Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of Will Marion Cook: Materials for a Biography

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This document is one in a series—"Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of"—devoted to a small number of African American musicians active ca. 1900-1950. The documents are fallout from my work on a pair of essays, "US Army Black Regimental Bands and The Appointments of Their First Black Bandmasters" (2013) and "Black US Army Bands and Their Bandmasters in World War I" (2012; rev. version, 2016). In all cases I have put into some kind of order a number of biographical research notes, principally drawing upon newspaper and genealogy databases. None of them is any kind of finished, polished document; all represent work in progress, complete with repetitions, missing data, and the occasional typographical error. I invite queries, amplifications, and corrections, which may be directed to plefferts1@unl.edu. The present document is a first draft of October 2017.

A biography of Will Marion Cook by Marva Carter, Swing Along (2008) is an excellent place to start for anyone interested in Cook. Carter relied heavily on Cook’s unpublished typescript autobiography, and interviewed family members. Bill Reed’s book chapter on Cook in Hot In Harlem (2010) is the best recent treatment of him at that length. The present effort extends their work principally by trolling through available electronically searchable newspaper databases. The material in this chronology will be supplemented in due course by a short series of on-line documents about particular aspects of Cook’s career, including brief synopses of the careers of other family members, his involvement with the “tab show,” his involvement with La revue nègre, his involvement with education, his involvement with a repertory company at the Lafayette Theatre, his involvement with writing and representing on stage the history of African American music, and a chronology of his shows and songs.

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COOK, WILL MARION (1869-1944)

January 27, 1869 - July 19, 1944

Born in Washington, DC; died in NYC; buried in Washington, DC.

Composer, conductor, arranger, orchestrator, producer, director, violinist, pianist, librettist and lyricist, author, educator. One of the foremost American musicians of his generation, and regarded by many in the African American community of his day as its leading composer. In contemporary eyes, an eccentric, irascible genius of great heart.
INTRODUCTION

Lester A. Walton, in NY Age, May 7, 1908, p. 6:

"Who is the foremost Negro composer in the United States?" . . . .
"There is but one correct answer." Will Marion Cook. And "he probably leads when it comes to eccentricity."

Salem Tutt Whitney writes the following in his "Timely Topics" column, under the heading "Impressions of Musicians" (Chicago Defender, October 11, 1930, p. 5):

"Will Marion Cooke [sic], musician and composer of some of our most popular songs and ensembles. Chorus director of high ability. Energetic, nervous, eccentric, sometimes brutally frank, nevertheless he's a friend of mine."

P. L. [Percival Leroy] Prattis (1895-1980), a well known and influential figure, was a journalist who worked at the Chicago Defender, etc., and then was executive editor of the Pittsburgh Courier from 1936 to 1965. In his column "The Horizon," in the Pittsburgh Courier, November 4, 1944, p. 7 [Old Fulton Postcards; also cited in Carter thesis, p. 175], Prattis wrote:

"I have heard Will Marion Cook lie until my head has swum. I liked the kind of lies he told. He was a gifted liar with no holds barred. But the lies he told hurt nobody. They helped him and they helped those who heard them, for he lied for beauty's sake. Grossness, ugliness, meanness all vanished under the spell of Cook's vivid imagination, his gift for coloring."

Composer and pianist Margaret Bonds provides the often-quoted remark that "Even now, when I write something for choir and it's jazzy and bluesy and spiritual and Tchaikovsky all rolled up into one, I laugh to myself, "That is Will Marion Cook"." This anecdote reminds us that the most interesting Cook music was in his ensemble writing (not his songs), most of which is gone. Regarding the lost choral and ensemble idiom of Cook, there is also the much earlier comparison to Dvorak, in respect to one of the Cannibal King projects: According to the Evansville Courier and Press, August 25, 1901, p. 5, in an article signed Phil H. Brown, it says the book of one particular project was furnished by Harry B. Smith, gives much information and a scenario,
and pronounces: "Now the announcement comes that Cook has written a genuine negro opera called the "Cannibal King" . . . . the music is of the kind that Dvorak laid down."

Not particularly a joiner, or not seen to be so, Cook was not, for example, a member of the Frogs and not a member of the Crescendo Club. But he was quite active in the Clef Club for over a decade, and he was an active participant in the 1914 Autumn Exposition, the 1934 Century of Progress pageant, etc.

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HIS NAME

Cook was baptized William Mercer Cook; William is his legal first name; he was named after his maternal grandfather; until early adulthood he is more often than not "Willie"; Mercer comes from his father's friend John Mercer Langston, also Oberlin-educated, the first Dean of the Law School at Howard; his middle name remains Mercer at least through the Oberlin years; he is William Mercer Cook in Oberlin registrations and William M. Cook on his 1887 passport.

Acc. the Carter bio, Cook changes his name to Will Marion Cook ca. 1890 to honor his mother (Marion was his mother Belle's middle name); Cook says in his memoir that the change was made in DC between Chattanooga time and Oberlin, so he would have been a youngster around 13 and was made in rejection of "Mercer" in favor of Marion, in a complaint to his mother, when Langston annoyed him over something (Cook memoir in Carter thesis, p. 390-91, 403-404; the Aveni thesis also cites Cook memoir that he gave up "Mercer" when his namesake said some things he disagreed with); Riis 1989 says he changed his middle name during his college years, which presumably could stretch through National Conservatory years; Aveni thesis (Rutgers 2004) says that Abbie filled out an Oberlin alumni record for Cook after his death and that there she says that he used Marion "after returning from Berlin" (and a vague reference to this testimony is in Carter thesis, p. 18).

In DC throughout the 1890s he is William M. Cook or Wm. M. Cook (and Will Marion Cook gets no hits in DC papers of that time); another combination to search is simply William Cook.
"Will Marion Cook" is mostly his preferred personal and professional name after 1900; only occasionally do newspapers later call him "William" instead of the near universal "Will."

Cook uses “Will Marion” as a pseudonym for one or more Clorindy publications; thus, sometimes the newspapers, esp. ca. 1898-1899, call him "Will Marion" (e.g., Boston Herald, August 21, 1898, p. 14; LA Times Feb. 19, 1899, p. 12), and some references to band concerts with selections from Clorindy identify the composer, by the last name only, as Marion.

Cook uses "Will Mercer" as a pseudonym in 1904 when working on Lederer/Smith productions.

Sometimes the middle name is Marian with the second "a" and/or the last name is "Cooke" with final "e", so it important to check variant spellings in searches.

He is not to be confused with Will A. Cooke, a separate individual, a contemporary who is an African American engaged in theatrical work, with whom Cook's career often intersects.

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BIOGRAPHY

EARLY YEARS

1869, in January: born in Washington DC on January 27 (Carter thesis, p. 2, notes that some sources give 28 or 29 January); his brother John is two years older; boyhood in DC; Cook apparently lived in DC continuously for ten years, until after the death of his father in March 1879; then, in rapid order, something like Denver, Kansas City, DC, Chattanooga, DC, Cleveland environs (Oberlin). There is some ambiguity around where he was living and for how long in the years 1879-1883, as unfolds below.

c. 1874 begins violin at age 5 in DC (Chicago Defender, July 29, 1944, p. 2); begins school in DC; in the first published ASCAP biographical dictionary (1948), his entry says he was boy soprano; he was a prodigy on the violin, and eventually acquired professional-level piano skills. In 1906, the Washington Evening Star (April 22, 1906, p. 8) remembered Cook as "a product of the colored public schools," and
"the composer is remembered here as a boy with great native musical
talent who afterward studied" at Oberlin, under Joachim, and under
Dvorak.
NB: In “The Negro on the Stage,” Theatre Magazine (1903), p. 96, it is
reported that “both his father and grandfather were musicians, the
latter being the plantation fiddler on a Virginia plantation before the
war”

1874: Cook’s youngest brother, Oliver, was born in 1874.

1879: Cook’s father dies in March; Cook recalled that at some point after
the death of his father, he went with his mother but not his brothers
to Denver and then KC (Cook memoir in Carter thesis, p. 391); this
would be perhaps ca. 1879/80?? to ca. 1881/1882?? in Denver and
then (briefly) to KC with mom, who was teaching school;
a Mrs. Belle Cook was elected as a new member of the National
Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children
in Washington in October 1879 (Washington Evening Star, October
15, 1879, p. 4), and this is likely to be Cook’s mother, so they would
have been in DC then;
the Kansas City Plaindealer later said, "Will Cook is an old Kansas
City boy, and a violinist of considerable power" when he came
through with Clorindy on the Orpheum circuit in 1899, so he must
have logged some time there (Kansas City Plaindealer, March 10,
1899, p. 3); NB: his younger brother Oliver settled in KC around 1900
and became a leading educator, WWI war hero, and one of the city’s
most prominent African American citizens.

1880: Cook is in the US 1880 Census in DC with his mother and brothers
[9th and 10th June], and he is also recorded in the US 1880 Census
[June 9th] in Chattanooga, TN with his brother Oliver and his
grandparents.

ca. 1880-1881: about "10 months" with maternal grandparents, William and
Jane Lewis, in Chattanooga, TN.
In his memoir (Carter thesis, p. 391-92) Cook says he got into an
altercation at school in KC, and then he was sent from KC to
Chattanooga in the spring of the year when he was 12, which would
be spring 1881; the 1880 Census reports him in both DC and
Chattanooga (but not Denver); he says 12 again as his age when he
made this trip (Cook memoir in Carter thesis, p. 394); he says he left
there "after about ten months" (Carter thesis, p. 398), when he was 13
(Carter thesis, p. 398), which would be after January 1882, and that he leaves for Oberlin that same fall, so fall 1882 (Carter thesis, p. 402), which does not entirely square with below. Trying to remember events almost 50 years after the fact, it is not surprising that Cook’s memories are a bit fluid about his age at the time of crucial boyhood events.

cia. 1881/82-1883 with family/Mom in DC, returning from Chattanooga around "age 13"; possibly back to Kansas City and then DC?

Carter thesis chronology (355-56) says he is in KC with mom in 1881, then to Chattanooga; remember, though, that he was in the Census in Chattanooga, perhaps just on a shorter visit (?); probably 1881-1882 in Chattanooga, then, and not 1880-1881?, because same thesis chronology (p. 356) says he goes to Oberlin in September 1882.

OBERLIN, OHIO, 1883-1887, four years

The Cleveland Gazette likes to call him an old Cleveland boy, or "formerly of Washington, D.C. and Cleveland, O.," probably on account of his high school years there (e.g., Cleveland Gazette, November 1, 1902, p. 3; Cleveland Gazette, December 9, 1916, p. 3); the Cleveland connection to his family is also reiterated at the time of his mother’s death. Exactly when he arrives in Oberlin is not clear. He seems to have had one year of public high school in 1883-1884, but whether he arrived then or whether he may have been in town before that, in elementary school/junior high, needs sorting out.

In Oberlin, Cook and his older brother John lived with the family of their paternal aunt, Jennie Jackson, and his first cousins Cora and Harvey, for Cook’s public high school (his memoir has him thrown out) and then subsequent enrollment at Oberlin Conservatory [Riis 1989 says that happens in 1886].

His aunt, Virginia (Jennie; Jenny; Ginny) Cook Jackson (1852/1854 - 1932), is a much younger sister of his father; she is one of the Detroit Cooks, he says in his memoir (Carter thesis, p. 402; plus web and Census hits); she is married to James Harvey Jackson (Dec. 1850 - ) born in Virginia but by 1880 a resident of Cleveland, Ohio, and they have children Cora (1874 - ) and Harvey (1876 - ), who would have been
youngsters at home when Cook and his older brother were attending Oberlin; Cora was born in Michigan, but this family was in Cleveland by the 1880 US Census; James Harvey Jackson probably related to Harvey C. Jackson family of Detroit ??].

Cook remained close to his cousin Cora Jackson Parchment into the 1940s.

James Harvey Jackson and his younger brother Oliver T. Jackson (b. April 1862 - later 1948) married the Cook sisters Virginia (Jennie) and Sarah R. (Sadie, b. Oct. 1856), respectively, but 18 years apart; Oliver settled in Boulder in 1887; Oliver and Sadie married c. 1890; evidently leaving Oberlin, JH is living with them in Boulder, Colorado in US 1900 Census, and working in the same field as his brother---caterer, and still married, and has been for 28 years; Oliver founded the town of Dearfield, Colorado in 1910; Oliver's second wife is Minerva, and she is in the census from 1910 through 1940.

Aunt Jennie is alive and living in NYC with married daughter Cora Parchment, a teacher, and Cora's husband Samuel, in real estate, in the US 1920 Census; she appears in NYC and Yonkers (1925, 1926, 1927, 1928) directories; in NYC Cora had several addresses, as for example at 221 W. 138th in 1919, and 321 W. 138th St. in 1920, 1925 and 1931.

NB: May Aunt Jennie Jackson be the same person who was a singer on the circuit and was slated to sing in his opera?? Naah. That is another Jennie Jackson (1852-1910), who was born in Nashville and died in Cincinnati.

Oberlin College is where two immediate members of his family, his father (grad. 1864) and mother (grad. 1865), earned degrees; an Oberlin, OH resident, Cook’s uncle James Harvey Jackson, evidently did not go to Oberlin College, acc. college registry in catalogue and in on-line "Negro Graduates of Oberlin College"

Carter (book, p. 12 and 148n7) says an uncle was George Frederic Thompson Cook (1835-1912); Oberlin cat. has this individual enrolled 1853-1855 prep, and 1855-1858/1859-1860 college but no degree; gets Hon. MA, 1877, but I do not think this individual is Cook's uncle. He was famous man with distinguished career in DC schools, serving as superintendent of the Colored Schools for many years. He was the son of Rev. John Francis Cook of DC, and younger brother of John Francis Cook, Jr. (1833-1910) (also an Oberlin man, educator, and
government official). These two prominent brothers and DC residents are not evidently related to Major Cook and family of Richmond, Va. and Detroit.

Cook's brother John, older by two years, was at Oberlin Prep while Cook was in town; the Oberlin Catalogues now scanned and on-line show J. H. for three years from 1884-1887 in Department of Preparatory Instruction, in the Classical School, and once also simultaneously in conservatory, age ca. 16-20. On the face of it, he entered Oberlin Prep at the same moment his younger brother entered the Conservatory.

The same span of catalogues shows William Mercer Cook listed as in the Conservatory for four school years from 1884-1885 through 1887-1888, but not in the Prep School; the catalogues are published in the fall; they are, in a sense, anticipatory of the coming year and the registered students. The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Catalogue with register of all students to 1908 confirms this. Cook did not spend the anticipated fourth year there.

In fact, Will is at the Oberlin Conservatory for 3 academic years (1884-1887), and simply anticipated being there for a fourth year. It seems he and his brother showed up at Oberlin at the same moment, or John arrives after Will, and they go back to DC together after his brother has finished the Preparatory Division in 1887.

To clarify, Cook may have been living in the town of Oberlin for four years (1883-1887) or even for five (1882-1887); taking 1883, for the first year he was in public schools (1883-1884), and then for the next three Cook was in the Conservatory: NB: not in the College or the Department of Preparatory Instruction. No one says he actually earned any kind of Oberlin degree.

Notices in newspapers for violinist "Willie Cook" appear from 1886 and 1887 onward.

At the same time as Cook was at Oberlin, other African American students there who would cross paths with him in his later career included Sterling Nelson Brown (gr. 1888), Harriette Gibbs [Marshall] (gr. 1889) and Mary Church [Terrell] (gr. 1884, MA 1888).

THE OBERLIN YEARS IN MORE DETAIL
1883-1884

Carter bio. has unspecified mention of early January 1884 concert refs; Riis 1989 says about 1884; other sources say age 13 or age 15; Defender obit says age 13 (Chicago Defender, July 29, 1944, p. 2).
Cook would have been 14 if he arrived in town in time to begin the 1883-1884 school year, turning 15 in the middle of that school year; Carter bio. cites refs. to concerts from early 1884, so from 1883-1884 school year, so age 14 seems right; records at Oberlin begin from the next school year, i.e., fall 1884.
In sum, if he is first at Oberlin Conservatory in 1884-1885, and spent only one year in public high school, then he was in public high school for 1883-1884, age 14-15. If perhaps he was in Oberlin, OH already from the year before that, it would be the year before high school.

1884-1885

1884, in Fall: Begins first year in Oberlin conservatory; after being kicked out of public school after one year (memoir, Carter thesis, pp. 406-08);
Cook entered the Oberlin Conservatory and studied with violin prof. Frederick G. Doolittle, as in his memoirs and as contemporary newspapers point out; lots of info in Doolittle in Carter bio, etc. from the memoir (Doolittle urges him to go to Berlin after ONE year at Oberlin, and he does, via DC (memoir, Carter thesis, pp. 409-412); this is manifestly wrong, as is his claim to have been in Berlin for three years (memoir, Carter thesis, p. 420)

1885-1886

1885, in Fall: Begins second year in Oberlin conservatory

1885, in November: Carter thesis (p. 356) cites ref. (Cleveland Gazette, October 3, 1885, p. 1) that he is playing in church services; earliest reference to him in a Cleveland newspaper that I have seen is a month later in fall 1885 (Cleveland Gazette, November 14, 1885, p. 4), when he and his aunt are visiting friends in Cleveland ("Mrs.
Jennie Jackson and Willie Cook, of Oberlin, visited friends in the city the past week.

1886, in April: Cleveland Gazette, April 3, 1886, p. 4 mentions "Mr. Willie Cook, of Oberlin, attended the Fisk concert Thursday evening."
Cleveland Gazette, April 10, 1886, p. 4, mentions not Cook but his brother: "Mrs. Jennie Jackson, of Oberlin, and Miss Mary Fuller and Mr. John Cook of Oberlin College, were in the city this week, and favored our office with their presence."

1886-1887

1886, in Fall: Begins third year in Oberlin conservatory

1886, in September: Cook’s mother Belle remarries to James H. Howard in DC on September 1.

1886, in October: Cook’s FIRST big concert appearance is in Cleveland on October 12, 1886; Cleveland Gazette, October 2, 1886, p. 4 he’s creating quite a sensation as a violinist; Cleveland Gazette, October 9, 1886, p. 4 he’s a coming violinist; Cleveland Gazette, October 16, 1886, p. 4 he played two numbers on a concert in Cleveland last Tuesday, one in each half ("Master Willie Cook")

1886, in November: Cleveland Gazette, November 6, 1886, p. 4 perhaps with affection or humor or irony, calls him "our Oberlin agent"; he clearly is learning how to work the local press, and this tendency will emerge again in conjunction with his DC orchestra, with the Chicago Fair and later

1886, in December: NEXT appearance is the Cook-Adair concert of December 14; it is his real debut and he hopes to earn money to support his study at Oberlin;
Cleveland Gazette, November 27, 1886, p. 3 Cook-Adair concert is upcoming; Cleveland Gazette, December 11, 1886, p. 3; Cleveland Gazette, December 11, 1886, p. 4; Cleveland Leader, December 12, 1886, p. 6; Cleveland Plaindealer, December 12, 1886, p. 16 with program ("Mr. Willie Cook", and he "is trying by this means to assist himself through the conservatory"); Cleveland Plaindealer, December 15, 1886, p. 4 short notice and review; Cleveland Gazette, December 18, 1886, p. 4 review of "Cook Concert"
1887, in January: Then the Cook-Adair Ticket Squabble gets aired in the papers:
   Cleveland Gazette, January 8, 1887, p. 4; Cleveland Gazette, January 22, 1887, p. 1; Cleveland Gazette, February 12, 1887, p. 4

1887, in March: Cook plays a number at a band concert on March 23, 1887, on a program with elocutionist Prof. B. D. Mockabee and etc.
   Cleveland Gazette, February 26, 1887, p. 4; Cleveland Gazette, March 5, 1887, p. 4; Cleveland Gazette, March 12, 1887, p. 4; Cleveland Gazette, March 19, 1887, p. 4

1887, in April: he played on a concert at Doan's Armory on Thursday, April 14 (Cleveland Gazette, April 16, 1887, p. 4; see also Carter, p. 16)

1887, in April: Cleveland Gazette, April 23, p. 4, says he "visited the city Wednesday to attend the performance of the Abbott Opera Company," which would be Wednesday, April 20

Back in DC for the Summer

1887, in May: Cook must have returned to DC from Oberlin in the late spring of 1887; this evening he will assist at a concert of the Howard University Mandolin a Glee Clubs at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in DC (Washington (DC) Evening Star, April 24, 1887, p. 15; Washington (DC) Evening Star, May 4, 1887, p. 9)

1887, in June: "Mr. Will Cook, the violinist, of Oberlin, O., is in the city en-route to Berlin, and will give a concert before leaving." (Washington (DC) Bee, June 11, 1887, p. 3)

1887, in August: he made an approach to Frederick Douglass to help with expenses of trip to Germany [Carter bio; Riis 1989]; he holds a private recital for a select audience on Wednesday, August 31 (Washington Bee, September 3, 1887, p. 3); this is probably the affair described as sponsored by Frederick Douglass's "granddaughter Annie Sprague and her friend Mary Nalle, at the latter's home on P Street between Fourteenth and Fifteenth," with an audience including Frederick Douglass, Major Fleetwood, Dick Thompkins, Henry Grant and Turner Layton,m sr.

Henry Grant was a major DC colored public school music teacher and church choir director at the 15th Street Presbyterian Church, and
father of Henry Lee Grant; native of Georgetown, died in December 1904 at age about 70 years while still teaching, so c.1834-1904 [Washington Bee, December 17, 1904, p. 1]; the 1900 US Census has Henry Grant born in 1840

Turner Layton, sr. was an important DC public school music teacher and church choir director] (memoir, Carter thesis, pp. 410-12); he will make appearances again below.

1887, in August: Cook’s first passport was issued on August 31, 1887; his name is given as William M. Cook and his age is given as 18.

1877, in September: There is a benefit concert in DC at Metzerott’s music store on Sunday, September 11, 1887 to help Cook; then a benefit at First Congregational Church, on Wednesday, September 14, 1887, three days before departure (memoir, Carter thesis, p. 412, where it says the affair gained him almost $2000, and he thought Berlin was doable on $50 a month (p. 410); Frederick Douglass attends the latter and predicts big things (Washington Bee, September 10, 1887, p. 2; Washington Bee, September 17, 1887, p. 3; review from National Republican reprinted in Cleveland Gazette, September 17, 1887, p. 1; Cleveland Gazette, September 24, 1887, p. 1); never mentioned to this point in Cook’s memoir is someone he surely knew or met, his near contemporary and friend Joseph Douglass (1871-1935).

BERLIN 1887-1889

1887-1888

1887, in Fall: Oberlin records indicate his declared intention to enroll for 1887-1888 in the conservatory, but, instead, he is off to Europe at age 18

1887, in September: he sails September 17th to Bremerhaven; in memoir (Carter thesis, p. 413) he says this is his first trip across the Atlantic and there are a subsequent 28 voyages across---this could mean 14 round trips, if taken nearly literally.

Study in Berlin for two years, age 18-20; with Herr Moser at first, then at Hochschule für Musik in Joachim’s studio; possibly studied there mainly with Heinrich Jacobsen (lengthy discussion in memoirs,
Carter thesis, pp. 412-; Aveni thesis; Wiki ref.); he recalls the 1888 funeral of Kaiser Wilhelm I, etc.; he says he received a Stradivarius as a prize for finishing at the head of the class (memoir, Carter thesis, p. 420); seems unlikely but there is the later story about how expensive his instrument was; no Hochschule record of this (Carter thesis, p. 5), so it is likely to be Cook hyperbole.

The Königlich Akademischen Hochschule für ausübende Tonkunst (Royal Academy of Musical Performing Art, a.k.a. Royal Academy of Music, a.k.a. Hochschule für Musik) was established in Berlin in 1869 under Joseph Joachim, its founding director; it was a university conferring academic degrees; now a part of the Berlin University of the Arts; a Hochschule focuses more on practice than on academic research.

1888-1889

1889 in spring, Cleveland Gazette, March 30, 1889, p. 3: Cook is making rapid and exceptional progress with Joachim.

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1889-1891

1889-1890

1889, in fall: Back to WASHINGTON, DC, age 20, for the next two years.

Cook returned early in what was to have been his third year of study in Berlin [thinking 1887-88/1888-89/1889-90]; he returns by November 1889 to DC after just over two academic years; his autobiographical memoir somewhere apparently says he was in Germany for three years, but he might have meant calendar years 1887, 1888, 1889; of course, he was in German-speaking lands for a significant period in the early 1920s

Note: the shift from "Willie" to "William" can be observed in E. L. Thornton letters to the NY Age in fall 1889.

1889, in August: Cleveland Gazette, August 31, 1889, p. 3 says he has strained the fingers of his left hand by overwork and cannot use them for three months
1889, in September: Cleveland Gazette, September 21, 1889 says he's going to return from Berlin to DC in a few days and has strained his fingers and needs time off from violin for a few months (repr. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 56)

1889 in November: Cleveland Gazette, November 9, 1889, p. 3 says he's going back to Berlin shortly

1889 in November: in a long, two-column E. L. Thornton letter from Washington dated November 25 (New York Age, November 30, 1889, p. 1), one small paragraph says "Mr. Willie Cook" has just returned, and "He is a musical phenomenon performing some of the masterpieces upon his violin with one hand"; it sounds as if not illness but injury forced his return; son Mercer also recalls it might have been lack of funds; perhaps the claim of injury masked the embarrassment of the end of funding (??); in fairness, the later story about stiff fingers at time of Dvorak contact at National Conservatory (1947 memoir) may be the recurrence of the same problem, though he's concertizing in DC in December 1897

1889, in November: "Mr. Will Cook, the violinist, will not be able to appear" at a recital at the Berean Baptist Church as previously announced (Washington (DC) Evening Star, November 27, 1889, p. 8)

1889, in December: he is supposed to be returning to Germany in about three months; he makes his debut recital as professional violinist in DC (Cleveland Gazette, December 7, 1889, repr. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 59)

1889, in December: another report says he will return to Germany after fulfilling some US engagements, including one in St. Paul, Minn. (NY Age, December 28, 1889, p. 4)

1889, in December: Washington Bee, December 14, 1889, p. 2 says he's doing a DC recital on December 19th; the Bee has multiple small references on that page; this is his December 19 recital in DC at Universalist Church on 19th St. (or Church of Our Father at 13th and L) (NY Age, December 28, 1889, p. 4)

1889: Joseph Douglass's father Charles and grandfather Frederick were both amateur violinists. Joseph, two years younger than Cook, married a Howard (Fannie Howard, a musician)---any relation to
Cook's stepfather?? No. Joseph first begins to make a name for himself ("Master Joseph Douglass") in DC in 1888-1889. He's playing in the Cook Orchestra in 1890-91.

1890, in March: Cook is playing in the D'Albert Orchestra in DC, with Fleetwood as director and with other members including his brother, John H. Cook.

1890, in April: Cook ("Prof. Willie Cook the accomplished violinist") is the conductor of a DC orchestra accompanying a new opera written by Miss Anna M. Savoy, "Noble Revenge" (Washington Bee, April 12, 1890, p. 3)

1890-1891

1890, in August: Cook’s second year back in DC.

1890, in August: Washington Bee, August 30, 1890, p. 3: "A new orchestra has been organized with Hon. Fred Douglass, president; Major C. A. Fleetwood, V. president; and Mr. Willie Cook, director." Cook is 21. Clearly gets re-acquainted with Frederick Douglass, perhaps through Douglass’s violinist grandson if not directly on account of Douglass’s prior interest and help; in late summer, Cook directed a DC-based chamber orchestra organized by Civil War black Medal of Honor Winner [Sgt.] Major Christian A. Fleetwood, now of the War Department, and Frederick Douglass; the Fleetwood Orchestra, underwritten by Frederick Douglass; the group played in DC and also said to have toured the east coast; this group is called the "Cook Orchestra" and exists for about a year

1890, in September: Detroit Plaindealer, September 5, 1890, p. 1: brief mention of his new orchestra of 24, Hon. Fred Douglass, Pres.; Cook, leader; Jos. Douglass, asst.; Bell, sec. and treas.; Thompkin, manager; will visit leading cites [i.e., as in Bee above]

1890, September: Cleveland Gazette, September 13, 1890, p. 3: very similar to September 5 above: "Willie Cook, of Washington, well known in this city and in Oberlin, where he formerly lived, has organized an orchestra composed of twenty-four musicians. Hon. Fred Douglass is president, Mr. Cook, leader; Joseph Douglass, assistant; Maj. Fleetwood, vice president; J. J. Bell, secretary and treasurer, and
Richard Thomkins, manager. The orchestra hopes to visit the leading cities during the coming season." Joseph is Fred. Douglass's talented grandson, and a teacher of Jim Europe.

