

**The**  
**TENORSAX**  
**of**  
**GREELY WALTON**

Solographer: Jan Evensmo  
Last update: June 25, 2012

Born: Mobile, Alabama, Oct. 4, 1905  
Died: Oct. 9, 1993

*Introduction:*

Greely Walton was one of the early tenorsax players with a strong, personal style. Listening to his recordings with Henry "Red" Allen from 1930, it is obvious that he must not be forgotten!

*History:*

Began on violin at the age of 12, attended school in St. Louis and Pittsburgh, then musical studies at New York University, switched to tenorsax. Worked with Elmer Snowden (1926), Henri Saparo (1927-28), Benny Carter (1929). With Luis Russell from 1930, remained to work under Louis Armstrong until 1937. With Vernon Andrade and his Renaissance Orchestra from 1938. Briefly with Horace Henderson from September 1941, then (on baritone sax) with Cootie Williams (1942-43), Cab Calloway (1943-45). (Ref. John Chilton).

## GREELY WALTON SOLOGRAPHY

**KING OLIVER AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 16, 1929**

King Oliver (dir), Louis Metcalf (cnt), J.C. Higginbotham (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, sop, as), Greely Walton or Teddy Hill (cl, ts), Luis Russell (p), Will Johnson (bjo, g), Bass Moore (tu), Paul Barbarin (dm), Walter Pichon (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Victor, two issued, no tenorsax soli.

**NYC. Feb. 1, 1929**

Similar/same personnel, definitely Greely Walton (ts).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, three issued, one item (a remake of the reject from previous session) has GW:

49649-3 Freakish Light Blues Solo 12 bars. (SM)

49649-4 Freakish Light Blues As above. (SM)

Nice, but almost sweet playing, and although well conceived, not too exciting.

On May 15, 1929, GW is present at a recording session with **BESSIE SMITH**. Two titles were made, but no tenorsax soli.

**JACK PURVIS AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. May 1, 1930**

Jack Purvis (tp), J.C. Higginbotham (tb, vo-403994), Greely Walton (ts), Adrian Rollini (bsx), Frank Froeba (p), Will Johnson (g), Charles Kegley (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Columbia, two have GW:

403993-A When You're Feelin' Blue Solo 8 bars. (SM)

403994-A Be Bo Bo Solo 16 bars. (FM)

Quite typical and good but no great soli on "Be Bo Bo" and "... Blue". However, the session as a whole is beautiful and should not be missed by anybody!

Then with Luis Russell from 1930, remained to work under Louis Armstrong until 1937.

**LUIS RUSSELL AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. May 29, 1930**

GW may have replaced Teddy Hill already, but the three recorded sides cannot confirm it, as they have no tenorsax.

**HENRY ALLEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. July 15, 1930**

Henry Allen (tp, vo), Otis Johnson (tp), Jimmy Archey (tb), Albert Nicholas (cl, as), Charlie Holmes (cl, sop, as), Greely Walton (ts), Luis Russell (p, cel), Will Johnson (bjo, g), Ernest Hill (tu), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, two have tenorsax:

62344-1 Singing Pretty Songs Solo 16 bars. (FM)

62344-2 Singing Pretty Songs As above. (FM)

62346-1 I Fell In Love With You Solo 32 bars. (FM)

62346-2 I Fell In Love With You As above. (FM)

These are very nice and personal soli! Personally I have a particular weakness for his playing on "I Fell ...", with an unusually powerful vibrato and a direct, eager style, but also "... Songs" is nice. And it is evident from the alternate takes that he improvises to satisfaction.

**LUIS RUSSELL AND HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Sept. 5, 1930**

Henry Allen, Otis Johnson (tp), J.C. Higginbotham (tb), Albert Nicholas (cl, sop, as), Charlie Holmes (sop, as), Greely Walton (ts), Luis Russell (p, ldr), Will Johnson (bjo, g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm).

Three titles were recorded for Okeh, all have tenorsax:

404428-B Muggin' Lightly In ensemble to solo 4 bars. (FM)

404429-A Panama Solo 16 bars. (F)

404430-B High Tension Brief break. (FM)

**NYC. Oct. 24, 1930**

Same. Dick Robertson (vo-34924,35026).

