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Author(s): Edward Komara

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BLUES IN THE ROUND

EDWARD KOMARA

As Eddie “Son” House recalled it, traveling with Charlie Patton to his 1930 Paramount Records session was a lot of fun. Patton rounded up House and two other Mississippi Delta musicians, Louise Johnson and Willie Brown, and arranged to have singer Wheeler Ford (of the gospel group the Delta Big Four) drive them to Paramount Records in Grafton, Wisconsin, for Patton’s third recording session. Boosting themselves with corn liquor bought early in the trip, the musicians (except for the abstaining Ford) had a raucous time on the road. At one point Johnson and Patton, former lovers, got into a heated argument in the front seat of the car; Johnson put an end to their quarrel by joining House and Brown in the back seat. On their arrival in Grafton, Johnson chose House as her new lover (Perls 1967, 61).

House’s “road trip” story as related to Nick Perls has become such a beloved yarn of Mississippi Delta blues lore¹ that it almost eclipses why Perls, with Dick Waterman and Phil Spiro, sought out House in June 1964. Among Waterman’s first questions to House upon initial telephone contact on June 21 was whether the older man was the same as the one who recorded for Paramount in 1930 (Waterman 1989, 50). House indicated so, probably with some surprise over his visitors’ knowledge about his records. In truth, House’s Paramount records, along with Charlie Patton’s, were available at the time of the visit on the reissue label Origin

1. Several historical narratives about Patton and House retell the latter’s road trip story at length. The best of these is Obrecht (1992). Robert Crumb (1984) devoted four panels to the trip; he acknowledged use of Palmer (1981, 33).

EDWARD KOMARA is the music librarian and blues archivist at the Music Library and Blues Archive of the University of Mississippi. His catalog and commentary on Charlie Parker’s 1946–1947 Dial sessions is forthcoming from Greenwood Press.

Jazz Library.² The irony of these events is that the records that House, Patton, Brown, and Johnson made in 1930 were not intended for historical posterity but for the immediate foot-tapping entertainment of a record-buying public.

Blues musicians are not usually considered salesmen of their own music, but maybe they should be. Due to the few opportunities to perform outside their towns and counties and to the musicians' face-to-face familiarity with their regular local audiences, blues performing and listening activities are depicted as communal in oral history, photography, and literary accounts. The same musicians in the setting of a recording studio are almost never thought of as communal, but they could be. When a "community" of musicians is concerned with the objective of making marketable records for home entertainment, the trials and successes of their endeavors can be assessed through their products. Can their records sell themselves without the benefit of widespread advertising? If so, should the musicians be credited for promoting the worth of their music through the strength of their recorded performances?

These questions will be addressed after reviewing the well-known 1930 Paramount session featuring Louise Johnson, Son House, Willie Brown, and Charlie Patton. Some aspects and artifacts of this session have received little attention, but they should be examined. The extensive discography of the surviving takes included in Appendix A will be cited throughout this review; by its example, I hope to demonstrate that discography is a necessary tool for blues research and an insightful means for interpreting recorded blues performances.

* * * * *

Charlie Patton's 1930 Paramount recording session has long been regarded as classic. As early as 1964 Origin Jazz Library owner Bernard Klatzko (1964, 8) wrote, "Was this the greatest country blues recording session ever? In my opinion—emphatically yes!" In recent years the Japanese label Pea Vine titled a reissue of records from this date as *The Legendary Delta Blues Session*. While the term "legendary" may be overused in other blues history contexts, it is fitting for this event. It was on this occasion that Louise Johnson and Willie Brown made their only studio recordings under their own names. This was Charlie Patton's third session for Paramount and his last for almost four years. It would be on the basis of these studio discs, along with Alan Lomax's 1941–1942 field recordings for the Library of Congress, that Son House was sought out in

2. See the discography in Appendix B. For a review and appraisal of House written only weeks before his rediscovery, see Napier (1964).

1964 and reintroduced onstage. Two of the Paramount issues from this session have yet to be found, becoming, with the passage of time, the Holy Grail for blues listeners.

Eighteen takes survived from Patton's session with House, Brown, and Johnson. These performances were shaped by the musicians and technicians present at the time of the recording. The first record made was of Louise Johnson, with audible encouragement from the other three musicians; the last was of Charlie Patton performing with Willie Brown. It seems the musicians from Mississippi were allowed to stay in the studio even when not performing, an unusual practice in a time when the typical procedure was to have the nonperforming musicians wait outside in line. Silent technicians monitored the recording of these performances and set them in the form we hear today. Like the people in the studio, we the listeners can immerse ourselves in this historical event by following the takes in the order they were recorded, noting the changes in the music and the personnel, and realizing for ourselves the conditions tacitly understood and accepted by all participants at the time of the session. Thus we may come to understand what was recorded when the microphones were turned on, and at times we can begin to speculate about what occurred while the microphones were turned off.

Appendix A presents the 1930 session in a musical thematic format, tracking composing credits, melodic themes, lyric and melodic transcriptions, and record issues. It extends the scope of blues discography from the comprehensive listings of Dixon and Godrich (1982), Leadbitter and Slaven (1987), and Leadbitter, Fancourt, and Pelletier (1994). Their indispensable discographies are less descriptions of the music and more akin to telephone books, containing names and numbers and occasionally a street name, such as Beale Street in Memphis. Yet, following the example of the telephone book reader who admitted, "True, the plot isn't much, but what a cast of characters" (Bing 1957, vii), listeners and researchers can gain from contemplating the names and the titles. What is more, the recordings may be located and listened to, enabling some insight into those names and titles. To take one step further, the recording procedures and working conditions may be investigated, toward a realization of why a given record sounds the way it does.

Crucial to an understanding of the Patton session is an understanding of the recording process as it was in 1930.³ The only studio recording process then in use, from Victor down to Paramount, was a direct-to-disc method that etched the musical performance onto a wax disc called a matrix. The matrix would be the source for the intermediate stampers

3. Much of the information that follows comes from Mumma, Sheridan, and Kernfeld (1988, esp. 357–358). For specific details about the Paramount operation and its own procedures, see Calt and Wardlow (1990), part of an excellent five-article series about that label.

and, in turn, the commercial copies. During recording, the wax matrix disc would spin at a rate of seventy-eight revolutions per minute. The duration of a musical performance depended on the diameter of the matrix disc. The twelve-inch disc could hold as much as four and three-quarters minutes of music, the ten-inch disc, three and a half minutes. Twelve-inch records were fragile and expensive to make, limiting their use to classical recordings. Ten-inch records, despite their shorter playing times, could better withstand the frequent playings to which they were subjected.

So, musicians had to keep their performances down to three minutes per take. Paramount technicians used an electric light system to signal the end of a given take (Titon 1977b, 22). If the performer indicated that a song would exceed one three-minute side, he or she was sometimes allowed to continue it on a second disc; the two parts of the song would be then issued back-to-back on one commercial record. Edits were not possible. If a mistake was made, the whole song would have to be re-recorded on a new wax disc. Thus, all musicians had to perform without errors for three minutes in order to achieve an acceptable take. Sometimes they had to perform two acceptable takes; since wax discs were subject to breakage, an extra performance would be recorded as a "safety." During the course of a recording session, the studio engineer had to keep track of the various takes. Each song was numbered in ascending consecutive order, with the takes for each song also successively numbered.