1890, September: "A new orchestra has been formed in Washington, D.C. with Hon. Fred Douglass, president; Major C. A. Fleetwood, vice president, and Willie Cook, director" (Indianapolis Freeman, September 13, 1890, p. 2)

1890, in September: (Mr.) Elsie Hoffman playing with Will Marion Cook's orchestra in Washington, D.C.'s Grand Army Hall on September 26, 1890 (put in 189 acc. Badger, Reese bio., p. 24, citing Carter thesis, p. 17 and NY Age; also, a ref. in Michael Segell, The Devil's Horn: The Story of the Saxophone (2006) to saxophonist (Google Book hit)); HOWEVER, Carter bio. puts this concert a year later, citing NY Age, September 27, 1890, p. 1.)

1890, in September: "the Cook Orchestra Experiment," with full roster of officers and nineteen (19) performers (NY Age, September 27, 1890, p. 1); the orchestra "is named for Mr. Wm. M. Cook"; see also NY Age, October 25, 1890, p. 1

1890, in October: Cook Orchestra plays at the entertainment at the Berean Church on Oct. 17 (Washington (DC) Bee, October 11, 1890, p. 3)

1890, in October: Cook Orchestra plays a concert on Oct. 18 (NY Age, October 25, 1890, p. 1)

1890, in October: "The John M. Cook Orchestra, Maj. Fleetwood wielding the baton," entertains at a speech by Frederick Douglass on Tuesday, Oct. 21 at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church (Washington (DC) Evening Star, October 22, 1890, p. 9; NY Age, November 1, 1890, p. 1)

1890, in December: Cook Orchestra plays at a concert on Friday, December 26 at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church (Washington (DC) Bee, December 20, 1890, p. 1, 2; NY Age, January 3, 1891, p. 1)

1891 in January: St. Paul Appeal, January 31, 1891, p. 1, in a column on doings in Washington DC, says "Will Cook, the violinist, has under consideration a proposition from Mr. O. B. McAdoo to sign a two years contract to go with his troupe of singers to Australia.";
Cleveland Gazette, February 7, 1891, p. 3 has short notice that "The McAdoo Jubilee Company . . . . desires Willie Cook."

1891, in February: the Cook Orchestra plays on a concert at the Metropolitan AME. Church on February 10 (Washington (DC) Bee, January 24, 1891, p. 1, 3; Washington (DC) Bee, January 31, 1891, p. 3); Detroit Plaindealer, February 20, 1891, reprints local DC review of a DC concert featuring the celebrated Cook’s orchestra, the "Inimitable Powell Quartette" and also Lulu Hamer and Prof. John T. Layton (Layton is a basso, a vocal music instructor in the public schools and director of the Metropolitan A.M.E. church choir) (review repr. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, pp. 181-182)

1891, in February: in the choir run by R. W. Tompkins for a temperance meeting at the 15th St. Presbyterian church; "Mr. Willie Cook is quite an acquisition to the choir" (Washington Bee, February 21, 1891, p. 1)

1891, in April: the Cook Orchestra played at an entertainment by the High School at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church on April 10 (Washington (DC) Bee, March 21, 1891, p. 3; Washington (DC) Bee, March 28, 1891, p. 1; Washington (DC) Bee, April 4, 1891, p. 1)

1891, in June: on June 1, the Cook Orchestra played for the graduation ceremony of the normal department of Howard University (Washington (DC) Evening Star, June 2, 1897, p. 10)

1891, in June: the Cook Orchestra played for dancing after the theater on June 3 at Grand Army Hall (Washington (DC) Bee, May 30, 1891, p. 3)

1891, in June: the Cook Orchestra played at a garden party on June 15 (Washington (DC) Bee, June 6, 1891, p. 3)

1891, in June: the Cook Orchestra plays at an event at Grand Army Hall on June 16 (Washington (DC) Bee, June 13, 1891, p. 3)

1891, in June: the Cook orchestra played for a wedding reception in DC on June 30 (NY Age, July 4, 1891, p. 1)

1891, in September: the Cook Orchestra played at the Second Baptist Sunday School Lyceum on September 28 (Washington (DC) Evening Star, September 30, 1891, p. 7)
BACK TO THE MIDWEST, 1891-1893

1891-1892

ADVENTIST COLLEGE

1891, in November: Cook is back to the Midwest for what will be about two years, at age 22; in the earliest known reference to this move: Will Cook, the violinist, is now a student taking a class at the Adventist College in Battle Creek, Michigan (NY Age, November 7, 1891, p. 1; Detroit Plaindealer, December 18, 1891, p. 5); Battle Creek is about half way between Detroit and Chicago; Detroit is his father’s family’s home turf, and moreover, his step-father is an ardent Seventh-Day Adventist; the college, called Battle Creek College from 1874 to 1901, "was the first higher education facility started by Seventh-Day Adventists"; it is still in existence and is their "flagship university" [Wikipedia]; apparently Cook did not spend any more than a term there.

CHICAGO

1892, in February: Leaving Battle Creek, Chicago becomes Cook’s base by early 1892, and he may then have been so for over a year, to later 1893; he tours as a violinist and he is in a position to develop a first-hand interest in plans for the Chicago World’s Fair; in early February, it is reported that he recently visited Detroit, and he will be the "star" of a Chicago concert on February 10 (Detroit Plaindealer, February 5, 1892, p. 5)

1892, in February: Cleveland Gazette, February 13, 1892, p. 1, writes about Will Cook’s success in Chicago: he participated in a concert at Central Music Hall with the St. Thomas Episcopal Church Choir

1892, in February: "Mr. Frank L. Hamilton, is so much pleased with the violin playing of Mr. Will Cook that he is arranging for a series of concerts in St. Louis and other cities, in which Mr. Cook will star" (Detroit Plaindealer, February 26, 1892, p. 1, repr. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 224); evidently Cook is intermittently touring in recital in 1891-1892
1892, in March: Cleveland Gazette, March 12, 1892, p. 1 says he has returned to Chicago from KC, where he has arranged a KC recital for March 28.

1892, in May: he plays May 16, 1892 concerts in Milwaukee, on a program with elocutionist Hallie Q. Brown, who over a year later (see below) will be on Cook’s World’s Fair program (Detroit Plaindealer, May 20, 1892, as repr. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 229).

1892, in summer: If Clarence Cameron White’s anecdote about studying with Cook in Washington in the summer before he turns 12 is correct, that would be in the summer of 1892. One web hit on composer Clarence Cameron White (1880-1960) says he studied violin at Howard University with Cook and Joseph Douglass (1871-1935) and gave his first recital at age 15 (White attended Howard University in 1894-1895, and Oberlin conservatory in 1896-1901), which could be while studying at Howard before he goes to Oberlin; that Cook was connected to Howard University in the 1890s seems unsurprising but needs tracing (see below). Carter bio. and a Wiki entry say he studied with Cook at age 8, in DC immediately after return of Cook to the states. Indianapolis Freeman art., May 15, 1897, p. 6 clearly avers that he studied with Cook and Douglass some time during ca. 1890-1896; Aveni thesis says he studied with Cook in the summer when he was around 14, hence ca. 1893/1894; Joseph Douglass was also teaching in DC in the early 1890s. Carter thesis, pp. 162-163, quotes from two Clarence Cameron White documents that say Cook was his first teacher in violin and harmony.

Best bet, though, is that White studied with young hot shot Cook when Cook was around DC in 1889-1891, or back in town for the summer of 1892. The strongest case can be made for summer 1892. White reminisces four decades later that he came to Washington when he was about eleven years old and met Cook, who gave him violin lessons in the summer; these ended when Cook left Washington, when White was not quite 12 years old—-that would be 1892, when he turned 12 on August 10, 1892 (Washington Evening Star, May 28, 1933, p. 38; see also Wikipedia citation of this anecdote.)
Cook may have remained based in Chicago; Clarence Cameron White remembers that Cook left DC after the summer when White was 11 and taking lessons with Cook (as above). This season is devoted to planning and preparation for Colored People's Day, Friday, August 25, 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair

COLORED PEOPLE'S DAY AT THE CHICAGO FAIR

Concerning the name of the event itself:

COLORED PEOPLE'S DAY: (Chicago Tribune, etc.) is the very most frequent name for this event, as in the Tribune's daily column of coming events at the fair, and very many outside papers, including LA Times, Dubuque Herald, Baltimore Sun, etc., etc., use it; hence lots of hits in genealogybank.com, for example

or COLORED AMERICAN DAY: not too common, but called this by the Tribune in some articles, and by the Daily Inter Ocean, and by the Indianapolis Freeman, September 2, 1893, p. 1, and some others;

or COLORED FOLK'S DAY: very rare; exactly once citation in the Tribune long before the event, as seen in Google News Archive; a mere five hits in genealogybank.com, but used by Abbott and Seroff;

or JUBILEE DAY: The Indianapolis Freeman, and pretty much only that source, repeatedly calls this event JUBILEE DAY. And afterward: "the 'Jubilee Day' or what has lately been styled 'Colored American Day,' has come and gone" (Indianapolis Freeman, September 2, 1893, p. 1).

Cook, based in Chicago, comes up by fall 1892 with big plans for music at Colored People's Day for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, including a performance of his opera, Uncle Tom's Cabin. (Newspapers print reports beginning from October 1892 forward that he is working on a libretto and music for an opera on Uncle Tom's Cabin.) There is controversy about whether African Americans should be singled out this way with a special day, and about what should take place on that day if it happens. Cook gets President Harrison's support via Frederick Douglass connections, finagles a big barrage in the black press, and lines up performers and fund-raisers. Not all goes as initially planned. In the end there is a concert, with many of the hoped-for performers, but no opera.
Abbott and Seroff, pp. 279-283, have the best published account to date, though they consistently call it "Colored Folks Day" rather than the most common "Colored People's Day." They rely on Herald review for performers; a much later retrospective confirmatory source is the Chicago Broad Axe, September 2, 1922, p. 2; see also, with caution, the account in Peress.

1892, in October: Cook boldly ventures to go straight to the President of the United States with his proposal. Given the dates of the newspapers reports, Cook must have gone to the White House on Saturday, October 15; Cook called at the White House that day, intending to present a letter to President Harrison in person, and had to be content to leave his letter for the President with Secretary Halford; he leaves a letter together with endorsements of the Hon. Fred. K. Douglass, the Hon. John M. Langston, the Hon. John R. Lynch, ex-Senator B. K. Bruce, Dr. F. Ziegfeld of the Chicago College of Music, President J. E. Rankin of Howard University, and others.

Some later reports have it that Frederick Douglass himself introduced Cook to the President, but there seems to be no support for this assertion; moreover, it is greeted with skepticism in a remark in the Cleveland Gazette, January 23, 1893, p. 2: "Frederick Douglass presented Cook to President Harrison, so current report has it."

See Washington Post, October 17, 1892, p. 7; New York Sun, October 17, 1892, p. 2, article dated Washington, October 16; Chicago Daily Inter Ocean, October 18, 1892, p. 9, article dated Washington, DC, October 17; Detroit Plaindealer, October 21, 1892, p. 8: lengthy Cook letter to editor about his big plans (repr. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 237), with Cook address on Dearborn Street in Chicago; Chicago Daily Inter Ocean, October 30, 1892, p. 20; Cleveland Plaindealer, November 6, 1892, p. 14 has elaborate outline of Cook plans; Indianapolis Freeman, November 12, 1892 has same Cook letter to editor as in Detroit Plaindealer of October 21; Detroit Plaindealer, November 12, 1892

1892, in November: Cook is scratching up singers for the opera, including Sydney Woodward of Boston (Cleveland Gazette, November 26, 1892; repr. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 240)
1893, in January: Cook’s roster of talent expected to be Sissieretta Jones, soprano; Mr. Harry Williams, tenor, of the London Conservatory; Mme. Sally Waring of Washington, contralto, now singing at La Scala; the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Jennie Jackson, Leila Hamar [Lulu/Louise Hamar/Hamer] of Washington, and Harry Burleigh of the National Conservatory (NY Times, January 7, 1893).

1893, in January: the Washington DC Evening Star has article on "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (Washington (DC) Evening Star, January 9, 1893, p. 8); Cook has lined up talent including tenor Harry Williams, a native of Cleveland who teaches at the London Conservatory, and soprano Sissieretta Jones, Mme. Waring, who is an octoroon appearing at La Scala, the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Jennie Jackson and Lolla Hamaro [sic; i.e., Lulu Hamar] of Washington, and Harry Burleigh of the National Conservatory of Music; NYC concert scheduled for February 13, place unspecified, "to raise funds to secure a large chorus".

1893, in January: the Cleveland Gazette has a big article reporting that "Frederick Douglass presented Cook to President Harrison, so current report has it", etc. including anticipated NYC concert to raise funds, which are Sissieretta Jones concerts in February and March, on which see below; talent for the opera is reported to be Harry Williams, tenor, Sissieretta Jones, soprano, Mumford’s Fisk Jubilee Singers, Mrs. Jennie Jackson DeHart, L. Hamar [Louise "Lulu" Hamer], Harry Burleigh.

(Cleveland Gazette, January 21, 1893, p. 2, repr. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 279; see also Ohio Repository, January 25, 1893, p. 3; Langston City (OK) Herald, January 26, 1893, citing Chicago Bee report out of New York dated January 6; Atchison Blade, January 28, 1893, p. 4; NY Times, January 28, 1893; NY Times, February 10, 1893; Indianapolis Freeman, February 11, 1893, p. 5)

SIDENOTE on Harry Burleigh and Sissieretta Jones and Cook

It has not yet been established when Cook first met and became friends with his contemporaries and friends, Burleigh (1866-1949) and Jones (1868-1933). Burleigh, three years older than Cook, was raised in Erie, Pa. Living there in the later 1880s and early 1890s, he was just beginning to make his reputation around 1887, with mentions in the Cleveland Gazette, for example, beginning around 1885. Before he left for NYC in
January 1892, he was active as a vocalist as far afield as Chicago and Buffalo. Cook, of course, was living in Oberlin in the mid 1880s, and Cook and Burleigh were both protégés of the editors of the Gazette. There is a small window around 1886-1887 when they may have become acquainted.

Most of the soloists at the February 1893 Carnegie Hall concert (see below) were individuals associated with Black Patti and/or Washington, DC. It is not known just when Cook came to know Sissieretta Jones, but in DC she was performing in a world he knew well. Indeed, Jones is identified (“inaccurately”) as “of Washington, DC” in 1892 (Sacramento, Cal. Themis, March 19, 1892, p. 3).

The year 1892 was a break-out year for Jones (see Lee bio. chapter “I Woke Up Famous,” 1892”). Her DC premiere was at the Metropolitan AME Church at 15th and M on February 22, 1892 and she sang for the president at the White House on February 24.

She sang at Madison Square Garden at the Grand Negro Jubilee on April 26 (her real break-out performance) and in the lower auditorium at Carnegie Hall on June 15, in a concert that also featured Burleigh. He had only arrived in NYC in January so they probably met for the first time in the spring, if not, indeed, at the June event. She sang in Saratoga on August 6, 14, 15, 27, 28, while Burleigh was in town working at the Grand Union Hotel.

A Black Patti benefit concert at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Washington on September 22, 1892 also featured Lulu Hamer (Washington’s famous contralto soloist), Harry Thackery Burleigh, Sidney Woodward, Joseph Douglass, Walter F. Craig (NY violin soloist), C. E. Alston (cornetist of North Carolina), and Miss Bessie Butler, “Child Vocalist, Wonder of the Age,” the Metropolitan Choir of 50 voices, and Mrs. Albert Wilson, piano accompanist (Washington Bee, August 27, 1892, p. 3; Washington Bee, September 10, 1892, p. 3); or Mme Selika, Lulu Hamer, Bessie Butler, Walter F. Craig, C. E. Alston, Mrs. Albert Wilson, the Metropolitan’s choir, Harry Burleigh, Sidney Woodward, Joseph Douglass, with Prof. J. T. Layton as musical director (Washington Post,
September 23, 1892, p. 7); a few months later she was “a drawing room attraction this winter at various musicales” in the capital (Washington Evening Star, January 9, 1893, p. 8).

Clearly the two singers, Burleigh and Jones, both hit NYC and began to make an impact in 1892. And both had already concertized in Cook’s own Washington, D.C. backyard, and he could have heard them and met them, or at least heard of them on this account (even if he was mostly in Chicago in 1892). In sum, if Cook did not know them before, he would have forcefully become aware of them in 1892 as young, rising stars who were his direct contemporaries. By January 1893 they were all close. He worked with Sissieretta Jones until at least 1912, and with Burleigh until at least 1934.

1893, in February: There is some opposition from some voices in the African American community to the entire day, with all its events, as "ridiculous" and "an insult to our people", a theme voiced repeatedly in the Indianapolis Freeman

THE CARNEGIE HALL BENEFIT

1893, in February: Sissieretta Jones was to undertake some benefit concerts to raise money for Cook’s World’s Fair Colored Opera Company; they hope to gain sufficient funds to afford a large chorus; it is possible that Cook made his first contact with her when she had her Chicago premiere in January (Central Music Hall, January 5-7 and 10-11).

The first and apparently the only one of these benefits for the fair to actually take place was held at Carnegie Hall on Monday, February 13, 1893; this is an historic event, as they are the first African American group ever to perform there on the main stage; personnel for the concert includes some who were anticipated to perform in the opera in August, and some others.

Monday, February 13 Carnegie Hall concert and says that the World's Fair Colored Opera Co., headed by Black Patti, is the only organization "composed of members of the colored race which has obtained the privilege of appearing in the World's Fair grounds"

The important article in the New York World, Sunday, February 12, 1903, p. M1, reports that when Cook’s “Uncle Tom” was completed, he secured the cooperation of Frederick Douglass, Blanche K. Bruce, and Congressman Lynch; Douglass subscribed $1000 and introduced Cook to President Harrison and General Davis, Director of the World’s Fair; Phil Armour and Potter Palmer (prominent Chicagoans) lent their influence; Cook then turned to Mrs. Thurber, head of the National Conservatory of Musi in NYC, and she opened the door to a number of additional prominent philanthropists.

The Lee bio. of Black Patti says Cook was advertised as going to perform (p. 59); moreover, the Lee bio. (p. 59) and the John Graziano article on Jones (JAMS 53 (2000): 543-96) cite a review of the concert that definitely puts Cook there, playing, although not much because of no time to practice. In 1940, Abbie Mitchell recalled that Cook played the violin at a "Black Patti" Carnegie Hall concert (KC Negro Star, June 14, 1940, p. 1)

Carnegie Hall program: Any surviving program?? The Lee bio. indicates in a footnote reference that one survives but Lee does not give it in full.

A New York Times preview in January mentions Sissieretta Jones, Fisk Jubilee Singers, Henry Burleigh, a triple quartet, Paul C. Bolen, who like Burleigh is a pupil at the National Conservatory in NYC, and an orchestra of fifty banjoists!

New York Times, February 10, 1893, p. 9 and New York Tribune February 10 add the names Lloyd Gibbs, tenor, the Phonetic Quartet of Baltimore, Miss Lulu Hamer, and Cook.

At one point the program included Black Patti, Fisk Jubilee Singers, Cook on violin, and others: contralto Louise (Lulu) Hamer, tenor C. W. Payne, baritone Jefferson Caldwell, and pianist Paul Bolen.

NB: The Carnegie concert was intended to show the progress of the colored race in music, a characteristic Cook theme of which this may be the first instance. It was to begin with "wild plantation melodies" and end with Gounod's "Ave Maria." Patti ended up singing Centeneri’s "Grand Aria," a selection from Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, and the Gounod "Ave Maria."

Were there any other World’s Fair benefits with Black Patti in February and March? The new Lee bio. does not mention any, but she makes a ref. to Abbott and Seroff. In fact, the New York Times, February 10, p. 9 anticipates one in Brooklyn on March 3, sponsored by Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher. No trace of this in the papers, although on February 19 Sissieretta Jones sang in Brooklyn at an entirely different event.

1893, in March: New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 9, 1893, p. 12 reprints a substantial article from the New York Advertiser of February 12 (the night before the Carnegie Hall concert) that talks about progress made by the colored race in music; it is mainly about Cook, however.

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THE OPERA

Concerning the opera’s performers: at one point it was going to include "some of the best-known colored vocalists at Howard University" (Adrian (MI) Telegram, February 25, 1893, p. 2), though the names circling around the opera and the eventual concert at the Chicago fair are more strongly related to the pupils of Signor Antonio Farini in NYC, e.g. Maria Selika and Deseria Plato (on Farini and his students, see Springfield Daily Illinois State Journal, February 14, 1892, p. 9; Boise Idaho Statesman, March 5, 1892, p. 2)

A very long and important concert preview in New York World, Sunday, February 12, 1903, p. M1, with much background and a full scenario for the August opera (summarized in Atlanta Constitution, February 17, 1893, p. 4; the Detroit Plaindealer, March 3, 1893 also has ref. to how Tom will die, acc. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 280). Given
the extremely timely reference to the tragedy in Paris, Texas in the third act, this is a brand-new libretto right now:

“The libretto departs to a considerable extent from the play (sic). The story is told in three acts. The part of the heroine will be taken by Mme. Sissieretta Jones, the "Black Patti." She will appear as Nekita, a black princess, stolen from Africa and placed on a plantation on the Suwanee River, where she makes the acquaintance of Uncle Tom. The owner of the plantation has just returned from Paris with some friends, whom he promises to entertain with a gorgeous plantation scene.

In the second act the slaves are assembled on the river bank in the moonlight to entertain their owner's friends. Among the slaves are a troupe of twenty octoroons, who perform a number of dances. A plot is concocted by Nekita, who desires to burn the plantation, seize a ship and escape with the slaves to Africa. She attempts to enlist Uncle Tom but he refuses. Although he does not disclose the plot, he warns his master.

The third act shows the attack by the slaves. It fails and most of them are killed. Uncle Tom has been sold in the meantime to Legree, who accuses the old slave of having had a part in the outbreak. The decision is that Tom shall be burned at the stake. The burning constitutes the wind-up and will be a picture as far as possible of the Paris (Tex.) outrage, as described in the despatches.

In addition to Mme. Jones, characters will be taken by Miss Jennie Jackson, soprano; Miss Lulu Hamer, contralto; Lloyd Gibbs and Harry Williams, tenors, and Jefferson Caldwell, basso. The manager of the company is Charles S. Morris, who has gained a reputation as a campaign orator.”

1893, in June: An extraordinary article connecting Cook and Dvorak appears in June, 1893:

“UNCLE TOM IN OPERA / By a Black Composer, Black Librettists and with a Black Star./WILLIAM COOK’S FINE MUSIC/ This Negro Has Written Songs Any White Composer Might Be Proud Of” (NY Press, Sunday, June 25, p. 3):
“A few weeks ago Dr. Anton Dvorak startled people by the statement that he believed the negro melodies of the old South were to furnish the basis of a new school of music. His attention was drawn to the subject by the work of Professor Harry Burleigh, a teacher in his school, and Professor William Cook, who is the composer of the opera, which is a remarkable and original composition. . . . . . No one would recognize the original plot of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” in Mr. Cook’s work. There are two of the old characters left, Uncle Tom himself and the cruel Legree. . . . . . Reform is the purpose of the new “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” the same that it was in the old.”

NB: The Dvorak reference is to a published interview in the New York Herald, May 21, 1893.

Burleigh is to sing Legree and Sissieretta Jones is to sing Nekita. Since Burleigh does a duet from the opera in August with Woodward, the latter is probably Uncle Tom. Burleigh is reported as going to Chicago in earlier August to help prepare a chorus for the opera. “Mr. Harry Burleigh is in Chicago, where he will assist in rendering the music in Festival Hall at the Exposition on Friday, August 24, Negro Day. Mr. Burleigh will spend the first part of the week drilling a chorus to sing portions of the newly composer opera, Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” by Will M. Cook. Mr. Burleigh will assume the part of Legree and give other solos at the concert.” (Buffalo Evening News, August 23, 1893, p. 1).

Snyder, Burleigh (p. 99 and Chapter 6, n. 44), reports that two songs, “He Shall Burn” (Simon Legree’s song) and “Thou Art Gone forever,” are named on an advance program.

Ultimately, only a single selection from the Cook opera was performed (a duet sung by Harry Burleigh and Woodward, for which we do not know the text), and Abbot and Seroff rightly think there is good reason to believe that the opera was never completed, despite Black Patti’s praise of its music (Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 476, fn 30).

Notes on some personae:

Harry A. Williams is very possibly a Cleveland buddy, or at least an acquaintance, from Oberlin days.
The personnel of Mumford's Fisk Jubilee Singers included Jennie Jackson Dehart, tenor C. W. Payne, and basso J. N. Caldwell, so this group is a resource for Cook for the planned August opera and for February concert; see Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, p. 43, etc.

Charles S. Morris is husband of Frederick Douglass's daughter Annie, acc. Abbot and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, p. 279; he had to apologize for the non-appearance of Sissieretta Jones, ibid., p. 284.

Almost 30 years later, the responsibility for the entire Chicago program is put by the Chicago Broad Axe on the shoulders of the Rev. Charles S. Morris (1865-1931), the great Baptist minister and orator. “It was in Festival Hall that he put on the great program,” with mention of Douglass, Hallie Q. Brown, Will Marion Cook, Deserio Plato, Harry Burleigh, Sidney Woodard, Arthur Freeman, and Paul Dunbar (Chicago Broad Axe, September 2, 1922, p. 2); Morris, just a few years older that Cook, was as a young adult the secretary and protégé of Frederick Douglass. It makes sense that he had a large hand in this event. At least from February forward (see above) he had been mentioned as manager of the opera.

Contralto and keyboard performer Louise "Lulu" Hamer---note the spelling---is in the 1888 and 1901 Washington city directories, in 1888 as an organist; genealogybank.com refs. and Historical Newspaper refs. overwhelmingly favor Hamer; *Bee* gives the name as Hamer in 1889, etc.; *Freeman* gives Hamer in 1897; *Evening Star* gives the name as Hamar in 1901; *Bee* has Mrs. Lulu Hamer Burrell in 1918; Lulu A. Hamer, or more formally, Louise A. Hamer, a sewing teacher and singer, turns up from late 1880s to the early 1900s in both capacities in DC; she is singing with Cook and his DC orchestra in 1891 (Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, pp. 181-182)

Lloyd G. Gibbs is "The Black de Reszke"; he's a very prominent tenor in 1890s and 1900s in concert and on stage, and as a quartet singer; possibly based in DC

There is a Paul Bolen or Paul C. Bolen, organist-choirmaster in NYC area in 1910s-1930s; organist in 1915 NY State Census; he's a
church organist living, spouse Mary, born ca. 1878 in NY, and living in Harlem in the US 1940 Census


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Things simmer down for a while in mid 1893.

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LEADING UP TO THE BIG EVENT ITSELF

1893, in August: A number of newspapers carry an identical blurb on August 4, 1893, mentioning Sissieretta Jones, Harry Burleigh, Maria Selika, Fisk Jubilee singers, exposition orchestra, scenes from Uncle Tom's Cabin, etc.; e.g., Rockford Daily Spectator, August 4, 1893, p. 2; Chicago Daily Inter Ocean, August 6, 1893, p. 7, etc.

