

**The**  
**TROMBONE**  
**of**  
**HENRY HICKS**

Solographers: Jan Evensmo & Ola Rønnow  
Last update: March 15, 2015

Born: Birmingham, Alabama, ca. 1904  
Died: NYC. ca. 1950

*Introduction:*

Henry Hicks is mostly known for his excellent trombone playing with the Mills Blue Rhythm Band. Since he disappeared from view as early as in 1934, he is mostly forgotten today, and it is important to get him out of oblivion with this solography.

*History:*

Attended Wilberforce College, played in Edgar Hayes' Blue Grass Buddies (ca. 1924), then regularly in Horace Henderson's Collegians from 1925-28. With Benny Carter's band in 1929, briefly with Bingie Madison, then with Mills Blue Rhythm Band from 1930 until 1934 (ref. John Chilton).

*Message:*

Note that I (JE) have used extensively "Mills Blue Rhythm Band – A Discography and Solography by Frank Dutton, Nigel Haslewood, Martin Richards and Eric Townley with assistance from Peter Carr and John Hart", printed in Storyville no. 108/109 (1983).

## HENRY HICKS SOLOGRAPHY

**CLARENCE WILLIAMS' ORCHESTRA** **NYC. Jan. 15, 1930**

Ed Anderson (tp), possibly Henry Hicks (tb), possibly Ben Whitted or Cecil Scott, Russell Procope (cl, as), Arville Harris (cl, ts), James P. Johnson, possibly Clarence Williams (p), Cyrus St. Clair (tu), Floyd Casey (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Okeh, both have trombone soli:

403630-B Left Alone With The Blues Solo/straight 16 bars. (M)

403631-A I've Found A New Baby Solo 16+8 bars, (as) on bridge. (F)

This session is introduced as a Postscript of Jan. 3, 2015, personnel suggested by K.-B. Rau. The trombonist has hitherto been known as 'unknown', and aurally the suggestion that he could be Henry Hicks is very good. Particularly "... Baby" is interesting with a fine improvised solo. Any comments will be welcomed.

**MUSICAL STEVEDORES** **NYC. Jan. 30, 1929**

Louis Metcalf (tp), Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, as) Cliff Jackson (p, cymbal), Elmer Snowden (bjo), Bud Hicks (tu, scat vo).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

147899-3 Happy Rhythm Soli 14 and 8 bars (mute). (M)

147900-3 Honeycomb Harmony Solo 6 bars (mute). (SM)

Henry Hicks' first recording session shows that he is one of the better performers on the trombone at the end of the roaring twenties. His solo work particularly on "Happy ..." is clean and professional.

**JUNGLE TOWN STOMPERS** **NYC. April 15, 1929**

Louis Metcalf (tp), Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, as), Luis Russell (p, cel), Elmer Snowden (bjo), Henry "Bass" Edwards (tu, perc), Kaiser Marshall (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Okeh:

401797-C African Jungle Solo 14 bars (open). (M)

401798-B Slow As Molasses Solo 12 bars (open). (SM)

Competent soloing, this time without mute, but rather straight forward without much colour, most interesting is "... Jungle". Can we be sure about this personnel? This seems to be a Luis Russell group, and it is somewhat surprising to see Hicks listed in Rust instead of J. C. Higginbotham, who was the trombonist in Russell's band at the time, and who recorded with Russell both before and after this date. Admittedly, the trombone playing sounds rather stiff and modest to be Higgy, but the actual sound is not unlike him. Could it be Higgy on a less inspired day? It would be interesting to know Rust's sources for suggesting Hicks. Postscript of March 15, 2015: Rau states categorically that this is not a Luis Russell group but associated with Elmer Snowden.

**SIX SCRAMBLED EGGS** **NYC. April 18, 1929**

Probable personnel: Louis Metcalf (cnt), Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl), Spencer Williams (p), Elmer Snowden (bjo), Bass Moore (tu), Paul Barbarin (dm), Jasper Davis, Ken Macomber (dir).

Two titles were recorded for Victor, rejected.

**JASPER DAVIS & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. April 23, 1929**

Louis Metcalf (cnt), Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, as), probably J. C. Johnson (p), Elmer Snowden (bjo), Bass Moore (tu), Lizzie Miles (vo).

Two titles were recorded for Harmony:

148465-3 Georgia Gigolo Solo 16 bars (mute). (M)

148468-2 It Feels So Good Solo 12 bars (mute). (M)

Confident playing here, particularly on "... Gigolo", and although there are some fluffs on "... Good", we can hear the traces of a personal performer. Also here the personnel can be questioned, although it is listed in Rust, where is the evidence?

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS ORCHESTRA** **NYC. April 5, 1930**

Louis Armstrong (tp, vo), Ed Anderson (tp), Henry Hicks (tb), Bobby Holmes, Theodore McCord (cl, as), Castor McCord (cl, ts), Joe Turner, Buck Washington (p), unknown (vib), Bernard Addison (g), Lavert Hutchinson (tu), Willie Lynch (dm, ldr). This is in fact Mills Blue Rhythm Band (see below), fronted by Louis.