The Paramount Record Company's small size shaped its commercial markets. The Wisconsin Chair Company of Port Washington, Wisconsin, founded Paramount as a side venture to its phonograph cabinet manufacturing. At first, Paramount lacked its own recording facilities, having to use studios in New York (hence "New York Recorded Laboratories" on every Paramount label), Chicago, and Richmond, Indiana. Eventually, in 1929, Paramount recording studios were built within the Grafton factories of the Wisconsin Chair Company.

Since Paramount was not a recording industry giant, it could sign only regional personalities and minor stars. After seeing Okeh successfully launch its "race records" series in 1920, Paramount decided to aim for African-American markets with its own "race" series. Alberta Hunter and Ma Rainey were among Paramount's urban stars, but Texas blues performer Blind Lemon Jefferson broke open the country blues market in 1926. In its quest for additional country blues talent, Paramount signed Charlie Patton of Mississippi in the spring of 1929 on the recommendation of Jackson, Mississippi, talent scout H. C. Speir.⁴ At his first session,

4. Paramount's search for country blues talent is treated in Calt and Wardlow (1991). Speir's discovery of Patton for Paramount is detailed in Calt and Wardlow (1988, 11-15).

in the Gennett Records studio in Richmond, Indiana, Patton recorded several hits, including his trademark "Pony Blues" and "Down the Dirt Road Blues" (see Dixon and Godrich 1982, 581).

Shortly after the new Grafton studio was completed in the fall of 1929, Charlie Patton went there for his second recording session, taking violinist Henry "Son" Sims with him. Patton and Sims recorded separately for some sides and together for others. On this occasion, Patton performed his two-part blues about the 1927 Mississippi River flood, "High Water Everywhere" (Dixon and Godrich 1982, 581). Paramount featured "High Water Everywhere" in its *Chicago Defender* advertisement in the April 12, 1930, issue and then listed it in a subsequent *Defender* ad two weeks later (see Vreede 1971, opposite item 12901). Sales figures for releases from that studio session were sufficiently impressive to interest Paramount in recording Patton a third time.

The label's contact for locating Patton and other Mississippi artists continued to be H. C. Speir. During late April or early May of 1930 Speir brought a gospel group, the Delta Big Four, to Grafton for a Paramount session. After delivering the vocal group, he met with Paramount president Otto Moeser, who offered his visitor an opportunity to buy the label from the Wisconsin Chair Company for twenty-five thousand dollars. Although Speir was interested in Moeser's offer, he couldn't meet the price, as he had made a large investment in an oil well the previous fall. (The oil well proved to be dry, and Speir lost thirty thousand dollars as a result [Wardlow 1993b, 25].)

While the Delta Big Four were taking a break, recording director Arthur Laibly allowed Speir to speak into the studio microphone for a test record.⁵ Laibly also asked Speir for Patton's address; Speir replied that Patton at the moment was living in Lula, Mississippi, adding that other business commitments prevented him from going there to speak to the musician (Wardlow 1993b, 25).⁶ Determined, Laibly himself went to Lula by train, extended to Patton his invitation to record, and asked him

5. The recording matrix numbers for Speir's test were L-314-1 and L-314-3. Numbers L-312, L-313, and L-315 through L-320 were used for the Delta Big Four (L-317 remains untraced). On his test, Speir read headlines satirizing then-governor Bilbo from Mississippi newspapers dated April 12 and 19, 1930, which he had brought with him. As only these two consecutive issues of a regional newspaper were read aloud, a recording date after April 26 seems unlikely for this test and hence for the Delta Big Four session. Paramount gave a hundred copies of the test to Speir, who gleefully gave them to his music store customers after his return to Jackson. During the late 1960s, Speir gave researcher Gayle Wardlow the last surviving and only known copy of the test. In 1995, upon my recommendation, John Meador, Dean of University of Mississippi Libraries, acquired the Speir disc from Wardlow for the Blues Archive.

6. According to Calt and Wardlow (1988, 213), Laibly supposedly sent a telegram to Speir inquiring about Patton after the Delta Big Four session.

to bring along any musicians of sufficient talent. For trip expenses, the record executive gave the musician a hundred dollars (Calt and Wardlow 1988, 212–215). Patton had long known Willie Brown, had just met Son House, and remembered Louise Johnson, a piano player at the Joe Kirby plantation. He gathered everyone together and asked Delta Big Four-member Wheeler Ford to drive them to Grafton.

The exact date of Patton's third session remains unknown. Estimating the total length of time taken by Laibly to arrange a train trip to Lula and by Patton to contact the other musicians as three to six weeks, a likely date could have been any time between May 25 and June 14. The takes waxed by Johnson, House, Brown, and Patton span the Paramount matrix numbers L-398 through L-433. The session must have been held before September, when singer Anthony Olinger recorded on matrix disc L-503 for the ninety-third birthday of Wisconsin Chair president J. M. Bostwick Sr.⁷ Between the Speir test (L-314) and the Bostwick disc (L-503) is L-348-2, containing "You've Got What I Want" performed by Irene Scruggs. For many years, Scruggs kept a test copy of that disc with the recording date of May 28, 1930, inscribed on the label. By inference, the Patton 1930 session takes are thought by many to have been made on or about May 28,⁸ although there is nothing to disprove that the Mississippi Delta musicians were actually there in July or even August.⁹ In consideration of Laibly's contacts with Speir and Patton when setting up the session, the present account and discography place the recordings between May 28 and June 14, 1930, but allow conjectures through August 1930.

Their road trip aside, what exactly did Louise Johnson, Son House, Willie Brown, and Charlie Patton, with the supervision of Arthur Laibly, do during the session itself? To attempt to answer this, the records will be examined in matrix number order, the same order in which they were recorded, presuming that Laibly and his studio engineer did their work correctly.

7. The label from the Bostwick birthday disc was reproduced in Calt and Wardlow (1992, 21).

8. Dixon and Godrich (1963, 555) described the hand-dated Irene Scruggs test disc in connection with her Paramount release of "You've Got What I Want," but they prudently gave "c. July, 1930" for the Patton, House, Brown, and Johnson sides. In later editions, however, the House, Brown, and Johnson performances are ascribed the specific date of "Wednesday, 28 May 1930" (1969, 119, 325, 374; 1982, 122, 340, 391), while Patton's are given as "c. 28 May 1930" (1969, 550; 1982, 581). The possibility that the date, specific or approximate, for the Patton session discs could have been borrowed from the Scruggs test was pointed out by Hall and Noblett (1975b).

9. Hall and Noblett (1975b) reported that "Son House remembers the session as being in August." I have yet to trace House's quote if Hall and Noblett took it from a printed source. Nevertheless, given the dates of the respective Speir, Scruggs, and Bostwick test matrices, it is conceivable that Patton and his fellow musicians went to Grafton in August.

Example 1. Louise Johnson, "All Night Long Blues," take 2 (L-398-2), opening vocal chorus with Patton's interjection

Johnson: I woke up this mor-nin' blues all 'round my bed etc.

Patton (speaking): Well?

Louise Johnson performed first, playing two takes each of "All Night Long Blues" (L-398) and "Long Ways from Home" (L-399), titles that share the same melody and several lyrics. Both takes of "All Night Long Blues" have survived, demonstrating the practice of recording an extra safety in case the first master was damaged. The first take was acceptable and indeed released; but as a precautionary measure, a second take was recorded, in which Johnson left out the piano solos she performed in the first take. The lyrics borrow somewhat from Anna Jones's "Trixie Blues"¹⁰ and other recorded blues,¹¹ but the manner in which Johnson played and sang the song is reckless, humming with the piano figures and shouting, almost bursting, the melody beyond recognition.¹² The encouraging shouts from House, Brown, and Patton add greatly to a raucous atmosphere, not unlike those in the Delta barrelhouses. Patton showed himself especially deft at spurring her, to the extent of interjecting a response in the middle of a phrase (see Ex. 1).