1893, in August: in Chicago, but before, not at, the fair, Cook participates in a concert at Bethel Church with Harry Burleigh (1866-1949) and others, so he obviously either knows Burleigh already or meets him at this point (Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 293), though of course Burleigh had been mentioned since early January 1893; Is this the concert of August 16, where Joseph Douglass and Harry Burleigh participate? No, I think not, and this Wednesday evening concert at Bethel is a benefit for the Knights of Pythias (Indianapolis Freeman, August 12, 1893, p. 8); in a different concert the next evening, according to the Indianapolis Freeman, Maria Selika (who was the star), Joseph Douglass, Burleigh, and Cook (doing a number on the violin) are on the program of a musical and literary concert on Thursday the 17th at Bethel (Indianapolis Freeman, August 19, 1893, p. 1); Burleigh is part of the Big Event in preliminary announcements in newspapers of August 4. Sounds as if they are all in town from
only about August 1, and use Bethel Church as a base of operations, or a place to worship and concertize.

At the fair Cook met Dunbar for the first time; Dunbar was working as a clerk for Douglass at the Haiti Pavilion (Carter bio. quotes from Cook memoir about his introduction by Douglass to Dunbar, p. 38), and Dunbar gets a spot on the program; Mercer memoir of 1923 spring concert tour of Cook with Clef Club and with Richard B. Harrison recalls that Cook introduces Harrison to Dunbar here; Cooks hangs out with his DC buddy and fellow violinist Joseph Douglass.

At the fair Cook may have met Dvorak. Peress (pp. 31-32) quotes an August 13, 1893 letter of introduction for Cook from Burleigh to Dvorak in Dvorak archives; see also Snyder, Burleigh, p. 98.

Possibly Cook had already met Dvorak and showed him music from the opera in the spring. Years later, the Washington Evening Star (April 22, 1906, p. 8) says of Cook, "It was he who directed the great composer's attention to the originality of the old heart-touching negro melodies . . . " that led to the New World Symphony; this is an anecdote normally told of Cook's friend Harry Burleigh, but it is attested in May 1893, in “UNCLE TOM IN OPERA/ By a Black Composer, Black Librettists and with a Black Star./WILLIAM COOK’S FINE MUSIC/ This Negro Has Written Songs Any White Composer Might Be Proud Of.” (NY Press, Sunday, June 25, 1893, p. 3), already referred to above.

THE BIG EVENT

COLORED PEOPLE’S DAY takes place at the Chicago Fair on Friday, August 25, 1893.

The Chicago Herald, Saturday, August 26, 1893, p. 1 reports this program:

Hon. Frederick Douglass speech

Introduction of Mrs. Isabelle Beecher Howard

Mme Deseria Plato sang Meyerbeer's "Lieti Signor" [from the Huguenots] and was unanimously recalled for an encore, which was "Nearer My God to Thee".
Then seven numbers "and as many and more encores as there were original appearances":

J. Arthur Freeman, Buck’s recitative and aria, "The Shadow Deepens"
Harry Thacker Burleigh, Bizet, Carmen, Toreador’s Song
Sidney Woodward, [aria from] Verdi’s I Due Foscari
Joseph Douglass, Violin Fantasie from Trovatore
Paul Dunbar read an original ode to "The Colored American"
Burleigh and Woodward, a duet from the new Uncle Tom’s Cabin opera
Miss Hallie Q. Brown, a recitation

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM:

Chicago Daily Inter Ocean, August 25, 1893, p. 2 says the Douglass speech is called "The Race Problem in America", and that Hattie Q. Brown (recte: Hallie) will recite "They are Coming"

Chicago Daily Inter Ocean, August 26, 1893, p. 1: the event began at 3:00 pm, featured artists were Plato, Brown, Woodward, Freeman, Burleigh, Douglass, with accompanist Maurice Arnold Strothotte.

Kalamazoo Gazette, Saturday, August 26, 1893, p. 2 reports that Hallie Q. Brown, elocutionist, read "The Black Regiment"; it also says there were some jubilee singers, but other details are wrong so this is suspect.

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Maurice Peress, p. 33 and p. 208, note 8, quotes from the after-concert article in the fair paper, the Daily Columbian, for Saturday, August 26, which essentially affirms the Herald account. Accompanist for all is Maurice Arnold Štrathotte, a Dvorák protégé. (Peress, however, thinks the event was held on Thursday the 24th.)

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Black Patti was expected to sing but did not sing. Her excuse was that there was a hitch between her two managers and her guarantee had not
arrived before it was too late to make the trains. This could be true, but more likely, acc. Snyder, _Burleigh_ bio., she was trying to sidestep the controversy about Colored People’s Day. Claims that she performed reveal many newspaper articles to have been written on the basis of the intended program, not what happened on the 25th. (Abbott and Seroff catch this fault in the reporting.)

1893, in September:
About a month after Colored People’s Day, Black Patti brings her touring company to Chicago and does sing on the fairgrounds, on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 27, 1893 [Black Patti bio by Lee says that this is on September 25], with Joseph Douglass, Mme. Deseria Plato, Mme. Neal Gertrude Hawkins, among others, in the assembly room of the Woman’s building; they also perform two concerts, with entirely different programs, at Chicago’s Central Music Hall on the evenings of the next two days, September 28 and 29 (Chicago Daily _Inter Ocean_, September 28, 1893, p. 7; Chicago Daily _Inter Ocean_, September 29, 1893, p. 6; Abbott and Seroff, p. 284)

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NEW YORK YEARS, 1893-1897

1893-94, 1894-95, 1895-96, 1896-97 are theatrical four seasons with not very much hard external evidence for what Cook is up to in NYC and DC with Cole, Dunbar, Williams & Walker, etc.

AT THE NATIONAL CONSERVATORY

1893, in the fall after the fair:
Cook seems to have gone to NYC in the fall of 1893 and attended Thurber's National Conservatory; little or no direct evidence for exactly when, and Cook's own memoirs don't really help on this point; nonetheless Cook is often referred to as a Dvorak pupil and he puts Dvorak repertoire on later programs. He is supposed to have met Dvorak before June 1893 and to have showed him the music for his opera (see above), though an alternative narrative has Burleigh drafting a letter of introduction for Cook to Dvorak in the summer of 1893 in Chicago.

Peress (p. 32) says Cook joined Dvorak's composition class in NYC in
September 1893, and that he left later during the 1893-1894 season (p. 48); Tibbetts says he played in a concert there in December 1893 (cit. Carter).

Cook could have been one of the colored string players or colored soloists noted as being in the orchestra in early 1894 at Dvorak’s benefit concert in the Madison Square Garden Concert Hall on Tuesday, January 23 (NY Herald, January 24, 1894, repr. Abbot and Seroff, Out of Sight, p. 275); this concert "will show some practical results of Dr. Dvorak’s efforts to get at the music of American negroes and one of the soloists will be Mme. Jones and "the chorus will consist of colored pupils, the orchestra being that of the National Conservatory" (NY Evening Post, Friday, January 19, 1894, p. 6)

Famous Ellington anecdote about Cook his smashing violin (Ellington, Music is My Mistress, pp. 96-97); the Carter bio. of Cook assembles four versions of this story (pp. 111-112); Williams and Walker and Hogan tell a colorful story about his not playing in public, and owning a $1,500 violin (NY Morning Telegraph, August 19, 1905, p. 10); NB: that dollar figure would be about $30,000 or $40,000 today; in fact, Cook plays the violin at least until September 1916 (see below)

1893, in December: Carter thesis (p. 40) cites Cleveland Gazette, December 16, 1893, to the effect that Cook is abandoning plans for a career in violin playing in favor of composing.

1894, in March: Cook is in Washington, DC, playing violin at an Easter Sunday evening song service at the Metropolitan A.M.E. church with violinist Bernadine Smith under choir director Prof. J. T. Layton (Washington (DC) Evening Star, March 26, 1894, p. 8)

1894-1895

Cook’s second full year in New York? or split between NYC and DC? the NY Age obit, July 29, 1944, p. 1, says Cook studied briefly with Dvorak in 1895, and if that is true, it would have had to have been in the few months of that year before Dvorak left the US for good; possibly Cook had contact over two academic years, in both 1893-1894 and 1894-1895. In the Clorindy memoir he mentions not being able to play in the orchestra because of stiff fingers, Dvorak not liking him, being barred from the school, and studying with John White.
1895-1896

WORTH'S MUSEUM

When does Cook step out of the conservatory and the classical sphere and commit himself to popular music? The first extended vaudeville acts with Cook involvement were with Bob Cole and the stock company at Worth's Museum, and this could have been for a period of up to two years (two theatrical seasons) in 1894-95 and 1895-96; then Cook left and went back to DC at some point---but perhaps not until early 1897, then he remained based in NYC, though not any longer at Worth's, for a third season, 1896-1897. Worth's gets a solid mention in Cook's memoirs and by Mercer Cook (and in Carter bio.; see quotes from them in Carter bio., pp. 36-37).

Cook's memoirs recall some of the black stock company members putting on afterpieces, i.e., an extended finale to a vaudeville show like the recently emergent full third section to a minstrel show; these mini musicals had other locations, esp. as the first feature. His first contributions were likely to have been individual songs or a full mini musical.

At least once, "Cole told me he was to run the show for a week and asked me to be musical director"

Cook worked with a troupe at Worth's Museum that Cole's much later obit calls Bob Cole's All Star Stock Company.

Worth's Museum: by far and away the most commonly used name for this establishment; a.k.a. Worth's Museum and Theatre, a.k.a. Worth's Family Theatre, a.k.a. Worth's Dime Museum, at 30th and 6th; "Six Halls of Wonders and a Grand Theatre". Worth's Museum had been at 106-108 E. 14th before the 1890-91 season. Worth took a partner, Huber, in January 1890, and then Huber bought him out. Worth then moved to the site of the old Haymarket dance hall on 30th and 6th Ave, hoping to open a museum with attached theater in the fall of 1890, but legal matters delayed him. Worth finally opened at that new location in January 1891, and had continuous vaudeville there from 1893 for three seasons (1893-94, 1894-95, 1895-96) (cit. Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America, p. 58, 150; see also Odell,
Annals of the NY Stage, p. 730); for the latter two years---1894-1895, 1895-1896---the theater manager was black and the resident stock company was black. Black acts first ran at Worth's sometime in May 1894 (see below) and continued for about two seasons up to when Worth's changed hands in the spring of 1896. In March 1896, the building was still open on the same site, but with new management and was now known as the American Nickleodean, but still with the variety theater attached (NY Sun, March 1, 1896, p. 3). Cole departed, and his first season with Black Patti was in 1896-1897.

1894-1895

WORTH'S STOCK COMPANY

Worth's had begun to feature colored variety only in 1894---colored performers are a new departure---with Billy Jackson's Colored Georgia Minstrels from Monday, May 1, 1894 (acc. Abbot and Seroff, while Odell records them only from May 21, 1894, running consecutive weeks through June 9); then Jackson retires (acc. Odell) and Manager C. V. Moore takes charge of his personnel, beginning June 11, for over a year, to June 24, 1895, but not continuously e.g., runs June 11-16, June 25-30, July 9-14, 1894). Billy Johnson is in the May-June 1894 group. Ads in 1895 say Moore's group has been in the theatre for 40 weeks. Moore then puts the group on the road for five or more years. [Who runs the house company in 1895-1896?] "Brother C. V. Moore" brings his "forty genuine colored minstrel men" to a theatrical benefit in April 1895 (New York World, Sunday, April 14, 1895, p. 6)

This is not just one group of colored performers out of many in NYC. Rather, Worth's and only Worth's was the NYC epicenter of black variety/ vaudeville/minstrelsy from 1894 into early 1896 in that city. It was Chicago that was the big national center, with Sam T. Jack and Isham touring out of that city. NYC had a relatively small black population, at this moment concentrated mainly on the West side from the 20s and 30s to the 50s, prior to the Great Migration. The Worth's group was THE black theatrical community in the city. It pulled in Williams and Walker, and the Johnson brothers, at this time. Isham and Black Patti drew upon it as they grew and needed more talent.
Bob Cole and Billy Johnson are named together for the first time when they cross paths in the Georgia Minstrels in December 1894, and in April 1895 they are there with C. V. Moore's Colored Minstrels. What they are trying to bring to Worth's is what Cole and Johnson had already been involved with on tour in Sam T. Jack's Creole Company.

Abbott and Seroff have Billy Jackson and C. V. Moore companies, incl. big ad for Moore with lots of names, etc. Indeed, the companies of Jackson, and Cole, and Moore, are basically all the same, and their personnel are the resident company at Worth's. Jack, Isham, etc., pull out talent for partial seasons on the road, or for summer gigs.

Very significant article on Negro theatres by Juli Jones (this author is identified in Ghost Walks, p. 431, as William Foster), in Indianapolis Freeman, March 13, 1909, p. 5. This article devotes an important paragraph to Worth's, out of which the most striking point seems to me to be that Worth's was the first theatre under black management according to the writer (C. V. Moore was black). It had what is referred to as a stock company, and named are Johnson and Dean, Fred Piper, Billy Farrell, Mattie Wilks, Jerry Mills, Camille Cassell, Irving Jones, Ben Hunn, Hen Wise, Billy Young, Alice Makey, Jennie Sheppard, Gussie L. Davis, Stella Wiley, Tom Brown, Billy Johnson, Bob Cole, and Will Marion Cook as music director. These are folks who perform also with Sam T. Jack's Creoles and Isham's Octoroons, and shortly later, go first with Black Patti, and then with Cole & Johnson, etc., etc.

Carter bio. of Cook cites Billy and Will Farrell, Tom Brown, Fred Piper, Mamie Flowers, Billy Johnson, Mattie Wilkes, Gussie L. Davis, Will Proctor, and Stella Wiley (Carter, p. 36) as in Cole's all stars.

Odell (v. 15: 735) for June/July 1894 names Billy Johnson, Ben Hunn, Billy Farrell, Alice Mackay, Tom McIntosh, Fred Piper, W. H. Proctor, Stella Wiley, Hen Wise, etc.; this is the first mention of Stella Wiley that I have seen.

Bob Cole obit by Walton in 1909 is another source of names of this group. Of course, the memories of 1909 can fail, or be refreshed. But there is a core of a repertory company that sticks together emerges, for example, in the summer minstrel shows (rosters in the Clipper) in 1894-1896 include Billy Young, Jerry Mills, Hen Wise, Tom Brown, Billy Farrell. See also the rosters of C. V. Moore's Colored Minstrels.
Note, too, that Sam T. Jacks had Bob Cole, Irving Jones, Stella Wiley, etc. in 1895 (NY Dramatic Mirror, December 28, 1895, p. 21); Black Patti's Troubadours in 1896-1897 include Bob Cole, Billy Johnson, Stella Wiley, Lloyd Gibbs, Hen Wise, Ada Overton!!, etc. (NY Dramatic Mirror, September 12, 1896, n.p.; NY Clipper, May 22, 1897, p. 190); Isham's Octoroons in 1897 had Ada Overton, Jennie Sheppard, Fred Piper, Stella Wiley, etc. (NY Dramatic Mirror, September 11, 1897, p. 5); and A Trip to Coontown includes Cole and Johnson, Lloyd G. Gibbs, Jesse A. Shipp, Camille Casselle, Milicent Bradley, the Freeman sisters, Gladys Hunster, Tom Bacon, Hen Wise, Robert A. (Bob) Kelley, Walter Dixon, Jim Wilson, George Brown, etc. (NY Dramatic Mirror, April 9, 1898, p. 16; NY Dramatic Mirror, April 16, 1898, p. 9). There's clearly a cluster of variety folks here. A subset with Billy Young, Jerry Mills, Hen Wise, Tom Brown and Billy Farrell among others, did a minstrel show out on Long Island one summer (Ghost Walks, pp. 104-105).

NB: Ann Charters's biography of Bert Williams (p. 52) makes the point that Cole took most of the Worth company to form the nucleus of the first Black Patti Troubadours roster.

Other references: Odell, Annals; JWJ, Black Manhattan, pp. 97-98; Black Manhattan CD liner notes; Carter bio., Chapter 5, quoting Cook memoir, which is relatively extended and vivid on this; confirmed briefly by Cole 1911 obit; Abbott and Seroff, Ragged but Right, pp. 69-71; Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, pp. 386-88, Brooks, Lost Sounds, p. 78, etc.; nothing specifically on Worth's, but mention of All-Stars, in Riis article.

Abbott and Seroff have Bob Cole's big gig from 1891 to 1896 as being with Sam T. Jack's Creole Burlesque Company; they quote the NY Clipper to the effect that Cole joined Sam T. Jack's company in late 1893, and he's on the roster in August 1894 for 1894-95 and November 1895 for 1895-96; they also report that in December 1894 Cole and Johnson were together in Billy Jackson's Colored Minstrels in an engagement at Worth's Museum (Ragged but Right, p. 69).

Abbott and Seroff also show Cole in other companies at Worth's, including C. V. Moore's Colored Minstrels, etc. (Out of Sight, p. 162-67; 386-89ish); nowhere is the name Worth's or Cole's "All-Stars" used until the 1911 Cole obit, as far as I can see, except for one citation in Hill and Hatch, p. 157 to the "All-Star Dramatic Concert Troupe" and its play,
"A Pair of Spectacles" (which may be the well-known [white] play of that name); Riis article mentions All-Stars and this may come from the family.

Cole and Johnson then go in 1896-1897 with the first year of Black Patti's Troubadours; there is a rupture with her after just one season, and then Cole and Johnson tour with the first full-length black narrative show, the three-act A Trip to Coontown, from 1897-1898 for four seasons; possibly Cook goes with Isham's second company in fall 1896 when Cole and Billy Johnson go to work for Black Patti's Troubadours, and Williams and Walker anecdotes make it appear more likely he stuck it out until early 1897. Thus, he may have been all or mostly or essentially a New Yorker from late 1893/early 1894 to early 1897, or for about three years.

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Cook and WORTH'S

But what about independent evidence for exactly when Cook was at Worth's?

The biggest significance about Cook and Worth's is that (1) Cook is wooed over to the dark side (!!!), i.e., to popular music and away from Dvorak and classical performing and composing; and (2) Cook's work with Cole produced his first one-act mini-musicals/afterpieces/operetta(s) for the vaudeville/variety stage. What was on offer at Worth's was skit or sketch length. (NB: with Black Patti's Troubadours and Cole & Johnson, etc., the biggest dramatic/narrative item also was a short musical comedy or operetta, of no more than an hour's length, which began the show)

1895 SONG

"Negro Love Song," words and music Will Marion Cook (Washington D.C.: E. F. Droop & Sons, 1895), at 925 Penn. Ave. N.W.; conventional, romantic, no dialect; not done with Dunbar and not the later Dunbar lyric; local DC publisher; Cook identified as "Will. M. Cook"; Edward F. Droop was a well-known DC music merchant who did some publishing, with only nine sheet music scores in WorldCat. First line: "The night shades fast are falling"
1895-1896

1895, in July: CLORINDY.

Perhaps in anticipation of the second season of black variety at Worth’s, Dunbar and Cook have a July 15, 1895 contract with Witmark for Clorindy, complete with details on royalty payouts for US, Canada, England and other foreign countries (Carter thesis, p. 360 with details; Carter bio., p. 38 and p. 152, note 5; Peress, p. 49), hoping perhaps already for the 1895-1896 season, which would have been the second (and in fact the last) season of a black stock company at Worth’s, or perhaps hoping for Sam T. Jack’s or Isham. For whichever venue, Clorindy would have to have been a mini, and possibly a vehicle for Bob Cole, or Cole & Billy Johnson.

NB: Dunbar is mainly in Dayton during this time, and Clorindy was not actually written at this time.

Possibly Cook’s memoir of Worth’s pertains to this second season; filling three seasons of biography for Cook---1893-94, 1894-95, and 1895-96---must be done somehow with combination of National Conservatory attendance and moving over to Worth’s. Cook is probably mostly fiddling in either venue, and encouraged to compose by Cole. The biggest question seems to be whether 1894-95 is at Conservatory or Worth’s or both.

Yet in 1895-1896 he is still partly or entirely in Washington and committed to classical music, to judge by the immediately following incident:

1895, in December: "Prof. Wm. M. Cook" gives a lecture under the auspices of the Bethel Literary Society at the Fifteenth Street Baptist Church in DC on "Music Under Four Eminent Masters," i.e., Schubert, Beethoven, Wagner, Dvorak, with the assistance of Harry Burleigh and Mrs. Alice Strange Davis (Washington Evening Star, December 5, 1895, p. 8)

1896-1897

1896, in August: Isham’s new troupe, Oriental America, opened, thus dividing what had been the Worth stock company actor’s pool in NYC between four big troupes on the road: one Sam T. Jack
company, two Isham companies (the second of which is new), and the Black Patti Troubadours, in what was also their first season.

This is a big jump, from two companies (Jack and Isham) to four, and the talent had to be stretched. Isham some of drew his additional talent from Chicago, including Mme. D. Plato and Sydney Woodward, who had participated in the music at the fair for Cook in 1893. Up from Florida [or at school in NYC??], another novice member of the Isham company was J. Rosamond Johnson (Wash Post, ASCAP bio, etc.).

1896, in August: preparations in NYC for the celebration of the centennial of the AME Zion church there for two weeks in September, and Carnegie Hall has been engaged. Cook "of Washington, D. C." is running a grand chorus of 400 voices. (Indianapolis Freeman, August 22, 1896, p. 3)

1896, in September: Cole & Johnson leave the nest and consolidate as a team (after Sam T. Jack and Isham and the Worth's stock company had pulled them in various directions the previous season, and in the face of all this season's options), and go out with Black Patti.

1896, in September: George Walker and Bert Williams came to New York and got a flat on 53rd Street in fall 1896, and George Walker's 1906 article says that Will Marion Cook hung out at their NYC flat on 53rd Street, along with Dunbar, Burleigh, Bob Cole and Billy Johnson, Jesse Shipp, and Will Accooe; this is around the time of librettist Glen MacDonough and Herbert's musical travesty or satire, The Gold Bug, produced by George Lederer at NYC's New York Casino Theater on Broadway, managed by Canary & Lederer (Cook, Clorindy memoir, calls it "Lederer's Casino Theatre"); the premiere was Monday, September 21, 1896, running for only 21 perfs., or at best three weeks, into early October; some accounts say it closed as early as the 26th; Walker and Williams join the company in progress, but this did not help save the show. (NB: "The Gold Bug" became a popular Herbert march)

1896, in September: just around the time of Gold Bug, Cook is reported in NYC at the moment but a Cleveland Gazette reporter hasn't run across him (Cleveland Gazette, September 19, 1896, p. 1)

WILL MARION Cook and ISHAM'S ORIENTAL AMERICA

1896, in the fall: Back to Cook and how he survived the dissolution of the Worth troupe. He went to Oriental America. This show was announced in spring 1896 (e.g., LA Times, June 14, 1896, p. 23). Oriental America, which was anticipated to be a lavish spectacle with a company of 65, opened at A. M. Palmer's Theater in NYC on August 3 (Chicago Tribune, August 16, 1896, p. 27; NY Dramatic Mirror, September 12, 1896, p. 6, etc.) = first black show on Broadway, sort of, where "it scored one of the bona fide "hits" of recent years" (Tribune). Then it went on tour. It is in Columbus; then Chicago in mid to late August (first at the Alhambra in the week of August 16 and then at the Academy in the week of August 23); Detroit from August 30 into early September; then into Canada in early September; Brooklyn in later September; Philadelphia in the week of September 27; Rochester just after October 11 and Syracuse on October 20; DC for the first time in late October; Patterson, NJ in early November, and Hoboken on Sunday, November 8 for a sacred concert; DC again at Thanksgiving; Pittsburgh in mid December; Cincinatti in Christmas week; Indianapolis in New Year's Week, on Dec. 28, 29, 30; return to Chicago in January 1897 with a new program (with the "new program," i.e., not the one seen in August) at the ??? and then at the Alhambra; Cleveland in January; Syracuse in February; Philadelphia in February; Lancaster, PA in March; Philadelphia again in mid March; This show goes to England and Scotland for just over a year, from April 1897 to May 1898, sailing April 1; in Salford at the Regent Theatre from April 19, in Sheffield in July 1897, in Bristol in December 1897, etc.; NB: Mattie Wilkes and the Eldridges did not go to Europe; then, back in the US, in May 1898 the companies of Octoroons and Oriental Americans consolidate for A Tenderloin Coon.

1896, in August: In Chicago in August the opener was "a spectacular operatic absurdity," "Mrs. Waldorf's Fifth Anniversary," including the Manhattan sports and the bicycle girls and the flower ballet (Chicago Daily Inter Ocean, August 19, 1896, p. 7)
1896, in September: In Philadelphia in September the show's opener was In the Isle of San Domingo (Philadelphia Inquirer, September 29, 1896, p. 7); i.e., in Hispaniola, the island that holds both Haiti and the Dominican Republic today.

1896, in October: On its first stop in DC for a in October about a month later (Monday, October 26 to Saturday, October 31 at the Academy of Music), the musical skit that opened the first part of the show was Madame Toussante L'Ovature's (sic) Reception (Washington Post, October 27, 1896, p. 7). From August through October the troupe is doing pretty much the same show; however, they do a Sunday "Grand Sacred Concert" at the end of their run. John Graziano's chapter in Everett & Laird, Cambridge Companion, p. 67, gives the plot of the skit. It takes place in a Florida hotel whose proprietor is named Waldorf. The entertainment there provided by Mr. Waldorf (acc. Graziano and LoC libretto) includes:

Four Japanese maidens
The men of the Magnolia Golf Club
The ladies of the Grove Lawn Tennis Club
The Twentieth Century Bicycle Maids, in bloomers, and their dudes, the Manhattan sports.

Isham's libretto at the LoC integrates the olio into the skit and calls for the operatic excerpts to follow immediately. Later these acts form part of the olio, independent of the preceding skit. Graziano may be describing the action from the LoC libretto, even though the title is different.

Colorful posters for Oriental America are at the LoC and for sale on the Internet. Isham was originally a lithographer and advertiser, so the flood of posters makes sense in this context. They feature:

The Four Japanese Maids
The Bicycle Maids and the Hunting Chorus
The Flower Ballet
40 Minutes Around the Operas
and some individual singers

COOK'S "[THE VISIT OF THE] CANNIBAL KING"
The first glimpse of the long-running Cannibal King project (A). Mattie Wilkes is singing Cook’s "Cannibal King" song in late October in Isham’s production (Washington Bee, October 31, p. 8), which would presumably have to be during the second part (the variety segment). She "sings very charmingly the composition of Prof. Will M. Cook, entitled "The Cannibal King"; right now, it is a song, not a show.

When Isham's troupe returns to a city, it needs fresh material, especially if returning in the same season (the ads say "Presenting NEW SELECTIONS"). The troupe's newest opener, apparently its third or fourth mini musical skit of the fall, appears in November, at the time of its return engagement in DC at the Academy of Music in Thanksgiving week (Monday, November 23-Saturday November 28); It is Cook's new opus, [The Visit of the] Cannibal King (Washington Post, Sunday, November 22, 1896, p. 19; Washington Bee, November 28, 1896, p. 5); "See the Cannibal King and His Secretary" (DC Morning Times, November 22, 1896, p. 12).

There are either three principals or two (Eldridge and Shipp, or Eldridge, Shipp and Brown); they are either king, secretary and interpreter, or king, secretary/interpreter, plus Mr. Waldorf; one song out of a bigger batch makes the strongest impression (Mattie Wilkes' song?), and so do the choral effects, probably due to Cook:

Jesse Shipp and Billie Eldridge are the Cannibal King and his secretary/interpreter, respectively. Shipp acted the straight man for the comedy of Eldridge. They are called "a bogus cannibal king and his secretary" or "a 'fake' cannibal King with his private secretary"; and "In the opening skit there will be introduced a parody of a cannibal king at a swell colored reception and how he and his secretary acted on the first occasion of their entre into a civilized party." "They enter the Waldorf in NYC. "Li wants to know whether the proprietor of the Waldorf is married. After he has been told yes, he requests his interpreter to ask the proprietor if his wife is married. The questions that Li asks are too funny to repeat." Mattie Wilkes plays the role of the wife of the proprietor of the Waldorf. And "a big batch of catchy songs come well in this turn."

""In the first part a novelty is introduced in the shape of Li Hung Chang, his secretary and interpreter, Tom Brown, Billy Eldridge and
J. A. Shipp, who make plenty of fun. Miss Mattie Wilkes's song, in which the chorus joins without orchestral accompaniment, is quite effective. The parts a balanced in a manner that is seldom heard and the different voices blend admirably."

