

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH J. MAYO WILLIAMS  
JULY 28, 1970  
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W: You know, they were socialites...one of them.

M: Clarence Gennett was.

W: Yeah. He spent most of his time down in Newport.

M: I know, they had a house there.

W: Yeah

M: Some questions now. Who was Millie Williams?

W: That was my mother

M: Did she work for the Chicago Record Company?

W: No, she was just used as a name.

M: What about Maurice Williams?

W: Maurice Williams was my brother.

M: He worked with you then?

W: That's right. Maurice's job was in the office. He was just a handy man, so to speak.

M: And Aleta Williams?

W: She was my wife.

M: She helped out in the office, too, I suppose.

W: Yes, she did. She has since passed.

M: What about the Kapps, Jack and Frieda and David.

W: Frieda was Jack's wife. David was Jack's brother.

M: What was their relationship to you.

W: Well, now, Jack and I organized Vocalion records for the Brunswick company.

M: Did Jack work with you on the Chicago Record Company and the Black Patti label?

W: No. He and I organized the State Street Music ~~Publishing~~ Company.

M: What was the purpose of you and he getting together for that?

W: In order to control the songs and so forth that came through the organization. Jack was an officer, Dave was an officer, and I was an officer. Brunswick was also owned by United film Company. They controlled the whole situation. Later, they forced both of the Kapps to resign because of a conflict of interest. After Jack and Dave resigned from the State Street Music ~~Publishing~~ Company, I inherited the whole situation. Then I sold it to another concern...that is, I assigned the songs. Later I organized the State Street Music Publishing Company....with that one other name in there(PUBLISHING).

W:m The State Street Music Company became the State Street Music Publishing Company because of a conflict of interests between the Kapps and the Vocalion people. The Kapps were forced to resign. They(Vocalion) didn't wa<sup>s</sup>t any outside interests operating as members of their organization.

M: When the Chicago Record Company was formed in May, 1927, did Fred Gennett have any money invested in it?

W: He had practically all of the money. The Chicago Record Company was the result of the breaking up of the Paramount company and the New York Recording Laboratories. The fellow came down here....I forget what his name was....

M: Was his name Barrett?

W: Yes. Edward Barrett. He<sup>1</sup> pulled out of that and came down and got Fred Gennett and me to go in this Chicago Record Company and the three of us organized it.

M: What was his reason for wanting to get that started up?

W: They had some dissention up in Port Washington. Barrett had some dissention with Moeser, who owned the NYRL and also the Wisconsin Chair Co.

M: So you were going to give the NYRL a little competition.

W: Yeah.

M: Was Aletha Dickerson working for the NYRL?

W: Aletha(AHL-EE-THAH) was working for me. She was my personal secretary. Being my personal secretary...when I got out of the NYRL, we got in touch with her because she knew most of the artists.

M: Who was the person who came up with the design for the record label?

W: Black Patti?

M: Yes.

W: Sissereta Jones from Providence, Rhode Island, was our insiration for the label.

M: Do you remember the Dennetts from Sheboygan, Wisconsin? D-E-N-N-E-T-T.

W: No. I can't recall them.

M: Does the name Superior...a record label mean any thing to you?

W: No, it doesn't.

M: I understand that there was a court case at one time. Was that in the Cook County Court?

W: In regards to what?

M: In regards to the Chicago Record Co.? You mentioned in one of your letters that there was a court case over the whole business.

W: The only court cases that came up were over the dissolution of the publishing company. These cases were registered here in Illinois. It had nothing to do with the Chicago R<sup>E</sup>cord Co.

W: Now here's what finally happened with the Chicago Record Co. The Gennetts controlled it, see. This Fred Gennett, rather. He controlled it. He found it wasn't making the kind of money he thought it would make and he just dissolved it of his own volition.

M: Was there quite a volume of the records sold?

W: Quite a good deal, yes. You see, they were bucking Paramount and all the big companies. The big companies also had a budget line of records. There wasn't but about three or four of them then. That was Victor, Columbia, Okeh, and one or two others.

