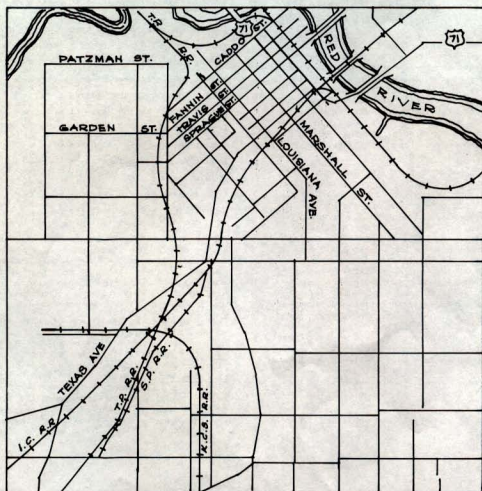


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JERRY'S SALOON BLUES

1940 field recordings from Louisiana



SHREVEPORT 1940

Shreveport, Louisiana lies in the "Tri-State" region where Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas meet. It's the capitol of Caddo Parish, the most north-westerly parish in the State and one which has along its western border the mounds that marked the boundary between the United States and the Republic of Texas.¹ Like the Parish, Shreveport has a large non-white population, a third of its people being black or Indian in origin, and the booming, hustling city has always attracted blacks from the Tri-State region who have sought to get some spin-off from its continually expanding economy.²

Growth is a characteristic of Shreveport. It was the clearing of the Red River by Captain Henry Shreve in the mid 1830s that made the town possible and it was incorporated in 1839 with a name that honored his Shreve Town Company that laid out the site. It flourished with the trade that its situation on the Texas-bound route encouraged and by the cotton produced on the big plantations along the Red River. They depended on slave labour before the War between the States. Not only was the city on the Confederate side; it was the last bastion of the Confederacy even though it was never devastated by the war.

All this has a bearing on its culture and, incidentally on the music of its black population. For there was money in Shreveport and when the railroad link with Dallas was established, soon after the war, it continued to thrive even as the river traffic died.³ Relatively speaking, blacks in Shreveport were well off, sharing a little in the general prosperity and circulating their cash in the bars, saloons and red-light districts of the city. In 1880 there were still only 8,000 people in Shreveport, nevertheless, this number had doubled by the time Huddle Ledbetter, the celebrated Leadbelly, made his first visit to the brothels of Fannin Street at the turn of the century.⁴ Still a small town, even if, to the young rebel in knee-pants from Mooringsport and the Caddo Lake region, it had the temptations of a big city.

It was the oil-strike at Caddo Lake in 1906 which made a boom city of Shreveport. Oil, like cotton, required cheap labour, at least in pre-mechanized years. Blacks were seldom employed at the rig, but there was still plenty of heavy work and, with the discovery of oil, the expanding economy of the city brought many opportunities for domestic, menial and semi-skilled work. When the strike seemed to have burned itself out by the end of the 'twenties the opening of the East Texas field in 1930 and the Rodessa Field five years later gave the city the boost it needed.

The Depression years had been tough for Shreveport as for every other urban district but it recovered quickly and avoided the malaise that affected many Southern cities. But then it had none of the aspects of a Southern city: it was pragmatic, hard-nosed, commercial, unromantic, go-getting. When John Avery Lomax and Ruby Terril Lomax came there in 1940 the population had hit the seventy-five thousand mark and blacks had tipped thirty-five per cent.⁵ If they'd stayed longer they would doubtless have found many more musicians among the black community that centred on the West Allendale and Cedar Grove sections. But they stayed only two days, the Tuesday and Wednesday the eighth and ninth of October, before going on to Oil City, the site of the 1906 strike. Writing a few days later Ruby Lomax reported: "After jiggling around considerably in East Texas with Sacred Harp Conventions and a Negro Baptist Assn. and guitar-pickers and an ex-slave, we struck out for Shreveport. Except for some pretty newboys' cries, all our recordings there were made by Negroes--blues singers from 'Texas Avenue', French Creole singers, guitar and mandolin pickers 6."