The king is named "Li Hung Chang," which was actually the real name of the current Chinese viceroy (prime minister) of the day, a man much in the international news at the time. He paid a major state visit to the US and Canada in late August and early September of 1896 as part of his tour of the world, and was mentioned thousands of times in the newspapers. (Left London ca. August 22, then basically two weeks in US and Canada, incl. NYC first and then DC on September 4; he crossed the continent and left Vancouver September 14, arr. Peking by October 21)

Tom Brown, who had been with the Octoroons as an impersonator, joins Oriental America right at this moment, just for this skit. The November 28 Bee (p. 8) says he is the king and Eldridge is the interpreter, which makes Shipp the manager of the Waldorf. NB: Brown had been with the Octoroons up to now, and he then goes back to the Octoroons (Boston Herald, December 8, 1896, p. 4), suggesting that this new skit may have been done by the Oriental Americans only in DC


From Abbie’s memoirs and a song title page, Cook was working on an "opera," The Cannibal King, as early as 1896; further, he had three songs published this year, and Riis says the covers tie them to The Cannibal King (Riis, Dahomey edn., p. xviii, and notes 7 and 8). At least one does: WorldCat reports "Love is the tendrest of themes: From the Negro opera The Cannibal King," words and music by Cook (NYC, 1896). This song is identified with Cook in a list of colored song writers and their songs published in an article, "Colored Song Writers," in Iowa State Bystander, August 13, 1897, p. 4, which also says "One of the most beautiful sentimental songs in this valued collection of negro music is written by William M. Cook of
Washington, D.C., who is an educated musician and a teacher of music." NB: during his DC and Clorindy period as below.

NB: Cook consistently called his shows operas, but this is not, technically speaking, their genre. This apparent overstatement raised the ire of Sylvester Russell, especially in fall 1902 (Indianapolis Freeman, November 15, 1902, p. 5) in reference to an interview Cook gave at the time of In Dahomey (in American Magazine Supplement to the New York American and Journal, Sunday, October 19, 1902, p. 19) and again in 1905 (Indianapolis Freeman, October 14, 1905, p. 5), in reference to how Walker & Williams and Shipp and Cook describe Abyssinia.

NB: Bob Cole was going to do King Eat 'Em All for Black Patti's troupe before he broke with them (Indianapolis Freeman, December 19, 1896, p. 5), and this topic may have been inspired by Cook; possibly the cannibal king thread goes the other way, and back even before, i.e., even before Cook, to the earliest days with Cole at Worth's, as one of the mini musical comedies for that venue. Cole's announced venture was probably intended to be ready for the next season (1897-1898), but it seems to have been set aside because At Jolly Cooney Island was going too well to shelve, and then Cole broke with Black Patti. In any event, it surely was, or would have been, another playlet. Cole rejoins Cook in a Cannibal King project in 1901, after A Trip to Coontown closes for good (see below).

1896 SONGS

"Love is the tendrest of themes: From the Negro opera The Cannibal King," words and music by Cook (NY: Howley, Haviland, 1896).

“That'll Be All Right Baby: the funny Negro song hit,” music and lyrics Cook (NY: Spaulding & Gray, 1896); NYPL Digital Gallery has it, and no mention of Cannibal King; sung by white coon singer Maud Huth.

“We're Marching On: A Colored American Hymn,” music and lyrics Cook (W. Bedford, Mass.: George Broome, 1896); dedicated to Cook’s dedicated supporter Frederick Douglass, who had died in 1895; NB: Broome later became manager for the Clorindy tour, and Cook referred to him in a letter of September 20, 1921 as his "old pal" (Carter thesis, p. 189).
RETURN TO WASHINGTON in 1897

1897 in March: later, in the spring of the 1896-1897 season, Cook is clearly off the road with Isham and back in DC; he has probably been back since late January or early February, and involved with Dunbar and Clorindy (as below); possibly he returned to DC right after his run with Oriental America, or when the company went overseas; a Washington DC musicale of Monday, March 15 featuring Miss Ida Platt, pianist, also had some vocalists, and a violin obbligato by Cook accompanied by pianist Mrs. Alice Strange Davis, and Will and his brother John then provided music for "a promenade concert" as part of the affair (Cleveland Gazette, March 27, 1897, p. 1). Note that Cook is still playing the violin. Moreover, he does so at least as late as Clef Club 1912 event and fall 1916 ref.

1897, in April: Cook is deeply involved in plans in DC for a National Conservatory of Music in DC, as an officer of a committee assembled to plan to establish a new musical organization, "a society for the advancement of those who may take hold in the understanding of the musical works of the best masters, and also with an ulterior object, to plan for the establishment of a National Conservatory of Music here at the nation's Capital" (Washington Bee, April 10, 1897, p. 5).

The back story here is that Mrs. Thurber got a bill introduced in late March to fund her Conservatory with some national dollars, and the bill's language indicates that it would be newly established in DC; Cook clearly expected the institution to admits blacks; in the end, hostility to public funding for Thurber's private entity killed the notion. (Washington (DC) Evening Star, March 22, 1897, p. 1; Washington Post, March 23, 1897, p. 4; Omaha Bee, March 28, 1897, p. 12; NY Times, March 28, 1897, p. 4)

1897, in June: the Cook Orchestra played musical selections, and Cook played a violin solo, at the graduation exercises of the normal department of Howard University (Washington (DC) Evening Star, June 2, 1897, p. 10; Washington (DC) Times, June 2, 1897, p. 2).

1897-1898
1897, in October: along with participating in a number of groups with which he has been associated with in concerts since the return from Germany, including the Selika Quartet and the Orpheus and Amphion Glee Club, Cook is playing violin in a benefit for the Colored Y.M.C.A. on October 15 (Washington (DC) Evening Star, October 9, 1897, p. 16).

1897, in November: Cook is a candidate for the brand new position of musical director in the (colored) public schools, and he ends up in a scandal and threatening a libel suit against Mrs. Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954, an 1884 graduate of Oberlin), a school trustee, i.e., a member of the Board of School Trustees, and her husband, in which Cook is seeking $10,000.

Probably a problem with Cook’s candidacy, besides the fact that he was not employed in the public schools at the time and had no prior public school experience, was his association for several years with theater and with ragtime songs.

Moreover, just prior to this moment, Cook had soured things with Terrell by attacking the appointment of Sterling M. Brown (sr.) as a trustee, and in this he is identified as Prof. William M. Cook of Howard University (Washington Evening Star, October 4, 1897, p. 2); then Prof. George William Cook of Howard wrote the Evening Star to say, first, that he was not the person mentioned, and second, that there is no Prof. Wm. M. Cook in Howard University, to which the paper responded that they identified him exactly as he "was introduced by the chairman of the introduction committee" at the occasion where Cook spoke (Washington Evening Star, October 9, 1897, p. 3)

NB: Mary Church Terrell was a Washington acquaintance from before her move to Oberlin; she was "Molly Church, destined to wed Judge Robert H. Terrell," acc. Cook (Cook memoir in Carter thesis, p. 402), although she was 6 years older; just when this was, is not clear, since she graduated Oberlin in 1884; was her family by then in DC and was she coming home during the summers? Or is this Cook fabulizing? He DOES refer to her as Molly, which Wikipedia says is her immediate family's name for her. In some ways, the Cook memoir's memory of Molly Church, Jessie Wormley, and Bruce Evans (Dr. W. [Wilson] Bruce Evans, 1866-1918, born in Oberlin, first principal of Armstrong High, c.1902, whose wife, Annie Brooks
Evans, was a music teacher in the public schools) fits better after the 
return of Cook from Berlin to DC in 1889 rather than now, eight years 
later.

What is at stake here is the initial appointment to the brand new 
position of director of music in the colored public schools, and the 
Bee is proud of its role advocating for such a position (Washington 
Bee, September 18, 1897, p. 4); the musical committee of the Board of 
Trustees, consisting of Rev. Sterling M. Brown and Mrs. Mary 
Church-Terrell, made the decision around November 1; the position 
ends up going to going to Mrs. Alice Strange Davis (a recent 
appointment, she was from Baltimore and had only been on the job 
as one of the music teachers since January 1897; Cook knew her and 
had performed with her in Washington, as above); there are four 
music teachers in the colored schools, who were Alice Davis, John 
Layton, T. L. Furby, Henry Grant; the other candidates were in fact 
Profs. Layton, Furby, and Grant; her appointment is to be tested; 
there was a complaint that only the four music teachers in the schools 
had been considered; a public committee charged that the result was 
on account of favoritism exercised by some of the trustees (this public 
committee consisting of, among others, John H. Cook and William M. 
Cook), and the committee's petition was accompanied by letters of 
support from individuals including Paul Dunbar (Washington 
Evening Times, November 11, 1897, p. 2); a fresh committee of three 
was formed by the Trustees and they administered a competitive 
examination to applicants—presumably anyone who wanted to 
apply; the Bee championed Layton, or else Furby, against Davis, and 
suggested the time was not yet ripe for a woman in the job 
(Washington Bee, November 13, 1897, p. 4); the exam is administered 
in mid November; the examination results confirmed Mrs. Davis; a 
petition goes into circulation against the appointment of Davis in 
earliest December; some individuals write letters of support to the 
Board of Trustees in favor of Leighton; Cook's libel suit against the 
Terrells followed.

(Washington Bee, November 6, 1897, p. 2; Washington (DC) Times, 
November 19, 1897, p. 8; Baltimore Sun, November 19, 1897, p. 2; 
Washington Bee, November 13, 1897, p. 4; Washington Bee, 
November 20, 1897, p. 4; Washington Bee, November 27, 1897, p. 5; 
Washington Bee, December 4, 1897, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, 
December 11, 1897, p. 5; Washington Evening Star, December 15, 
1897, p. 10; Washington Bee, December 18, 1897, p. 5; Iowa State
Bystander (Des Moines), December 24, 1897, p. 3; Washington Evening Star, January 1, 1898, p. 10; Washington Bee, January 22, 1898, p. 4)

1897, in November: in what appears to be an error, the Cleveland Gazette announces that Prof. John T. Layton is the one who has, in fact, been appointed music director of the colored schools of Washington, DC, with Alice Strange Davis and Joseph Douglass as his assistants (Cleveland Gazette, November 27, 1897, p. 3)

Layton had very much been the candidate of the Colored American (Colored American, September 1, 1900, p. 12; Colored American, September 8, 1900, p. 8)

NB: Not a full three years later, Alice Strange Davis (1861-1900) died suddenly on August 7, 1900 in a sanitarium in Battle Creek, Mich. after an operation; a new director was needed and Harriet A. Gibbs "of Kansas" was made Assistant Director of Music (or assistant music teacher) over Layton, Furby, and others as the result of a competitive examination on September 29, 1900 for which there were twelve candidates offering themselves for examination (Washington Evening Star, September 25, 1900, p. 16; Washington Evening Star, September 29, 1900, p. 16; Washington Times, September 29, 1900, p. 7; Washington Bee, October 20, 1900, p. 1; Washington Bee, October 27, 1900, p. 5)

Harriet A. Gibbs is brand new in Washington; she is the new Directress of Music (Washington Colored American, October 27, 1900, p. 14), or she is Assistant Superintendent of Music, or she is Director of Music---both are used on the same page, where she is "at the helm" (Washington Colored American, December 8, 1900, p. 1); she is Director of Music in the schools of the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Divisions, and there is irritation over her appointment (Washington Bee, October 27, 1900, p. 5); in 1903 and 1906 she is called assistant director (Washington Colored American, June 13, 1903, p. 5; Washington Evening Star, May 24, 1906, p. 6); she resigns at the end of May, 1906, at which time the Bee calls her Director (Washington Bee, June 9, 1906, p. 1); evidently she is in charge, but the position has some public flexibility in title; clearly, this is the top job in the colored schools and she replaces Alice Strange Davis from 1900 to 1906.
NB: Just going by the newspapers it takes a while to sort out precisely the chain of command and the job titles. But there is clearly a white director of music (a.k.a. supervisor of vocal music, an emphasis on “vocal” that makes sense since school music is still pretty much just vocal music, so that keyboard chops are expected; the elder Layton's one big flaw for the job is that he is not a pianist, but just a choral director and singer);

from January 1901 to 1913 in DC the director is the (white) Miss Alys E. Bentley. Then there is also a director of music in the colored schools as we have seen above, also regularly called assistant director of music, on account of which the white director is evidently the overall supervisor. Beneath the assistant director are the assistants, the teachers. In June 1905, J. T. Layton is temporarily promoted for three months to be assistant director, and Clarence White is temporarily promoted as a result to become an assistant teacher (Washington Evening Star, June 30, 1905, p. 17).

In 1906, after Harriet Gibbs's resignation, the position of assistant director is now, finally, given to Mr. J. T. Layton, while the overall director of music in the DC schools continues to be Miss Alys E. Bentley (Washington Evening Star, September 5, 1906, p. 8); Layton is music director of the colored schools and "Washington's Greatest Musician" in Washington Bee, January 22, 1910, p. 4; he serves in this role for a decade, 1906-1916.

Alys Bentley (white) resigns in June 1913 as overall director to teach in NYC at the Ethical Culture School, and it is reported that her position pays $1000 with a longevity bump to $2000 after five years, and Prof. W. L. Tomlins will take over temporarily (Washington Evening Star, July 3, 1913, p. 4); Tomlins becomes the new director of music in the public schools in the fall of 1913 and is introduced to the teachers at the M Street High School by Prof. John T. Layton, assistant director in charge of music in the colored schools (Washington Bee, November 1, 1913, p. 8).

After the 1913-1914 year, Tomlins is succeeded for the year 1914-1915 by Mrs. C. V. [Mrs. Frank] Byram, director of music at East High School, and then she is succeeded in November 1915 by Hamlin E. Cogswell (appointed in May 1915, begins in fall; died in office in April, 1922).

Layton (c.1841-1916), whose home was at 1722 10th St. NW, just two
blocks away from the Cook family home, after serving for a decade, died on February 14, 1916 at the age of 75 (Washington Evening Star, February 15, 1916, p. 21; Washington Bee, February 19, 1916, p. 1, 4); a longtime advocate for Cook, the elder Layton was one of the DC figures who supported Cook’s trip to Berlin (memoir). He had been teaching in the public schools for about 35 years and had been the director of the choir at the Metropolitan A. M. E. church for about 45 years; his son, J. Turner Layton, producer, song-writer, pianist, and vaudevillian of NYC, is also in the Cook circle there, and works with Creamer, Felix Weir, Abbie Mitchell, produced Strut Miss Lizzie, etc.

In 1916, Miss Josephine E. Wormley (c. 1879 - after 1940---born in DC, she's 51 in the 1930 census and 58 in the 1940 census), a promising young DC musician from the later 1890s and a teacher in the public schools since at least 1903 (Washington Evening Star, September 21, 1903, p. 7) was made assistant director of music for the colored schools in 1916 immediately after Layton's death, moving from a salary of $800 to $1300, and she served from September 1916 through 1925.


Wormley is still a public school teacher in the 1930 US Census but not any more in 1940; she is surely the old Cook friend from his DC childhood, called "Jessie Wormley" in Cook’s memoir (Carter thesis, p. 402), though he was a teenager and she would have been about 4 or 5! unless he’s misremembering and it is 1889 and she’s about 10 (and has a crush on him).

1897, in December: Cook is one of great music educators in "the Athens of the American Negro" along with T. L. Furby, [Mr.] Bernardine Smith [a young violinist], J. T. Layton, Mrs. A. S. Davis, Joseph H. Douglass, and Clarence White in music (Indianapolis Freeman, December 25, 1897, p. 7); note that these are not all school music teachers
1897, late in the year: Cook, closing up shop on his shot at a public-school job, and with Dunbar back in town, jumps back into the preparation of Clorindy.

1898, in March: still with a close eye on DC educational politics, Cook files charges claiming someone got a music job on account of also agreeing to work in the church of one of the public school trustees; this is denied by the individual; Cook goes so far as to file a letter with the US President with the claim of alleged abuses in connection with the colored schools (Washington (DC) Evening Star, March 28, 1898, p. 12; Washington (DC) Evening Star, March 29, 1898, p. 7, 9).

1898, in March: Cook returned to NYC to be an associate editor for the Prospect Publishing Company, established to publish The Prospect, a sixty-four page monthly magazine for the colored people of America; its first and only issue appeared in April 1898, and to this first and only issue Cook contributed a major article, "The Music of the Negro-Past, Present and Future." (Washington Post, March 16, 1898, p. 5; Washington Times, March 27, 1898, p. 18; Washington Evening Star, March 28, 1898, p. 12; Washington Colored American, April 23, 1898, p. 6)


Cook writes that critics think that Negro music has degenerated, but this is not true. It draws on African roots and on American folk music with English, Scotch, Irish, and French roots. Then it turns to convention. Then to ragging, where he mentions Gussie Davis, James Bland, Bert Williams, and Bob Cole. Then Dvorak. Then Coleridge-Taylor, Harry T. Burleigh, and "others of lesser note" who are also forging their way to the front, through knowledge of musical classics. (In shape, if not in detail, it is like the 1915 article, etc.)

1898, in March: decades later, Cook recalls that he attended the memorial for Anton Seidl at the Met in NYC that was held on March 31, 1898; he recalled that he was so moved that he cried (Pittsburgh Courier, February 13, 1937, p. 5)
CLORINDY, genesis 1897-1898

1897, in August: Cook and Dunbar had a contract for Clorindy with Witmark in 1895 (see above), but the project then stalled. While back in DC as "teacher" at Howard and involved in local public school affairs, Cook finally got down to writing Clorindy in fall 1897, surely from the moment of the August return to the US from England of Dunbar; both Cook and Dunbar are Washingtonians at that time in 1897; that is part of their continuing connection.

Cook and Dunbar leave colorful accounts of their collaboration, sweated out in John Cook's basement; the biggest source for all accounts is Cook from his own Memoir, as excerpted and printed in 1947; the story of Clorindy, in his own words, is printed from the Cook autobiography in Theatre Arts 31/9 (September, 1947): 61-65, and reprinted by Southern, Readings in Black American Music; this account is familiar from retellings, and is vivid and quotable; the story is retold by Woll, by Carter bio., by Peress, etc.

Cook remembers that Williams and Walker came to NYC to perform in Victor Herbert's Gold Bug (in September 1896) and then "they swamped New York" and went on to a long run at Koster and Bial's (in early 1897, from January to April). (NB: Cook was involved with Isham's Oriental America that fall.) He says that he met them after they came to NYC, and he says "That was where I came into the picture," i.e., in reference to the Koster and Bial's run, so his interaction with them about Clorindy, and the thought to make it a vehicle for them, would have come early in 1897. That is when he was lent money by their manager to get home to DC.

Cook then hits Dunbar with his great idea---blowing the dust off the Witmark contract and working up Clorindy for Williams and Walker. But Dunbar goes to England from February to August 1897. Cook throws himself into music education in DC, as above. (Evidently not teaching in the schools, however, at least not in spring term of 1898, since he is so poor and so much in NYC on publishing and Clorindy business.)
Cook’s memory of a "long siege" of Dunbar probably means he was working on the idea with Dunbar before the poet left for England, i.e., Jan/Feb 1897, and that they eventually collaborated after Dunbar's return, i.e., in the late summer/early fall (August/September) of 1897, in John Cook's basement. NB: The Dunbar biographies all agree on a narrative that has Dunbar working on Clorindy before being offered and accepting the Library of Congress job that began October 1, 1897.

After this feverish burst of creativity in 1897, Cook then says many days elapsed before there was "any kind of action." He himself was tied up in educational affairs, and Dunbar had taken a job. Then Williams and Walker came through DC with the Hyde and Behman show. That was Hyde's Vaudeville Company, a.k.a. Hyde's Comedians, and they were the "Kings of Colored Comedians"; they came through DC around the last week of January 1898. The comedy team encouraged him once more, and he then went to NYC twice. For the first trip, he again borrowed money from their manager. In NYC, he begins by hitting Witmark [February], and struggles to get home to DC. Then "some months" pass [February, March, April, May?]. He is in NYC as an associate editor of The Prospect by March, since its first issue was April 1898, but that did not last long and probably did not pay very much. Maybe back to DC? Then the story goes that in DC he borrows money from a DC connection, goes to NYC to hit up Rice, and Cook badgers Rice every day for a month [May/June], while rehearsing talent on the side, and finally getting the booking "on the thirty-first day." This is when he is very poor and cadges meals from friend Harry Burleigh. Witmark's memoir, From Ragtime to Swingtime, says Cook was struggling to get a production together only a month before the June 27 or eventual July 5 opening, suggesting Cook got the booking in early June. It is not clear whether Williams and Walker are still in the picture, or whether Hogan has come on board.

Some hectic rehearsals ensued (time frame hard to pin down precisely, but must be June), aiming for an opening on a bill starting Monday, June 27. Hogan, the star, was only available after his work with Black Patti had ended in DC on May 21, and Hogan was advertising his availability a week later (NY Dramatic Mirror, May 28, 1898, p. 17), so he probably only signed on around June 1; after a week's postponement due to rain, Cook's troupe opened for Rice on the bill starting Monday, July 5. Cook says the show ran an hour on opening night.
CLORINDY’S ORIGINAL SCENARIO

One surviving report of the original scenario of Clorindy for Williams and Walker is from the New York Sun, Sunday, June 26, 1898, p. 6, and was published the day before what was to have been the premiere that got rained out. It is clearly the version for the W&W comedy team, not for Hogan’s solo turn:

"A one-act operetta written and sung by negroes will be given in the roof garden of the Casino to-morrow night. The text is by Paul Laurence Dunbar, the poet, and the music is by William Marion. The scene is laid on a Virginia plantation in the last century, and Mr. Dunbar says the story explains the origin of the cake walk. Two house servants are in love, and the rival to the valet is a field hand. In a contest it is the latter who shows bravery. He is to be made a house servant as a reward, and as he cannot even walk properly his master sets all his negroes walking in order to select the most graceful. The field hand, with the assistance of the girl whom he has protected, wins the preferment and the love of the dusky maiden."

This scenario was printed again, with slightly greater detail, in the New York Sun, June 8, 1898, p. 7 (and the Springfield (Ill.) Republican, July 15, 1898, p. 3, quoting the Sun), giving us an indication both of what the scenario was as a vehicle for Williams and Walker, and what it became:

Dunbar and Cook "set out to write something characteristic of their race in words and music. It was to receive whatever aid might come from an interpretation by negro singers and actors. Thus "The First Cake Walk" had its scene laid in Virginia in the last century. The master of the Castlewood estates, to settle a rivalry in love between two of his slaves---one a house servant and dandy, the other a farm clod---proposes that the two men shall exhibit their qualifications to serve in the household. The valet has protested against such a reward to his rival, who has shown courage under circumstances which betrayed the cowardice of the other. The field hand, to prove that he can acquire the necessary elegance, undertakes to walk as gracefully as the other. Mr Dunbar says that he had heard from old negroes the tradition that the cake walk began in this way. His purpose was to present the subject with the humor and poetry possible to comic opera, and Mr. Marion, who has studied composition under famous
masters, wanted to prove that he could treat the themes of negro music in a way that was characteristic as well as musicianly."

CLORINDY’S DIALOGUE

Clorindy was originally intended for Williams and Walker, presumably as the field slave and house slave, respectively. Instead, though, since they were otherwise committed at the moment, it was abbreviated and refashioned at the last moment into a vehicle for big solo star Ernest Hogan, who had only ever worked in NYC for one week, with Black Patti the previous autumn. His career had taken off directing cakewalk contests in San Francisco in 1892, and he was therefore a perfect fit. In Clorindy, Hogan becomes a major star and gets major hits with "Darkytown is Out Tonight," etc.; in NY Times, August 7, 1898, p. 5 the show is simply called "the big cakewalking act, headed by Earnest Hogan."

Creating a version for Hogan obviously required a major rewrite.

While on tour with Clorindy over the Orpheum vaudeville circuit in the West, Cook explained the genesis of Clorindy to an LA Times reporter in early 1899, saying that about a year ago (i.e., 1897/1898) he and Dunbar wrote a negro opera, and now Rice has cut out all of Dunbar’s words; that is, presumably, the Dunbar dialogue for Williams and Walker was cut out and replaced with Hogan material, or else that now some or all of Hogan’s lines were cut (LA Times, February 19, 1899, p. 11; see also Clorindy memoir). Cutting dialogue was regrettable but obviously necessary, to shift the focus from two to one and perhaps also (we do not know for sure but it seems likely) to shorten it for vaudeville. Cook, in his Clorindy memoir, blames the uncovered roof garden, where the dialogue would not be heard, for the necessity to cut, and says it was Hogan that did the cutting (so no dialogue for Hogan at all, or did Hogan cut the Dunbar dialogue for the W&W version, and write something to fit himself?).

CLORINDY’S SUMMER SCENARIO

As it hit the stage in the summer of 1898, Clorindy was a vehicle for Hogan to do a star turn on the New York stage, and a shell or template for a number of dance turns and songs and a cakewalk finale. We have neither
the original book for Williams and Walker, nor the modified book for Hogan, nor the version that Cook took on the road across the Orpheum circuit, but the original scenario is given above. Hogan, who had come to fame in San Francisco in the early 1890s by acting as Master of Ceremonies at giant cake-walk competitions, may have played a role like that in Clorindy.

For the scenario of the abbreviated form:

Cook’s Clorindy memoir says it was "a story of how the cakewalk came about in Louisiana in the early Eighteen Eighties." [Note—no longer in Virginia in the time of slavery.]

In the NY Tribune in 1904, Clorindy is called Cook's "southern idyl". Its songs stress Dixie ("Hottest Coon in Dixie"), "Love in a Cottage", and "warm coons a'prancin'."

"Whether they [Dunbar and Cook] could have accomplished their purpose under favorable circumstances was not settled. "The First Cake Walk" as given was a crude afterpiece, which had as slight a basis as these things usually possess. It was merely a cake walk which an old woman got up for her son." (Springfield Republican, July 15, 1898, p. 3)

"It has no plot. An old mammy gives a party in honor of the return of her son from college, and institutes the cake walk as one of the amusements." (NY Herald Tribune, July 6, 1898, p. 2); NB connection here to later scenarios with return of college girl from Vassar!

After the show went out on the road for 1898-1899, we read that "The action of the novelty takes place at a lawn party in Darktown, at which there are in attendance twenty swell coons. The party is entertained by its several members, and terminates in the grand cake walk. Mr. and Mrs. Tutt of New York, who won the cake walk at the Madison Square garden in that city recently against 250 competitors, head the company" (Omaha World Herald, January 13, 1899, p. 10).

WHILE CLORINDY WAS ON PAUSE

1898, in March: A COMIC OPERA, or Cannibal King, second round (B).
A story came out in the press in late March 1898, during the hiatus of six months and more during which Clorindy was in limbo and Cook was still in DC, as a candidate for music teacher, and then in NYC as an editor. It is announced that Cook, Dunbar, and James Whitcomb Riley are going to write a negro comic opera, to be played entirely by colored singers. The project is a plausible one because James Whitcomb Riley was a strong early supporter of Dunbar, from 1892. Riley would do the libretto, presumably, with Dunbar lyrics and Cook music.

Scenario (Chicago Tribune, March 29, 1898, p. 6):

"The heroine is the daughter of a waiter who has become so rich from the tips which he has received at a winter hotel in St. Augustine that he determines to go North and introduce his daughter to colored society in New York. The first act takes place in the courtyard of the hotel and will make a very pretty spectacle. The other act is laid in Thompson street, where the heroine meets an African King, who is traveling incognito."

There are obvious broad parallels here to later Williams and Walker shows where the protagonist gets rich and goes North and attempts to get into society (e.g., Lucky Coon and Policy Players) but most of all to Cannibal King in some of its variations, as is clear from the plot summary of the latter in the Indianapolis Freeman, November 9, 1901, p. 5 (see below).