Two titles were recorded for Okeh, one has HH:

403897-A I Can't Believe That YILWM Straight 14 bars (open). (M)

**NYC. May 4, 1930**

Same. Four titles, three have HH:

404000-B Exactly Like You Straight 8 bars (mute). (SM)

404001-C Dinah Break to solo 16 bars (open). (F)

404002-B Tiger Rag Solo 16 bars (open). (F)

Although not exactly remarkable, HH shows that he can be close to the level of the most important trombone players, he plays competently in high tempo, and a few fluffs on "Dinah" and "Tiger Rag" do not really matter.

**MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND**

**NYC. Jan. 30, 1931**

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson (tp), Harry White, Henry Hicks (tb), Castor McCord (cl, ts), Ted McCord (cl, as), Crawford Wethington (cl, as, bar), Edgar Hayes (p), Benny James (bjo), Hayes Alvis (b), Willie Lynch (dm), Dick Robertson (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Brunswick/Vocalion, two have HH:

35985-B Straddle The Fence Straight intro (open). (M)

35987-A Moanin' Solo 8 bars (mute). (SM)

**NYC. March 23, 1931**

Same. Issued as **KING CARTER & HIS ROYAL ORCHESTRA**.

Three titles were recorded for Columbia, two issued, one has HH:

151455-1 Blues In My Heart Straight 16 bars (mute). (M)

**NYC. April 28, 1931**

Same with George Morton (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Melotone, three have HH:

36665-A Minnie The Moocher Obbligato 8 bars (mute). (SM)

36666 Blue Rhythm Soli/straight 8 and 14 bars (open). (F)

36668-A Red Devil Solo 16 bars (open). (FM)

The basis of this solography was laid many years ago when I (Jan) heard "Blue Rhythm" and HH's trombone introduction for the first time. Then I realized we had another great and forceful trombonist who deserved our attention. Note also "Red Devil" with a strong and confident solo. These recordings are just beautiful, hot as hell and also with excellent trumpet soloing.

Note: We cannot always be completely sure whether Hicks or White takes the solo. The reference material is meagre, but White has some soli with Cab Calloway.

**MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND**

**NYC. May 1, 1931**

Personnel as above with Chick Bullock (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Banner, three issued, two have trombone, one by HH:

10590 Minnie The Moocher Solo 8 bars (open). (SM)

**NYC. May 12, 1931**

Same with George Morton (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Banner, three issued, two have HH:

10626-3 Low Down On The Bayou With orch. Break (open). (FM)

10628-2 Futuristic Jungleism Solo 8 bars (open). (FM)

**NYC. June 18, 1931**

Same. Three titles were recorded for Victor, one issued:

69963-1 Moanin' Solo 8 bars (mute). (SM)

**NYC. June 25, 1931**

Same. Issued as **KING CARTER & HIS ROYAL ORCHESTRA**.

Four titles were recorded for Columbia, three have HH:

151638-1 Moanin' Straight in orch (open). (S)

151639-1 Low Down On The Bayou With orch. Break (open). (FM)

151640-3 Blue Rhythm Straight 8 and 14 bars (open).  
Straight in orch (mute). (F)

**NYC. June 26, 1931**

Same with Chick Bullock (vo).  
Four titles were recorded for Victor, two issued:

69978-1 Heebie Jeebies Solo 18 bars (open). (FM)

69980-1 Minnie The Moocher Obligato parts (mute). (SM)

**NYC. July 31, 1931**

Same. Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, three have HH:

36992-A Savage Rhythm Soli 4, 4 and 4 bars (open). (M)

36994 Every Time I Look At You Soli 4 and 4 bars (mute). (SM)

36995-A Snake Hips Straight 4 bars. (FM)

Note primarily his fine solo on "... Jeebies"! Note also another version of "Blue Rhythm", similar but nevertheless with many differences. And the groove on "Savage ...", a coplay with clarinet and tenorsax. The MBRB is also steadily developing its swing abilities, dig this band!

**MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND**

**NYC. Feb. 25, 1932**

Shelton Hemphill, Wardell Jones, Ed Anderson (tp), Harry White, Henry Hicks (tb), Charlie Holmes (cl, as), Crawford Wethington (cl, as, bar), Joe Garland (cl, ts, bar, bsx), Edgar Hayes (p), Benny James (bjo, g), Hayes Alvis (b), O'Neil Spencer (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Banner, three issued:

11360-1 The Scat Song Solo with orch 8 bars (open). (F)

11363-1 Heat Waves Soli 2 and 4 bars (open). With orch 8 bars (mute). (SM)

11364-1 Doin' The Shake Solo with orch 8 bars.  
Solo 20 bars (open). (F)

**NYC. April 5, 1932**

Same. Two titles were recorded for Banner, one issued:

11651-A The Scat Song Solo 8 bars (open). (FM)

**NYC. April 27/28, 1932**

Same with Billy Banks (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Banner, three have trombone:

11751-1 Cabin In The Cotton Solo 8 bars (mute/growl). (M)

11767-1 The Growl Solo 12 bars (mute/growl). (M)

11788-1 Mighty Sweet Solo 8 bars (open). (FM)

**NYC. May 12, 1932**

Same. Four titles were recorded for Melotone, three have HH:

11823-1 Rhythm Spasm Soli 8 and 4 bars (growl). (F)

11825-1 White Lightning Soli 4, 4 and 4 bars (open). (F)

11826-1 Wild Waves Solo 16 bars (open). (SM)

11826-2 Wild Waves As above. (SM)

**NYC. Aug. 17, 1932**

Same except Gene Mikell (cl, as, bar) replaces Holmes.