After Johnson's first efforts, there is an apparent blank for the next eight matrix numbers from L-400 to L-407, except for L-403 and L-404, which contain performances by a military band (performing "U.S. High

10. Paramount session, New York, ca. July 1923 (Dixon and Godrich 1982, 405).

11. The lyric, "blues all round [one's] bed," may be heard in recordings by Memphis and Mississippi blues performers of this period, such as Frank Stokes with Dan Sane ("Sweet to Mama," 1927), Memphis Jug Band ("Coal Oil Blues," 1928), Tommy Johnson ("Lonesome Home Blues," 1930), and Ishmon Bracey ("Suitcase Full of Blues," 1930). Louise Johnson's use of these words, together with her lyrics to "On the Wall," place her firmly in the Memphis and Mississippi blues contexts.

12. At one time, there was some doubt about whether Louise Johnson accompanied herself at the piano or merely sang in front of an uncredited pianist. Clarence Lofton, in conversation with John Crosley, claimed to have been the pianist on the Louise Johnson sides (Groom 1970). Son House (1965, 41) referred to Louise Johnson as "the girl playing the piano." Hall and Noblett (1975a; 1975b) listened to Johnson's recorded performances, compared them to representative sides by Lofton and other pianists, and considered the remarks by Rob Heath (1970), Groom, and House. They concluded that Louise Johnson certainly was her own accompanist. No research has appeared since 1975 to challenge their opinion.

School March" and "Spirit of '98" [Vreede and Van Rijn 1996, 73]). No cause for the break in recording has been documented, and the missing numbers are untraced in the other Paramount "race" issues. Two writers on piano blues, Hall and Noblett (1975b, 21–22), noted speed irregularities (Johnson's sides sound in F-sharp, an unusual key that would force the pianist to play mostly black keys), and they suggested that the session was momentarily stopped for repairs to the recording equipment.¹³ If this is true, the Mississippi musicians may have taken an extended break, during which repairs were made and the military band recorded some takes.

When the Mississippians returned to the studio, Son House took his turn at the microphone, accompanying himself on the guitar. "My Black Mama" was based on a melody by James McCoy that House heard near his birthplace, Lyon, Mississippi (Wilson 1966, 2–3; Groom 1968, 6). It was recorded on two sides for back-to-back issue. Often noted are the "Death Letter" verses on part two, which can be traced back to Ida Cox's 1924 Paramount recording, "Death Letter Blues." This "death letter" concept was treated also in records by Lottie Kimbrough,¹⁴ Romeo Nelson,¹⁵ John D. Fox,¹⁶ and Papa Harvey Hull.¹⁷

Afterward, House recorded the two parts of "Preachin' the Blues." For the melody, House borrowed another tune from James McCoy and added his own verses (Wilson 1966, 2–3; Groom 1968, 6). Much has been made of this piece concerning House's vacillation between the blues and the church (see Charters 1967, 65). The recording went well, with the first takes of each part approved for issue. Interestingly, during the fifth chorus of the first part, a muffled noise can be heard, perhaps from one of the nonperforming musicians in the studio.¹⁸

13. I verified these pitch irregularities myself while transcribing the incipits for the thematic discography.

14. "Wayward Girl Blues," Paramount record session, August 21, 1928. Dixon and Godrich (1982, 65) listed Kimbrough's records under her maiden name, Lottie Beaman.

15. "Dyin' Rider Blues," Vocalion session, November 26, 1929 (Dixon and Godrich 1982, 559).

16. "The Moanin' Blues," Gennett session, December 14, 1927 (Dixon and Godrich 1982, 242).

17. "Hey! Lawdy Mama—The France Blues," Gennett session, on or about April 8, 1927 (Dixon and Godrich 1982, 356). The Origin Jazz Library album *Really! The Country Blues* opens with Son House's "My Black Mama," parts one and two, with this Papa Harvey Hull record following.

18. The muffled sound occurs between the lines "Yeah, a heaven of my own" and "Certainly I'd give all my women a long long happy home." In his lyric transcription, Macleod (1994, 26–27) transcribed the sound as "Wait for it. Follow me," and added the note, "The quiet speech (by another?) suggests more than solo v[ocal]/g[uitar]." Checking several reissues of the well-worn, unique surviving 78 rpm copy, I could not make out any distinct words. My opinion is that the noise was made by a witness, perhaps Brown, Johnson, or Patton, and yet only House was performing.

gets some encouragement for "On the Wall," but she alone is heard for her last side. "By the Moon and Stars" is based on "The Forty-Fours," a melody widely shared among black southern pianists of the 1920s including Eurreal "Little Brother" Montgomery, who recorded a classic version of the theme as "Vicksburg Blues" in 1930 (Gert zur Heide 1970, 19–20). Both of these Louise Johnson recordings sound in the key of B-flat, apparently free of the studio equipment problems that may have caused Johnson's earlier sides to play back in F-sharp.

Another four matrices skip by, and then comes "Dry Spell Blues" by Son House. The two parts of "Dry Spell Blues" were the most troublesome sides to record, requiring four and two takes, respectively. Although this is an original composition by House, its chant-like phrasing is similar to that of "Preachin' the Blues" and to the axe-songs hollered by field laborers.²⁴ The most likely reason for the retakes is that the piece is a tricky one to perform, with its musical phrases cut short and dovetailed together. The result is an urgent but unhurried performance.

The drought that inspired House's "Dry Spell Blues" and, as will be examined below, Charlie Patton's "Dry Well Blues" was still persisting at the time of the session, and its aftereffects would linger through March 1931. Much is known and has been written about the other great Mississippi Delta disaster captured in blues, the 1927 Mississippi River flood,²⁵ but little is known about the 1930–1931 drought. However, the American Red Cross (1931) published a report on its drought relief work, opening with these dramatic lines: "The drought of 1930, which parched the fields of 1057 counties in twenty-three States with severe reactions in the early months of 1931, was the greatest calamity of its kind in the country's history."

As early as March 1930, rain shortages were noted in West Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. During the time of this recording session, Mississippi was receiving forty-seven percent of its normal rainfall. In August the drought had gained the press's attention and President Hoover's concern; he appealed to Red Cross Vice Chancellor Ernest P. Bicknell for drought relief, and he also opened the farm-credit facilities. By June 30, 1931, the Red Cross aided some 2,765,000 people (American Red Cross 1931).

For Son House as a field hand and for Johnson, Brown, and Patton as musicians supported by the field hands, this drought affected their earnings and outlooks in different ways. The fervent narrative of House's

24. Charters (1967, 64–65) discussed only "Preachin' the Blues" with the axe-songs; but "Dry Spell Blues" also has the "hesitation" rests that Charters identified in "Preachin' the Blues," and hence, it too is relevant, if not related, to the axe-songs and other field hollers.

25. Daniel (1977) presented a general history of that flood, while Briggs (1989) identified specific recorded blues about it.

"Dry Spell Blues," with the clipped guitar accompaniment, portrays how hard he was scuffling through this difficult season. In contrast, Patton reacted with less austerity. As a possible response to House's "Dry Spell Blues," Patton revealed his own view on the unfolding disaster, having Brown join him on second guitar. He began singing his narrative in a deliberately slow tempo; the resulting record lasts three minutes sixteen seconds, a little long, but safe enough to fit on a ten-inch disc. Patton used one of his familiar melodic models, "Pony Blues," on which he had set so many of his other lyrics.