See Chicago Tribune, March 29, 1898, p. 6 (with scenario), quoting the New York bureau of the Chicago Tribune, March 28; Chicago Tribune, March 29, 1928, p. 8, "Thirty Years Ago"; Minneapolis Journal, April 1, 1898, p. 8 a long article with scenario; Kansas City Star, April 3, 1898, p. 7 with scenario; Washington, DC Colored American, April 9, 1898, p. 2 with scenario; LA Times, April 10, 1898, p. 19 with scenario; LA Times, April 17, 1898, p. 25; LA Times, May 15, 1898, p. 25; Indianapolis Freeman, April 16, 1898, p. 5: last week Cole & Johnson's A Trip to Coontown company and the NY Sun say that Paul Dunbar is to collaborate with JWR on a comic opera for Negro actors, with a plot not unlike that of A Trip to Coontown (see also Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 149, where this is assigned to NYT); Chicago Tribune, April 24, 1898, p. 51, etc.
Identical references in *The Bookman* 8/1 (September 1898), p. 13 and *The Book Buyer* 17/2 (September 1898), p. 96, say "the report, by the way, which reached us a few months ago that James Riley Whitcomb, in collaboration with Paul Laurence Dunbar, was engaged in writing a comic opera, is entirely without foundation." See also *LA Times*, September 18, 1898, p. 19 ("the report that James Whitcomb Riley and Paul Laurence Dunbar are collaborating in writing a comic opera is denied on excellent authority"). BUT note the printed scenario.

Something had been afoot.

1897, in December: a Wm. M. Cook of 2236 6th Street is called for jury duty in Criminal Court No. 1 (*Washington Evening Star*, December 2, 1897, p. 2)

1898, in April: a "William M. Cook" or "Wm. M. Cook" of 2224 C street, is called for April jury duty in Police Court (*Washington Evening Star*, March 26, 1898, p. 11; *Washington Evening Star*, April 4, 1898, p. 16; *Washington Times*, April 5, 1898, p. 3)

BACK TO CLORINDY on stage in summer 1898

1898, in July: CLORINDY on stage: Clorindy, or, The Origin of the Cakewalk, by Cook and Dunbar; Norton 1898.41 (I: 629-30); often called Clorinda; referred to as a ragtime opera, or a short operetta, or a one-act musical comedy in its form in summer 1898; called a ragtime opera while on tour over the Orpheum circuit; Cook calls it a comic opera in 1902 (in the Hearst interview, when he and Dunbar are called the colored Gilbert & Sullivan); for its genesis, see above; it reaches the stage on Monday, July 5 as a playlet, a vaudeville act (thus not a "show", but more than just one extended number) running about 45 minutes, and meant as the principal feature---in fact, the afterpiece, the spectacular and extended final number---on a variety/vaudeville bill. At this length, and with its cast of thirty (or sometimes said to be twenty), it was "the biggest spectacular feature ever seen in a vaudeville performance."

In effect, it is the kind of vaudeville act that comes to be called a "tab show"; i.e., it is a tabloid version (meaning compressed and abbreviated) of the longer work that Cook and Dunbar originally created for Williams and Walker. (*NY Age* specifically calls it "Will Marion Cook's abbreviated musical offering"); *NY Age*, February 12,
The size of its ensemble is important for this genre, too; it is not just a skit/sketch for two actors. More direct parallels are to the short afterpieces Cook would have been part of at Worth's in vaudeville, and the "Part I" of Jack, Isham, and Patti shows.

Clorindy opened on July 5, 1898 as afterpiece to a white variety show, E. E. Rice's Summer Nights, at the NYC Casino Roof Garden; the Rice show had already been running (June 18-August 20), and Clorindy was an addition which ran with this show and then was held over into mid September with other material (July 5 - September 17)

Cook conducts; NY Sun, Friday, July 8, 1898 big Clorindy column, etc. Very popular and gets held over for weeks; sometimes described as running the full season at the Casino, presumably the summer season. (A typical vaudeville act normally might play for only one week at a single venue.) Hogan leaves in mid-August to return to the Black Patti Troubadours, which opens in Plainfield, NJ on August 24.

Bordman, Peress, Howland, etc. say Clorindy was the first all-black production on Broadway, but this is to seriously miss what it actually was, namely a single elaborate vaudeville act on a longer summer bill in a roof garden. Much more interesting and significant is that it got held over, and then had its lengthy run on the road in Keith and Orpheum circuit vaudeville houses and spawned another show ("Hottest Coon in Dixie"). It was fabulously popular and successful.

Cook met Abbie Mitchell when she joined this production at age ca. 14; was she in the summer cast or did she join for the fall touring ensemble?

1898-1899

CLORINDY ON THE ROAD

1898, in July: Mr. Will M. Cook has returned to DC (Washington (DC) Colored American, Saturday, July 30, 1898, p. 1)

1898, in September: Clorindy runs as part of Rice’s show at the Casino rooftop until the middle of the month
1898, in September: Carter bio. (p. 44) prints an ad from the Washington (DC) Colored American, September 3, 1898, p. 8: "Colored girls with good voices, handsome faces and forms, who wish to join an opera company, to consult with Will M. Cook, Casino Roof Garden, New York City. Send photograph, correspondence strictly private." This must be a move to assemble a fall road company for Clorindy, given that he is writing from the Casino Roof Garden. (See also ditto in Colored American, August 20, 1898, p. 8; Colored American, August 27, 1898, p. 8; Colored American, September 17, 1898, p. 6.)

1898, in September: the Washington (DC) Colored American, September 24, 1898, p. 7 says much interest in the coming visit of the company to DC is on account of the number of Washingtonians in it, "the majority of whom will make their first appearance as professionals before a local audience," so he evidently got some takers from his ad. Could one of them be Baltimorian Abbie Mitchell?

1898, in September: With the close of the summer season, Ernest Hogan returns to headline in the Black Patti troupe, as he had the previous theatrical season; Clorindy is reconfigured into a version for vaudeville with Cook still in the pit and George Broome as manager; cut again, with a company of 25 or 30, and evidently not now requiring a superstar such as Hogan to carry it, it runs "a spirited half hour" on the vaudeville circuits in the 1898-1899 season, described as E. E. Rice's Company or Production, "Rice's Great Casino Summer Nights Success", and "The Celebrated Clorindy Company"; it plays in vaudeville in Keith and Proctor houses in NYC and the East, and on the Orpheum circuit in the West; in later planned revivals of Clorindy, Cook refers to it as running around 35 minutes.

THE TOUR BEGINS

1898, in September: Clorindy’s tour as a vaudeville act starts in Boston at Keith’s Theatre (week of September 10 and 18), at Keith’s Union Square, NYC for two weeks at the end of October, incl. week of Monday, October 17, Wisconsin and Chicago in late November and December (Chicago at the Great Northern, a vaudeville house, for the weeks of Monday, November 26 and December 3; Milwaukee later in the first week in December), St. Louis in late December (from Monday, December 24).
1899, from January: Kansas City from January 1; then in Omaha a week later; San Francisco from January 23 through February 12; February in LA and Denver; Cook is in LA with Clorindy in February 1899, as mentioned in the Cleveland Gazette, March 4, 1899, p. 3, quoting LA Times, February 19, which gave him "almost full length portrait"; March return to Kansas City, and also a return to Chicago in March (NY Dramatic Mirror, March 18, 1899, p. 22) and continuing into April; at that moment in Chicago, the Fellowship Club entertains prominent actors and theatrical men Sam Lucas, Cook & Broome, Cole & Johnson, and Sam Corker at a "Stag" (Springfield (IL) Illinois Record, March 11, 1899, p. 3)

1899, in April: Cook himself leaves Clorindy's vaudeville run in April 1899, when he jumps over to be music director for A Lucky Coon; evidently Cook is with Clorindy all the time until then; NB: in the pit for Senegambian Carnival is Harry Burleigh, and for A Lucky Coon the conductor is a Mr. Alexander, the Charles F. Alexander who went with Hogan to the Antipodes later that year, touring down under in 1899-1900.

1899, April-July: Clorindy continues to run in April 1899 in Atlantic City (?; Carter bio, p. 153, note 36); and on to mid June 1899 in Rockford, Illinois; see also footnotes to NY Dramatic Mirror refs in 1899, in Carter bio, p. 153; Clorindy is back in NYC at Proctor's Palace in week of July 3, 1899 (New Rochelle, NY, Pioneer, July 1, 1899, n.p.; NY Dramatic Mirror, July 8, 1899, p. 16); apparently also two weeks in St. Louis in July (NY Morning Telegraph, Sunday, July 16, 1899, p. 7 ("Clorindy, a colored entertainment," is continued" in St. Louis at Forest Park Highlands); this apparently ends the initial Clorindy run.

CLORINDY’S AFTERLIFE

While Clorindy itself was on the road in 1898-1899, Clorindy material was incorporated into the fall 1898 Senegambian Carnival and the spring 1899 A Lucky Coon (see below).

1899-1900: The "Clorindy chorus" has an immediate afterlife when "the entire famous singing corps"--the Clorindy chorus of sixteen male and female voices--- became part of the troupe for The Hottest Coon in Dixie, a new touring revue taking its name from a Cook-Dunbar song in Clorindy; this show's first season was 1899-1900;
The Hottest Coon in Dixie was recognized as the immediate successor to Clorindy in what must be a standard advertising blurb: "The Hottest Coon in Dixie" was formerly known as "Clorindy." As the latter it was a big hit at the local vaudeville house last season. It is now entirely different and contains fifteen additional people" (Omaha World Herald, May 6, 1900, p. 14; see also Columbus (Neb.) Journal, December 5, 1900, p. 2).

Hogan did a Clorindy production with his own troupe in Honolulu in Spring 1900.

Two seasons later, Clorindy was revived in January 1901 by Cook for Hogan in Boston at the Boston Music Hall after the run of Uncle Eph’s Christmas in vaudeville (Boston Herald, January 13, 1901, p. 14; other Boston Herald and Boston Journal refs.)

It was then revived, apparently, in May 1904: Clorindy is going to be staged with fifty people as part of a one-off benefit performance at the Herald Square Theatre on Sunday evening, May 8 for the Metropolitan Hospital and Dispensary (NY Globe and Commercial Advertiser, Friday, May 6, 1904, p. 7).

It was intended for revival in Cook’s Negro Life spectacular for Madison Square Garden in the fall of 1912, in a 35-minute version.

It was revived in NYC at the Lafayette by Cook in 1914.

Clorindy was intended for Negro Nuances in 1924, running 30 minutes.

And in the 1939 WPA musical Sing for Your Supper, its opening was used as a kind of historic number.

A comment on Clorindy’s idiom: we know the show through its surviving songs in their piano-vocal reductions. What we lack, in addition to dialogue, is the arranged and orchestrated full score. Alain Locke, in The Negro and His Music (1936, p. 61) whets our appetite when he writes: "Clorindy" was years ahead of its time, its hints of the symphonic development of Negro syncopation and harmony were not to be realized for another ten or fifteen years." What was he hearing and responding to? (Or was this what Cook was telling him to say?)
SENEGAMBIAN CARNIVAL

1898, in August: in the midst of the initial rooftop run of Clorindy, another show is put together: Senegambian Carnival, a Dunbar and Cook vehicle for Williams and Walker for their 1898-1899 season; it was the first "big show" for Williams and Walker; Senegambian Carnival was "A 2-Act African Musical Comedy"; an extravaganza; under George Lederer management, and he originally intends to take it to London after a 12-week US season; like Clorindy, or the later A Lucky Coon, it played in vaudeville houses, but unlike Clorindy, it was not just a sketch and part of a larger vaudeville bill, but itself a "big show."

[Forbes (Dunbar bio., p. 78) say Cook and Dunbar collaborate again on this revision, as does Sampson, Blacks in Blackface, p. 79]

George Walker says Clorindy was done as an afterpiece to Senegambian Carnival, but perhaps better put it was recycled or transformed (expanded, reworked) into the new show, or as one paper puts it, SG is "an evolution of" Clorindy; NY Dramatic Mirror calls Senegambian Carnival "an evolution of Dunbar's 'Origin of the Cakewalk'" or "just another name for it" (NY Dramatic Mirror, September 10, 1898, p. 10 and NY Dramatic Mirror, September 24, 1898, p. 13); The backbone story line seems to have kept the Clorindy songs and scenario as the finale. George Walker himself remembers Senegambian Carnival as "our first show," and as consisting of vaudeville acts plus Clorindy as the afterpiece (NY Age, December 24, 1908, p. 4), and NY Sun says Clorindy is appended to Senegambian Carnival (NY Sun, September 11, 1898, p. 23).

The question to ask is whether it is anything like what the Clorindy version for the Williams and Walker team looked like in early 1898.

In Boston, Senegambian Carnival employed a company of sixty, including "40 Georgia Rosebuds", hence the description as an extravaganza; it is a big cast and a full show, not merely a skit in vaudeville, but probably just a little additional plot; the principal means of expansion of its slender excuse for a story line is evidently through a number of interpolated variety acts; the show gets called a hodge podge of specialties. Dunbar is said to have contributed the words of several songs, which perhaps indicates that he has added new things to the Clorindy material; one is a topical ditty with the
refrain "In Dahomey" (Boston Daily Advertiser, September 6, 1908, p. 6)

There is no extant libretto for Senegambian Carnival, but newspapers summaries give us plot and characters; in its scenario we first meet Williams as Dollar Bill and Walker as Silver King (the characters who are also in the next show, A Lucky Coon):

Act I opens on the banks of the Mississippi on a steamboat landing or steamboat pier in Louisiana, a typical southern scene of forty years ago ["This steamboat landing represents a typical southern scene, in which the negro of 40 years ago is vividly portrayed"]; where Dollar Bill has just returned from the Klondike with lots of gold; his buddy is a local confidence man named Silver King; he is met by his townsmen, family and friends are gathered at sunset to celebrate their trip north [a party of negroes is about to take a steamer for an excursion north];
Act II shifts to a street NYC where they are guests of a wealthy hostess [at Manhattan beach?];
Act III is "in a grand ballroom, with a stairway reaching up into the flies", and ends with cakewalk.

Or, in a more summary fashion that only very roughly corresponds to what emerged, "The first act will show the Southern negro in his condition before the war and the second will illustrate what he is capable of in his state of emancipation and education" (Boston Daily Advertiser, August 27, 1898, p. 5).

Cook and Dunbar probably worked on Senegambian Carnival after the Clorindy run started. For Cook, it would have been something to do during the day. He/they either invent a fresh book in order to accommodate the shift from one star (Hogan) to two (Williams and Walker), or very possibly to restore the original narrative framework created for Williams and Walker in the first version of Clorindy; in any event, Senegambian Carnival is a loosely-plotted musical comedy heavy with vaudeville-act interpolations.

For Williams and Walker, if one regards it as musical comedy, then it is their first foray into musical comedy, as is sometimes said (e.g., Sampson, Blacks in Blackface, p. 79, and Walker himself, as above); as the first large company built for musical comedy around Williams and Walker, they need to hire much additional talent, which ends up
including the three girlfriend/wives: Abbie Mitchell (Cook), Ada Overton (Walker), and Lottie Thompson (Williams).

The show runs from a Labor Day 1898 matinee on September 5 to September 10 at the Boston Theatre (Boston Herald and Boston Globe daily in this span; e.g., Boston Herald, August 21, 1898, p. 14; Boston Herald, September 4, 1898, p. 14; Boston Herald, September 10, 1898, p. 4); an early report calls it "William & Walker's Black Carnival" (Boston Herald, August 21, 1898, p. 14); then back to NYC at the NY Casino Roof on Sunday the 11th ("the company stops off here on its way from Boston to Philadelphia to give one Sunday performance" in NY Sun, September 11, 1898, p. 23; also NY Morning Telegraph, September 12, 1898, p. 3); Philadelphia beginning on September 12 at the Chestnut Hill Theatre; then to Cincinnati for September 19-25; in Buffalo, NY, September 26-28; then a return to Philadelphia at the People's Theatre, October 3-6; then to DC from October 10-15 [the show is in DC with Williams and Walker in the week of October 9/11, 1898, with Cook and Dunbar in the audience]; then back via Titusville, PA; in NYC at Koster and Bial's on October 23, and a run at Koster's from November 7 to December 17; closes when Williams and Walker change management and start up with A Lucky Coon in December 1898

Harry Burleigh conducts Senegambian Carnival (Boston Daily Advertiser, September 6, 1898, p. 6; NY Dramatic Mirror, November 19, 1908, p. 18), but leaves by January, and, indeed, he probably left with the shift in management in later December; Washington Bee, January 14, 1899, p. 5 says he is now off the road and singing with a white quartette; the Indianapolis Freeman, January 21, 1899, p. 5 says Burleigh "has closed with William & Walker's Own company"; the Cleveland Gazette, February 18, 1899, p. 3, says that Harry Burleigh is musical director with Williams and Walker (stale news? or intending to mean A Lucky Coon?), but this is retracted/denied in the Cleveland Gazette, March 11, 1899, p. 3, which says a Mr. Alexander has that position--Charles F. Alexander

1898 marriage?: acc. Carter, the marriage of Will and Abbie was on October 21, 1900, after the birth of Marion, but in fact I have seen no independent evidence for the date and place of this wedding in this or any other year. Given Abbie's birth in 1883, she has just turned 17 on that date in 1900. Given the report that she married Cook when
she was 14, and that she is in Clorindy when she is 14, and given a
real birthdate in 1883, then the stronger possibility is that they
married right away in 1898, before her fifteenth birthday on
September 25. If the date of October 21 is right, but the year is really
1898, then she would have been 15 officially (or 14 if she begins
slicing a year off her age!)

NB: Abbie's passport of March / April 1922 says she was in France for
October-November 1898. Sic? Possibly, while Cook touring with Clorindy
in vaudeville? Were they already married??

A LUCKY COON

1898, in December: Williams and Walker take on Hurtig & Seamon
management

1898, in December: yet another production, A Lucky Coon runs from the
very end of year, from mid December; Williams and Walker leave
Senegambian Carnival for this new work, which is a lightly modified
Senegambian Carnival, tweaked and renamed on account of the new
management; it plays at Koster & Bial's.

Now with Hurtig & Seamon management; the new show was
probably nearly identical to Senegambian Carnival except for
changes motivated by the change in management; A Lucky Coon,
like its progenitor, is a full show and a kind of mixed form: a two-act
musical extravangaza or skit or sketch or comedy or musical comedy
or farce or farce comedy or farcical comedy or burlesque---with
vaudeville interpolations, i.e., with clever specialties introduced
between the acts and also during them, and with a cakewalk (in fact,
probably the whole Clorindy "Darktown folks are out tonight to see
and be seen" scenario, but not put on for some college kid, as in
abbreviated Clorindy scenario) as the climax;

Again the show is the work of Dunbar and Cook (Brooklyn Daily
Eagle ref.; see also Brooks, Lost Sounds and Forbes, Bert Williams
bio.); very likely to work like its predecessor as a vehicle for the
Clorindy songs and dance performances; continues to allow multiple
variety-show bits; lightly amending the story of Dollar Bill and Silver
King from Senegambian Carnival; Williams and Walker play the
same characters first invented for them in Senegambian Carnival; still
a big cast of some 50 (on the road with 40); and it continues to play in vaudeville houses

*A Lucky Coon* opens on a levee on the Mississippi in New Orleans, Louisiana; Williams is a roustabout on a Mississippi river steamboat who holds the winning ticket for a $30,000 prize in the Louisiana lottery and Walker is a confidence man---a bunco man, or bunco steerer, a swell colored gentleman from the North, thus not just a local, as he was in *Senegambian Carnival*---who becomes his warm friend and takes him to NYC to introduce him to society and helps him blow all the money:

Act I in Louisiana, as Dollar Bill is convinced to run an excursion to NYC, where he is to be introduced into the society of the colored 400 of the metropolis and spend his money

Act II has lots of amusing incidents in NYC, closing with a third scene with a cakewalk in a ball room; Dollar Bill challenges Silver King to a cakewalk to see who will be awarded the title "The Hottest Coon in Dixie"---a Clorindy number (Boston *Herald*, March 29, 1899, p. 15; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 22, 1899, p. 8; Springfield (Ili.) *Illinois Record*, March 25, 1899, p. 1; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 16, 1899, p. 6; *Cleveland Leader*, April 18, 1899, p. 5)

In the Cleveland *Gazette*, February 18, 1899, p. 3, Harry Burleigh is identified as the musical director with Williams and Walker (which would be *A Lucky Coon*), but this is retracted/denied in the Cleveland *Gazette*, March 11, 1899, p. 3, which says a Mr. Alexander has that position; in this regard, NB: in January 1899 Prof. Harry Burleigh resigned with Williams & Walker (*A Lucky Coon*) and Prof. Charles F. Alexander was made musical director (*Indianapolis Freeman*, January 28, 1899, p. 5); NB: Alexander marries Madah Hyer in May (*Indianapolis Freeman*, February 25, 1899, p. 5), and they go with Hogan to the Antipodes in summer 1899

*A Lucky Coon* goes on tour, including Jersey City and New Haven in December, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Providence and Boston (end of the month, back at the Howard) in January, NYC in February; Columbus, OH on March 2; Dayton, Chicago and Illinois, Milwaukee; Cleveland from mid April; and closes the season with the
company in DC in May. Like Senegambian Carnival, A Lucky Coon plays at vaudeville houses, not in legitimate theatres.

The Cleveland Gazette, April 15, 1899, p. 3 reports Cook is now with the company of Williams and Walker’s A Lucky Coon ("It is said Will M. Cook, formerly of this city, is with this company."). It may be that he stepped in when Alexander stepped out.

A Lucky Coon has an afterlife: it went on to tour for two subsequent seasons, at least into March 1901 or later (1898-1899 / 1899-1900 / 1900-1901), but Williams and Walker are with it only in its first year. In season three, for example, it opens for the first time ever in Brooklyn in March, 1901, with a cast of seventy-five performers (Colored American (DC), March 16, 1901, p. 6)

1899-1900

THE CANNIBAL KING

1899 in June and July: What we can call Version [C] of this project:

With A Lucky Coon running smoothly, there is news from as early as February and March 1899 about a show called The Cannibal King, a negro opera, whose themes are exclusively negro; a Dunbar and Cook collaboration; not the 1896 show, and not the 1898 project with James Whitcomb Riley, this 1899 version is reportedly a finished play with libretto by the productive (white) Broadway lyricist and librettist Hugh Morton, lyrics by Dunbar, and music by Cook, to be produced in London by George Lederer, who had produced Senegambian Carnival but who then had been dropped in return by Williams and Walker.

It was announced that before any US production, there first would be a London production in October 1899, with Cook and Dunbar and a company composed entirely of imported US negro singers See NY Musical Courier col. by Edward McIntyre called "Negro Melodies"; LA Times, February 19, 1899, p. 12; Philadelphia Inquirer, June 25, 1899, p. 4; NY Herald, June 25, 1899, Fourth Section, p. 2; Buffalo Morning Express, July 2, 1899, p. 16; NY Evening Telegram, July 6, 1899, p. 4; NY World, July 16, 1899, p. 2; NY Morning Telegraph, July 17, 1899, p. 1; NY World, July 26, 1899, p. 2.
Cook had the play accepted at the Garrick Theatre in London, and he has just come back from England (NY Evening Telegram, July 6, 1899, p. 4); the first production will be at London's Prince of Wales theatre in the fall and "will not be done in this country until after the English run" (NY World, July 16, 1899, p. 2); Lederer is leaving NYC today and going to London for about five weeks to arrange for production there of several plays, including Cook and Morton's The Cannibal King (NY World, July 26, 1899, p. 2).

A Vienna newspaper, the Wiener Zeitung, August 12, 1899, p. 13, has a small entry announcing that the Cook-Dunbar opera The Cannibal King will open in London in October.

"The Cannibal King," the negro opera for which Hugh Morton and Will M. Cook, the negro musician, will stand responsible, will be first produced at the Prince of Wales in the Fall of this year. Its novelty, it is thought, will make it popular. It will not be given in America until after England is through with it." (NY Morning Telegraph, July 17, 1899, p. 1)

Ernest Hogan gave a lengthy interview to the Sydney (Australia) Sunday Times (July 9, 1899, p. 2), in which he declared: "My intention is some day to write a negro opera, founded on a serious story, with heavy music. It can be done. We've got a composer in American—a colored boy named Will Marion—who has written some great music. He is now in London, trying to get a theatre where he can produce it. If he ever does, this world will hear some grand music."

No biographical data preclude a London trip for Cook in 1899, though there is no hard evidence at present for it yet.

This show did not fly. So, what happened? Hugh Morton was a very well-known and productive librettist active from the 1890s into the 1920s (see IBDB, etc.), and Lederer is a well-known producer active from the 1890s-1930s; they closely collaborated on a series of shows with composer Gustave Kerker in the later 1890s; however, in August 1899 they severed this arrangement, and Lederer began a collaboration with librettist Harry B. Smith and composer Ludwig Englander (NY Times, August 15, 1899, p. 7; Denver Post, August 27, 1899, p. 8); the Morton/Lederer rupture seems to have put an end to all mention for the time being of A Cannibal King; see below both on further life for
this material, and for the collaboration of Cook separately with Lederer and Harry B. Smith.

Noteworthy here is that Lederer is proposing an all-black company for London just when two black vaudeville troupes are heading in 1899 for Australia and New Zealand; note also, below, Lederer's later interest in getting a Cook-composed show to London.

Evidently the song published in 1902, "Parthenia Johnsing, as sung by Abbie Mitchell," text by Morton, is from this version of the Cannibal King material, since the title name is related both to the character Pompous Johnsing of Jes Lak (whose daughter is Mandy) and also to the Parthenia Jenkins of Uncle Eph.

The roots of this project clearly go back in some way to the 1896 Isham show, and also to the James Whitcomb Riley project of 1898; not part of Williams and Walker enterprise. The gestation of this Cannibal King surely began in 1896 with the mini in the Isham show, but exactly what form it was in in 1898 or 1899 projects is unknown; looking down the road, it was reworked into Jes Lak White Folks of 1900 (Cook-Dunbar), then into the Cannibal King(s) of 1901, and then into In Dahomey of 1902 (see below); continuities of later material are discussed in Graziano and Riis, who do not mention this version at all; relationship to King Eat Em All also needs exploring. Finally, note that the two plot line streams or basic scenarios (Dollar Bill and Silver King, and Cannibal King) that play out over the entire period of the Cook/Dunbar collaboration.

THE POLICY PLAYERS

1899, in October: The Policy Players, the next big vehicle for Walker and Williams; in NYC and on tour for one full season, 1899-1900; book by Jesse Shipp; a two-act musical comedy, running three hours; for a company of fifty; music apparently mostly either borrowed or by Williams and Walker; Cook is music director, conducting in the pit, but it is not clear how much of the score might be his own new compositions.

One reviewer noted Cook's conducting style: "There is another comedian not down on the bills, and he is Will (Marion) Cook, the musical director. It is a part of the show to watch his baton as it
gyrates through the air with a glass arm motion" (reprinted from the Kansas City Journal in the Topeka Plaindealer, January 12, 1900, p. 2).

Played Orpheum theaters as a full evening show in place of vaudeville in the West.

Sampson, in Blacks in Blackface, says The Policy Players is a retitling of A Lucky Coon but that is not quite so; in broad perspective, however, they are indeed similar: two acts, vaudeville elements; a naive and a con man. In the scenario here, a lottery fiend, Williams, wins some money by playing the numbers and wants to enter high society (the Black 400), and Walker's character engineers this, fleecing him along the way; there is the move from South to NYC; gambling and social climbing.

Eric Smith, Bert Williams bio., p. 41, points out much common ground between Senegambian Carnival, A Lucky Coon, and The Policy Players

Abbie's memoir (ref. in Carter bio., p. 51) says there was a dispute over whether Cook or the white house conductor would direct during the appearance in Washington, DC. Eventually, Cook did the vocal selections and the white man did the instrumental selections. (See also extensive account in Plaindealer (Topeka, KS), November 24, 1899, p. 1.) Abbie also recalls going to London for two weeks, apparently before The Casino Girl, and seeing the Queen.