Two titles were recorded for Banner:

12181-1 Sentimental Gentleman From Georgia Solo 6 bars (open). (FM)

12182-1 You Gave Me Everything But Love Solo 8 bars (mute). (M)

HH does not get very many solo opportunities except for the small bits and parts in his swinging organization, time is not ripe for extended individualism, only the great guys were permitted such frivolity. However, like in "... Lightning", we are highly satisfied with what we get, it swings!! In fact, there is probably no band swinging like this in 1932, or possibly Bennie Moten, or what do you think?

**BILLY BANKS & HIS ORCHESTRA****NYC. Aug. 18, 1932**

Unknown personnel with (tp), possibly Henry Hicks (tb), (cl, as), (as), (ts), (p), (g), (b), (dm), Billy Banks (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Victor,

- |         |                       |  |
|---------|-----------------------|--|
| 73306-1 | Oh! You Sweet Thing   | Solo 16+8 bars (mute),<br>(cl) on bridge. (FM) |
| 73307-1 | It Don't Mean A Thing | Solo 8 bars (open). (F)                        |
| 73309-1 | You Wonderful Thing   | Solo 8 bars (mute) with (vo). (M)              |

These fine trombone soli may be played by HH, the style is much the same to our ears, but how can we be certain?

**MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND****NYC. Aug. 26, 1932**

Personnel as MBRB above with Fats Waller (p-12203).

Two titles were recorded for Melotone:

- |         |            |  |
|---------|------------|--|
| 12203-1 | Old Yazoo  | Soli 8 and 4 bars (open). (FM)                               |
| 12204-2 | Reefer Man | Solo 16 bars (mute) to obligato<br>parts. Break (open). (FM) |

**NYC. Sept. 23, 1932**

Personnel as above except George Washington (tb) replaces White.

Three titles were recorded, two issued, one has HH:

- |         |             |  |
|---------|-------------|--|
| 12358-1 | Smoke Rings | Probably straight 16 and 8 bars<br>(mute) to coda. (S) |
|---------|-------------|--|

**1933**

Probably same personnel. Movieshort, one title has HH:

- |             |                                   |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Blue Rhythm | Solo/straight 16 bars (open). (F) |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|

**NYC. March 1, 1933**

Same. Three titles were recorded for Columbia, two have HH:

- |          |                          |                                     |
|----------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 265074-3 | Ridin' In Rhythm         | Solo with orch 32 bars (mute). (F)  |
| 265076-2 | Buddy's Wednesday Outing | Solo with orch 16 bars (mute). (FM) |

**NYC. Aug. 31, 1933**

Same. Four titles were recorded for Melotone, three issued, all have trombone soli, 'Storyville' assumes HH on two but this is doubtful. We think the relaxed and swinging solo on "... Martini" sounds like Hicks, while the soli on "Feelin' Gay" seem to be by George Washington. Note the typical Washington-phrase in bar 5:

- |         |              |   |
|---------|--------------|---|
| 13930-1 | Jazz Martini | Solo 16 + 8 bars (mute), (as) on bridge. (FM) |
| 13931-1 | Feelin' Gay  | Unlikely break and solo 8 bars. (FM)          |

**NYC. Oct. 5, 1933**

Same. Four titles were recorded for Victor, one has trombone solo but the guys in 'Storyville' must be in error here, Washington's favourite phrase crops up again in bar 9 and at the beginning of the last 8 bars:

- |         |           |  |
|---------|-----------|--|
| 78094-1 | Kokey Joe | Unlikely solo 16+8 bars, (p) on bridge. (FM) |
|---------|-----------|--|

**NYC. Dec. 4, 1933**

Same with Adelaide Hall (vo).

Three titles were recorded for Victor, two issued, but no HH.

**Chi. Feb. 20, 1934**

Same. Two titles were recorded for Bluebird, one has trombone solo, 'Storyville' has HH but we disagree; GW is recognizable by his use of the same phrase again in bar 9, and also by his problems with attacking the notes clearly, so characteristic of nearly all his soli:

- |         |           |                                    |
|---------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| 80279-1 | The Growl | Unlikely solo 12 bars (open). (FM) |
|---------|-----------|------------------------------------|

The Henry Hicks solography has come to an end. There are some good and quite long soli on the 1933 sessions, and we can only be sorry for his early goodbye to jazz. What happened to him?

No further recording sessions.

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