Together, "Dry Spell Blues" and "Dry Well Blues" form a double portrait of these two early bluesmen. In "Dry Spell Blues," Son House depicts himself as one who works the Delta soil, and his melody reflects his labors. Despite his previous travels and a brief prison term at Parchman Farm (Wilson 1966, 2-4), House seems to have never strayed from his musical and agricultural roots in Lyon, Mississippi. Patton, on the other hand, considered not just his own situation but also those of the people around him, using melodies and lyrics that he picked up over his long itinerant performing career. Willie Brown's guitar presence shows that other musicians learned Patton's pieces and were willing to join Patton in performance anytime.

Patton recorded three other pieces, again in duet with Willie Brown: "Some Summer Day," "Moon Going Down," and "Bird Nest Bound." "Some Summer Day" is a thinly disguised cover version of the Mississippi Sheiks' smash hit "Sitting on Top of the World" (recorded on February 17, 1930), appropriating the melody and three lyric couplets from the song composed by two members of the Sheiks.

"Moon Going Down" and "Bird Nest Bound," on the other hand, are sung to Patton's "Maggie" theme in varying deliveries. "Moon Going Down" receives a shouted, hard-driven performance that renders lyrics about a Clarksdale, Mississippi, mill fire and an onrushing train all the more vivid. After bellowing, "Lord I think I heard that Helena whistle" midway in the fourth vocal chorus, Patton tells Brown, "Well, I *hear* it blowing," which gets both performers chuckling.²⁶ "Bird Nest Bound," by comparison, is subdued, even wistful. Its words, paraphrasing those of "Bird Nest Blues" sung by Ardell "Shelly" Bragg in 1926 (Evans 1987, 197; Calt and Wardlow 1988, 174),²⁷ are expressed so longingly by Patton

26. This little aside was discovered by R. R. Macleod while he was transcribing the lyrics for his compilation *Yazoo 1-20* (1988). Macleod believed that Brown faintly completes Patton's sung line with the word "blowin'," to which Patton replied, "Well, Willie, I hear it blowin' too." Given Patton's indistinct manner of speaking and the driving music, the vocal exchange doesn't seem clear enough to be heard exactly as Macleod transcribed it. However one hears it, one must credit Macleod for capturing the spirit of the moment.

27. I have yet to have access to Bragg's record or a reissue to compare to Patton's adaptation.

that some listeners interpret them as sentiments longing for a home or refuge (Palmer 1981, 84–85). Since “Bird Nest Bound” is the last performance of the session, Patton could just as likely be signaling to Brown, House, and Johnson that it was time to pack up and head back to Mississippi. After all, Patton always showed himself to be a musician for all occasions through his songs.

There is one remaining take, a rather odd one at that: Son House and Willie Brown playing a blues featuring lyrics about walking. This was never released by Paramount but survived on a test disc found fifty-five years after the session.²⁸ The disc itself has no matrix number, so it is difficult to place the item within the context of the session. Patton biographer Gayle Wardlow (1994) suggested placing it at L-412, which seems plausible, as L-412 is between House’s “Preachin’ the Blues” and Brown’s “M & O Blues.”

After the musicians were paid,²⁹ they quietly returned to Mississippi. The records were released with little fanfare; a Paramount promotional list for October 1930 included Son House’s “Dry Spell Blues,” parts one and two, among its “New Releases” (see Vreede 1971, opposite item 12991). No other announcements for this session’s releases are known or readily available. “Race records” generally were selling poorly, in large part due to the Depression. Paramount compounded their poor sales with worsening distribution; by the end of 1931 not even H. C. Speir could get Paramount 78s for his store (Calt and Wardlow 1992, 22). For many of the titles described in this study, only one copy exists; each was located not in Mississippi, but in the tobacco and apple regions of Virginia and North Carolina, where the workers had money for records.³⁰

Young Mississippi musicians Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, and Howlin’ Wolf learned some of the Delta songs recorded in Grafton not from the records but from the musicians who made them. Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters adapted House’s “My Black Mama” melody and the “Walking Blues” lyrics to suit their respective musical purposes. Johnson recorded his version of “Walking Blues” on November 27, 1936, and saw its release on Vocalion the following year (LaVere 1990). In 1941, in the

28. The discovery by Michael Kirsling of the “Walking Blues” disc and other previously unknown treasures is described in Hilbert (1989).

29. Son House (1965, 41) told Julius Lester that he was paid forty dollars for the session, the equivalent of a year’s work in the cotton fields. However, Patton received forty dollars per side after his first session in 1929. Calt and Wardlow (1992, 16) reported that Laibly wished to pay fifty dollars per side to Patton and each member of his contingent for their respective efforts. If so, House may have actually received no less than three hundred dollars.

30. As one who has traded with collectors for over thirty years, Gayle Wardlow generously shared with me in June 1994 the facts behind the discoveries of rare and unique copies of blues records, including those examined in this study.

presence of Alan Lomax and John Work, Muddy Waters performed "Country Blues" and discussed its origins (see Muddy Waters 1993). To be sure, Waters admitted he was familiar with Johnson's "Walking Blues" release, but he pointed out that he learned the tune from Son House himself.³¹ Waters' contemporary, Howlin' Wolf, on the other hand, was taught by Charlie Patton (Welding 1967, 20–23), and elements of Patton's songs remained in Howlin' Wolf's repertory throughout his career (see Howlin' Wolf 1992). For example, the enigmatic opening lyric of Howlin' Wolf's 1956 classic "Smokestack Lightning" ("Smokestack lightning, shining just like gold") turns out to be a compression of Patton's fifth vocal chorus from "Moon Going Down" ("Lord the smokestack is black and bell it shine like, bell it shine like, bell it shine like gold"). Later in their lives, Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf left Mississippi for Chicago, and by 1960 both were mainstays of Chess Records and the local club scene.

During the late 1950s and the early 1960s, inquiries about pre-war Mississippi musicians began to be made. As scratchy copies of old 78s were recovered one by one, they were hailed as historical recorded documents of aging or deceased bluesmen not just as the entertaining foot-tapping performances they were originally intended to be. From the first, the records from Patton's Grafton session were regarded as musically and historically significant, and no effort was spared to bring them back into circulation. From 1961, when the Origin Jazz Library label began reissuing Patton's records, through 1985, when the "Walking Blues" test was found, the performances from this late spring 1930 session were uncovered bit by tantalizing bit.

Two discs have yet to be found. One is Paramount 13099, a Willie Brown release with "Kicking in My Sleep Blues" and "Window Blues"; the other is Paramount 13096, pairing "Clarksdale Moan" and "Mississippi County Farm Blues" by Son House (Vreede 1971, items 13096 and 13099; Dixon and Godrich 1982, 122, 341). Fortunately, House performed the latter title for Alan Lomax in 1942, thus preserving the song.³²

House based his "Mississippi County Farm Blues" on the melody of Blind Lemon Jefferson's "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean," and therein lies an interesting story. House recounted to Alan Wilson (1966, 5) that during the Grafton session, the "recording engineer" (probably Laibly) announced that Jefferson had died and asked if anyone knew any Jefferson songs to record toward a tribute release. In response to that

31. For comparison and discussion of the Son House, Robert Johnson, and Muddy Waters treatments of "My Black Mama" and "Walking Blues," see Cowley (1981) and Briggs and Burke (1988).