Three titles recorded for Melotone, two rejected, the third has tenorsax:

E-35025 I Got Rhythm Solo 8 bars. (FM)

**NYC. Dec. 17, 1930**

Same, plus unknown (tp), Vic Dickenson (vo-35760).

Three titles recorded for Vocalion/Brunswick, two have tenorsax:

E-35758-C Saratoga Drag Solo 8 bars. (FM)

E-35759-C Ease On Down Solo 32 bars.  
Solo with orch 16 bars. (F)

Among the Okeh recordings, "Panama" contains one of GW's most memorable soli, with a fine drive, original concepts and a personal, very strong vibrato. Note also a nice little solo on "... Lightly".

**LUIS RUSSELL AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Aug. 28, 1931**

Henry Allen (tp, vo-70195), Robert Cheek, Gus Aiken (tp), Dicky Wells (tb), Albert Nicholas (cl, as), Henry Jones (as), Greely Walton (ts), Luis Russell (p, ldr), Will Johnson (g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib), Chick Bullock (vo-70196/97).

Four titles were recorded for Victor, two have tenorsax:

70195-1 You Rascal You Solo 14 bars. Break 2 bars. (F)

70196-1 Goin' To Town Solo with orch 8 bars. (FM)

A fine and personal solo is to be found on "You Rascal You", while "... Town" is less significant.

**LUIS RUSSELL AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Aug. 8, 1934**

Leonard Davis, Gus Aiken (tp), Rex Stewart (cnt), Nathaniel Story, Jimmy Archey (tb), Henry Jones, Charlie Holmes (cl, as), Bingie Madison, Greely Walton (cl, ts), Luis Russell (p, ldr), Lee Blair (g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib), Sonny Woods, The Palmer Brothers (vo).

Six titles recorded for Melotone et al, the three arranged by Bingie Madison have tenorsax soli. Two are certainly by Bingie, but one may possibly be GW:

15574-1 Hokus Pokus Possibly solo 16+8 bars,  
(tp) on bridge. (FM)

It is three years since the previous GW solo, and therefore solo identification may be in error. However, I feel that the solo on "Hokus Pokus" is similar to what we know from GW, and that the other tenorsax items on the session are played in a slightly different style, thus BM.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS ORCHESTRA NYC. Oct. 3, 1935**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Leonard Davis, Gus Aiken, Louis Bacon (tp), Harry White, Jimmy Archey (tb), Henry Jones, Charlie Holmes (as), Bingie Madison (cl, ts), Greely Walton (ts), Luis Russell (p), Lee Blair (g), Pops Foster (b), Paul Barbarin (dm, vib).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, one has GW:

60024-A Got A Bran' New Suit As below. (M)

60024-B Got A Bran' New Suit Solo 16 bars. (M)

**NYC. Nov. 21, 1935**

Same. Four titles were recorded, but no GW.

**NYC. Dec. 13, 1935**

Same. Two titles were recorded, but no GW.

**NYC. Dec. 19, 1935**

Same. Four titles were recorded, one has GW:

60252-B I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music Solo 8 bars. (FM)

60252-C I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music As above. (FM)

**NYC. Jan. 18, 1936**

Same. Two titles were recorded, but no GW.

**NYC. April 28/29, 1936**

Same, except Snub Mosley (tb) replaces Archey.  
Three titles were recorded, but no GW.

**NYC. May 18, 1936**

Same personnel, except Jimmy Archey (tb) replaces White.  
Six titles were recorded, one has GW:

61111-A Mahogany Hall Stomp

Solo 12 bars. (FM)

Note: Several airshots from this period but no tenorsax soli found.

Louis introduces Greely on "... Gabriel ...", but his rough, personal style is easily identifiable without help. He plays good on this one, but "Mahogany ..." is perhaps the best item. In "... Suit" it seems he got some problems by reaching for more than he could grasp, note however that the two takes are rather different.

No further recording sessions.

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