

Collection #
P 0470

JOHN EDWARD HASSE COLLECTION CA. 2004 COPIES (CA. 1910S–1920S)

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Processed by

Barbara Quigley
27 October 2005

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 black-and-white photograph folder; 1 color photograph folder
COLLECTION DATES:	Ca. 2004 copies (ca. 1910s–1920s)
PROVENANCE:	Gift from John Edward Hasse of the Smithsonian Institution.
RESTRICTIONS:	None

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ACCESSION NUMBER: 0000.0412

NOTES: The William Henry Smith Memorial Library holds several publications authored by John Edward Hasse.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Indianapolis was a rich center of ragtime and jazz in the early twentieth century. Ragtime, a uniquely American musical genre based on African-American rhythms, flourished throughout the United States from the late 1890s to the end of World War I. There were several distinguished ragtime composers and performers in Indianapolis during that time. Many were African-Americans who performed along Indiana Avenue, but little of their music was published. Most of the published composers were middle class whites, including numerous women. The city's ragtime community included May Aufderheide, Cecil Duane Crabb, Will B. Morrison, Julia Lee Niebergall, J. Russel Robinson, and Gladys Yelvington.

In the early twentieth century jazz was created primarily by African-Americans. Indianapolis was a favorite destination for touring musical shows, and there was much work for local musicians. The Washington Theatre attracted top black performers, including local bands such as the Russell Smith Orchestra and the Harry Farley Orchestra. A young Noble Sissle played with the latter.

May Frances Aufderheide was born into a somewhat musical family in Indianapolis on 21 May 1890. Her father, John Henry Aufderheide, was a violinist who worked as a banker, and his sister, May Kolmer was a pianist who played with the Indianapolis Symphony and who taught at the Metropolitan School of Music. May Aufderheide learned classical piano from her aunt, but was lured to ragtime. Her first composition, "Dusty Rag," was published in 1908 by Duane Crabb. That same year she married an architect, Thomas M. Kaufman, and moved to his hometown of Richmond, Indiana. Sales of her music prompted her father to go into the music publishing business, and he formed John H. Aufderheide and Company, which became an important publisher of Indiana composers from 1908–1913. May composed nineteen new pieces that were published by her father's company, including seven rags and several marches, waltzes, and songs. Her brother Rudolph wrote lyrics for at least one of her compositions. May and her husband adopted a daughter, Lucy, and returned to Indianapolis, where Thomas ended up working for his father-in-law at the Commonwealth Loan Company. He retired with considerable wealth in 1947 and moved his family to Pasadena, California. May became wheelchair-bound in the 1950s, but outlived both her husband and her daughter. She died on 1 September 1972 in Pasadena, and was buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California. May's compositions included "Richmond Rag," "Buzzer Rag," "Blue Ribbon Rag," "A Totally Different Rag," "Novelty Rag," and her best-known piece, "The Thriller."

Cecil Duane Crabb (1890–1953) moved to Indianapolis in 1908. His compositions included "Klassicle Rag" and "Trouble Rag" (both with Will B. Morrison), "Orinoco," and his best-known, "Fluffy Ruffles," a two-step. He had been a young sign painter when he drew a cover for and arranged the printing of May Aufderheide's "Dusty Rag."

Will B. Morrison was another ragtime composer based in Indianapolis. One of his best known works was "Sour

Grapes,” which he self-published in 1912.

Julia Lee Niebergall was born 15 February 1886 into a musical family. Her father played the double bass occasionally with the Indianapolis Philharmonic, and her siblings played instruments also. The first rag she composed was the “Hoosier Rag,” published in 1907 by Jerome Remick in Detroit. She wrote only two more piano rags, “Horseshoe Rag” and “Red Rambler Rag,” both published by J.H. Aufderheide, and she worked as an arranger for that Indianapolis firm for a while. She was a friend of May Aufderheide. During the 1910s and 1920s she was a professional pianist playing for movies at the Colonial Theatre. She also played for ballet and gym classes, and later taught piano and music theory at Manual High School. It was widely known that she was one of the first women in Indianapolis to own and drive her own vehicle. She supported herself as a professional musician nearly up until her death at age eighty-two on 19 October 1968.

Abe Olman was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1888. He moved to Indianapolis in 1908 and managed the sheet music department at L.S. Ayres department store for four years before moving to New York to become a music publisher. While in Indianapolis he composed “Honeymoon Rag,” “Candlestick Rag,” “Seaweeds Rag,” “Halloween Rag,” and “Egyptia.” He was a director of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) from 1946–1956. He was a cofounder of the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1968, whose most prestigious award is named after Olman. He wrote two well-known standards – “Oh Johnny, Oh!” (with Ed Rose) and “Down Among the Sheltering Palms” (with Jack Yellen). He died in Rancho Mirage, California, in 1984.