Though John Lomax's autobiography was published a few Fly LP 260

years later and therefore could have thrown light on how he found the Shreveport singers, the event was obviously insufficiently memorable for him to include.⁷ But it is likely that he merely encountered them on the street and later followed them to a bar. His field notes report that "Oscar (Buddy) Woods, Joe Harris and Kid West are all professional Negro guitarists and singers of Texas Avenue, Shreveport, Louisiana. The songs I have recorded are among those they use to cajole nickles from the pockets of listeners. One night I sat an hour where the group was playing in a restaurant where drinks were served. I was the only person who dropped a contribution in the can. I doubt if the proprietor paid them anything."⁸ This brief note suggests that all three musicians were working together as a group. But if so, it seems not to have occurred to Lomax to record them as a three-piece band. Instead, Oscar Woods was recorded on the Tuesday; Joe Harris and Kid West on the following day.

In a brief interview at the conclusion of the session, when Oscar Woods had sung and played Look Here Baby, One Thing I Got To Say, John Lomax elicited a little further information.

Lomax: Buddy, when do you--when do you play this song?

Woods: Oh, well, down 'n' around these little hop joints and things like that--when they having a good time.

Lomax: That's a--that's a stimulator?

Woods: Well, they kinda get a li'l stimulated.

Lomax: How do you make your living regularly, Buddy?

Woods: Oh, just different--hanging around the corners, lyin' around the joints 'n' takin' up where I can. Once in a while--n-y' know, that way.

Lomax: You pass the hat around? Don't you....

Woods: Oh yes, sir, passing the hat around, don't forget it.

Lomax: How long have you been a street singer?

Woods: Ohh - I guess around fifteen years.

Lomax: Done nothing but pick since then?

Woods: That's all--practically all.

Lomax: That so? Where did you grow up did you tell me?

Woods: Always in the State of Louisiana.

Lomax: Whereabouts?

Woods: Oh, down near Nachitoches.

Lomax: Worked on a farm?

Woods: Yes sir.

Lomax: Where did you get your music?

Woods: I guess I just settled on it. Just picked it up somewhere, something. I didn't read up on it.

"Thank you" said Lomax in a rather bored voice; he'd heard it all before, the same vagueness, the same lack of detail. As an interview with a blues singer it was perfunctory but in 1940 there was little to relate it to and no picture emerging that would make a more probing interview necessary. Woods was easy, but respectful, and didn't advance any information of his own accord.

The record session itself was slightly more revealing, though it may have given John Lomax a surprise. He had collected a number of versions of the Ballad Of The Holl Weevil,⁹ and probably requested one from Oscar Woods. At any rate Woods obliged with a song of this title, Holl Weevil Blues. It was however a version of Ma Rainey's Be-Weevil Blues, recorded in 1923 and her first issued record.¹⁰ Oscar Woods had transposed the tune skillfully to his individual technique of guitar playing, subtly changing the phrasing to suit the steady rhythm of his own

accompaniment. By his own account to Lomax, Woods had been working on the streets since 1925 and may therefore have heard the record at his farm home a year or so before.

Buddy Woods, as he was generally called, was no stranger to recording when the Lomaxes found him. His earliest titles were with a second guitarist who sang blues vocals and played kazoo, Eddie Schaffer; their Fence Breakin' Blues and Home Wreckin' Blues were recorded a decade before in Memphis, Tennessee¹¹. This was only four days after James 'Kokomo' Arnold made his first recordings, at the same location and with the same recording crew¹². The fact is a tantalising one, for as far as can be ascertained, these may have been the first four recordings made of a comparatively rare style of blues guitar playing. It seems unlikely that Woods and Arnold could have learned this technique with such virtuosity in so short a time and direct influence is therefore unlikely. Arnold claimed to have come from Georgia¹³, while Woods came from Louisiana. Only a few days later, Booker Washington White (and companion, Napoleon Haristoun) also made his first recordings of slide guitar, again to the same recording team in Memphis¹⁴.

Unlike Tampa Red, who used a slide on the treble strings only, Arnold, Woods and White all played in open tuning with the slide laid across the strings. On occasion, Booker White would play with his guitar laid across his lap, but more frequently he played with a slide made from a length of brass tubing, slipped over his finger, with the guitar in the customary position. Arnold usually, and Woods invariably, played the guitar flat across the lap. Black Ace (B.K. Turner), who learned much of his technique from Buddy Woods, employed the same method¹⁵. This was also the manner of slide guitar playing used by Leadbelly, who may well have learned it in Shreveport. It appears that the flat guitar technique was particularly favoured by Shreveport musicians but seems likely that it was derived directly from the Hawaiian style, which had been made popular by Hawaiian musicians appearing at the Chicago World's Fair and the subsequent annexation of the islands¹⁶.

