough, third-rate Chicago cabaret called the 'All Star'. This place was at 43rd and Indiana Avenue. Lil Green sang there and a piano player named Charlie, who was from New Orleans. The 'All Star' was always packed with musicians, as a lot of them were out of work'. Is it wishful thinking to believe this is Charlie Spand he refers to?

Spand might have been playing in Cripple Clarence Lofton's Big Apple Tavern, located at South State Street, a little above 47th Street, if we are to believe the late John Steiner's chapter on Chicago in 'Jazz' by Nat Hentoff and Albert McCarthy: 'In a nearby tavern 'The Crippled One', Lofton might be hosting Will Ezell or Leroy Garnett or Charlie Spand as they passed through with a show or came around to give the town a whirl'. In 1975, Bob Hall and Richard Noblett, taking Steiner's impressionistic evocation as a fact, stated that 'Guests at Lofton's saloon are reputed to have included Will Ezell, Blind Leroy Garnett and Charlie Spand' ('Blues Unlimited' 116, page 21).

According to Konrad Nowakowski, however, Steiner's speculation that Lofton 'might' have hosted Spand is part of a paragraph in which Steiner mixes pre-war and post-war events and recent information from Bob Eagle reveals that Garnett (born 1897) and whose full name was Leroy Roscoe Garnett, died in Chicago on 3rd January, 1933, having lived there most of his life (e-mail, 4th December, 2005).



Label shots courtesy Paul Swinton.



Paramount advert courtesy Dennis and Susan Klopp

### A new recording career

Boogie-woogie was in full swing by the late 1930s. Artists like Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons and Jimmy Yancey embraced the popularity of boogie-woogie and were subsequently recorded during the 1939-1940 period. The story of Meade Lux Lewis's rediscovery by John Hammond was widely circulated and written about. Even a local newspaper like 'The Lowell Sun' (Massachusetts), recounted the story of how Hammond found Lewis in Chicago, in its 15th February 1939 issue. Jimmy Yancey, at that time living at 3525 South Dearborn Street, met Charlie Spand again in 1940.

As early as 1939, the original Paramount recording of 'Hastings St.' appeared in auction lists for an initial bid of \$2, two to three times the amount of other blues and jazz items being auctioned at that time, which indicates the extent of contemporary jazz fans' interest in Spand's piano playing.

Charlie Spand may have taken advantage of the revival of interest in piano blues and boogie-woogie. He got the opportunity to do two separate recording sessions for Okeh, on 20th and 27th June, 1940, recording a total of eight songs, including a remake of his 'Soon This Morning'.

Arthur Satherly, who was responsible for Columbia's so-called ethnic and country artists, or his assistant Don Law, may have been responsible for getting Spand on record again. Satherly may have turned the date over to Lester Melrose, who may have acted as an agent, getting Spand a recording date against publishing rights (letter from Michael Brooks, Sony Music Studios, 30th September, 2004).

Tampa Red was the route to Melrose's 'good graces and managership'. Tampa Red's house at 35th and State was a gathering place or hang-out for practice (Paul Garon: 'Woman With Guitar', pages 41-42). The recording sessions took place in Chicago, indicating that Spand was still living nearby. Checking the recording cards for Spand's recording sessions, which are still available at Sony Archives, did not reveal an address for him. We have to remember that the dates were paid for with a lump sum and no royalties. All metals ('A' takes only) still exist, which is something of a miracle. Test pressings of the same takes of all eight titles exist in the Paul Swinton collection.

Spand's Okeh records were reviewed in the 6th September and 25th October, 1940 issues of 'Jazz Information': 'First there's Charlie Spand, the pianist on the famous Paramount 'Hastings Street' (sic), back on records after years of obscurity'. Accompanied by Ernest Lawlers (Little Son Joe, 1900-1961) on guitar, Spand, however, was evaluated as just another good blues pianist. The October issue even stressed that in comparison with his older work, they (Okeh 05757) appear thin. No major rediscovery story resulted and no coverage was given on the whereabouts of Spand, in contrast to Lofton and Yancey, who became darlings of the hot jazz milieu. Spand remained strictly in the race corner, a possible explanation for his obscurity, according to Konrad Nowakowski.