J. Russel Robinson was born in Indianapolis on 8 July 1892. He began playing piano in the city’s movie theaters around 1905. After leaving Indianapolis in 1908, he composed several rags including “Sapho Rag,” “Eccentric,” and “Dynamite Rag.” From 1919–1921 he toured and recorded with the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and composed several popular and jazz hits, including “Margie,” “Singin’ the Blues,” and “Palesteena.” He then worked for W.C. Handy’s publishing company as an arranger and lyricist. He played piano for various popular and blues singers in recording sessions. He died in Palmdale, California, on 30 September 1963.

Noble Sissle was born in Indianapolis on 10 July 1889. His early interest in music was influenced by his father, who was a minister and organist. He attended Shortridge High School before the Sissles moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in 1906. Having an excellent tenor singing voice, he joined a male quartet for a four-week tour of the Midwest vaudeville circuit in 1908, and later joined a gospel quartet for a similar tour. His family returned to Indianapolis in 1913. Sissle attended DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, for the fall semester 1913, before transferring to Butler University in Indianapolis, where he wrote several “yells” for the football team. At the request of the owner of the Severin Hotel in Indianapolis, Sissle formed a twelve-piece orchestra to play there regularly. In 1915 he moved to Baltimore, Maryland. That same year he and Eubie Blake became songwriting partners after meeting as members of Joe Porter’s Serenaders. Their first song was “It’s All Your Fault.” In 1917 Sissle enlisted in the army, where he helped James Reese Europe recruit members for a military band. In 1921 Sissle and Blake wrote and produced a musical performed on Broadway called *Shuffle Along*, which included the song “I’m Just Wild about Harry.” Other memorable songs by Sissle and Blake include “Love Will Find a Way” and “You Were Meant for Me.” Sissle returned to Indianapolis with his orchestra to play at the Indiana Roof Ballroom periodically during the 1930s. He became involved with the Negro Actors Guild, which he helped found in 1937, serving as its first president. He died 17 December 1975 in Tampa, Florida.

Russell Smith was born in Kentucky in 1890. A pianist and vocalist, he is noted for having formed one of the first African-American orchestras in Indianapolis. From 1911–1914 his orchestra was the resident band at the Severin Hotel in Indianapolis. Smith later played in the road company of Sissle and Blake’s *Shuffle Along*. Smith returned to Indianapolis in 1935 and remained until his death in 1969. During the 1940s and 1950s he worked as a janitor at a downtown bookstore during the day, and played various venues as part of trios and quartets in the evenings. In 1956 he played at the charter meeting of the Indianapolis Jazz Club. In his youth, Smith composed a number of rags including “Princess Rag” and “That Demon Rag,” which achieved only minor local success.

Gladys Yelvington (1891–1957) worked as a pianist for silent movies in Elwood, Indiana. She was considered a gifted and expressive performer on both piano and organ. She was an acquaintance of May Aufderheide, and some of the songs she composed were published by J.H. Aufderheide and Company, including her “Piffle Rag” in 1911. It

appears that she stopped composing and performing when she married Leo Parson.

John Edward Hasse (b. 1948) is a music historian, pianist, and award-winning author and record producer. He serves as Curator of American Music at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, where he founded the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, an acclaimed big band. He earned his M.A. (1975) and Ph.D. (1981) degrees at Indiana University.

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of nine black-and-white photographs and one color photograph related to the Indianapolis ragtime and jazz scene in the early twentieth century. Nine of the photographs show portraits of composers and musicians: May Aufderheide, Cecil Duane Crabb, Will B. Morrison, Julia Lee Niebergall, Abe Olman, J. Russel Robinson, Noble Sissle, Russell Smith, Harold Stockton, and Gladys Yelvington. One is a color photograph of a painted portrait; the others are copy photographs and photographs of halftone images. One is of a newspaper announcement of a performance, which includes two portraits. There is also a photograph of a 1914 advertisement for an Indianapolis piano store.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Portraits

CONTENTS

Copy photograph of May Frances Aufderheide wearing a large hat.

Photograph of halftone image of Cecil Duane Crabb.

Photograph of halftone image of Will B. Morrison.

Copy photograph of Abe Olman.

Color photograph of painted portrait of Abe Olman.

Photograph of halftone image of J. Russel Robinson.

Copy photograph of Noble Sissle and Russell Smith in a staged scene (original photo by the White Studio, New York).

Photograph of newspaper announcement of a performance by pianist Julia Lee Niebergall and whistler Harold Stockton, the "Hoosier Bird Boy" in The Times Christmas Jubilee Minstrels at the Murat Theater in Indianapolis (original announcement from the *Indiana Daily Times*, 1914). Shows

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portraits of Niebergall and Stockton.

Copy photograph of Gladys Yelvington wearing a large hat.

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Series 2: Advertisement

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Photograph of newspaper advertisement for “piano and player bargains” at the E.L. Lennox Piano Co. at 311 N. Pennsylvania Street in Indianapolis (original advertisement from the *Indiana Daily Times*, 15 December 1914).

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P 0470).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.