Arnold, Woods and White, who were to make their names in later years, had already formulated their personal styles. Arnold's complex picking on Rainy Night Blues and almost frantic playing on Paddin' Madeline Blues was undisputedly his own; White's train imitations were in a percussive form that he repeated often later. By comparison Woods' playing was more relaxed, seeming to be less interested in impressing the recording executives. Not that any of them was to owe a career to Victor - though Oscar Woods with Eddie Chafer (sic) made a coupling for Victor under the name "Eddie and Oscar" on 8 February 1932. This record (Victor 23324) which backed Mok-Em-All-Blues with Flying Crow Blues was the first recording of the latter title, a popular Texas-Louisiana theme. The session was in Dallas and was probably held at the instigation of Jimmie Davis, a white country singer with political ambitions whose songs were clearly influenced by black records. On the same day Davis made four titles with Woods accompanying, on one of which they shared the vocals, Saturday Night Stroll (Victor 23688). Indeed, Buddy Woods may have accompanied Davis recordings as early as 1930, in Memphis. Jimmie Davis was later to become Governor of Louisiana in 1944 and was to serve a second term in 1960. Woods seems not to have exploited the connection by seeking more recordings on his own initiative. Within the next couple of years Kokomo Arnold had moved to Chicago where, in September 1934 he commenced his four-year long contract with Decca during which he recorded prolifically¹⁷.

Buddy Woods however stayed in Louisiana, unambitious, disinterested in making a career. "Calls himself 'Troubadour', 'Street Rustler'" Lomax noted¹⁸. When Woods had an opportunity to record for a unit of the Decca company it was in New Orleans in 1936 where he cut Don't Sell It - Don't Give It Away; one of the tunes he chose to play for John Lomax four years later.¹⁹ He'd recorded it too, in San Antonio with the band fronted by a Shreveport singer, Kitty Gray²⁰. It's not surprising, there-

fore to hear the ease with which he plays the tune and the almost casual, swinging manner of his singing. "Words and music by Buddy Woods" Lomax added to his hastily penned transcript, adding "Buddy Woods claims to have composed the words and music".

Though Buddy Woods had recorded several blues at his few sessions, he made only one for John Lomax, Sometimes I Get To Thinkin'. The verses were slight modifications of traditional lyrics and the whole blues had only three stanzas. But Woods seems to have considered them as a composition; asked to make a second take he introduced only slight variations, opening with different instrumental phrasing and changing a word here and there while the sense remained the same. Buddy's final item Lock Here Baby, One Thing I Got To Say was a remodelling of Hey Lady Mama²¹ (a theme made popular by Bumble Bee Slim a few years before) played with his customary fluency.

John Lomax could have obtained more music from Buddy Woods if he had been familiar with his records. Lomax was motivated to record songsters rather than blues singers and was far more interested in those singers who reflected in their repertoire the vestiges of the older tradition. Buddy Woods, recording with his "Wampus Cats" and playing, at times, with small jazz-inclined groups, must have seemed too urbane to Lomax²². Kid West and Joe Harris were more to his taste; at any rate he recorded more items by them. However, they had even less to say about themselves and Lomax left no further notes to fill in the biographical details of the two street singers.

Their first title was probably rather unexpected. Though it was called Railroad Rag (AFS 3990 A3) it was a novelty ragtime number of the kind that years before they had played to white audiences; decades before, even. After a second take of the song, with its pathetic closing line "Here comes that Choo-choo, choo-choo-choo-(poop-poop)-that's the Railroad Rag", Lomax avowed that it was a "pretty thing" and asked Kid West when he first played it²³. "Thirty-five years ago," Lomax asked his had he heard "anybody else play it?" "Nobody" Kid West assured him. John Lomax turned to Joe Harris, "what do you do Joe?" "Play music" came the brief reply. "In a drinking place?" Lomax asked. "Yes sir" said Joe. "Play and sing?" enquired Lomax. The interview wasn't going well so Joe played the Baton Rouge Rag to a banjo-like theme with a "heel - and - toe" dance timing. Lomax asked Joe where he had learned it. "I jus' studied it up myself." "Didn't you tell me that somebody else started you on it?" Lomax asked in a reproving tone. "Yes sir, the boy - he was a trumpet player and he learned it to me." "How long ago?" Lomax asked. "Been around thirty-three years ago" Harris replied, explaining in answer to a further question, that this was in Bunkie, Louisiana. Harris revealed a little more of himself when he recorded a song in Creole patois, Creole Song (AFS 3990 B4). This he learned in New Iberia, he explained, some thirty-six years before. At the time he was sixteen years of age.²⁴

Lomax: Did you speak any French, Creole down there?