On tour, The Policy Players hit Albany and NYC and Washington in the fall, and Philadelphia and Boston in March and NYC in April 1900 (Washington, DC Colored American, October 14, 1899, p. 1; Indianapolis Freeman, November 18, 1899, p. 5; etc.); The show is booked into a Washington vaudeville house, the New Grand Opera house, and ran there in mid November 1899, displacing all vaudeville for a week, starting Monday, November 13, with lots of variety specialties as part of the evening (Evening Star (DC), November 14, 1899, p. 17)

ANOTHER NEW WORK

1899, in late December: It is reported that "Mr. Will Cook . . . left Thursday for New York City" (Cleveland Gazette, December 16, 1899, p. 3);
"Will Marion Cook, musical director with Williams and Walker company, has gone to New York City to assist DeKoven in writing music for a comic opera that is to be produced at the New York Casino theater soon." (Indianapolis Freeman, December 30, 1899, p. [11?]; Washington, DC, Colored American, January 13, 1900, p. 6); NB: he is still music director/conductor for The Policy Players.

This reference is may be to an entirely new enterprise that did not get any traction, but it may refer to the need to work on The Casino Girl (see just below), without any connection to DeKoven, but whose librettist, Harry B. Smith, had contributed the book to earlier shows with music by DeKoven.

THE CASINO GIRL

1900 in March: A white show, The Casino Girl, runs in US from March 19 to June 6, 1900 (Cleveland Gazette, April 7, 1900, p. 1); Norton I: 670-671 (1900.20 & 1901.08); it is a two act musical set in Egypt; first association of Cook with entire team of producer George Lederer and Lederer's new librettist/lyricist Harry B. Smith, the team who will also be responsible for The Wild Rose in 1902, and The Southerners in 1904 (see below); Cook also worked separately with Harry B. Smith on A Girl From Dixie in 1903 (see below). NB: a two-act, four-scene musical with book by Smith and music by Engländer, it is a pretty typical Lederer production.

The Casino Girl had a white company and was a white-oriented show, and like The Wild Rose (1902; see below), uses Cook material but without huge Cook association, unless he was orchestrator/arranger, the role most likely to be Engländer's. Cook provided four songs. Cook and Smith publish Gems From Casino Girl in NYC and London in 1900. With the same creative team, soon, A Girl From Dixie will be the first big black-white collaboration (see below). In 1904, the Colored American credits Cook with "most of the songs" in this show (Washington, DC, Colored American, September 10, 1904, p. 2).

Musically The Casino Girl is a kind of pastiche, like the later The Wild Rose. So who wrote the music, and who arranged and orchestrated it? Consistent early reviews mention Cook, MacConnell and Nevin as contributing composers; the NY Herald, in reviewing the premiere the night before, says it is a musical comedy in three acts with "music
by Will Marion Cook and Harry T. McConnell" or "music by Will Marion Cook, Harry T. McConnell, and Arthur Nevin" (NY Herald, March 20, 1900, p. 11,); NY Morning Telegraph review of opening night likewise says music by Will Marion Cook, Harry T. MacConnell and Arthur Nevin (NY Morning Telegraph, March 20, 1900, p. 1); in a review of The Casino Girl by the American correspondent for The Era (London), March 31, 1900, p. 000, the author says the music is by Cook, Harry T. McConnell and Arthur Nevin, so this threesome consistently is associated with the March run; obviously the question is how many original Cook numbers were used, and who did the arranging and orchestrating of the whole shebang, and if Cook really threw a fit over this show (see below), did someone like Engländer step in hurriedly?

Cook's much later "Men of the Month" profile in The Crisis says "he composed the score" of The Casino Girl and The Southerner, suggesting an equivalent contribution in each, probably as orchestrator/arranger, but here, in fact, Cook contributed just four (4) new original songs.

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle has long article anticipating the show that discusses McConnell's work in the show, as he is a man of Brooklyn; says he wrote half the show, 11 numbers, and that it is his big break, his hour of fame after ten years of hard work on amateur shows, etc.; says "DeKoven and George Marion Cook (sic) are others that contributed musically" (Brooklyn Daily Eagle, March 4, 1900, p. 8); IBDB says most of the music and songs by Harry T. MacConnell

The Francescina bio. of Harry B. Smith (p. 127) says Cook, MacConnell, Nevin, Ludwig Engländer, and John H. Moore were contributing composers; a variety of claims is made about the composer(s): by some accounts, the principal composer is Ludwig Engländer, "with additional songs"---at least four---by Cook, incl. a published score of the four, two of which had Smith lyrics; a later Indianapolis Freeman mentions a Will Accooe contribution as well (Indianapolis Freeman, April 20, 1901, p. 5);

An anecdote (Carter, Cook bio., pp. 52-53), drawing on Abbie’s memoirs says Cook wrote ALL the music, then after opening night he tore up all the music in the pit and stormed out, and the music had to be entirely rewritten; no trace of this yet in contemporary newspapers; on the other hand, Williams & Walker and Hogan later tell a
newspaper reporter pretty much this story, and they say it involved
The Southerners of 1904 ("After delivering his music to the producer
he has been known to get hold of the MS. and destroy it, as in the
case of "The Southerners," which had to be entirely rewritten for
George Lederer" (NY Morning Telegraph, August 19, 1905, p. 10); NB
both were Lederer productions

Reviews in NY Dramatic Mirror, March 24, 1900, p. 16 and NY World,
Tuesday, March 20, 1900, p. 7 mention the excellence of the chorus,
which could be due to Cook's work; the reviewer in The Era singled
out Virginia Earle singing "Lover's Lane" with a chorus of
pickaninnies in the background, and said it had to be encored several
times

The Casino Girl had a good run on Broadway in spring 1900; it was in
London by June 23, 1900 and at the Shaftesbury Theater for a long
run beginning in July (and ran in England on the road for at least two
seasons, into 1902); on Broadway again in 1901, and then on the road
into at least 1902; Franceschina bio. of Smith (p. 129) cites an English
vocal score with major changes from the Broadway version;

The NY Sun, April 11, 1901, p. [illeg.], has wonderful column
discussing a NY revival that it says is effectively a third edition of the
show, stating that of the 16 to 20 songs in the London production, not
more than six were in the original production, and this third edition,
back in US, is yet again different; my suspicion is that Engländrer and
John H. Moore had a hand in the musical revisions, but Englander
might have been the overall arranger/orchestrator/musical director
who pulled all the parts together.

A much later Lester Walton column in 1908 says Cook visited Lederer to
try to get "Lovers Lane" [from Casino Girl, 1900] into another Lederer
show, and this was soon followed by "The Gypsy Maid" for Irene
Bentley [in Wild Rose, 1902] (Walton, in NY Age, May 7, 1908, p. 6)

1900, in March: birth of daughter Marion on March 22, 1900, right after the
premiere of The Casino Girl

JES LAK WHITE FOLKS
1900, in June: essentially version [D] of “Cannibal King” material:

Jes’ Lak White Folks, by Cook and Dunbar was a summer show for the Cherry Blosson Grove, the New York Theatre’s roof garden, featuring Cook’s own troupe, with Abbie Mitchell; a one-act skit or sketch, called a Negro operetta, running about 45 minutes with a half dozen songs, a couple of principals---Irving Jones, Pete Hampton, Richard Connors, Alice Mackaye, and Abbie Mitchell---and a very large chorus of thirty; just one elaborate turn or act on the bill, to play as part of a larger vaudeville/variety show; contemporary newspapers call it Will Marion Cook's operetta with lyrics by Dunbar, or with additional lyrics by Dunbar. That locution could be read simply to say that some of the lyrics were by Cook, too, or instead, that all the lyrics were added by Dunbar to Cook's libretto.

The book clearly is by Cook; J. W. Johnson also says Cook was his own librettist for this show; in LoC catalog of copyright entries, a libretto of 8pp was copyrighted by Cook on June 15, 1900, and it says "Jes lak white fo'ks" and "with additional lyrics by P. L. Dunbar"; WorldCat reports a British Library copy published by Frank Dean & Co., London, in 1900, attributed to Cook, with additional lyrics by Dunbar; the NY Morning Telegraph, Novbember 12, 1900, p. 3 gives a list of "New Plays Copyrighted" that is dated Washington, D.C., Nov. 10. It includes Cook's one-act negro operetta with additional lyrics by Dunbar, and it has been copyrighted by Will Marion Cook of Brooklyn, NY.

NB: If Cook's "Jes lak" got published in England in 1900, perhaps he was over there.

And yet, there is a surviving printed libretto with a Dunbar attribution and a modern edition in Dunbar works and by Alexander Street Press, asserting that it is by Dunbar; indeed, some newspapers in 1900 say that Dunbar copyrighted it by the fall of 1900 (though there is no trace at LoC), and this fact got picked up as a brief tidbit by the national news wires (e.g., Kalamazoo Gazette, November 25, 1900, p. 10; Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette, November 25, 1900, p. 10; South Carolina State, December 9, 1900, p. 2); however, it NEEDS CHECKING whether the copyrighted libretto of the fall is real or not, that is, whether it is in fact Cook’s work in the form that got performed that summer, or whether it represents something revised by Dunbar.
Regarding the title, papers of the day print "Jes'" and "Folks" but published libretto has "Jes Lak White Fo'ks" and modern scholars often print "Fo'ks."

Scenario: Pompous finds gold and wants to move up in the world. His daughter Mandy, has a Vassar degree (passing herself off as from Madagascar), and he plans to marry her off to an African king, JuJu, so he can get into high society. She refuses.

They open in NYC on Monday, June 25, 1900 for a one-week run to July 1 at The Cherry Blossom Grove, the roof garden on top of the New York Theater on Broadway between 44th and 45th (NY Times, June 26, 1900, p. 7, etc., etc.); the show gets held over for at least one additional week (NY Press, July 1, 1900, p. illeg.). Riis 1989 says it was Cook's least successful show, and Riis 1992, p. 48 calls it a failure and a brief effort that closed quickly. In fact, though, we need some perspective. It was a part of a "Summer Attraction," more of a skit or sketch than a "show"; it was merely an elaborate but short summer roof garden act---the week's principal feature---and as such, it was one element in a much larger, longer variety / vaudeville show, and the shows typically refreshed once a week with new material, so it did just fine, or as normal. Admittedly it did not do as brilliantly as Clorindy two years before in NYC and on the road, or as Uncle Eph's Christmas would do a few months later in Boston, since both of these skits, of similar length and function, got "held over." [NB: Carter bio, p. 53, says at Winter Garden, and says, p. 55, that it ran into August]; mentioned in NY papers from June 24 to July 7 (NY Evening Post, NY Dramatic Mirror, NY Herald, NY Times, NY World) and NY theatre news into July (Seattle Daily Times, July 4, 1900, p. 5; Washington, DC Colored American, July 14, 1900, p. 6, says they were in there [in NYC] "last week")

NB: The dates do not seem to provide for Cook going over to England before mid July, if at all.

1900

SONS OF HAM
1900, in September: Sons of Ham is the next Walker and Williams vehicle; under Hurtig & Seamon management; with book by Jesse Shipp, or Shipp and Cassin; it is the first big Williams and Walker show to run for two years: on tour and in NYC for two seasons, 1900-1901/1901-1902; Norton, I: 681-82 (1900.46); the "Tom the Tattler" column from Chicago in the Freeman talks about the misfortune of small pox hitting the company while in Pittsburg, and says "Mr. Shipp wrote and staged the "Sons of Ham," while Mr. Cook looked after the musical interests; and there is a combination of brains that cannot be surpassed even among the white profession" (Indianapolis Freeman, December 15, 1900, p. 2); Cook apparently contributed no new solo songs but he surely did the ensemble numbers that opened and closed acts, and he was Music Director.

Sons of Ham is very much of a variety/vaudeville-type show; a list of numbers for its second season in a later Indianapolis Freeman is followed by the comment that its joint authors, the songwriters McPherson and Lemonier, are responsible for almost all the music used by the company (Indianapolis Freeman, October 12, 1901, p. 5).

After three weeks of rehearsals, Sons of Ham ran from Monday, September 17 in Mount Vernon, NY, then in New England (Springfield, Mass., September 27) and Philadelphia (from October 1) and Brooklyn, and in Manhattan from October 19 for two weeks (Eric Smith, Bert Williams bio., p. 44; Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 223, has it opening October 6 after three weeks of rehearsal); in Syracuse, New Haven, Kentucky, Canton, OH, and Pittsburgh, PA in November 24; closes in Pittsburgh on Nov. 24 due to an outbreak of smallpox (Philadelphia Inquirer, November 25, 1900, p. 4), on account of which members of the troupe returned to NYC; the "Tom the Tattler" column from Chicago in the Freeman talks about the misfortune of small pox hitting the company while in Pittsburg, (Indianapolis Freeman, December 15, 1900, p. 2); they are back in business before Christmas (Indianapolis Freeman, January 5, 1901, p. 8 for appearance in Muncie) and in January (Omaha World Herald, January 29, 1901, p. 5), then New York, Boston, Philadelphia, etc. in the spring;

In 1902-1903 season, Sons of Ham goes out again for a third season, but now with the comic duo of Avery & Hart in place of Williams & Walker (this team will later also take over In Dahomey from Williams and Walker);
Cook was probably with it for first season, but this needs checking; maybe he was with it the first year and then moved to his own Cannibal King (see below).

1900, in October: 1900 marriage (acc. Carter thesis, p. 361) on October 21, 1900, seven months after the March birth of Marion, with Cook age 31 and Abbie age 16, but no independent evidence yet found for date and place of wedding in this or any other year; if Abbie's real year of birth is 1883, she had already turned 17. Given the report that she marries Cook when she is 14, and that she is in Clorindy when she is 14, and given a real birthdate in 1883, then the stronger possibility is that they married right away in 1898, before her fifteenth birthday on September 25. If the date of October 21 is right, but the year is really 1898, then she would have been 15 officially (or 14 if she begins slicing a year off her age!); if they married on October 21, 1900, then that would have been while the show Sons of Ham was back in NYC for two weeks, and it would have been just after Abbie's birthday, newly turning 17 or 16.

UNCLE EPH'S CHRISTMAS

1900, in December: Uncle Eph's Christmas, by Cook and Dunbar; full extant libretto, with modern edition in Dunbar works; the ensemble was called Cook's own troupe (December 1900 refs.), but in fact its core is the members of the Hogan circle, including many with whom he had toured Australia and New Zealand in 1899-1900; it is another short work, a one-act operetta on a vaudeville bill with several other acts, including trained lions and a sword swallower, but in the vaudeville context it is regarded as a mammoth vaudeville production; runs 45 minutes, cast of 30, stars Ernest Hogan and Abbie Mitchell; world premiere is in Boston at the newly re-opened Boston Music Hall, on Christmas Eve, running three weeks from December 24, 1900 to January 13, 1901 (preliminary reports also say it will run for four and five weeks); with Cook conducting (Boston Herald, basically daily from December 18 to January 12 or thereabouts, incl. December 25, 1900, p. 9; entering its third week last Monday, acc. Boston Herald, January 13, 1901, p. 14).
Uncle Eph's Christmas re-uses a great deal of musical material from Jes Lak, in the same order, but without key plot elements of the "Cannibal King" story line; evidently there is no problem here with Dunbar as author of the spoken libretto---it is "his" show, just as Jes Lak had been Cook's show; Uncle Eph is copyrighted by Dunbar (see list of "New Plays Copyrighted" dated Washington, March 9, in NY Morning Telegraph, March 10, 1901, p. 4); its biggest hits are Hogan singing "Possum Meat" and Abbie singing "Lover's Lane" (from Casino Girl).


1901, in January: CLORINDY
The success and good run of Uncle Eph led to a one-week revival of Clorindy, with the same company, complete with Hogan at the head of the show, at Boston Music Hall, again as a short one-act operetta in vaudeville (Boston Herald, January 13, 1901, p. 14; Boston Herald, January 19, p. 9, etc.)

1901, in March: From NYC on March 29, Cook writes Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee to propose that Cook organize a choral touring company of eight singers and an accompanist, to be called "Tuskegee's Real Negro Singers," to do a mixed program of twelve numbers consisting of "uncultivated slave song," "slightly developed melodies," and "four numbers of a rather ambitious character." Nothing came of this, but it is clearly a vision of the kind of progressive program and generic distinctions that Cook would promote for the rest of his career (Booker T. Washington Papers, p. 67).

1901, early: THE CANNIBAL KING
The Cannibal King again [Version E], announced with music by
Cook, but now with a book by Dunbar rather than by Riley or Morton; the precise relationship to the earlier 1896 or 1898 or 1899 shows of this name (or to King Eat 'Em All below) is not known;

This version of the show was probably being worked on by Dunbar in late 1900 and early 1901, before the end of the run of Bob Cole and Billy Johnson with A Trip to Coontown, and thus before any idea of making it a vehicle for them (see below). Rather, it might have been thought of as the next vehicle for Williams and Walker, who had up to now been on the pace of a new show each season; they instead decided on pursuing a second year of Sons of Ham, which could have derailed this new project in the late spring or early summer months; Dunbar reportedly was the original librettist and then backed out; perhaps Dunbar was working to expand Jes Lak/Eph; perhaps this is the moment described by J. W. Johnson when Dunbar is irritated by Cook and won't work with him, which is exactly Armstead-Johnson's reading of JWJ autobiography passage (NB: Cook and Dunbar worked a year later on In Dahomey)

NB: Helen Armstead-Johnson quotes from an unpublished 1978 conference paper by Mercer Johnson (recte Mercer Cook??), which itself is reportedly quoting or paraphrasing from Will Marion Cook's unpublished memoirs. "Conceived as an operetta for Williams and Walker, the first half of the libretto for The Cannibal King [Cook's title] was written by Paul Laurence Dunbar. Then Dunbar became involved in writing a novel and lost interest in the operetta. Cook then called in Cole and the Johnson brothers to complete the libretto." This sounds more or less right (but see below in October 1901).

1901-1902

1901, in August: [F] A NEW COMIC OPERA

a.k.a. either The Cannibal King or King Eatémall, but evidently neither with Cole & Johnson nor Dunbar

Eatémall: According to Cleveland Gazette, August 3, 1901, p. 1, Cook is to write music for a comic opera, King Eatémall, with a libretto by Harry B. Smith (white), the preeminent Broadway librettist who has furnished the book for several DeKoven operas; they have already worked together once, on The Casino Girl; perhaps this revives the
project with Lederer and librettist Hugh Morton of 1899. It is certainly a distant offshoot of the central line of Cannibal King projects.

**Cannibal King:** According to the Evansville Courier and Press, August 25, 1901, p. 5, in an article signed Phil H. Brown, the book was furnished by Harry B. Smith, and gives much info and a scenario: "Now the announcement comes that Cook has written a genuine negro opera called the "Cannibal King" . . . . the music is of the kind that Dvorak laid down"; the paper says that the production will be at the Manhattan Casino and feature Bob Cole, Mattie Wilkes, and Williams & Walker. (Cole is same as below, but Wilkes and Williams and Walker are not part of the other 1901 venture). In the August time frame of this article, the presence of Cole makes sense, but this is a fresh scenario.

Scenario: "The scene of the new opera is laid in the Sandwich islands and the leading character is King Eatemall, the chief of a tribe of cannibals who depend upon the shipwrecks on their coast for the delicacies of their table. As a rule, those who were so unfortunate as to fall in the hand of the king and his subjects were white people.

Upon this occasion, however, a party of colored tourists who represented every color under the sun became ship wrecked and the strenuous question of their disposal was a hard knot for the king and his council. An octoroon was selected for the sacrifice, while others were so dark and objectionable that the king declared them to be poison.

In the meanwhile the king catches a violent distemper in the way of a heart affair with the young lady who is to be eaten and he is put to serious straits to decide between the desires of his heart and those of his stomach.

It is said that the situations are at once critical and amusing with fine climaxes. The music is of the kind that Dvorak laid down and the book was furnished by Harry B. Smith, who was at one time librettist for Sousa's operas."

This Harry Smith 1901 scenario is clearly different from the other Cannibal King scenarios, and this version of Cannibal King/Eatemall also failed to gain any traction.
NB: For the threesome of Smith and Cook and Lederer, see The Casino Girl in 1900, this planned Eatemall (for 1901), The Wild Rose in 1902, A Girl from Dixie in 1903, and The Southerners in 1904.

1901, summer/fall: CANNIBAL KING [Version G]

With Williams and Walker intent on pushing Sons of Ham into a second season, and with Dunbar out, for one reason or another, it appears that the long-lived Cannibal King project in its early 1901 version was once more reconceived, now as a vehicle for Bob Cole and Billy Johnson after their four seasons with A Trip to Coontown (1897-1901). Coontown closed for the season in Philadelphia on May 11 (Philadelphia Inquirer, May 7, 1901, p. 7; Indianapolis Freeman, May 18, 1901, p. 5).

[NB: Willis ("Bill") Accooe was music director for Coontown and Accooe is involved also in this new Cannibal King, acc. some refs.]

Cole and Billy Johnson are both expected in the new production, so perhaps we are looking at a window of development of this project between the close of Coontown in May and the split of Cole and Johnson in late July. Cole and Billy Johnson formally dissolve their partnership on July 31, 1901, acc. Ghost Walks, p. 233 [source needed]. Billy Johnson was actually appearing with "A Trip to Coontown" with Jesse Shipp in the summer, ending a two-week engagement at the Midland Beach Theatre (Staten Island) around the middle of July (Indianapolis Freeman, July 27, 1901, p. 5), so he would probably have intended to go straight from this production into rehearsals for the fall.

Because of a substantial torso of a libretto at LoC (all of Act I), this version gets lots of modern attention in the secondary literature. See JWJ memoirs, Armstead-Johnson, Miller, Krasner, LoC, etc.

This Cannibal King failed to launch. The Indianapolis Freeman of August 10 has a big report on it, sounding no warning signs, and given the typical delay of a week or two between East coast events and their coverage in the Freeman, this would mean that the rehearsals were underway in July/earliest August, and thus it possibly could be the case that lacking a second act, everything fell through by the very end of July.
It is called a comic opera in two acts, according to the pretty big article in Indianapolis Freeman, August 10, 1901, p. 5, but perhaps only one act was written at this moment.

Announced for Cook's own troupe with Abbie Mitchell; the troupe is called Cook's opera company; the Freeman says that "Cook's big Negro opera company is rehearsing here the [sic] "The Cannibal King"" and that they will open at one of the Broadway theatres about August 15. It is a first-rate ensemble, with overlap with the Hogan circle and Uncle Eph company of the preceding January and with Coontown veterans: Bob Cole, Ernest Hogan, Ben Wise, Billy Johnson, Coley Grant, Rosamond Johnson, Theo Pankey, Lewis Salisbury, Reginald Burleigh, "Kid" Frazier, Abbie Mitchell Cook, Ada Walker, Kate Milton, Mamie Grant, Muriel Ringgold, Cecil Watts, Anna Cook, Mollie Dill, Odessa Warren, Nelly Dancy, Midget Price, Gertie Peterson, George Archer, John Boyer, The Alabama Comedy Four, and a chorus of forty.

The libretto: J. W. Johnson memoir says that Cole did the book and he did the lyrics, but that it "was never wholly completed"; J.W.J. also says he was asked to intervene with Dunbar, and then later that Cole and Cook did not get along, but either this is later in their careers, or perhaps the rupture occurred during this project--how serious and for how long?? Perhaps what Cole & Johnson labored over here had begun as the work of Dunbar.

Cannibal King began as Cook production, and if under his own management, this may be part of the problem; he was not a good manager; perhaps the show advertised in October (see below) represents fresh, new professional management of Ed H. Lester, who was primarily a show manager, but this did not seem to help.

A libretto for "Act I" with authors Bob Cole and J. W. Johnson was submitted to Library of Congress on August 10, 1901; this libretto is the first source to mention the great song "Swing Along." (NY Dramatic Mirror ref.; Carter and Riis mention this; LoC copyright deposit material in LoC performing arts reading room; copy in Hatch-Billups Collection in NYC)

The songs in the LoC libretto align closely with Jes Lak and Uncle Eph, suggesting again the ghost of Dunbar in the Cole & Johnson
libretto, with significant additions basically doubling the number of musical numbers.

The LoC libretto is for the first of an anticipated two acts, and one just has to read the extant material to see a huge problem. Act I ends with a classic dramatic cliff hanger, but at the same time---with about 16/17 musical numbers---it was way too long for a single act; what Cole & Johnson had incorporated was the standard number of songs in a full show. The creative team had written themselves into a corner and could not figure a way out. Evidently there was no Act II in August.

The rupture between Bob Cole and Billy Johnson, if that is what it was, may have actually been the killer.

**NB:** As already remarked above, "Bob Cole, producer and stage manager, with Black Patti Troubadours, is preparing a comic opera, entitled: "King Eat 'Em-All," which will be produced by Mme. Jones and the Troubadours next season" (Indianapolis Freeman, December 29, 1896, p. 5); this Cole show would have fallen victim to the rift between Cole and the Black Patti troupe, but Cole comes back into the picture in 1901, so perhaps it is all related.

J. W. Johnson asserts that this Cannibal King was never finished and Cook negotiated "a sale to a producer for a flat price" that gave the collaborators "several hundred dollars apiece." This does not square with October 1901 evidence. (see below).

**SCENARIO:**

The plot has essential elements that go back to earliest stages of "Cannibal King" material (but not Harry Smith and/or South Pacific island Eatemall):

"The plot of the comedy hinges upon the ludicrous attempts of a colored headwaiter at a fashionable Florida hotel, who has suddenly become wealthy, to elevate the tone and mend the manners of his race and make them eligible to society" (Indianapolis Freeman, November 9, 1901, p. 5).

The father is still "Pompous Johnson" but now the daughter is Parthenia, and there are additional new characters. Krasner (1997, 64-65) gives a fuller description: it "is essentially the same as that of Jes
Lak White F’lks . . . two new elements are added . . . [and] the text was enlarged," by including two schemers who could have been "intended for either Cole and Johnson or Williams and Walker." This insight offers the possibility that the play was being revised before Cole and Johnson split, or before Williams and Walker were out of the picture. (In 1901-1902, Williams and Walker were in the second season of Sons of Ham, but earlier in 1901 that might not have been determined.)


1901, in August: This show never got to the stage. It was announced as in rehearsal in August for expected opening ca. August 15, 1901 for a short run in NYC; with huge and impressive---unrealistic?---cast list, as above (Indianapolis Freeman, August 10, 1901, p. 5 see also Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 233).

1901, in October: Not again mentioned in newspapers until advertised as available in late October (NY Dramatic Mirror, October 19, 1901, pp. 19, 20); Cole is no longer an author, and Dunbar’s name gets top billing as author; possibly this is a re-write to feature Cole in a solo star role; in an article entitled DUNBAR’S COMEDY/ “The Cannibal King” Soon to be Produced in New York/ (Lexington (KY) Leader, October 23, 1901, p. 7), the book is said to have been written by Dunbar and J. W. Johnson; “most of the music is founded on purely plantation melodies”; and the cast will be headed by Cole and Abbie Mitchell; the article provides an elaborate scenario that goes beyond the LoC Act I libretto to tell the story of Act II, without the cliffhanger theft of Pompus’ trunk:

“The plot is as unique as the music is said to be catchy. It tells of Pompus Johnson, who, for a number of years, has held the position of head waiter at a fashionable Florida hotel, and, having accumulated a snug sum of money, wishes to become a factor among the Florida Negro aristocracy. He has sent his daughter, Parthenia, a beautiful quadroon, to Vassar College, where she graduates with honors, having kept her Negro parentage a secret.

Pompus has heretofore countenanced the aspirations of Jerry Jenkins, an under waiter at the hotel, to his daughter’s hand, but now he begins to look with disfavor upon his suit. Jerry must gain a higher position in the word; he must become a butler in some rich family, or second waiter in a hotel, or at least approach near the
dignity of a head waiter before Pompus will agree for him to marry his daughter.

A couple of dark schemers, hearing of the prosperity of Pompus, concoct a plan to swindle him out of a large sum of money by playing upon his credulity and vanity. Disguised as a conjure man one of them informs Pompus that many years before Capt. Kidd had buried a vast treasure in an old well located on Pompus’ place. Pompus falls an easy victim to the scheme and readily gives them the amount of money asked for the secret, and to the great chagrin of the schemers digs and really finds an old chest filled with gold and jewels in the very place indicated by the fakirs.