In 1941, Signature first reissued 'Hastings St.' as 'Hastings Street', a dubbing of the original Paramount recording. On the Paramount label Blind Blake is listed as the main artist, the title being listed in Blues & Gospel Records (1997, page eighty) under his name. Signature, however, first lists Charlie Spand on the label as the performing artist, followed by Blake underneath. This might be an indication of Spand's revival, or of piano blues and boogie being the hot topic of the day among jazz fans. The release took place prior to the temporary discontinuance of Signature in October. 'Jazz Information's' review of Signature 65101 finds Spand no more than a mediocre pianist — 'compare his recent Okeh offerings'. According to the reviewer, Columbia would release the title within a short time as well. By mid-August 1940, shortly after the Okeh sessions, the dubbing had been given a Columbia matrix number, CO 27910. 'Dubbings were made some time ago, and Bob Thiele of Signature was so



Ernest Lawlers aka Little Son Joe. Courtesy Paul Garon

informed before he announced the reissue', according to the same reviewer. Eventually, Columbia made the prediction come true, but the reissue came six years later, as part of the album 'Boogie Woogie Vol. 2' (Columbia C-130), released in May or June 1947 ('Names & Numbers 11', Nowakowski and Rye, 1999). On the post-war Columbia issue, it is Charlie Spand in capital letters as artist credit, followed by 'Piano - Charlie Spand; Guitar & Talking - Blind Blake' in small print as personnel details. Spand is also listed as composer of the song.

### Spand disappears

After his short re-appearance on record, Spand's name only turned up occasionally during the early 1940s.

Down Beat magazine of 1st January 1943 mentions that 'Charlie Spand, pianist on Paramount records, is still around Chicago', according to George Hoefler.

Jimmy Yancey mentioned to Dick Muhlitz that Spand visited his apartment at 11th West, 35th Street, off State Street in the early 1940s.

The October 1943 issue of 'Jazz Record' (No. 8, page seven) had a story named 'Pitchin' Boogie', recalling 'names of legend and story', including that of Spand. Although he was close at hand, hardly anyone seemed to be aware of Spand being alive and well in or around Chicago, as reported in the earlier mentioned 'Down Beat' issue.

When Dick Muhlitz visited their apartment in 1949, the Yanceys thought that Spand had gone to California, and hadn't seen him since the early 1940s (email from Dick Muhlitz, 14th February, 2003).

After World War II no definite reports on Spand are to be found, either in Chicago or in Detroit. Guitarist Eddie Burns, who arrived in Detroit in 1947, and is known for his encyclopaedic memory, did not recall Spand as then active in the city.

### The Charlie Spand / Jimmy Yancey photo

Another indication for his stay in Chicago however, is the second known photo of him, showing a slim, middle-aged man, playing piano in the presence of Jimmy Yancey. The photo, taken at Yancey's apartment, was published in 'Jazz Monthly's' January 1959 issue and credited to Nat Shapiro. According to the caption, the photo was taken a year or two before Yancey's death in 1951.

In Peter Sylvester's book, 'A Left Hand Like God', the same photo appears, credited to Duncan Schiedt. When I contacted Schiedt about the photo in 2002, he told me he had obtained the photo more than forty years ago. He did not remember who had given the photo to him but he was told that the pianist was Spand.

After I asked Duncan Schiedt about the origins of the photo, he forwarded the letter to Carl Halen. Halen and Gene Mayl visited Chicago in the summer of 1948. Since Schiedt knew that Halen and Mayl were in Chicago at that time, he presumed that one of them might have taken the photo or might have seen Spand.

Halen responded in a letter on 1st September 2002, reporting about that period: 'Through mutual friends we went to the Yancey rent party. I had (an) Agfa box camera with flash attachment and took several pictures', but not the one showing Yancey and Spand.

One of the people present at Yancey's apartment was Walter Joplin, who claimed to be a descendent of the ragtime king Scott Joplin. Walter was distinctly remembered because he was playing piano, missing one hand. Another visitor was Clarence Hall, who played with Will Ezell in Louisiana in 1931. In the hope that they might have seen Spand during one of their visits, a copy of the Spand/ Yancey photo was sent to both Carl Halen and Gene Hayl for identification, but neither of them knew the person next to Jimmy Yancey.

It is certain, however, that the photo predates the year 1948, since it was used to illustrate the 'Boogie Woogie Part 2' album (Columbia C-130), issued in May or June 1947. The photo seems to have been taken by a professional photographer and appears to come from a large format negative.