Harris: Yes sir.

Lomax: What do the words mean?

Harris: I got no razor, and I got no gun.

I got no money, and I don't want you."

They moved hastily on to the next tune. It was Nobody's Business a version of a traditional theme first popularised by Bessie Smith in 1923 by its full title of Tain't Nobody's Business If I Do²⁵. On this Joe Harris took the vocal, his voice being stronger than Kid West's, who, on the evidence of the recordings, appears to have been the older of the two men. It was one of three older themes which the duo recorded, the other two were Bully of The Town and Old Ilen Cackled And Hooster Laid An Egg. Although I'm Looking For The Bully Of The Town had been recorded by, for example, The Memphis Jug Band in 1927²⁶, it seems unlikely that the Harris-West version was derived from such a source. Part of every songster's repertoire early in the century this song seems to have survived in the duo's memory in a fragmentary form. Kid West's mandolin playing is sufficiently adept to suggest that he may have been a dab hand at playing the tune in earlier years. Old Ilen Cackle was more popular with white communities, a

dance these which was recorded by a number of old-time white musicians. There is some relation with Cacklin's Ten and Repeater Two 27, by The Skillet Lickers, the Atlanta based white string band which featured Kid West's contemporary, Gid Tanner, on fiddle. It was in fact a fiddle show-piece permitting instrumental imitations of the fowl. One might conclude that Kid West had been a member of a string band playing for white dances at some time in his life, when a fiddle player performed the ministry.

Though older "musicianers" 28 than Buddy Woods, both Kid West and Joe Harris played and sang blues. Kid West's Blues has an engaging touch of irony which declares his intention to stay single and not be bothered by "no worryin' kids". Though Joe Harris's East Texas Blues is fairly conventional with its verses derived from Blind Lemon Jefferson, his reference to getting to Texas "across the line" emphasises the persistence in the folk memory of the boundary between the States and the Texas Republic. His Out East Blues (AFS 391 A2), a wistful blues with echoes of earlier recordings, includes the line stating that he had "a woman in Franklin, one in Donaldsonville". These towns in St. Mary's and Aucuse Counties respectively, have even today, populations below ten thousand. Bunkie, incidentally, lies south-west of Natchez-on-the-Hill in Avoyelles Parish. The final blues, well played by Kid West, A-Natural Blues, is otherwise notable for the inclusion of a verse usually associated with Huddie Ledbetter's Good Morning Blues. 29

From Shreveport, John and Ruby Lomax went in search of Leadbelly's family, who lived in Mooringsport, near the site of the first big Caddo Lake oil strike. Meeting Uncle Bob Ledbetter must have been a landmark for John Lomax, for the old man was the uncle of Huddie Ledbetter. Lomax wrote in his notes: "Uncle Bob, renowned singer in his younger days when Terrill Ledbetter (now dead) played the guitar, is now an 80 year old man. Intelligent, possessing natural dignity and poise, he sits on the porch of his home with one of his granddaughters and looks out over fields of cotton and corn which he is no longer able to cultivate. Children swarm around--nine in the bunch, the oldest sixteen years. He seems so indifferent to the clamour as the flies he brushes away. We were disappointed in Uncle Bob for he has had a "stroke" and his "remembrance" is no longer trustworthy. "He ain't in his mind" his daughter told us."

One of thirteen children, he was born on December 18, in he believed, 1861. They asked him why, after working in a rich country for fifty years, he didn't save up something for his old age. "I drank too much whiskey" he replied, "Every Saturday night I spent all I had earned the week before. But I had a good time." Ruby Lomax's letters added further details, quoting Bob Ledbetter as saying that he was born west of Oil City. He didn't go to school. "My father knew book-printin'", he had print-learnin', and he learned me how to spell out of an old-fashioned spelling book. He didn't know nothing about writing...I was never in jail in my life, I didn't go to see my friends there. I always said "Practice makes perfect" and I stayed away from the jail. My father learned me what was right to do and I tried to do it. My father sang regular church songs. I sang fiddle reels--not a fiddler though. Everywhere you used to hear me I was singing reels...I joined the church at 19, married at 20, just started in the 20's. I believe in conjure if you let 'em put it in your coffee or food." Noted Ruby Lomax: "It was from Uncle Bob that Leadbelly learned many of the songs that he "composed" himself!" They asked him where he learned so many songs, "Jes' broadenin' around, jes' broadenin' around" he replied.