32. Lomax field recording 6608-A-1, July 17, 1942, for the Archive of Folk Song, Library of Congress (see Dixon and Godrich 1982, 341).

request, House recorded his "Mississippi County Farm Blues." At first glance, House's account of the song's origin invites a little skepticism, as Jefferson was found dead in December 1929, but a look at Paramount's Jefferson releases and related advertisements in 1930 may uncover some grains of truth to the story (see Vreede 1971; Calt and Wardlow 1992, 22). At the time of his death, Blind Lemon Jefferson was Paramount's biggest star. The label probably realized that sales would drop if the news of his demise became widespread, so it continued releasing and advertising new Jefferson records as though he were still alive. As late as March 29, 1930, Paramount ran an ad in the *Chicago Defender* referring to Jefferson in the present tense: "Blind Lemon Jefferson says 'Southern Women are hard to beat' and he ought to know." Additional Jefferson discs from his last session appeared the following May and June; only in July was a tribute record announced to Paramount dealers.³³ If House was indeed in Grafton in June, his story of learning about Jefferson's death at that time may be true.³⁴

* * * * *

Returning to the questions guiding this study, did these records by Patton, House, Brown, and Johnson sell themselves without widespread advertising? Certainly not to the buying public of the Depression but definitely to the collectors of subsequent decades who discerned musical merit in each 78 rpm disc they saved; it is entirely due to these collectors that everything from this session survived. And were these musicians personally credited for promoting the worth of their music through the

33. Paramount 12945, with Walter and Byrd singing "Wasn't It Sad About Poor Lemon" on side A (matrix L-276) and Rev. Emmet Dickenson preaching "The Death of Blind Lemon" on side B (matrix L-277). The disc's matrix numbers suggest an approximate recording date of late March or April 1930.

34. There are few grounds for House's apparent claim to have met Jefferson himself. Charters (1967, 188) told us that "Son House has said that he met Lemon in the studio in Port Washington the day before Son recorded in July, 1930," then recounted House's story about when he learned of Jefferson's death. House didn't mention actually meeting Jefferson to Alan Wilson (1966), but he inadvertently dropped Jefferson's name to Perls and Calt (1967, 61) while describing the hotel arrangements at Grafton: "House: 'Me and her [Louise Johnson] stayed together in our little room. So Charlie and Willie and this other boy . . . ' Perls and Calt: 'Wheeler Ford?' House: 'Lemon. Lemon Jefferson. Like in this room. Charley in the next one. Willie in the next one. Then me and Louise, we had the one that's facing the street. That's the way that was.'" House didn't mention Jefferson again, and instead of following up with questions about the possible encounter, his interviewers asked about the guitars used at the session. Charters (1991, xi) acknowledged Nick Perls as a source. If what Perls showed Charters was the same interview that was later published as "Son House Interview—Part One" (1967), its mention of Jefferson was the basis of Charters's indication that House and Jefferson met.

strength of their recorded performances? In the case of Son House, dramatically so.

Fueled by reissues of House's 1930 Paramount records and 1941–1942 Library of Congress performances, Dick Waterman, Nick Perls, and Phil Spiro sought the musician himself. They located him, not in the Mississippi Delta or in Memphis or in any part of the South but improbably enough in Rochester, New York, on June 21, 1964, Father's Day weekend (Waterman 1964; Waterman 1989). The rediscovery of Son House caught the imagination of the fledgling blues press (Klatzko 1964) and even the notice of the general news magazine *Newsweek* ("Looking for the Blues" 1964).³⁵ With encouragement from Waterman and Perls, House resumed performing in public, playing anew the repertory heard previously on scarce and worn 78s. He enjoyed a distinguished Indian-summer career, a career made possible through his old records and his impassioned performances on them. Of the group that traveled from Mississippi to Wisconsin in 1930 to make records, House was the only one to live to be rediscovered. Louise Johnson had not and would not be heard from after moving to Memphis in the early 1940s (Hall and Noblett 1975b, 21n1), Willie Brown died in 1952,³⁶ and Charlie Patton succumbed to a heart defect in 1934 (Wardlow and Calt 1967, 10–17).

This essay's title, "Blues in the Round," can be read in three different ways. First, four Mississippi musicians created a circular rapport among themselves while working in a Wisconsin studio, thus producing a remarkable series of records. Second, the shape of a disc on which these and all other blues performances have been issued, whether 78, LP, or CD, lends a tangible meaning to "in the round." And finally, a record being a secondary document of the immediacy of the performer himself (the ideal primary source), a circular path may be traced from the recording performer to the record and back to the performer, even if, as was the case of Son House, that path had to take more than thirty years to return to the starting point.

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35. This article also treats the rediscovery of Nehemiah "Skip" James.

36. A reproduction of Brown's death certificate is given in Wardlow (1986, 6).

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APPENDIX A

Catalog of Charlie Patton's 1930 Paramount Session

This catalog is arranged in matrix number order of the session takes, with the unnumbered "Walking Blues" test disc placed after the last numbered matrix. The header information for each recording includes the name of the composer, taken from the label of the original issue; the title of the piece recorded; and identification of the form of the work. When known, the composer of the melodic source is noted. The header information concludes with a note about additional performers on the recording.

For each recording, the matrix number of the take is given, together with the metronome speed and duration of the performance. The tempo measurements were taken during the first two choruses of the performance in question; however, during any one of these recordings, the tempo increases from one chorus to the next. Durations are given in minutes and seconds. These are followed by an identification of the order and function of the choruses in the performance, together with incipits for one or more choruses. Blues chorus structures are in standard lengths of eight or twelve measures, according to the musical and lyrical phrases. Rural blues performers, then as now, typically add or subtract measures to individual phrases during any chorus, and Charlie Patton and his associates were no exception to this practice. The melodic incipits were transcribed at recorded pitch by the author. They are intended to be illustrative and helpful in identifying the performances. Incipits for performances by Eddie "Son" House are used by permission of the House estate.

Readers should take a possible pitch discrepancy of one semitone into account while examining the various reissues and the notated transcriptions. Such pitch differences may be due to recording equipment problems (Hall and Noblett 1975b, 21–22), to Patton's practice of tuning his guitar sharp for timbral brilliance (Calt and Wardlow 1988, 182), or to decisions made during the LP and CD transfer processes.

Information about each take is concluded by a list of the issues on which the performances may be found and a list of sources of transcriptions of the lyrics and, where pertinent, the melody. Details about the issues may be found in Appendix B, and full citations for the references to the lyric and melodic transcriptions may be found in the References list.

Comments on the Session

The 1930 Paramount recording session most likely was held between May 28 and June 14, 1930, although it could have been held in July or even August. Arthur Laibly was the recording director who supervised the session, which, as mentioned in the body of this article, seems to have been conducted with extended rest periods, during which other musical acts used the studio. A repair break also was probably taken after matrix L-399 to fix the technical problems that produced pitch irregularities on the matrix discs.

The collected surviving session takes, except for the second take of "All Night Long Blues" and "Walking Blues," have been issued in matrix number order on *The Legendary Delta Blues Session* (Pea Vine PCD-2250).