Since the photo was taken prior to May or June 1947, and maybe even as early as 1940 or 1941, taking Columbia's intended reissue programme into consideration (as reported in the November, 1941 issue of 'Jazz Information'), it seems fair to assume that Spand indeed may have left Chicago in the early or mid 1940s.

The Syracuse 'Herald Journal' of 20th July, 1947 reviewed the album: 'Kenny Kersey, Champion Jack Dupree, Jimmy Yancey and Charlie Spand are lesser known except to 'Boogie' enthusiasts, who place them among the finest performers of this piano style. This album affords the best possible opportunity for comparison and study, as well as downright enjoyment'.

### New research

The Chicago Public Library Reference Team tried on my behalf to locate addresses for Spand in the Alphabetical Telephone Directories for 1925/26, 1930, 1940, and 1950, but no Charlie, Charles or C. Spand was listed. In 1950, 1951 and 1952 one Eliz B. Spand was listed at 4340 S. Evans Avenue in Chicago. This address is in Chicago's Black Belt and was only two blocks east from Aletha Dickerson's 1928 address: 4314 St Lawrence Avenue.

The Social Security Death Index lists one Elizabeth Spand:  
SSN: 337-16-3265  
Born: 31st May, 1900  
Died: March, 1980  
Residence: 60452 Oak Forest, Cook, IL  
Issued: IL (before 1951)

A copy of the Social Security Application may supply more information, but it normally does not give information about the name of her spouse. No listing was found in the 1930 US Census.

Charlie Spand was not listed in the records of the Musicians Union held by the Chicago Public Library's Music Department. This was not uncommon in those days, since it was hard for African-American musicians to get acceptance for the Union and pay their dues.



Jimmy Yancey (left) and Charlie Spand. Photo courtesy of Duncan Schiedt.

It is possible that Spand may have lived in Chicago through the 1950s and 1960s. In the December 1958 issue of 'Jazz Report' there was this note: 'Chicago . . . Little Brother (Montgomery) says Charlie Spand's in town'.

Bob Koester had come to Chicago on 1st September, 1958 to open his 'Jazz Record Mart'. While visiting the 'Victory Club', he was introduced to pianist Eurreal 'Little Brother' Montgomery for the first time. It may have been on this occasion that Koester was told about Spand being in Chicago, although he did not remember this when interviewed (telephone conversation, 11th March, 2003).

Little Brother Montgomery's remark about Spand being in town, did not lead to his rediscovery, in the same way as Will Ezell remained unnoticed in Chicago, although he was living around the corner from Koester's store at that time! Ezell died unnoticed in August, 1963, having lived in Chicago for 38 years.

A new search for Spand in the Chicago Telephone Directories during the period 1950-1970 was requested. However, no new information was found.

### The Los Angeles, California connection

As Mama Yancey had earlier reported Spand's move to the West Coast, reports mentioning California appeared and re-appeared in various magazines during the 1960s. Tony Standish mentioned that Charlie Spand 'is in LA working as a cab-driver' in the March/April 1960 issue of 'Eureka'. However, Little Brother's account of 1958 also persisted in Paul Affeldt's 'Jazz Report'. Follow-ups did not lead to the finding of Spand in Los Angeles. When Karl Gert zur Heide interviewed Little Brother Montgomery on 1st September, 1968 in Chicago, Montgomery said that Spand 'is perhaps in California'.

Although these reports were described as rumours ('Blues Unlimited', issue 117; 'A Left Hand Like God'), one (unknown) pianist (Big Chief Ellis? Speckled Red?) said, when interviewed, that he last saw and met Spand in California, according to Paul Swinton in a telephone conversation of 23rd July, 2003. It is possible that Spand joined the Black Exodus to the West Coast shortly after World War II, to find better work, as Lucille Bogan did.

However, none of these reports could be verified. As late as 1976, Karl Gert zur Heide made inquiries for Spand at the Yellow Cab Company in Los Angeles, California. Spand was not listed as an employee. In 2004 a new request was made to the Los Angeles Public Library to check entries for Spand in the city and telephone directories. The letter came back a year later, unanswered.