By now he was almost unable to sing, but he took them to see his grandson, Noah, a blues singer and guitarist. "Noah resembles Leadbelly physically (he would like to imitate him as a guitar player, but Noah works at his job too closely, he doesn't practice "pickin'" enough). All of Noah's tunes are "Blues", most of which he claims to have put together. As he played for us in Oil City, the adoration of his comely wife who sat by, the grave regard and esteem manifested by Uncle Bob, made the scene memorable." 32

The 'ucene' was set with Uncle Bob being interviewed by John Lomax. "Uncle Bob told all about the lakes and ferries in the old days. "Lots of good fishin'" he said, "but I don't like to fish. Don't like anything about the water, the biggest motion I can make in the water is to go to the bottom." In half apology for Huddie's troublous career he remarked: "Looks like some people's born for trouble; jes' love trouble". Again, "I tell you how it is wid de nigger nation. If a man goes big wid de women, us men hates him!" He followed this with an unaccompanied Cleveland Campaign Song (AFS 3992 B 1) potentially of great interest because of its possible early date, the unloveable but ample Grover Cleveland having been elected to office in the year of Leadbelly's birth and entering the White House in 1886. Cleveland's second term, to which this song may have referred, was inaugurated in 1893, supported by the Populist vote. Though it is unlikely that either Uncle Bob Ledbetter or his local black contemporaries had the vote he did claim he had himself voted for Cleveland. When The Sun Goes Down (AFS 3992 B 2,3,4), on a standard blues theme followed, in no less than three takes, suggesting that the stricken Uncle Bob was not up to recording by himself. He was prevailed upon to sing Irene, with Noah Moore playing the guitar accompaniment.

"Huddie learned "Pauline" from Uncle Bob and probably many another tune. "Pauline", by the way, says Uncle Bob, came to him from his father" John Lomax recorded in his notes, presumably confusing Irene with Allen Prothro's song Pauline (AFS 176 B), recorded some seven years before in Nashville Penitentiary. Uncle Bob concluded with What She Ate (AFS 3994 A 2), possibly a minstrel-type number, and then Noah Moore took over.

In spite of Lomax's comments, Noah's first items were not blues. Mr. Crump Don't Low It Here (AFS 3993 A 1) was the spirited barrelhouse piece that was known to all the Memphis singers and which was recorded as Mr. Crump Don't Like It by Frank Stokes in 1927³³. The identity of Mr. Crump was unknown to Noah Moore, and John Lomax's questions and Noah's replies make it clear that he did not associate Memphis with the song. It seems therefore that he probably adapted the Stokes record but introduced the rhythms and licks that he had learned from his elder cousin, Huddie.

I Done Told You was not strictly a blues either, but an eight-bar dance reel, with refrain of a kind popular in country districts until the 'thirties. "You call that a two-step?" Lomax asked. "I reckon so", Noah replied, acknowledging that it was the kind that he used to play for dances. In this item, which he recorded twice, the influence of Leadbelly is strong and the powerful rhythms are extremely well handled. But Noah was a younger man and a man of his time. As Lomax had observed, blues were Noah's music and for these he changed his style. Oil City Blues (AFS 3993 B 1) and Low Down Worry Blues are played in a rolling style, with occasional bass string runs or hammered treble notes in a manner much favoured by Texas guitarists of the 'thirties. Possibly the shadow of Funny Paper Smith (Howling Wolf Smith)³⁴ falls across these recordings, but they also link with later singers like Lil Son Jackson³⁵. Less likely but subtly evident is the influence of Robert Johnson, especially in the closing verses of Low Down Worry Blues³⁶. Noah uses the humming phrases and once or twice the high notes of the treble E picked at the 12th fret, that Johnson favoured. This recording lasted nearly twelve minutes, quite exceptional for recordings of the time. "Bout the longest one I ever heard" remarked Lomax. "It seems like it still got me in a sweat" Noah replied after his marathon performance.