The Catalog

Paramount Records session, Wisconsin Chair/Paramount factory studio,
Grafton, Wisconsin

Possibly last week of May or first two weeks of June 1930, but not after
August 1930

Participants: Willie (Willie Lee) Brown, guitar and vocal
Eddie "Son" House Jr., guitar and vocal
Louise Johnson, piano and vocal
Charlie (Charley) Patton, guitar and vocal

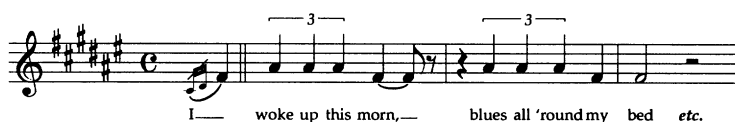
The Session Takes

"All Night Long Blues" (Louise Johnson). 12-bar blues; vocal interjections
only from Brown, House, and Patton

a. L-389-1; ♩ = ca. 128; 3:02

Choruses: Johnson piano; vocal (4); piano; vocal (2); coda (2 mm.)

Beginning of Johnson's first vocal chorus



I — woke up this morn,— blues all 'round my bed etc.

Beginning of Johnson's second vocal chorus



Well mm — pret-ty near all night long — etc.

Note: Incipits transcribed at recorded pitch; the performance more likely was played in the key of F or G major

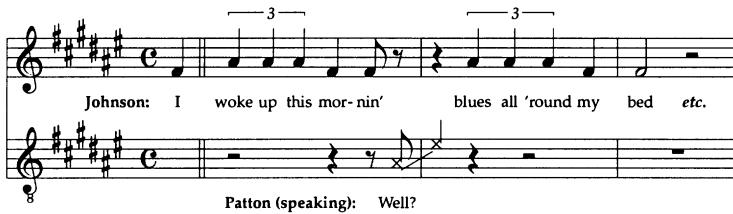
Issues: Paramount 12992, Document DLP 532, Document DOCD-5157, Magpie PY4401, OJL-11, Roots RSE-5

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Taft 1983, 144

b. L-398-2; ♩ = ca. 128; 2:56

Choruses: introduction; Johnson vocal (6); coda

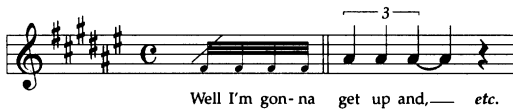
Beginning of Johnson's first vocal chorus



Johnson: I woke up this mor-nin' blues all 'round my bed *etc.*

Patton (speaking): Well?

Beginning of Johnson's second vocal chorus



Well I'm gon-na get up and,— *etc.*

Note: Incipits transcribed at recorded pitch; the performance more likely was played in the key of F or G major

Issues: Document DLP 532, Document DOCD 5321

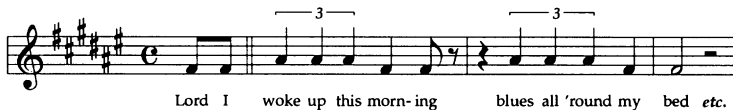
"Long Ways from Home" (Louise Johnson). 12-bar blues; vocal interjections only from Brown, House, and Patton

a. L-399-1; unissued, presumably lost

b. L-399-2; ♩ = ca. 128; 3:27

Choruses: introduction (4 mm.); Johnson vocal (4); piano; vocal; coda

Beginning of Johnson's first vocal chorus



Lord I woke up this morn-ing blues all 'round my bed *etc.*

Beginning of Johnson’s second vocal chorus



Now ——— now now now now, I cried like a new-born child *etc.*

Note: Incipits transcribed at recorded pitch; the performance more likely was played in the key of F or G major. It also is likely that the session was stopped at this point so that problems with the recording equipment could be corrected.

Issues: Paramount, 12992, Document DLP 532, Document DOCD-5157, Magpie PY4417, Milestone MLP 2018, OJL-11, Roots RSE-5, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Taft 1983, 144

Matrix numbers L-400 to L-402 are untraced, L-403 and L-404 are performances by the Broadway Military Band (Vreede and Van Rijn 1996, 73), and L-405 to L-407 are untraced

“My Black Mama I” (Eddie “Son” House Jr.). 12-bar blues; based on a melody learned from James McCoy near Lyon, Mississippi; performed by House alone

a. L-408-1; unissued, presumably lost

b. L-408-2; ♩ = ca. 112; 3:05

Choruses: introduction (4 mm.); House vocal (8)

Beginning of House’s first vocal chorus



Oh, ——— black ma- ma what's the mat- ter with you said if it ain't sat- is- fac- to- ry don't care *etc.*

Issues: Paramount 13042, Biograph BLP-12040, Document DOCD 5002, Flyright LP 102, OJL-2, Roots RSE-5, Wolf WSE 116, Yazoo L-1073, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1972; Anonymous 1990; Givens and Evans, n.d.; Groom 1967, 19–20; Grossman, Grossman, and

Calt 1973, 92–93; Macleod 1992, 422; Macleod 1994, 25; Sackheim 1969, 204–205; Taft 1983, 112; Tilton 1977a, 118–120

Melodic transcriptions: Basiuk 1976, 47 (guitar accompaniment only); Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 92 (first vocal chorus only); Tilton 1977a, 119–120 (second and fifth vocal choruses only)

Note: Charters's lyric transcription (1963, 10) is of House's 1942 Library of Congress recording

"My Black Mama II" (Eddie "Son" House Jr.). 12-bar blues; based on a melody learned from James McCoy near Lyon, Mississippi; performed by House alone

a. L-409-1; unissued, presumably lost

b. L-409-2; ♩ = ca. 112; 3:12

Choruses: introduction (4 mm.); House vocal (7)

Beginning of House's first vocal chorus

Well I sol-'mly swear Lord I raise my right hand— Lord *etc.*

Beginning of House's second vocal chorus

I got a let-ter— this mor-ning how do you re-ckon it read? *etc.*

Issues: Paramount 13042, Biograph BLP-12040, Document DOCD 5002, Flyright LP 102, OJL-2; Roots RSE-5, Wolf WSE 116, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1972; Anonymous 1990; Givens and Evans n.d.; Groom 1967, 20; Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 93; Mcleod 1994, 25–26; Sackheim 1969, 205–206; Taft 1983, 112

Note: Charters's lyric transcription (1963, 10) is of House's 1942 Library of Congress recording

“Preachin’ the Blues I” (Eddie “Son” House Jr.). 12-bar blues; based on a melody learned from James McCoy near Lyon, Mississippi; performed by House alone

a. L-410-1; ♩ = ca. 112; 2:59

Choruses: House vocal (6)

Beginning of House’s first vocal chorus

Oh I'm gon-na - get me re-li-gion- I'm gon-na join the Bap-tist Church—

Issues: Paramount 13013, Biograph BLP-12040, Document DOCD 5002, OJL-5, Rhino R2 71130, Roots RSE-5, Wolf WSE 116, Yazoo L-1073, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1972; Anonymous 1990; Anonymous n.d.; Charters 1967, 63; Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 185; Macleod 1992, 419; Macleod 1994, 26–27; Oakley 1976, 218 (first four choruses); Palmer 1981, 80; “Preachin’ the Blues” 1965; Sackheim 1969, 212–213; Taft 1983, 112

Melodic transcriptions: Basiuk 1976, 50–51 (guitar accompaniment only); Charters 1967, 64 (first vocal chorus only); Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 185 (first vocal chorus only); “Preachin’ the Blues” 1965 (sixth vocal chorus only)

“Preachin’ the Blues II” (Eddie “Son” House Jr.). 12-bar blues; based on a melody learned from James McCoy near Lyon, Mississippi; performed by House alone

a. L-411-1; ♩ = ca, 100; 2:47

Choruses: House vocal (5)

Beginning of House’s first vocal chorus

Hey - I'm gon-na fold - my arms - I'm go-ing to kneel down in prayer etc.