### What's in a name?

Just as all options seemed to have dried up, Bob Eagle revealed ground-breaking information on Spand from the '1930 U.S. Census', early January, 2003. Enumerated on 18th April, 1930 Spand was listed as Charlie Spann (sic), residing as a lodger at 732 East 45th Street, Chicago, Cook County,

Illinois. In 1930 Spand recorded '45th Street Blues' (L-102; circa March 1930) and 'Room Rent Blues' (L-35; circa February, 1930; both titles issued on Pm 12930) in the Grafton, Wisconsin studio, verifying his recent arrival in Chicago! The recording of '45th St. Blues' even mentions his address:

*Take me to forty-fourth, I'll make forty-fifth all by my self (2x)  
Now, when I get to seven thirty-two, she better not have nobody else*

He was shown as aged 28 years, single and his occupation was 'Musician, Recording', with 'Record Co.' added later. According to the Census report, Spand and his parents were born in Mississippi. There is some uncertainty about which household he was lodging at, since the enumerator, one Elizabeth C. Williams became confused. It is unclear whether Spand was lodging with Pearl Dudley (28), who was married to John Dudley, or with Mary Casey, a 33-year old widow, whose occupation was listed as 'Mangle Feeder, Laundry'. She had an eight year old daughter, Mary Holoman.

Several sources believed that Spand died in Chicago around 1975, according to Paul Swinton.

The Social Security Death Index gives another listing for one Charlie Spann, born on 27th February, 1900, residing in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois 60653, when he died in January, 1975! The application for his Social Security Card was made before 1951, as the card was listed as being issued prior to that year. More interestingly is the city where it was issued: Gary, Indiana. However, a requested copy of this application for a Social Security Card showed discrepancies with the 1930 US Census information. Although listed as a male Negro, neither his date nor place of birth tally with the 1930 Census. The application, filed in December, 1936, shows this Charlie Spann's age as 28 years and his birth date as 27th February 1908 (not 1900, as listed in the SSDI). The age given in the application may be misleading though; compare Marshall Owens, who gave his age as 49 years when applying for a social security card in 1944, whereas his year of birth was listed as 1892 (and as 1890 on his death certificate).

This Charlie Spann was born in Corona, Alabama, north-west of Birmingham. While living on 2137 Adams Street in Gary, he worked for the Carnegie Illinois Steel Corporation, a steel mill located at North Broadway in Gary. His parents are listed as Woodson Spann, then deceased, and Jennie Frazier. Somewhere down the line, he moved (back?) to Chicago where he died in 1975.

Although it is tempting to believe that this is our man, there are too many discrepancies to think that Spand's name was indeed Spann. Konrad Nowakowski pointed out that identification with the man from Alabama and correct spelling are two different matters. 'I think we must rule out the Alabama man even if the spelling of our man in the 1930 US Census ('Spann') should be correct. This is unlikely, but not entirely impossible: if he was in fact 'Spann' (or if he was 'Spands' as Aletha Dickerson thought), but began his recording career with 'Spand' on the labels by some mistake, he might have stuck to that professionally. Still, I think we agree that even then he would not be the man from Alabama'. The US Census enumerators only spent several minutes per house when noting down the information on the households. Misspellings in Census reports are more rule than exception.

We'll have to wait for the 1940 U.S. Census to find more about the 'Levee Camp Man'.



Walter Joplin, circa late 1940s. Photo courtesy of Gene Mayl

### Acknowledgement

The research for this article took place over a period of four years. Requests to the Detroit Public Library to check city directories for Charlie Spand remained unanswered. A letter to the Los Angeles Public Library sent in July, 2004 came back without the requested information in March, 2005.

### This article could not have been realised without the help of the following people:

Michael Brooks of Sony Music Studios for checking the Charlie Spand 1940 recording sessions cards; Chicago Public Library Reference Team; Bob Eagle for permission to use the 1930 US Census information; Paul Garon for his permission to use the Ernest Lawlers photograph; Carl Halen; Bob Hall; Indiana Historical Society; Gene Mayl for supplying copies of photos of Jimmy Yancey and Walter Joplin; Dick 'Mush' Mushlitz; Konrad Nowakowski for his patience, answering my e-mails over the past few years, proofreading and fact-checking the article; A. Paul Pedersen for the use of Charlie Spand advertisements; Guido van Rijn for proofreading and fine-tuning this article, his suggestions and sharing his knowledge to construct a logical story; Howard Rye; Duncan Schiedt; Chris Smith for his comments and editing the final draft; Social Security Administration, Baltimore, MD; Paul Swinton for a copy of the Chicago Music Publishing Company's entries of registered songs at the Library Of Congress, for many conversations and for his permission to use the Charlie Spand/ George Hannah (sic) photo, reproduced from a 1929 Paramount catalogue; Karl Gert zur Heide for checking his research and supplying copies of 'Jazz Report' and 'Eureka' magazines.