He emerges from the recordings as a good all-rounder, playing dance reels and blues with equal skill. His Just Pickin' (AFS 3995 A 1) is a dance tune adapted from the traditional ballad of the region Ella Speed³⁷. He followed it with a slide guitar piece, Settin' Here Thinkin', probably played with the guitar flat, and with a vocal that owed even more to Robert Johnson. The final solo item, Jerry's Saloon Blues, was in the same vein but again with the guitar played in a manner that suggested at least some awareness of the school of Buddy Woods³⁸.

At about seven that evening John Lomax went out for a bottle of milk, a piece of cake and a sandwich for Uncle Bob Ledbetter. Later they drove him home from the Oil City hotel where the recordings had taken place. "They sure showed me a good time; that was the first time I ever ate at a

white people's hotel in my life" Bob told his admiring family when he got home.

The Shreveport-Oll City sessions were over, and none of the participating singers ever recorded again. What happened to them?

Almost exactly twenty years later, in the summer of 1960, with my wife Val and Chris Strachwitz I tried to trace Oscar Woods. It wasn't easy to make any kind of research in Shreveport at that time. The city facilities were still segregated and whites weren't welcome in the tougher black districts. Only a few blocks away the white proprietor of a gas station pretended that he'd never heard of Fannin Street. When we got there, finally, it looked oddly pleasant and shaded, the smaller timber framed cabins that clung to the side of the steep hill, appearing very domestic with linen on the washing lines. But a couple of black women soon let us know we weren't wanted.

In 1940 Oscar Woods had given his address as 1403 Patzman Street with a mailing address at 1529 Alston and Harris and West were living at 816 Lawrence. This information was not available to us at the time of our own searches, but in the event it would have been of limited use. From one poor lead to another we eventually met up with Alex "Snooks" Jones, a piano player and one-time musician in a little band which included Woods, Kid West and Joe Harris. Sadly we learned that Alex Jones had been one of the pall-bearers at Buddy Woods' funeral when he died at the age of fifty-three in 1956³⁹. Ironically, Kid West, a much older man, survived him by a year, while Joe Harris 'just faded' and nothing more was heard of him. We went out to Club 66 on a deserted, chalky hill-site on the edge of town where the band used to play. A clap-boarded, white painted dance-hall it had lurid murals on the walls and a juke-box in one corner. We tried to imagine it when the Shreveport string musicians provided the music, but in its silent, stuffy, unused space the images were slow in coming.

As for Noah Moore, he had died long before. His brother Tom, a welder at Riley Baird in Shreveport, wrote the brief details of Noah's life in a letter to Bruce Bastin⁴⁰.

"Noah was born in 1907 in the percentage of Mooringsport, La. born to Mr. and Mrs. Tom Moore Sr.. He was reared in Mooringsport, La.. He learn some of his music from Huddie Ledbetter...they played together all through the piney woods. He worked as a share-cropper and he loved to fish." After recalling the Oll City session, Tom added: "Noah loved to play his guitar, sometimes in his younger days, he stayed up late at nights, some friends would usually gather around for a jam session. Unfortunately, he went to war, (World War 2), next he was missing in action."⁴¹