Issues: Paramount 13013, Biograph BLP-12040, Document DOCD 5002, OJL-5, Rhino R2 71130, Roots RSE-5, Wolf WSE 116, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1972; Anonymous 1990; Anonymous n.d.; Charters 1967, 63–64; Macleod 1994, 27; Palmer 1981, 80–81; “Preachin’ the Blues” 1965; Sackheim 1969, 213; Taft 1983, 112

Matrix L-412 is untraced

“M & O Blues” (Willie Brown). 12-bar blues; melody based on “Pony Blues” (Charlie Patton); performed by Brown alone

- a. L-413-1; unissued, presumably lost
- b. L-413-2; ♩ = ca. 80; 3:03

Choruses: Brown vocal (5); coda

Beginning of Brown’s first vocal chorus



Issues: Paramount 13090, Champion 50023, Document DOCD 5002, Flyright LP 102, OJL-5, Roots RSE-5, Wolf WSE 116, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 176; Macleod 1994, 29; Sackheim 1969, 202; Taft 1983, 41; Titon 1997a, 94–95

Melodic transcriptions: Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 176 (first vocal chorus only); Titon 1977a, 95 (fourth vocal chorus only; voice only), 149–150 (fourth vocal chorus only; voice and guitar)

Matrix numbers L-414 to L-417 are untraced; although Vreede and Van Rijn (1996, 73) ascribed to L-415 an unissued, presumably lost “Grandma Blues” by Willie Brown

“Future Blues” (Willie Brown). 12-bar blues; melody based on “Maggie”/“Screamin’ and Hollerin’ the Blues” (Charlie Patton); performed by Brown alone

- a. L-418-1; unissued, presumably lost
- b. L-418-2; ♩ = ca. 112; 2:54

Choruses: introduction; Brown (6)

Beginning of Brown's first vocal chorus



Issues: Paramount 13090, Champion 50023, Document DOCD-5002, Flyright LP 102, Milestone MLP 2016, OJL-5, Rhino R2 71130, Roots RSE-5, Wolf WSE 116, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 102; Macleod 1994, 29–30; Sackheim 1969, 201; Taft 1983, 41

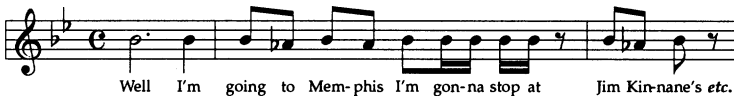
Melodic transcription: Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 102 (second vocal chorus only)

“On the Wall” (Louise Johnson). 12-bar blues; melody based on “Cow Cow Blues” (Charles “Cow Cow” Davenport); performed by Johnson alone

a. L-419-1; ♩ = ca. 112; 3:02

Choruses: Johnson piano; vocal (2); piano; vocal (2); piano; coda

Beginning of Johnson's first vocal chorus



Issues: Paramount 13008, Disques Pierre Cardin 93518, Document DLP 532, Document DOCD-5157, London 3544, Magpie PY4417, Milestone MLP 2009, RBF RF12, Rhino R2 71130, Riverside RLP 1052, Riverside RLP 12-153, Riverside RM 8009, Roots RSE-5, Yazoo 2002, Yazoo L-1028

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Macleod 1992, 76–77; Sackheim 1969, 35; Taft 1983, 144

“By the Moon and Stars” (Louise Johnson). 12-bar blues; melody based on or same as “The Forty-Fours”/“Vicksburg Blues” (Eurreal Montgomery); performed by Johnson alone

a. L-420-1; unissued, presumably lost

b. L-420-2; ♩ = ca. 96; 2:48

Choruses: introduction; Johnson vocal (2); piano; vocal; coda

Beginning of Johnson's first vocal chorus

I saw that old pale moon go down etc.

Issues: Paramount 13008, Document DLP 532, Document DOCD-5157, London 3544, Magpie PY4417, Milestone MLP 2018, Riverside RLP 1052, Roots RSE-5

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Taft 1983, 114

Matrix numbers L-421 to L-424 are untraced

"Dry Spell Blues I" (Eddie "Son" House Jr.). 12-bar blues; performed by House alone

a. L-425-1; unissued, presumably lost

b. L-425-2; unissued, presumably lost

c. L-425-3; unissued, presumably lost

d. L-425-4; ♩ = ca. 112; 3:07

Choruses: House vocal (6); coda

Beginning of House's first vocal chorus

Them dry spell blues have fall'n drive me from door to door etc.

Issues: Paramount 12990, Biograph BLP-12040, Document DOCD-5002, OJL-11, Roots RSE-5, Smithsonian/Sony RD101, Wolf WSE 116, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1972; Anonymous 1990; Charters 1967, 62; Givens and Evans 1968; Groom, Grainger, and Griffiths 1966, 22; Macleod 1994, 27–28; Taft 1983, 112–113; Titon 1977a, 121–122

Melodic transcriptions: Basiuk 1976, 48–49 (guitar accompaniment only); Titon 1977a, 121–122 (fifth vocal chorus only)

“Dry Spell Blues II” (Eddie “Son” House Jr.). 12-bar blues; performed by House alone

a. L-426-1; unissued, presumably lost

b. L-426-2; ♩ = ca. 112; 3:10

Choruses: House vocal (6); coda

Beginning of House’s first vocal chorus

It have been so dry

you can make a pow-der house out o' the world *etc.*

Issues: Paramount 12990, Biograph BLP-12040, Document DOCD-5002, OJL-11, Roots RSE-5, Wolf WSE 116, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1972; Anonymous 1990; Charters 1967, 62; Givens and Evans 1968; Groom, Grainger, and Griffiths 1966, 22–23; Macleod 1994, 28; Sacré 1987, 98; Taft 1983, 113

Matrix numbers L-427 to L-428 are untraced

“Dry Well Blues” (Charlie Patton). 12-bar blues; melody based on “Pony Blues” (Charlie Patton); Brown joins on second guitar

a. L-429-1; unissued, presumably lost

b. L-429-2; ♩ = ca. 96; 3:16

Choruses: introduction (2 mm.); Patton vocal (6)

Beginning of Patton’s first vocal chorus

Way— down in Lu-la I was liv - ing at ease *etc.*

Issues: Paramount 13070, Black Swan HCD-21/22, Document DOCD-5011, OJL-7, Pea Vine PCD-2255/6/7, Yazoo L-1020, Yazoo 2010

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Calt and Wardlow 1988, 207 (first, fourth, and sixth vocal choruses only); Calt et al., n.d.; Fahey 1970, 97–98; Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 204; Macleod 1988, 290; O’Neal 1993; Sacré 1987, 197; Taft 1983, 213
 Melodic transcriptions: Fahey 1970, 97–98 (first three vocal choruses only); Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 204 (first vocal chorus only)

Matrix L-430 is untraced

“Some Summer Day” (Charlie Patton). 8-bar blues; melody and selected lyrics from “Sitting on Top of the World” (Armenter “Bo” Chatmon and Walter Vinson); Brown joins on second guitar

a. L-431-1; ♩ = ca. 96; 2:51

Choruses: Patton (4); Patton guitar; Patton vocal (2); Patton guitar; Patton vocal

Beginning of Patton’s first vocal chorus

It was in the spring, one sum-mer day etc.