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## I BELIEVE I'LL MAKE A CHANGE

### Blues & Gospel Records 1890 - 1943 Updates, Corrections and Additions

This is the fourth series of corrections and additions to Robert M.W. Dixon, John Godrich and Howard Rye, *Blues & Gospel Records 1890-1943* (Oxford University Press, 1997, unrevised reprint 2005). Areas where large amounts of new data need to be collated for inclusion are still for the most part ignored. Information for this column should be sent in the first instance to Bob Dixon at 50 Coorie Crescent, Rosanna, Vic 3084, Australia. Final copy is prepared by Howard Rye, who would like to thank Chris Smith and Guido van Rijn for proofreading.

- 562** **JOE McCOY. 29 May 1930:** Matrix 62539 is titled Don't Want No Woman T'Have T'Give My Money To [sic] on Bluebird B5385 [Werner Benecke from 78].
- 565** **ROBERT LEE McCOY. 5 May 1937:** The correct title of matrix 07657 is G Man with no hyphen [label scan at <http://imagehost.vendio.com/bin/imageserver.x/00000000/bigwar/McCoyBB7090.jpg>].
- 569** **VIOLA McCOY. 21 November 1924:** Take 9860-B was also issued [Roger Misiewicz].
- 571** **HATTIE McDANIEL. c. March 1929** (first session): Typography of Paramount 12751 is really Dentist Chair Blues, Part I and Dentist Chair Blues, Part II [Max Vreede, Paramount 12000/13000 Series, spotted by Richard Metson].
- 576** **REV. F.W. McGEE. 23 October 1929:** The sub-title of matrix 57307 does not appear on the label [Guido van Rijn quoting from label scan published by Kurt Nauck]. It should be relegated to the session note as file information.
- 577** 16 July 1930: The take of matrix 62352 issued on 78 is in fact 62352-1 and that issued only on LP and CD is in fact 62352-2, and now appears also on BB 82866-60084-2 (CD), described as -2 [Tony Russell pointed out the discrepancy; David Evans, Richard Spottswood, Doug Pomeroy resolved the problem.] I (HR) retain the slight reservation that the Victor and Bluebird 78s might prove to use different takes and would be grateful if anyone who has either and is willing to supply copies or check them against descriptions of the takes would get in touch.
- 590** **BLIND WILLIE McTELL. 17 October 1928:** Take 47186-3 is reported on Victor V38032 [Roger Misiewicz, who says that Helge Thygesen's copy also uses -3]. Can anyone confirm that take -1 was actually issued?
- 593** **BLIND WILLIE McTELL. 5 November 1940:** Band 4071-A-2 now also issued on Dust To Digital DTD01 (CD) [Guido van Rijn].
- 597** **LEOLA MANNING. Acc. Gace Haynes, p; Eugene Ballinger, g.** [Recollections of Leola Manning's daughter Bobbie Jean Moore, quoted Jack Neely, 'The Moan, A forgotten fire remembered in song', Metro Pulse Online, Vol. 15, No. 8, 24 February 2005].
- 599** **ARETHA MARTIN.** Pseudonym for Bertha Ross on Champion as well as Silvertone [Guido van Rijn].
- 616** **MEMPHIS MINNIE. 21 February 1930 session note:** The retitling referred to definitely occurs on Oriole 8165 also [Paul G. Russell, confirmed by label scan]. 29 May 1930: Matrix 62539 is titled Don't Want No Woman T'Have T'Give My Money To [sic] on Bluebird B5385 [Werner Benecke from 78].
- 619** 27 July 1935: Correct title for matrix 91421 is I'm Waitin' On You with an apostrophe [Guido van Rijn, confirmed by label scan].
- 624** **HAZEL MEYERS. c. early March 1924.** This coupling probably also appears on Or 266 as by Louella Smith, as is partly noted on p. 828, but this is not confirmed. An on-line source [noted by Guido van Rijn, <http://settle.fateback.com/OR0100.html>] further muddies the question by quoting the pseudonym Louella Smith for Plug Ugly and the pseudonym Laura Smith for Tain't, which all other sources agree is credited to Louella! It can probably be ignored but accurate reports of this disc, preferably with aural comparisons, would be very desirable.