PAUL OLIVER

c 1978

NOTES

1. The term Parish is used only in Louisiana; elsewhere the States are divided into counties. The term was ratified in the State Convention of 1812. Texas became the twenty-eighth State in February, 1846.
2. Due north of Shreveport is Texarkana, on the Arkansas-Texas border and the other principal city in the Tri-State region. They are linked by the "Flying Crow" line.
3. Fuller historical details of the growth of Shreveport may be obtained from editions of the Louisiana Almanac, New Orleans, Pelican Publishing House, and from Louisiana, A Guide To The State, New York, Hastings House, 1941.
4. Leadbelly's encounters in Fannin Street are described by John A. Lomax in Negro Folk Songs As Sung By Leadbelly, New York, Macmillan, 1936, and are the subject of Leadbelly's recording of Fannin Street, Musicraft 225, made 1 April 1939.
5. Figures simplified from Louisiana Almanac, 1968.
6. Excerpt from letter, dated 14 October, from Ruby T. Lomax. Archive of Folk Song files.
7. John A. Lomax, Adventures Of A Ballad Hunter, New York, Macmillan, 1947.
8. John A. Lomax field notes, Archive of Folk Song files.
9. Leadbelly had recorded Boll Weevil (AFS 273 A 1) in Shreveport, prob. October 1934; available of Library of Congress L 51. He made other versions for the Archive, and for Musicraft in New York in 1939 (Musicraft 226).
10. Bo-Weevil Blues by Ma Rainey, accompanied by Lovie Austin's Blues Serenaders, was recorded in Chicago, December 1923 and issued on Paramount 12080. She made a new Bo-Weevil Blues in December 1927, with her Georgia Jazz Band, Paramount 12603.
11. Shreveport Home Wreckers' Fence Breakin' Blues - Home Wreckin' Blues was issued on Victor 23275 and Bluebird 85341. Recorded Memphis, 21 May 1930.
12. Gittfiddle Jim (pseudonym for James 'Kokomo' Arnold), Rainy Night Blues - Paddlin' Madeline Blues, Victor 23268. Recorded, Memphis, 17 May 1930.
13. See: Paul Oliver, 'Kokomo Arnold', Jazz Monthly, Vol. 8 No. 3, May 1962, pp.10-15; Jacques Demetre and Marcel Chauvard, interview with Kokomo Arnold in 'The Land Of The Blues', Jazz Journal, Vol.13, No.10, October 1960, p.8.
14. Washington White, New Frisco Train - The Panama Limited Victor 23295, and I Am In The Heavenly Way - Promise True And Grand, Victor 38615. Recorded, Memphis, 26 May 1930. Napoleon Hariston played second guitar. White was later known as 'Bukka' or Booker White.
15. See: Paul Oliver, notes to Arhoolie (LP) 1003, Black Ace, Berkeley, 1961.
16. The World's Columbian Exposition, generally termed the Chicago Fair or Chicago World's Fair was held in 1893. Hawaiian musicians were featured, as were African drummers from Dahomey! The annexation of Hawaii in 1897 resulted in the spread of Hawaiian music and the use of 'Hawaiian bars' in guitar playing.
17. Between September 1934 and May 1938, Kokomo Arnold made 76 issued sides and a number of unissued titles for Decca, recorded in Chicago or New York.
18. John A. Lomax, field note, Archive of Folk Song files.
19. Other titles were: Evil Hearted Woman Blues, Decca 7904 (backed by a Peetie Wheatstraw item, Southern Girl Bl.) and Lone Wolf Blues--the reverse of Don't Sell It-Don't Give It Away -- on Decca 7219.
20. Kitty Gray and her Wampus Cats made ten titles in San Antonio on 30-31 October 1937. One of these was Baton Rouge Rag, unissued on 78 and only recently released on 50 Years Of Jazz Guitar CBS (LP) 88225, 1976. This is the same tune as Joe Harris's 1940 recording; indeed, composer-publisher credits on the CBS label show - (J. Harris / J. Davis) Jimmie Davis Publishing - and there is therefore a distinct probability that Harris is one of the guitarists--Woods' slide guitar is also