Issues: Paramount 13080, Black Swan HCD-21/22, Document DOCD-5011, Pea Vine PCD-2255/6/7, Yazoo 2001

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Calt and Wardlow 1988, 22 (first and last vocal choruses only); Macleod 1994, 98; O’Neal 1993

“Moon Going Down” (Charlie Patton). 12-bar blues; melody based on “Maggie”/“Screamin’ and Hollerin’ the Blues” (Charlie Patton); Brown joins on second guitar

a. L-432-1; ♩ = ca. 96; 3:11

Choruses: Patton vocal (6)

Beginning of Patton’s first vocal chorus

Aw that moon has gone down ba-by— North Star 'bout to shine etc.

Issues: Paramount 13014, Black Swan HCD-21/22, Document DOCD-5011, OJL-1, Pea Vine PCD-2255/6/7, Yazoo L-1020, Yazoo 2010

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Calt and Wardlow 1988, 34–35 (first two vocal choruses), 60 (third vocal chorus), 334 (complete); Calt et al. n.d.; Fahey 1970, 98; Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 150; Macleod 1988, 291; O’Neal 1993; Palmer 1981, 84; Sackheim 1969, 192; Taft 1983, 213–214

Melodic transcriptions: Calt and Wardlow 1988, 334 (first vocal chorus only); Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 150 (first vocal chorus only)

“Bird Nest Bound” (Charlie Patton). 12-bar blues; melody based on “Maggie”/“Screamin’ and Hollerin’ the Blues” (Charlie Patton); Brown joins on second guitar

a. L-433-1; ♩ = ca. 84; 3:06

Choruses: Patton vocal (6)

Beginning of Patton’s first vocal chorus

Come on ma-ma Spoken: to the edge of town etc.

Issues: Paramount 13070, Black Swan HCD-21/22, Document DOCD-5011, OJL-7, Pea Vine PCD-2255/6/7, Yazoo L-1020, Yazoo 2010

Lyric transcriptions: Anonymous 1990; Calt and Wardlow 1988, 35–36 (third vocal chorus only), 330 (complete); Calt et al. n.d.; Fahey 1970, 98–99; Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 83; Macleod 1988, 292; O’Neal 1993; Palmer 1981, 85; Sackheim 1969, 188; Taft 1983, 214

Melodic transcriptions: Calt and Wardlow 1988, 330 (first vocal chorus only); Grossman, Grossman, and Calt 1973, 83 (first vocal chorus only)

“Walking Blues” (Eddie “Son” House Jr.). 12-bar blues; either Brown or Patton join House in this performance

a. 9/2 #1; ♩ = ca. 88; 2:54

Choruses: introduction (2 mm.); House vocal (5); coda

Beginning of House’s first vocal chorus



I got the blues so bad that it hurts my— tongue— to talk etc.

Issues: Document DLP 532, Document DOCD-5002, Yazoo 2002

Lyric transcription: Macleod 1994, 28–29

APPENDIX B

Discography

A. Paramount label issues

12990-A	Dry Spell Blues I	L-425-4
-B	Dry Spell Blues I	L-426-2
12992-A	All Night Long Blues	L-398-1
-B	Long Ways from Home	L-399-2
13008-A	On the Wall	L-419-1
-B	By the Moon and Stars	L-420-2
13013-A	Preachin' the Blues I	L-410-1
-B	Preachin' the Blues II	L-411-1
13014-A	Moon Going Down	L-423-1
-B	Going to Move to Alabama	L-37-1*
13042-A	My Black Mama I	L-408-2
-B	My Black Mama II	L-409-2
13070-A	Bird Nest Bound	L-433-1
-B	Dry Well Blues	L-429-2
13080-A	Jim Lee Blues I	L-57-2*
-B	Some Summer Day I	L-431-1
13090-A	M & O Blues	L-413-2 [†]
-B	Future Blues	L-418-2 [†]
13096	Clarksdale Moan	Untraced
	Mississippi County Farm Blues	Untraced

*Recorded by Patton with Henry Sims (violin) at Grafton, Wisconsin, in October 1929.

† Also issued on Champion 50023.

13099	Kicking in My Sleep Blues Window Blues	Untraced Untraced
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13111†

†Paramount 13111 is an issue of two Skip James recordings, "What Am I to Do Blues" (L-764-1) and "Drunken Spree" (L-758-2). However, Vreede (1971, item number 13111) ascribed "What Am I to Do Blues" to Son House.

B. Reissues

Biograph BLP-12040. *Son House—Blind Lemon Jefferson*. 1972.

Black Swan HCD-21/22. *The voice of the Delta: The complete recordings of Charley Patton*. 1994.

Disques Pierre Cardin 93518.

Document DLP 532. *Delta blues, vol. 1 (1929–1930): The unissued Paramount tests of Charley Patton, Son House, Tommy Johnson, Ishman Bracey, and the complete Louise Johnson*. [1988].

Document DOCD 5002. *Son House and the great Delta blues singers*. 1990.

Document DOCD 5011. *Charley Patton: Complete recorded works in chronological order, vol. 3*.

Document DOCD 5157. *Mississippi blues (1928–1937), vol. 1*. 1993.

Document DOCD 5321. *"Too late, too late": More newly discovered titles and alternate takes, vol. 4*.

Flyright LP 102. *Deep south country blues*.

London 3544. *Boogie woogie with the blues*.

Magpie PY4401. *"Whip it to a jelly."* The Piano Blues, vol. 1. 1977.

Magpie PY4417. *"Raised in the alley."* The Piano Blues, vol. 17. 1982.

Milestone MLP 2009. *Boogie woogie rarities 1927–1932*.

Milestone MLP 2016. *The blues tradition (1927–1932)*.

Milestone MLP-2018. *Pitchin' boogie: A second collection of boogie woogie rarities*. 1971.

Origin Jazz Library OJL-1. *The immortal Charlie Patton*.

Origin Jazz Library OJL-2. *Really! The country blues*.

Origin Jazz Library OJL-5. *The Mississippi blues, 1927–1940*.

Origin Jazz Library OJL-7. *The immortal Charlie Patton, number 2: 1887–1934*.

Origin Jazz Library OJL-11. *The Mississippi blues, no. 2: The Delta 1929–32*.

Pea Vine PCD-2250. *The legendary Delta blues session*.

Pea Vine PCD-2255/6/7. *Charley Patton: The complete recorded works*.

RBF [Record, book, and film] RF 12. *Piano blues*.

Rhino R2 71130. *Blues masters: The essential blues collection*. Vol. 8, Mississippi Delta Blues.

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- Riverside RLP 12-153. *Piano, brass and blues: A collection of classic blues accompaniments.*
- Riverside RLP 1052. *Boogie woogie: Classic blues accompaniments.*
- Riverside RM 8809. *Piano blues.*
- Roots Special Edition RSE-5. *Legendary sessions Delta style: The famous 1930 Paramount recordings in chronological order.* (Includes only the Louise Johnson, Son House, and Willie Brown takes.)
- Smithsonian/Sony RD101. *The blues: A Smithsonian collection of classic blues singers.* 1993.
- Wolf WSE 116. *Giants of country blues, vol. 1 (1927–32).*
- Yazoo 2001. *King of the Delta blues: The music of Charlie Patton.* 1991.
- Yazoo 2002. *Masters of the Delta blues: The friends of Charlie Patton.* 1991.
- Yazoo 2010. *Charlie Patton: Founder of the Delta blues 1929–34.*
- Yazoo L-1020. *Charley Patton: Founder of the Delta blues.*
- Yazoo L-1028. *Barrelhouse blues, 1927–1936.*
- Yazoo L-1073. *The roots of Robert Johnson.*