Being now wealthy Pompus seeks a wider field of social action than Florida affords, and moves to New York, where he beings a series of lavish entertainments in his magnificent South Fifth avenue residence.

Jerry Jenkins, being discarded—for Pompus, like his paler brother, now seeks a scion of nobility or royalty to wed his daughter—enlists in the army as a common soldier and goes to the Philippines. Pompus enters into negotiations with Eat ‘Em All, the Cannibal King, who has been residing in Paris, to marry his daughter, Parthenia. Eat ‘Em All on his way to America has caused a panic on the ship by breaking into the store room and devouring all the raw provisions, and on his arrival is locked up in jail.

One of the schemers, who is being released from jail just as Eat ‘Em All is being locked up, and, learning from him the reason for his presence in America, impersonates the Cannibal King at the house of Pompus, where elaborate preparations are being made for the approaching marriage. The actions of the fakir disgust Pompus, and everybody else, with royalty; so Jerry, who returns from the Philippines as a Captain and who informs Pompus that he has inherited the wealth of an uncle who made a fortune in trips as a railroad porter, marries Parthenia.

An attempt is made in “The Cannibal King” to keep both play and music true to the nature and characteristics of the Southern Negro. Most of the music is founded on purely plantation melodies.

The company, composed of the best Negro singers to be found in America, has been engaged and will be headed by Bob Cole and Abbie Mitchell.”

1901, in November: “The Cannibal King” was also said to be going to make its initial appearance in Hartford, CT in November (for Hartford, and then expected to go on to NYC, see Indianapolis Freeman, November
9, 1901, p. 5; for modern secondary literature that says Hartford and Indianapolis, see Sampson, *Ghost Walks*, p. 240 and Peterson, *Musicals in Black and White*, pp. 69-70, where possibly Indianapolis is an error simply on account of the fact that the reference is in the *Freeman*.

1901, in December: In yet another contemporary account, it was expected to open in NYC in December (*Colored American (DC)*, November 9, 1901, p. 6: "Dunbar and Johnson/ Next month there will be produced in New York a comedy, entitled "The Cannibal King." It was written by Paul Laurence Dunbar and J. W. Johnson and will be rendered by colored talent only. The fact that Dunbar and Johnson wrote it and that Bob Cole will take the leading part guarantees that it will be well received.")

This account reinforces the October reference in the *Lexington Leader* (above) regarding the authorship of Dunbar and Johnson and the participation of Cole and Mitchell.

There is no real evidence that any of these debuts (NYC or Hartford, etc.) ever actually took place. Henry D. Miller, *Theorizing Black Theatre* (2011) makes the same determination that it never hit the stage.

To repeat, it never hit the stage. Absolute subsequent silence in the *Indianapolis Freeman*, *NY Age*, and other NY papers, and so forth, is telling.

1901, in the fall: So, what are folks like Bob Cole, Cook, and Abbie Mitchell all doing in the fall of 1901?

1901, in December: Sylvester Russell's 1901 end-of-year column for the *Freeman*, "A Review of the Stage," regrets the end of *A Trip to Coontown* and the dissolving of the Bob Cole and Billy Johnson partnership, but does not say that Cole was in any other show in the fall, and Russell says without naming any show titles that Will Marion Cook and Will Accooe have contributed musical numbers to prominent Broadway productions (*Indianapolis Freeman*, December 28, 1901, p. 14)

In sum: Obviously there was trouble spanning a year and more in the creation of the Dunbar/Cole/J. W. Johnson show; in the modern secondary literature, Eric Smith (Bert Williams bio., p. 49) says
Dunbar quit in the middle of writing the show and the Johnson brothers and Bob Cole completed the libretto and lyrics; Carter bio (p. 57) says show was never completed due to discord between Cole and Cook; Encyclopedia of Harlem Renaissance says that Rosamond Johnson and Bob Cole completed the show with its Dunbar libretto (did they just do lyrics and music of some songs?); some Internet hits sometimes give "Dunbar and J. R. Johnson" as authors, but LoC typescript has Cole and J. W. Johnson. In the end, this version seems undoubtedly to belong to Dunbar and James Weldon (not Rosamond) Johnson. Cole was going to star in it, and clearly had a hand in the mid summer LoC version of Act I.

1901, in the fall: After the Cannibal King failure to launch, there is a gap in Cook’s biographical data for the rest of 1901.

1902, in January: acc. Carter thesis, chronology, p. 362, Cook goes to Chicago to prep chorus and soloists for what would be In Dahomey [sounds too early; Cannibal King instead?]

1902, in March: song [On] Emancipation Day is new and sung by Abbie at a testimonial in NYC for Sam Lucas (Indianapolis Freeman, April 5, 1902, p. 5); LoC copyright is March 20, 1902 (copyright by Cook; lyrics by Dunbar, no publisher)

THE WILD ROSE

1902, in April: The Wild Rose, a George Lederer production, book by Harry B. Smith and principal music by Ludwig Engländer---the team for Casino Girl; R. Norton, I: 712 (1902.16); two act musical set in Germany, featuring Germans and gypsies; stars Smith's wife, Irene Bentley, who also stars in A Girl From Dixie (see below); opened in Philadelphia, then a Broadway run from May to August; Engländer named as composer by NY Herald account of Vanderbilt party (see below) and etc.; by other accounts, there is no one composer, and thus all "outside" songs, which means Engländer or musical director Frederick Solomon is the compiler/ orchestrator/ arranger/ of all; additional writers contribute lyrics, and these are set by Engländer; no reason to think that Cook did the orchestrations; this show is important for his collaboration with Smith and Lederer again.
Three songs are provided by Cook, all with lyrics credited jointly to Harry B. Smith and Cecil Mack; the big hit is "The Little Gypsy Maid" for principal character Rose Romany (Irene Bentley) (LoC copyright March 29, 1902 by WMB; lyrics by Harry Smith and Cecil Mack, no publisher), also referred to as "My Little Gypsy Maid"

1902, in July: MY FRIEND FROM GEORGIA

Some NY papers report that "Ernest Hogan will star next season under the management of Gus Hill in a new musical comedy by Paul Laurence Dunbar, with music by William Marion Cook. The offering has been named My Friend From Georgia" (NY Herald, July 2, 1902, p. 10; NY Dramatic Mirror, July 12, 1902, p. 11). This project, which clearly would have been the next big creative effort for Dunbar and Cook, and another vehicle by them for Hogan, never came to fruition. Possibly Cook and Dunbar were too involved with In Dahomey.

The back story, in brief, is this. Ernest Hogan and Billy McClain were playing with a troupe in Hawaii early in 1902, and they hatched a plan to return to the mainland with a large company for a big tour. By February 1902 they had secured the rights to four comedies, among them My Friend From Georgia by Mr. Alan Dunn (with whom Hogan previously had worked in Honolulu in 1900), which they were proposing to play in rotation on this tour. In Hawaii, they then worked up a version of My Friend From Georgia for their use there, and copyrighted a 40 page typescript with the Library of Congress in February/March 1902. Evidently, deep into the spring and early summer this enterprise was still alive (as late as one newspaper reference in August), and they were looking for a revised book and lyrics from Cook and Dunbar for their extravaganza. In the end, it was set aside and Hogan and McClain worked with Gus Hill on a different venture. Four years later, a musical comedy by the same title was mounted at the Pekin in Chicago with a score by Jordan and Cook.

(Many refs. to the Hogan/McClain plans, incl. NY Dramatic Mirror, February 22, 1902, p. 19; NY Clipper, April 12, 1902, p. 101; NY Dramatic Mirror, July 12, 1902, p. 11; Washington, DC, Colored American, August 2, 1902, p. 5; see also Abbott and Seroff, Ragged But Right, p. 83.)
1902, in August: The Wild Rose was performed at a Newport party thrown by Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt on Monday evening, August 25 in a condensed version, and the curtain did not fall until 2:00 am on Tuesday morning (NY Herald, Wednesday, August 27, 1902, p. 10; Franceschina bio. of Harry B. Smith, p. 146)

1902-1903

IN DAHOMEY

1902, in September: In Dahomey is the next and greatest vehicle for Williams and Walker; it represents the final version [Version H] of the Cannibal King material; Norton I: 735-36, 772 (1903.08, 1904.26); a London piano-vocal score (London), at least two scripts (LoC and London), and some detailed programs survive. Important edition of all the extant materials by Riis: MUSA, 5; RRAM XXV: Thomas Riis, ed. Music and Scripts of In Dahomey (1903) with Abbie Mitchell; produced by Hurtig & Seamon; Cook is arranger/orchestrator/rehearsal conductor; Will Accooe is music director; book now by Jesse Shipp, though sometimes credited to Dunbar, who is otherwise always credited with the lyrics (the very most abbreviated references call the show simply the new musical comedy of Dunbar and Cook); 3 acts now, set in Boston, Florida, Africa; with just a couple of new Cook/Dunbar songs and lots of additional songs and dances by them and others; choral ensemble numbers presumably all by Cook.

In Dahomey: the book by Shipp derives most immediately from the Dunbar/Johnson (or Dunbar/Cole/Johnson) summer-fall version of The Cannibal King of 1901, which itself was presumably closely related to the prior unfinished Cook/Dunbar 1900-1901 collaboration (which moreover may have been intended once for Williams and Walker), and Jes Lak and other earlier "cannibal kings" going back to 1896; the material now has to be rewritten, adapted and expanded for Williams and Walker. Scenario: the rough building blocks of discovering/getting moneyed in Florida and then emigrating are still there, but now heading to Dahomey instead of to NYC.
Dunbar is named by contemporary accounts as the lyricist of the show (e.g., in newspapers, and on '1902 sheet music covers), but there may be only a couple of new songs here; this is the last the last big Dunbar collaboration with Cook, and he may have broken with Cook after this (??), and he dies young of TB in 1906.

1902, in September: Indianapolis Freeman, August 30, 1902, p. 5, quoting an earlier letter from a correspondent, says that In Dahomey will be out in about three weeks.

It opened at Stamford, CT on September 8, 1902 Springfield, Mass. on Friday, Sept. 19 (Springfield Republican, Sat., September 20, 1902, p. 4) Worcester, Mass. on September 20

1902, in September: on the way to Boston, on September 21, Abbie sings at a Newport party thrown by Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt; The Wild Rose just had been done at the Vanderbilts in August (see above); the Cook-Dunbar song "Returned" was sung at the party, and it was then published with the notice, "Returned: a Negro Ballad/ as sung by / Miss Abbie Mitchell/ at Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt's Newport theatre party" (NY: Von Tilzer, 1902; eBay hits and Temple University digital image; see also Riis edn. of In Dahomey, p. 191)

Continuing the itinerary:

Boston, for the first time, at the Boston Music Hall from September 22-27, 1902 (and not before)
Philadelphia: at the Auditorium for a week, from Monday, September 29
NYC: Grand Opera House (Brooklyn), in the week of Sunday, October 5, 1902
Newton, Folly Theatre (Queens), in the week of October 12
NYC: Grand Opera House in Manhattan [at Eighth Avenue and 23rd St. in Chelsea] for the week of Sunday, October 19, 1902 and still there Saturday, Oct. 25; Sylvester Russell diatribe in Freeman of November 15, 1902 makes reference to a Sunday article on the show, with photos, in Hearst’s NY American & Journal, and this came out Sunday, October 19, when the show was about to play in Manhattan; lots of attention to this run in black press, and white press, too
Trenton, NJ. on Monday, October 27;
Harrisburg, Pa. on October 30; Johnstown, Pa. on Nov. 1; Cleveland from Nov. 11; Lexington, Ky. on November 22; Bloomsburg, Pa. on Thanksgiving; Akron, Nov. 27; Cincinnati shortly after November 29; Muncie on December 11; Chicago in week of December 14; Springfield, Ill on December 25 (Daily Illinois State Register (Springfield, Ill.), December 21, 1902, p. 3); St. Louis, from Monday, December 29 Kansas City in New Year's Week Omaha, 6 perfs., Sunday matinee, Jan. 18 to Wednesday Jan. 21 at Boyd's NYC: back home after touring for five months, it finally reached Broadway in NYC on February 18, 1903 at the New York Theatre, hence the common dating of the show to 1903 in modern reference books; often cited as the first all-black show to play a major Broadway legitimate theatre; runs at New York Theatre until close on April 4
NYC: starts up at the Metropolis---more of a neighborhood house---around Sunday, April 19; Sunday New York Press, April 19, 1903, p. 6, says it will run this week, i.e., presumably from Monday the 20th (Morning Telegraph & Dramatic Mirror & Brooklyn Daily Eagle hits for April 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28); thus, plays NYC in spring 1903 for a total of about ten weeks off to England in early May London: May 16 premier Buckingham Palace: played in late June In Dahomey is on tour, including stints in NYC, for three seasons---1902-03, 1903-04, 1904-05---with Williams and Walker; and also with additional companies; [road/NYC/London and England/NYC/road, etc.]; Cook is on hand for Season No. 1, including the trip to England in 1903, opening May 16 in London, where he played for and socialized with royalty; in London, he is followed in the pit by Tim Brymn; James Vaughn takes over the baton when back in US; great fluidity of content over more than three-year run; biblio. in Riis, Graziano, etc.
1902, in November: LUCILLE

Sylvester Russell launches a diatribe against Cook in the Indianapolis Freeman, November 15, 1902 that takes issue with the contents of a newspaper article on In Dahomey, with photos, in Hearst's NY American & Journal, [the Sunday Journal] which came out on Sunday, October 19, when the show was about to play in Manhattan; acc. Russell, Cook exaggerates his operatic works which have never been produced and announces that "he has completed a grand opera entitled "Lucille" which is to be produced at an early date" (NB: see also Indianapolis Freeman, November 15, 1902, p. 5); does "grand opera" really mean grand opera, or is this Cook's usual code for musical comedy? Could Lucille be the new name for the Vassar Girl character in the latest version of the Cannibal King material? Russell is still on the topic of nomenclature in the Indianapolis Freeman, December 6, 1902, p. 5, where he writes that "Will Marion Cook is forcing Williams & Walker into opera that is not opera"

Another trace of the Lucille project comes in early 1906, when it is announced that in April, Abbie will sing in a negro operatic sketch called "Lucille" by Cook (NY Morning Telegraph, n.d., n.p. (March, 1906), with letters to the paper on the same page dated March 13)

1902, in December: Abbie Mitchell memoir recalls Cook playing the score of [some version of] "The Cannibal King" to producers Hurtig and Seamon on Christmas Day, 1902, while they were producing In Dahomey on the road in the East and Midwest. This may be the same item as referred to below in April 1903.

1903, in March: birth of son Mercer on March 30, 1903; how soon did Abbie leave him to join Cook in England? Very soon after.

1903, in March: An article on "Two Negro Musicians" previously published in The Colored Teacher (Hopkinsville, Ky.) is reprinted in The Negro Music Journal (Washington, D.C.), 1/7 (March 1903), p. 120. The two musicians are Burleigh and Cook, described as students of Dvorak. It says "Will Marion Cook is a native genius of surpassing brilliance. His range of musical productions include a negro National Hymn, (a misnomer however) of rare beauty and spirit, an operetta, a high grade comic opera, and songs, overtures and sonata [sic] that will
surely live into the next century." The two big musical numbers could possibly be In Dahomey and The Cannibal King.

1903, in April: short profile of Cook (The Theatre Magazine, 3/3, no. 26 (April 1903), p. 96-97), about the time In Dahomey leaves for England: "Mr. Cook is not proud of "In Dahomey," but thinks that his new opera, "The Cannibal King," on which he has been at work for several years, will entitle him to serious critical consideration. The libretto, written by a colored man, is said to be exceedingly clever and the score to contain some fine bits of composition. This opera will be presented early next season with a company composed entirely of colored singers. In the cast will be Miss Abbie Mitchell . . . and Harry T. Burleigh . . . . He is also at work in collaboration with Harry B. Smith on a musical play in which one act is laid in the South." [So he is looking to Fall 1903 for Cannibal King, and the Smith show must refer to A Girl From Dixie.]

NB: Bob Cole writes an article for Colored American Magazine which appears in March 1902, in which he says he is writing the libretto for Cook ("The Negro and the Stage," Colored American Magazine 4/11 (March 1902), pp. 301-306 at p. 306); the Indianapolis Freeman picks up on this, and reports in May that Mr. Cole is writing a libretto for Mr. Cooke's "The Cannibal King" and Dunbar is out of the business (Indianapolis Freeman, May 24, 1902, p. 5); in light of 1901 perhaps this is way late and the article was written and submitted long before it appeared in print. Or else Cole is still involved in 1902, and when Cook says the libretto is written by a colored man he means Cole and not, for example, Dunbar.

My suspicion is that if there is a Cannibal King variant that is still viable after In Dahomey, then it centers on the return of the Vassar Girl theme, i.e., going back to the Clorindy element of an educated black returning to the student's point of origin but feeling out of place.

1903, in May: on the day of the London premiere of In Dahomey, an interview with Cook appeared in the London Daily News, May 16, 1903, p. 6, and in it Cook says that in September 1903 he is "going to produce a little musical melodrama of my own, conducting it myself" (Green, "In Dahomey in London"); it is not known which if any subsequent show is what he had in mind at this time, but it could be Lucille, and from the Christmas 1902 and April 1903 items above, it could have been a variant of Cannibal King.
1903-1904

1903, in August: Indianapolis Freeman, August 8, 1903, p. 5 says Will and Abbie have just returned to NYC from the In Dahomey company in England; the show is still in its London run; he handed the baton off to Brymn; the show itself leaves London to tour the provincial cities when the Shaftesbury theater closes for renovation in early 1904.

1903, in the fall: a news story says that Abbie is under the patronage of the Vanderbilts, for whom she had sung in August and September 1902 (see above)

1903, in September: A GIRL FROM DIXIE

a.k.a. "The Girl From Dixie," apparently the earlier version of the name; Norton I: 756 (1903.41); a musical in two acts with about 16 numbers; Harry B. Smith is producer, librettist, and lyricist; Smith writes music for a new musical farce for his wife, the white actress Irene Bentley, called A Girl From Dixie, with both book and lyrics by Harry B. Smith; Smith produces it himself, without Lederer; Cook has written the music; there will be a large number of colored supernumeraries, and Bentley will sing a lot of coon songs.

The show runs on tour from September 1903, in Atlantic City, Ithaca, Syracuse, Utica, Gloversville, etc., and Dec. 1903-Jan. 1904 in NYC, and then April in San Francisco plus more touring at least into fall/winter 1904 (e.g., Augusta (GA) Chronicle, December 21, 1904, p. 6).

Although Cook has been around the edges of Lederer and Smith productions, and contributing to them, this is the first extensive collaboration.

A publicity blurb evidently touts the racial issue, in nearly identical language from several newspapers:

"His collaboration with Mr. Smith will mark the first time in the annals of the stage that men of Caucasian and African blood have
worked together on the same play" (Washington (DC) Times, August 23, 1903, Editorial, Society, Fiction, p. 2); "this collaboration will mark the first time in the annals of the stage that men of Caucasian and African blood have worked together on the same play" (Indianapolis Freeman, October 10, 1903, p. 7); "This is the first time in the history of the American stage that one of our race and one of the other class have worked together on the same play" (Cleveland Gazette, October 17, 1903, p. 1). Cook and Smith, already mentioned as a possible team (see above), join forces here for their next effort (below).

Harry Smith is the show's principal lyricist; in one source Cook is called its principal composer, but IBDB names only one Cook song. Other sources have it that there is "additional" music by Cook, and five or more other composers, including Victor Herbert by one account; an ad in the San Francisco Chronicle lists music by nine men, including Victor Herbert, Max Witt, Gustav Kerker, Cole & Johnson, George Norton, Ludwig Engländer, Baldwin Sloane, Will Marion Cook, and Kerry Mills; a Utica NY paper names eleven composers, including Victor Herbert, Ludwig Engländer, Baldwin Sloane, George Rosey, Max Witt, Ben Jerome, Will Marion Cook, Manuel Klein, Henry Walker, Moskowski, and Cole & Johnson. The Philadelphia Inquirer, August 16, 1903, p. 11 says its composers include Cole and Johnson, A. Baldwin Sloane, Ludwig Engländer, George Rosey, Max Witt and Ben Gerome, plus Cook has "two charming numbers in this musical play"; Francescina bio. of Harry B. Smith (p. 151) says that by the time it hit NYC in December, thirteen composers were represented in the score; the Indianapolis Freeman mentions Victor Herbert, Leo Friedman, and Manuel Klein.

The upshot here is that we have a Smith gimmick: he farmed out his lyrics to lots of his friends and previous collaborators, who are among the major operetta composers of the day, while Cook pulls it all together as arranger/orchestrator, musical director.

[NB: Peterson, Century (1993) has this show in 1902, with songs by Cole and Johnson; 1902 is wrong but apparently C&J contributed numbers to this melange.]

Clearly Cook's energy at this moment is with the Harry B. Smith/Irene Bentley shows and not with his own anticipated Cannibal King "opera." Cook definitely composes one song for this production ("When the Sunflower Turns to the Sun", often referred to as "The
Sunflower and the Sun") and at least one reference (see above) credits him with having another song in the show. "Sunflower" is re-used in The Southerners.

1903, in October: "Will Marion Cook, the noted musician and composer, has been spending some time at Tuskegee, observing the workings of the Institute and making a special study of plantation melodies" (Indianapolis Freeman, October 3, 1903, p. 1); this would have been during Elbert Williams's first term as bandmaster there, 1903-1904; NB: recall the 1901 proposal that Cook made to Booker T. Washington (see above)

1903, in December: Cook attended the Yuletide Stag in honor of J. Douglas Wetmore of Jacksonville, Florida that was held at the Marshall Hotel in NYC on December 26, 1903; among the others present were Bob Cole, J. R. and J. W. Johnson, and about forty more, with J. W. Johnson acting as toast master (Washington, DC, Colored American, February 6, 1904, p. 2)

1904: early in the year, Cook sets Dunbar's "Dreamin' Town" as a song

1904, in March: the program committee for the St. Louis Fair recommended to the general committee that Will Marion Cook be named the musical director for Negro Day at the St. Louis World's Fair on August 1 (Wichita Searchlight, March 26, 1904, p. 1)

1904, in May: Clorindy is going to be staged with fifty people as part of a one-off benefit performance at the Herald Square Theatre on Sunday evening, May 8 for the Metropolitan Hospital and Dispensary (NY Globe and Commercial Advertiser, Friday, May 6, 1904, p. 7)

THE SOUTHERNERS

1904 in May: The Southerners: A Musical Study in Black and White; Norton I: 767 (1904.21); A summer show for producer George W. Lederer (who also produced The Casino Girl, etc., for which see above); a musical comedy in two acts and eight scenes; written by Harry B. Smith as a vehicle for Irene Bentley; with a role for Abbie Mitchell; book and libretto by Will Marion Cook and Harry B. Smith, consistently identified under pseudonyms as Will Mercer and Richard Grant.
Called “Lederer’s Lastest Sensation,” and “A Fantastical Musical Study in White and Black” in a newspaper ad (Boston Herald, September 4, 1904, p. 11)

Cook wrote or adapted from his own songs some two dozen numbers---almost the entire songlist for the show---making this one of the biggest efforts of his entire career (and certainly the biggest to date) as a song composer for the theatre; another work with Lederer and Smith; he is credited with the whole score in 1904 (Washington, DC, Colored American, September 10, 1904, p. 2), and the much later Crisis "Men of the Month" profile of Cook says "he composed the score" of The Southerners.

Cook's "Dreamin' Town" of earlier this year is now adapted into the song "Mandy Lou" with new Cecil Mack lyrics, and it is a big hit.

Name changes for this show: Theater gossip on the newspaper wires in earliest May has the name of the show as At the Barbecue and expects it to be mostly a black cast with only a few whites (New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 1, 1904, p. 41; Duluth News-Tribune, May 1, 1904, p. 13; Anaconda Standard, May 2, 1904, p. 5). In the San Francisco Chronicle, May 1, 1904, p. 9, the show is called The Belle of the South.

Set in Louisiana; large mixed cast of white-oriented show, on Broadway; Broadway's first interracial musical, acc. Woll; Ida Forsyne was one of the black dancers in the show, and she is quoted in Stearns book on vernacular dance to say "this show wasn't separated into half white and half colored---everybody worked together---there were a lot of integrated groups in those days."

Opens in New Haven on 19 May, then plays Broadway at the NY Theatre for 36 performances, 23 May - 25 June; closes down for summer at this point; wonderful article in NY Dramatic Mirror, June 4, 1904, p. 2 on Cook, Abbie, The Southerners, Lederer, etc. See also John Franceschina book on Harry B. Smith.

1904, in June: A big top-of-page advertisement in the Clipper for the York Music Vo., Albert Von Tilzer, manager, says that Albert Von Tilzer has severed ties with the Harry Von Tilzer Music Publishing Co., and "We are the distributing agents for all Will Marion Cook's

1904, in June: early in the month Lederer says he has offers to take The Southerners to London in September (NY Herald, June 5, 1904, p. 8); then, Cook has just sailed for London last Saturday [June 18], where he will complete arrangements to bring over The Southerners intact from NYC for a run in September (Baltimore American, June 20, 1904, p. 4); Cook is gone about two months; he was expected to stage The Southerners and to revise In Dahomey for the comedy duo of Avery & Hart, and "Just what will happen in Europe this season is hard to tell, as it is quite useless to place any estimate on the self-praise, manufactured reports of a flighty, feathery composer" (Indianapolis Freeman, July 16, 1904, p. 5); immigration/travel info says he arrived back from Liverpool in NYC on August 27, 1904; Indianapolis Freeman, September 10, 1904, p. 5 says Cook arrived from London on Saturday, August 26 and says all is in good order with the In Dahomey troupe starring Avery & Hart in London, but there is no statement about any possible London gig for The Southerners;

A year later, Abbie recalls that she and Cook were arguing over money in the summer of 1904, when he was in Europe with Williams & Walker, and she was with The Southerners (NY Morning Telegraph, August 5, 1905, p. 10).

Williams & Walker and Hogan tell the story about Cook that "After delivering his music to the producer he has been known to get hold of the MS. and destroy it, as in the case of "The Southerners," which had to be entirely rewritten for George Lederer" (NY Morning Telegraph, August 19, 1905, p. 10). The same story is told of The Casino Girl (see above).

Without naming the show, Lester Walton also tells the story (NY Age, May 7, 1908, p. 6):

"It is said that the majority of musicians are eccentric, and Will Marion Cook is no exception to the rule. In the opinion of the writer he probably leads when it comes to eccentricity. An example of his peculiarities was shown several years ago when he was leader of the orchestra at a Broadway playhouse. He had written all the music to
the production, which was immensely popular. However, he took offense at something that had been done by the management and took every piece of music of the production with him. It is needless to state that on account of his actions the management was in a predicament, and the orchestra did not have a piece of music from which to play. A flag of truce was raised and the show was given."

Given that "he had written all the music," this is most likely a story about The Southerners.

1904, in August: Despite all the work toward a production in England, The Southerners did not go to London in the end, but instead was revived for a "fall and winter" season, beginning in Newport, then on to Boston from August 29 at the Colonial Theatre for two weeks; then in Brooklyn at the Broadway Theatre from September 12 for two weeks, then in Philadelphia from September 27 for a short week;

It was announced that Lederer would take the show on a Southern tour, on account of which he would have to let go all the Negroes at the end of the Philadelphia run on October 1, but then instead the entire production closed and the cast was disbanded on that date; Lederer makes a career shift now and takes over management of a Philadelphia theater; this is the last Lederer production with a Harry B. Smith book and lyrics, and Cook music; and moreover, there is a hiatus now in Lederer activity as a producer for Broadway stretching from 1904-1911.

1904-1905

In the early fall of this season, the Cook shows that are out on tour include The Southerners, A Girl From Dixie, and In Dahomey. The former two shows are his last highly significant collaborations with white librettists/lyricists on both staged and unstaged projects (e.g., Harry B. Smith, Hugh Morton, James Whitcomb Riley). Dunbar is now fatally ill and not available to collaborate. Cook’s principal partner at this time is now Jesse Shipp.

