

JOSEPHINE "JOSLE" MILES

Born around 1900, in Summerville, South Carolina. Her early life is unknown, but she apparently moved to New York in the early 1920's. She recorded for the Black Swan label around 1922 and 1923. Appeared in various Black revues and touring companies for most of the 1920's, recording for Gennett, Ajax, Banner, Okeb and Edison during this time. By 1928, she is believed to have begun recording religious material, using the name "Sister Josephine Miles". In the early 1930's she had settled in Kansas City and her remaining years are believed to have been taken up there with Church activities. She supposedly died in an automobile accident sometime between 1953 and 1956 in Kansas City Missouri.

IRVING "MIFF" MOLE (Red & Miff's Stompers)

Started his musical career playing violin and accompanying silent pictures on the piano. He switched to trombone, and his career in jazz music began with Gus Sharp's Orchestra. He joined the Original Memphis Five and played on and off with them until 1924. In 1923 he met Red Nichols and went on to make many records with bands directed by Red Nichols or under the name of Miff Mole and his Little Molers. However in 1927 he started working as a studio and radio musician and played very little Jazz during the next decade. He joined the Paul Whiteman Orchestra in 1938, and toured with them until 1940.

He returned to small-group jazz in the mid-1940s playing with Eddie Condon and recording for Commodore. Miff Mole's health quickly declined in the 1950s and sadly, he was largely forgotten by the jazz world at the time of his death in 1961.

PHIL NAPOLEON

Born Fillippo Napoli in 1901, was a classically trained trumpet player, but instead of following the classics, and performing in grand concert halls, he and pianist Frank Signorelli formed The Original Memphis Five (also heard on this CD) in 1917. The band was one of the most popular and prolific of the 1920s and featured the trombone playing of Miff Mole. They recorded hundreds of records under their own name and a variety of a pseudonyms, most notably as: Bailey's Lucky Seven, Ladd's Black Aces, The Charleston Chasers and Napoleon's Emperors. The Original Memphis Five broke up in 1928 and Phil began making his living as a studio musician when in 1937 he formed his own orchestra. However, it didn't go anywhere and he soon returned to session and studio work.

In 1946 he got a call from Jimmy Dorsey who was in desperate need of a trumpet player, due to the draft. He joined him in California, but only stayed with the band until 1947. He then came back to New York and worked as a studio musician at NBC until 1950. He then re-formed The Original Memphis Five and played in New York City for the next six years. In 1956 Phil moved to Miami, Florida and opened his own club called Napoleon's Retreat where he continued to lead a band. Phil Napoleon died on September 13th, 1990, at age 89 at his home in North Miami.

RED NICHOLS (Red & Miff's Stompers)

Red Nichols' style of playing cornet was greatly influenced by Bix Beiderbecke, but he was a better overall musician and an excellent sight reader. Nichols learned to play music from his father, who was a college music teacher. After moving east from Utah he teamed up with a Midwestern band called The Syncopating Seven. After that band broke up he moved to New York in 1923. He soon teamed up with the trombonist Miff Mole and the two would go on to make a great many records together under a variety of names such as: Red Nichols & his Five Pennies, The Arkansas Travelers, The Louisiana Rhythm Kings and Miff Mole and his Little Molers. Usually these sessions featured the same or similar personnel. Red also did a series of recordings for Edison under the name of Red Nichols and his Five Pennies, as well as Red & Miff's Stompers. These sessions at first featured trombonist Miff Mole and Jimmy Dorsey on alto and clarinet and later in the decade other such greats as Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, and Jack Teagarden would also be featured in the lineup. The depression hit the Nichols band hard, but he survived by working in Broadway shows, and even lead the pit orchestra for two of George Gershwin's shows; "Girl Crazy" and "Strike Up the Band".

In 1934 Red fronted a band for Bob Hopes first radio show sponsored by Kellogg's Cereal. In 1959 Hollywood made a highly fictionalized picture of his life called "The Five Pennies", starring Danny Kaye. Red Nichols died in Las Vegas, Nevada in June 1965 at the age of 60.

THE ORIGINAL MEMPHIS FIVE

The Original Memphis Five was founded in 1917 by Phil Napoleon and Frank Signorelli after playing in dance bands together at Coney Island in New York. Their first record was actually released as an Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB) record with the blessing of Nick La Rocca. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band had just broken up after La Rocca's nervous breakdown in 1922 and Frank Signorelli was the only member of the Original Memphis Five who had been in the ODJB. They recorded under a variety of other names, such as Ladd's Black Aces, and Bailey's Lucky Seven. None of the band members were from Memphis or even the south! The band was named after WC Handy's song "Memphis Blues".

NOBLE SISSLE AND EUBIE BLAKE