- present. Buddy Woods preceded Baton Rouge Rag with two items, Muscat Hill Blues and Don't Sell It (Don't Give It Away), Vocalion 03906.
21. Dumble Bee Slim, Hey Lawdy Mama, Decca 7126, recorded 8 July 1935. This song is also known as Meet Me In The Bottom.
 22. Buddy Woods' 4 December 1938 Dallas session with the Wampus Cats had two guitars, trumpet, piano, string bass and drums on Jam Session Blues - Token Blues (Vocalion 04604) and Low Life Blues (Vocalion 04745). The fourth title Come On Over To My House Baby (Vocalion 04745) has no string bass or trumpet. The latter instrument has been credited to Herb Morand, the New Orleans born trumpet player who led the Harlem Hamfats. This band, in spite of its name, was Chicago-based in the 1930s. It recorded in New York in April 1938 and again in Chicago in March 1939, and it seems unlikely, though not impossible, that Morand was in Dallas for the Woods session.
 23. That Railroad Rag, lyrics by Nat Vincent, music by Ed Bimberg, was published 3 April 1911, by Head Music Company and subsequently recorded by Walter Van Brunt (Victor 16876). The Kid West-Joe Harris version is available on Railroad Songs And Ballads, Library of Congress L 61, with inset notes by Archie Green.
 24. Many southern Louisiana blacks speak 'gumbo French', a patois derived from 'Creole' and 'Cajun' elements. For a full explanation of these terms see: Paul Oliver, 'Creoles, Cajuns and Confusion', Blues Unlimited, No. 4, August 1967, pp.5-7; reprinted in, Simon A. Napier (ed.), Backwoods Blues, Bexhill-on-Sea, 1968, pp.45-47.
 25. Bessie Smith's first recorded title for Columbia was Tain't Nobody's Business If I Do, made on 15 February 1923 but unissued. It was remade on 11 April 1923 (Columbia A3898).
 26. The Memphis Jug Band, led by Will Shade, recorded I'm Looking For The Bully Of The Town at its second session on 9 June 1927. It was the third record of the band to be issued (Victor 20781). See also note 27.
 27. The Skillet-Lickers with Gid Tanner, fiddle, recorded Cacklin' Hen And Rooster Too (Columbia 15682-D) on 4 December 1930. They also recorded Bully Of The Town on location in Atlanta on 17 April 1926 (Col. 15074-D). It is possible that Harris and West drew these tunes from white sources. Fiddlin' John Carson for example recorded The Old Hen Cackled And The Rooster's Goin' To Crow on 13 June 1923 (Okeh 4890) and two years later, in June 1925, a version of Bully Of The Town (Okeh 40444). Similarly, Earl Johnson, who died at the age of seventy-nine in May 1965, recorded with his Dixie Entertainers, in Atlanta, Georgia on 21 February 1927, Ain't Nobody's Business (Okeh 45092), Hen Cackle (Okeh 45123) and Bully Of The Town (unissued). These themes were in fact popular among a great many white entertainers.
 28. 'Musicianer' was a term used by early (pre-blues) entertainers who distinguished the non-singing instrumentalists from the singing guitarists or banjo-players, who were termed 'songsters'.
 29. Leadbelly worked up a spoken introduction to Good Morning Blues, and always included a 'blues all in my bread' stanza, for example Bluebird 88791, recorded 15 June 1940.
 30. Extracted from John A. Lomax field notes, Archive of Folk Song files.
 31. Extracted from Ruby T. Lomax letters to her family, Archive of Folk Song files.
 32. John A. Lomax, field notes
 33. Mr. Crump Don't Like It by the Beale Street Sheiks (Paramount 12552) was recorded in September 1927. The Beale Street Sheiks were Frank Stokes and Dan Sane, and their tune is the one usually associated with this theme. W. C. Handy in Father Of The Blues, his autobiography (London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1957), reports having heard the song in Memphis in 1909, and the lyrics show a relationship to the Sheiks' song. Handy claimed to have used this as the basis of a tune used as a campaign theme for Edward H. Crump, who was elected Mayor of Memphis in 1910. The tune was published as The Memphis Blues (1912) but is clearly a different one, (pp.93-102).
 34. J. T. 'Funny Paper' Smith, also known as 'The Howling Wolf' had some twenty sides issued in 1930 and 1931. He recorded again in 1935 but the items were unissued. After Blind Lemon Jefferson, Smith was probably the most influential of guitarists in the Texas area before World War II.
 35. Lil' Son Jackson recorded for Gold Star and Imperial after the War, and made one session for Arhoolie in the summer of 1960, Arhoolie (LP) 1004.
 36. Robert Johnson, Mississippi born but recorded in Texas in 1936 and 1937, was an important bridge between the older and the newer Mississippi styles of guitar playing.
 37. Ella Speed is one of the most popular Texas ballads. Archive of Folk Song recordings of this theme appear on Flyright-Matchbox SDW 264 by Wallace Chaires and by Tricky Sam on Flyright-Matchbox 265. It was also recorded several times by Leadbelly.
 38. Jerry's Saloon Blues includes the unusual verse with reference to 'Texas Avenue and that moving picture show' which was recorded by Leadbelly for the Archive of Folk Song in I Got Up This Morning Had To Get Up So Soon (AFS 122 A 2), Angola, Louisiana, 1 June 1934.
 39. Interview with Alex 'Snooks' Jones, Shreveport, 8 August 1960. The problems of tracing Oscar Woods were summarised in my article 'Eagles On The Half', American Folk Music Occasional, No.1, Berkeley, 1964, pp.91-94.
 40. Letter from Tom Moore to Bruce Bastin, 9 March 1974.
 41. A photograph taken of Noah Moore is dated 1943. As he died in action he must have met his death between 1943 and 1945.

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