M: Did you ever know a guy by the name of Clayton Jackson, Jack Jackson, he smoked a cigar all the time. He worked for the Gennetts.

W: No. I was down there in Indiana on several occasions, but I don't remember him. What was he supposed to do?

M: He worked with Fred Wiggins.

W: If I remember, Wiggins was the recording engineer.

M: Well, he was kind of the head man for the recording division down there.

M: What kind of a guy was Fred Gennett?

W: He had a very pleasing personality.

M: How did you two get along?

W: We got along fine. We just didn't make any money!!

M: Do you recall the Herwin label?

W: yes, that was more or less a mail order deal.

M: Did you ever sell Black Pattis by mail order?

W: Not directly by mail order.

M: They had to come into the stores to buy them, right?

W: yes, they had to come into the stores.

M: Well, that's about all for now. I'll call you again.

QUESTIONS FOR MAYO WILLIAMS

1. The Chicago Music Publishing Co was formed in 1924. You and your mother and your brother Maurice were listed as the persons forming the corporation. ~~Was~~ The initial investment in the company was \$2,000. Who put up that money?
2. Did you receive a salary from the Chicago Music Publishing Company?
3. What was your job title?
4. Was Althea Dicerson with you in 1924?
5. Was there a direct connection between the Chicago Music Publishing Company and the NYRL? What was that connection? Moeser & Bostwick were in control in 1930. *Did you ever print the sheet music that you published?*
6. Isn't it true that the purpose of setting up the CMPC and, later, the State Street Music Publishing Company, was to have a publishing house that would protect the ~~the~~ works of Black composers and at the same time protect the NYRL or the Chicago Record Company or Vocalion from having the ~~songs~~ songs used on these records used by other companies without the payment of royalties?
7. The State Street Music Publishing Company was formed on the same day as the ~~Chicago~~ <sup>Chicago</sup> Record Company, March 11, 1927. You and your mother and brother are again listed as the incorporators. Was the State Street Music Publishing Company set up to perform the same kind of function ~~for~~ for Black Patti records that the Chicago Music Publishing Company had been established to do for Paramount?
8. What job did Edward Barrett have with Paramount when he left them to team up with Fred Gennett and you to form the Chicago Record Company?
9. Were either Edward Barrett or Fred Gennett involved in The State Street Music Publishing Company? Or were you and Jack and Dave Kapp the original founders?~~af~~
10. Did Jack take over the Vocalion record line before or after you all formed the State Street Music Publishing Company?
11. Whose idea was it to form the State Street Music Pub Co? *Did you ever print sheet mu*
12. Were your duties with the SSMPC the same as they were with the CMPC? What were the things that you were in charge of as regards the:  
Chicago Record Company                      State Street MPC                      Chicago MPC
13. Were you employed by the New York Recording Lab? When till when? What job did you have? ~~Why~~ Why did you leave?
14. Did you know a white guy by the name of Charlie Yeager who worked for Gennett as a talent scout who scouted negro talent and hillbilly white talent? What can you tell me about him.
15. What did the artists who recorded for Black Patti receive? Flat fee? Royalties? How much? Fee plus royalties?
16. Did you scout artists for the Black Patti? Do you recall any of the following artists, and how you found them:
  1. Long Cleve Reed and Papa Harvey Hulll and the Down Home Boys
  2. Sam Collins

Jay Bird Coleman  
Clara Smith

Parham's Black Batti Band  
Mozelle Alderson

Eloise Bennett

Blind James Beck

17. Did you have the control over what was to be released on Black Patti and what was not to be released? If you didn't, who did?
18. Jack Kapp became the head of the Vocalion record division of Brunswick in February of 1928. Before that time he had also been working for Bruswick. What was his job?
19. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ I know that you were employed by Bruswick as a Business Agent in August, 1929. How long did you hold that job? Did Jack help you get that job? Did you have any other jobs with Bruswick before 1929? What were they?

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