1904, in July: it is announced that Williams and Walker will open in the fall with a refreshed In Dahomey, produced and restaged by Jesse Shipp (Indianapolis Freeman, July 30, 1904, p. 5); this is a third year with
the show for Williams and Walker; did Cook contribute anything? Apparently, yes: he and Jesse Shipp refurbish it.

1904, in August: It had been hoped that Cook might be musical director for Negro Day, August 1, 1904 at the St. Louis Fair (see Wichita Searchlight, March 26, 1904, p. 1), but he did not take this on, and we know he was out of the country until late August.

1904, in August: immigration/travel info says Cook arrived back from Liverpool in NYC on August 27, 1904; Indianapolis Freeman, September 10, 1904, p. 5 says Cook arrived from London on Saturday, August 26.

1904, in August: a refreshed In Dahomey in NYC from August 27 and touring into May 1905 or later, with Williams and Walker still on board;
San Francisco in December; Oregon and Washington state and Montana and North Dakota in January 1905; Duluth in February 1905; Boston for two weeks in March; Trenton in April and May; Wilkes-Barre, Harrisburg, and other Pennsylvania towns in May 1905.

Shipp and Cook are identified as authors of this "new coon opera"; it is their "new In Dahomey", and "an entirely new version" for the Williams and Walker tour after their return from their European engagement; in two acts and a prologue; Alex Rogers is identified with the book and with lyrics of new songs; James Vaughan is identified with some new music.

1904, in September: as mentioned above, The Southerners did not go to Europe, and is playing in Boston; it began there the week of August 29 and the week of September 5 is its last week at the Colonial (Boston Herald, September 2, 1904, p. 9; Boston Herald, September 7, 1904, p. 9); is Cook somehow with the company until its close October 1 in Philadelphia?

1904, in fall: there is now a gap in the steady yield of biographical data, and it may be that Cook is already working on the publishing venture (or is on the road with one of the shows?); it is possible that he goes again to Europe, since the Indianapolis Freeman, October 22, 1904, p. 2 says that he is just back from a trip abroad.
PUBLISHING

1905 in February: Indianapolis Freeman, February 25, 1905, p. 5 calls Cook "America's foremost colored light composer" and says he has gone into the song publishing business; he has a firm but may not be the controlling power in it [that would be Cecil Mack]; smaller notice later in the year in Indianapolis Freeman, July 15, 1905, p. 7; what seems to be going on is that Cook and others formed the Gotham Music Company early in 1905, with Cecil Mack, Jim Europe and others. (NY Morning Telegraph, Sunday, February 5, 1905, p. 8 says it made its debut at 39 W. 28th Street "last week". Two of its biggest numbers are Cook, "Old Vacant Chair," and JRE, "Obadiah.") It published more of Cook's songs than anyone else's. The Attucks Music company was a bit older, having been founded in 1904. The two firms merged in June/July 1905; Attucks was sold to McPherson and Cook, according to one account. The Gotham-Attucks firm runs to 1911 in their hands.

1905 in spring: in additional to his publishing ventures, Cook already could be busy writing songs and arrangements for two shows: Abyssinia and the Memphis Students

MEMPHIS STUDENTS in SONGS OF THE BLACK FOLK

1905, in June: Hogan's Memphis Students troupe opens in NYC; the name is chosen to recall the earlier famous Nashville Students minstrel troupe, and it is actually the name of the troupe rather than that of their show, but that distinction is not usually observed; a troupe of 25; they offer one elaborate act in a summer roof theatre variety/vaudeville show; they opened at Proctor's vaudeville house at 23rd street in June, where Cook, "The Dancing Conductor," is conducting in the pit (Stearns, Jazz Dance ref.), and then enjoyed a run from June 19 into September at Hammerstein's Paradise Garden on the Victoria Roof [or "Paradise Roof"]; the show stars Ernest Hogan and Abbie Mitchell with the Memphis Students ensemble.

They present a half-hour specialty called Songs of the South (when it first opened at Proctors 23th St.; NY Clipper, June 17, 1905, p. 430), or
Songs of Black Folk or Songs of the Black Folk, the last of which variations is the most common; also appeared at Hammerstein’s Victoria Roof garden (Indianapolis Freeman, July 29, 1905, p. 6); they had hit 100 performances by early August (Ghost Walks, p. 347), and conclude their run in the first week of September after almost three months (Ghost Walks, p. 347-348); Indianapolis Freeman says they filled a 100-nights engagement and have conclude their run (Indianapolis Freeman, September 9, 1905, p. 4, 5).

(NY Clipper, June 17, 1905, p. 430; Indianapolis Freeman, July 8, 1905, p. 5 (citing NY World, June 20); Indianapolis Freeman, July 29, 1905, p. 6; Indianapolis Freeman, September 9, 1905, p. 5; Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 344-45, quoting a review in the NY World, June 20, 1905; Abbot and Seroff, Ragged But Right, p. 45).

Then back to Proctor’s 23rd St. by the week of September 9, then to the Orpheum in Brooklyn the week of September 25: called "Songs of the Black Folks", on the bill at the Brooklyn Orpheum: Brooklyn Standard Union, September 24, 1905, n.p.; Brooklyn Standard Union, September 26, 1905, n.p., where Hogan and his 25 Memphis Students are "the largest [act] of its kind in vaudeville, with special scenery costumes and music"; another account emphasizes the elaborate costuming and splendid scenery; all music and songs composed and arranged by Cook; they were "far down on the program" which means prominent billing; then to the Colonial on the Upper West Side (Indianapolis Freeman, September 30, 1905, p. 5); Hurtig & Seamon take over management around now (Ghost Walks, p. 349) and they were at Hurtig & Seamon’s Manhattan vaudeville house in early October ("this week", in NY Dramatic Mirror, October 7, 1905, p. 18); James Reese Europe was a member of the orchestra.

1905, in July: Reid Badger (p. 29) says that the Memphis Students ensemble was to be one feature of the show The Birth of the Minstrel, and this is confirmed in NY Dramatic Mirror, June 24, 1905, p. 16, which calls the summer show "a portion of his new entertainment," the forthcoming The Birth of the Minstrel; moreover, an advertisement names Cook as the composer of the anticipated three-act musical melange, The Birth of the Minstrel (Indianapolis Freeman, July 15, 1905, p. 5), and this is surely because it was thought the Memphis Student material would be a part of it; in the end, though, it is Jordan and H. L. Freeman who write the music for what becomes Rufus Rastus.
1905, in July: Cook and Abbie are part of black art and music community moving up from the 20s and 30s into the Manhattantown neighborhood around West 98th and West 99th Streets, where neighbors include the Johnson brothers, etc. (lots of Google hits on Cook and Manhattantown); the entire district was razed for urban renewal in 1951; Carter bio. (p. 53) says this is at 10 1/2 W. 99th St.

1905 is when Abbie moves out, acc. Carter bio. However, an August 1905 newspaper hit says they moved up to 20 West 99th a fortnight ago, i.e. in July, with her mother and Cook’s mother and the two kids (NY Morning Telegraph, Saturday, August 5, 1905, p. 10). This does not precisely sound as if Cook and Abbie are split. A Will Marion Cook letter to the editor of the NY Morning Telegraph (n.d., n.p., circa March 27, 1906) is dated March 26, 1906 and addressed from 20 West 99th. This definitely sounds as if they are still together.

1905, in August: during the show’s run at the roof garden, Abbie and Cook had a big fight in her dressing room; a newspaper says Cook slashed up her stage clothes and slippers in her dressing room while she was at a rehearsal on Friday, August 4 (NY Morning Telegraph, Saturday, August 5, 1905, p. 10; also, according to Abbie memoirs in Moorland-Spingarn collection, acc. Sotiropoulos, Staging Race, p. 185); despite the violence, but they clearly make up enough to go to Europe together (see below).

1905-1906

1905, in September: in mid month, Abbie, still with Hogan, is restrained from performing with any other company; see, inter alia, Indianapolis Freeman, September 30, 1905, p. 5; the initial injunction was originally issued on September 12, 1905; this is some kind of rupture with Hogan; was she going to jump to Abyssinia??; a couple of weeks later, the NY Morning Telegraph says the injunction was to keep her from going to Europe (NY Morning Telegraph, October 22, 1905, p. 1); “Miss Abbie Mitchell had to steal away all alone by another ship in order to escape Hogan’s injunction. The writs served on the Students at sea were valueless” (Indianapolis Freeman, November 4, 1905, p. 5).

Evidently Hogan wanted to play in Memphis Students until his new star vehicle Rufus Rastus was ready, then turn his role over to
someone else, but keep management of (and presumably income from) the former company. When the European venture comes together, he wants to claim that he has two companies, one in the US and one abroad. Rufus Rastus opens October 30 in upstate New York, so he wanted to keep Abbie Mitchell and the rest of the company together until then.

There is definitely a Memphis Student troupe active in NYC and conducted by Will H. Dixon during the run of Rufus Rastus and while Cook and company were overseas (e.g., Indianapolis Freeman, September 30, 1905, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, October 28, 1905, p. 5; NY Times, December 24, 1905); they were being rehearsed by James Reese Europe in December for an engagement in vaudeville (Indianapolis Freeman, December 16, 1905, p. 6).

**ABYSSINIA**

1905, in October: Cook’s new show for Williams and Walker, Abyssinia, is in rehearsal and was said to possibly be going to open as early as October 1, in Montreal (Indianapolis Freeman, September 30, 1905, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, October 7, 1905, p. 6). Cook may have been working mostly at its music for the greater part of the year. But then the opening of Abyssinia gets postponed indefinitely (by one account, on account of unsecured financing: see Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 350) or else it will be presented in the spring (Cleveland Gazette, December 30, 1905, p. 1), and Williams and Walker do their vaudeville act instead (Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 352); probably this circumstance is what permits Cook to be able to go on tour to Europe

**THE TENNESSEE STUDENTS in Europe**

1905, in October: Cook takes the Memphis Students abroad, renamed the Tennessee Students, on a tour of Europe; featuring Abbie Mitchell; booked and led by Cook (Indianapolis Freeman, October 21, 1905, p. 5; NY Times, October 22, 1905); whatever the tension with Hogan, Will and Abbie got the rights from him and Hogan goes into Birth of a Minstrel, which gets renamed Rufus Rastus.

At one pointed the tour was planned to last nine months, through
July 1906, at least, with lots of stops in continental Europe, but that may have been blowing smoke, though they stayed six months abroad (November to April), returning in May; one of the stars was dancer Ida Forsyne, and another was Will Dixon; they were in Paris, London, Berlin, etc.; remaining as a miniature on a variety bill, the show in London was twenty minutes of singing, playing, and coon dancing (NY Clipper, December 2, 1905, p. 1040)

1905, in October: Abbie got a new passport on 29 November 1905 in Paris, and the application says she left NYC on October 21, 1905 for Paris; this is the awkward departure where the injunction was served against Abbie, over a month after it first became an issue, causing her and a companion to miss her ship on the 21st and have to take a later one on the 22nd; the Indianapolis Freeman suggests the Memphis Students were "stolen away" by Cook, and that Abbie herself stole away on another ship precisely to escape Hogan's injunction (NY Times, October 22, 1905, p. 9; Indianapolis Freeman, November 4, 1905, p. 4; NY Morning Telegraph, October 22, 1905, p. 1, etc.; see also above in September; the problem had been around for a while)

SHOO-FLY REGIMENT

1905, in October: Meanwhile, during the fall another project also is brewing. The Freeman says they've heard that Cole & Johnson are going out with a big company at the end of the year, and that Cook will train the chorus (Indianapolis Freeman, October 28, 1905, p. 5); this must be an early anticipation of the 1906 Shoo-Fly Regiment. Then an account in November says Cook is writing an opera for Cole & Johnson, and by implication this would be for London (NY Morning Telegraph, November 20, 1905, p. 10); this additional big project ends up being Shoo-Fly Regiment of 1906-1908, without Cook. 

NB: the Cole and Johnson new military play with music is expected towards the end of February 1906 with a company of 55 under the management of Samuel L. Tuck (Indianapolis Freeman, February 10, 1906, p. 5), and Cole & Johnson are writing everything---book, lyrics, music---themselves (Indianapolis Freeman, April 28, 1906, p. 5).

A much later story says the show will be under the management of Melville B. Raymond, and the shift in management may indicate problems getting the show initially off the ground (Fort Worth Star-
Telegram, September 17, 1906, p. 3).

As late as June, 1906 Cook is being considered as the possible music director for Cole & Johnson's Shoo-Fly Regiment (Indianapolis Freeman, June 9, 1906, p. 5).

More on the TENNESSEE STUDENTS

1905, in November: Cook arrived back from Southampton to NYC on the "St. Paul" on November 19, 1905 (for work on Abyssinia?? or to get a performer, as below?? or to work for Cole & Johnson?); he turns up at Hammerstein's Victoria with one of his children and gives the Morning Telegraph an interview: he arrived yesterday, leaving Abbie and a troupe of 18 in Paris, and he is writing for C&J, and he is also writing for Williams and Walker, and he has just finished a song "When Melinda Sings" (NY Morning Telegraph, November 20, 1905, p. 10), which sets a lyrical Dunbar poem.

Cook "returned to the states for a fortnight" and during that time, he gave an interview to Carle Browne Cooke, who also reports that the troupe has 18 members, and says that Cook has returned to find a "premier buck dancer", they are playing in Paris and Cook anticipates opening in London on December 18, and they are booked for six months but hope to tour for 18 months (Indianapolis Freeman, December 9, 1905, p. 5); then he returns rapidly back to Europe and England.

Evidently the company opened in Paris at the Olympic Music Hall for about a month in November, then opened in London on December 2 at the Palace (Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 352) and is there into January or later, then to Germany at some point, staying into May---totalling seven months (their return is announced May 26, 1906, acc. Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 366); big paragraph in Indianapolis Freeman, April 21, 1906, p. 5 says they are going to have an engagement of three months at the Follies Bergere, which would, in fact, carry them through July in Europe, as announced early on, but that does not come to pass;

The troupe is called the Tennessee Students now; for reference to the Tennessee Students in London, see, for ex., Indianapolis Freeman, January 20, 1906, p. 5; NB: Cook ads (from Chicago) in Indianapolis
Freeman in December 1906 and January 1907 call the troupe the Tennessee Students; some London papers call them simply "Abbie Mitchell and Her Coloured Students" (Sterns, Jazz Dance ref.)

1906 in January: after going back to London in December, Cook arrived back to NYC from Southampton on January 17, 1906 (surely for more work on Abyssinia); Indianapolis Freeman, January 20, 1906, p. 5 says "it has been announced that the rehearsals of the new comic opera "Abyssinia" will be resumed about the middle of February." Meanwhile, Abbie and company are the talk of the town in London in mid January (Ghost Walks, p. 358).

1906, in February: death of Cook’s close friend and creative partner Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

**ABYSSINIA**

1906, in February: ABYSSINIA
This much-delayed show for Williams and Walker is occasionally referred to by contemporaries as In Abyssinia, presumably in parallel with the earlier In Dahomey;
Abyssinia is back in rehearsals half a season later than once anticipated, and then opens in NYC at the Majestic Theatre at Columbus Circle on Monday, February 20, 1906;
Norton I: 827 (1906.14);
a musical play in four scenes (originally in six scenes?? CHECK);
Walker and Williams; book again by Jesse Shipp, who had done In Dahomey; lyrics by Alex Rogers, music by Cook (Indianapolis Freeman, February 24, 1906, p. 7);
Abyssinia has a "grand and diversified score of music composed and arranged by Prof. Will Marion Cooke" (Indianapolis Freeman, March 3, 1906, p. 5); the principal music is by Cook, with incidental music by Bert Williams and James Vaughn (Washington Post, April 15, 1906, p. D4); the music is credited to both Cook and Bert Williams in an early surviving program; no new Cook songs, but he presumably did ensembles and orchestrations; Hill and Hatch book, p. 169 says Bert Williams provided six songs; Eric Smith (Williams bio., p. 87) says six of the eight non-choral numbers were written by Williams.

Production was slow to get going, evidently on account of management issues (producing and financing difficulties), a
postponement which allowed Cook to head to Europe; essentially should be in 1905-1906 season if Williams and Walker pattern is maintained but instead opened February 1906 after problems are solved; it runs two seasons, through 1906-1907, but possibly Cook never conducts it as Music Director; on the road by mid to late March 1906, while Cook goes back to England; Vaughn is assistant music director (Indianapolis Freeman, March 3, 1906, p. 5), and probably was in the pit.

Abyssinia plot: another variant on the story line of lottery winnings purchasing a trip; here, a Kansas lottery winner takes a group to Europe and then to Abyssinia.

1906, in March: it is announced that Abbie will return in April to sing in a negro operatic sketch called Lucille by Cook (NY Morning Telegraph, n.d., n.p. (March, 1906), with letters to the paper dated March 13), but in fact she does not return in that month; this project had first been heard from in 1902 (see above).

1906, in March: James Reese Europe and Cook visit Rufus Rastus in NYC (Indianapolis Freeman, March 17, 1906, p. 6).

1906, in March: Cook back to Europe for more Memphis/Tennessee Students touring on March 27 (NY Dramatic Mirror, April 7, 1906, p. 25).

1906, in April and May: Cook and Abbie return separately to US, with Cook arrival from Bremen on the "Kaiser Wilhelm II" in NYC on April 20, 1906.

1906, in May: Cook, by special arrangement, will present Abyssinia in DC at Convention Hall on May 1 for one night only; this is as deep as Williams and Walker get into the South with Abyssinia (Kansas City American Citizen, April 6, 1906, p. 1).

1906, in May: Abbie arrives with Mom and baby Will in tow from Cuxhaven on May 15, 1906; she immediately goes to work.

1906, in May: Abbie Mitchell and her Memphis Students or her 25 Tennessee Students or Abbie Mitchell and the Twelve Tennessee Students (colored singers, dancers and musicians) are in vaudeville at the Colonial in mid-May, advertised apparently even before she is
even back
(NY Herald, May 15, 1906, p. 10; NY Evening Telegram, May 15, 1906, p. 8; Variety, May 19, 1906; Variety, June 2, 1906);
Variety vol. 11, no. 10, p. 3 reports that they were billed to open at the Colonial “this week,” but that they did not arrive on the steamer in time and had to be replaced. (NB: They were doing the Hogan show, mostly. They sing the songs of the South, she does Swanee River, there is eccentric dancing [Ida Forcen as “Miss Topsy”], all credit due Cook for the act, etc.); they are sometimes described as 25, but later, by early 1907, they are twelve.

Remembering the tussle at the time of departure, we now read: "Miss Abbie Mitchell and the Memphis Students have returned from abroad. Now that Ernest Hogan is starring successfully let us hope that there will be no legal entanglements between the fair daughter of the Sunny South and Mr. Hogan to awaken the wrath of her talented husband, Will Marion Cook, the composer" (Indianapolis Freeman, May 26, 1906, p. 5).

1906, in May: for the annual complimentary ladies’ reception of the Colored Republican club, Will Dixon of "Abbie Mitchell Cook and Her Memphis Student Company" performed (NY Age, May 31, 1906, p. 1)

1906, in June: Abbie Mitchell and her twenty-five Tennessee/Memphis Students will be an act on the vaudeville bill at the Brooklyn Orpheum in the week of May 21 (Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 22, 1906, p. 4); then at the Alhambra at 7th Ave. and 120th St. beginning May 28 (NY Times, Sunday, May 27, 1906, p. 5); then at Hammerstein's Victoria Roof Garden from Monday, June 4, 1906 (NY Daily Tribune, Sunday, June 3, 1906, p. 4; NY Herald, June 3, 1906, p. 13(?)); at some point the act closes, and Abbie goes out with Hogan in Rufus Rastus, singing "Mandy Lou," in the early fall.

Newspaper ads taken out by Cook call Abbie’s ensemble the Tennessee Students; thus both names---i.e., Tennessee Students and Memphis Students---are being tossed about after Abbie's return; later, in the winter of 1906-1907, it is Tennessee Students again in Cook promotions and in the papers. When she has broken with Cook and is working with Tom Fletcher in a year or so, they are once more the Memphis Students.
1906, in June: Cook is being considered as possible music director for Cole & Johnson's Shoo-Fly Regiment (Indianapolis Freeman, June 9, 1906, p. 5)

1906-1907

1906, in September and October: Abbie, the transcontinental prima donna, is on tour with Ernest Hogan in the second season of his Rufus Rastus, singing "Mandy Lou" (Elkhart Review, September 8, 1906, p. 2; Bay City (MI) Times, September 10, 1906, p. 6; Indianapolis Freeman, September 29, 1906, p. 6; Indianapolis Freeman, October 6, 1906, p. 6; Cincinnati Post, Sunday, October 8, 1906, p. 8; Buffalo (NY) Morning Express, October 30, 1906, p. 9)

1906, in October: at the end of the month Cook comes out to Kansas City from NYC for about two weeks as guest artist, along with Abbie Mitchell, to conduct a local group of 100 of KC's best male voices, the "Unbleached Minstrels" (or the "Great Unbleached Minstrels" in the October 4 mention); he conducts a rehearsal of The Unbleached Minstrels on October 28; there is a major concert on November 9, 1906 at Convention Hall, featuring mostly music composed by African Americans and featuring not only Abbie Mitchell but also local KC "peerless" and " debonnaire" contralto Emma Collins; Abbie is said to have sung before select and royal audiences in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna; the concert was to be followed by dancing (Kansas City (Mo.) Rising Sun, October 4, 1906, p. 1; KC Rising Sun, October 25, 1906, p. 5; KC Rising Sun, November 1, 1906, p. 5)

Speaking of Cook as conductor at this moment, "In him you have Creatore and Sousa peculiarly blended" (KC Rising Sun, November 1, 1906, p. 5)

Cook and THE PEKIN IN CHICAGO

1906, in November: Will Marion Cook joins the Pekin theatre enterprise in Chicago alongside Joe Jordan, writing for its stock company from late in the year, some of the time with Abbie; he is the second major composer to join, and Brymn will shortly be the third; a Broad Ax profile of J. Ed. Green mentions Jordan and
Cook (Chicago Broad Ax, January 12, 1907, p. 1);
[NB: Theatre Magazine VIII/no. 83 (January 1908), pp. 27-28 has an article on Pekin and Motts, signed Lucy France Pierce, that says Green writes the plays and Jordan and Cook do the music]

When does he get there? October? November? His first secure show is November 12 (My Friend From Georgia), so he might have been there already in October, before the November KC gig; seems unlikely that he could have been there long enough to have helped with Twenty Minutes From State Street, which opened Sept. 30/Oct. 1, as Richard Benjamin says?

In any event, Cook is there in November, then back to NYC in December; in December 1906 and January 1907, the Indianapolis Freeman carries ads taken out by Cook as a booking agent that give a Chicago address; at the Pekin itself there seems to be nothing in which he has a hand between January’s In Zululand and the two revivals in late May and June (see below), with the new "Ghost Ship." Is he not there? Is he only conducting? arranging? publishing?

1906, in November: MY FRIEND FROM GEORGIA
His first show at the Pekin is surely in November 1906: My Friend From Georgia, from November 12, 1906; first Pekin show to feature Abbie; in one account, he and Abbie have joined the company and will appear in A Georgia Gentleman, which must be an earlier title (NY Dramatic Mirror, November 3, 1906, p. 10); the final title echoes the earlier project for Hogan and McClain of 1902.

Cook writes lyrics for "Sweetie, Dear", to music of Joe Jordan, and it is published in 1906 in Chicago by Jordan and Cook with the Pekin Publishing Company, then published in 1907 in NYC by Barron and Thompson [see WorldCat]; copyright submission on November 26, 1906 and deposited December 22, 1906, so in time to have been sung in My Friend From Georgia at Pekin; Carter bio. and Buaman say it was used in The Man From 'Bam, but if so, this had to have been the February 1907 revival because for this show, Cook was only around for the revival in 1907; it is sung by Ada Overton Walker in Abysinnia and could have been written to refresh that show in its second season. Jordan said he wrote the song for Abbie (Van Orden, ed., Music and Cultures of Print (2000), p. 235, note 48.)
1906, in November: Dudley’s famous December column in the Indianapolis Freeman about companies in town to see matinee on November 23 (Indianapolis Freeman, December 15, 1906, p. 6), says that Jordan and Cook write the Pekin’s music; the companies see a matinee of My Friend From Georgia; Joe Jordan leads the orchestra, but "From the time Mr. Cook shot himself into the orchestra, grabbed his baton and the curtain raised to the sweet melody of the opening chorus until the fall of the curtain on the final act there was not a dull moment."

1906, end of November: Cook returns to NYC briefly after a month in Chicago (Chicago Broad Axe, December 1, 1906, p. 2)

1906, December 4: Coleridge-Taylor in Chicago for performance of his music; assisted by N. Clark Smith, Abbie Mitchell, Irene Howard, William Tyler [see NY Dramatic Mirror, November 3, 1906, p. 10, in anticipation]; Coleridge Taylor is expected to conduct; Carter bio, pp. 74-75; Ohman, "N. C. Smith in Chicago," pp. 000-00 and fn. 20; Ohman cites Chicago Tribune, December 2, 1906]; apparently Smith conducted the Pekin orchestra; no sign of Cook’s presence at this event, but N. C. Smith remembers that he was there (Chicago Defender, July 22, 1933, p. 10)

1906, in December: from Chicago later in the month, Cook is running ads in the Indianapolis Freeman, giving his Chicago address as the Pekin Theater; he is booking Abbie Mitchell, the Tennessee Students, Tribble and Marshall, and Best Colored Acts in Vaudeville; those wishing time in America and Europe should write at once (Indianapolis Freeman, December 22, 1906, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, December 29, 1906, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, January 12, 1907, p. 5)

1906 in December and into January 1907: Abbie with 12 Tennessee Students in NYC in vaudeville (Variety, December 8, 1906); at the Colonial on Broadway and 62nd (NY Tribune, December 2, 1906, p. 7; there last week, NY Dramatic Mirror, December 15, 1906, p. 16); at Brooklyn Orpheum from January 7, 1907 (NY Sun, Sunday, January 6, 1907, p. 9); they may cancel their engagement at the Wintergarden in Berlin, set for February 2, if Keith offers them more time here (Variety 5/2, December 22, 1906, p. 3); in vaudeville at Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre as one of nine acts (NY Tribune, January 13, 1907, p. 6; Variety, January 19, 1907, p. 11); A Variety hit (n.d., n.p. but 1907) says Abbie and the Tennessee Students are at Hammerstein's
"considerably reduced as to the number of singers" from the Hogan days on the Victoria roof, and with an entirely new catalogue of songs; at Hammerstein's, they "sing the songs of the South" and appear to be 2nd to last on the bill, hence top billing (NY Dramatic Mirror, January 26, 1907, p. 16)

1906, in December: revival of MY NEPHEW'S WIFE
Any sign of a hand in it by Cook? Not so far.

1906, in December: COUNT OF NO ACCOUNT
Any sign of a hand in it by Cook? Not so far.

1906, in December: DIXIE ANN
Some ambiguity here; by one report, Cook is back in Chicago, arranging the music for Dixie Ann, which opens for a week on December 31; also, the NY Clipper says Count of No Account will run through the holidays and be followed by "Dixie Ann"... Will Marion Cook being in the city [Chicago] at present, is arranging music for it" (NY Clipper, December 29, 1906, p. 1182, quoting their Chicago Letter written in Christmas Week); thus, Cook is supposedly arranging music for show called Dixie Ann to open after the holidays; however, by a later account, when Dixie Ann was expected to hold the stage, instead Count of No Account is into the third week of its run, which would be in the first week of January, and Cook is rehearsing the next production, which then would be In Zululand (NY Clipper, January 5, 1907, p. 1206)

1907, in January: IN ZULULAND
from January 7, 1907, the next big show is In Zululand; on January 19, 1907, it is starting its third week; a musical collaboration of Cook, Jordan, Brymn (Chicago Broad Axe, January 19, 1907, p. 2; Indianapolis Freeman, January 26, 1907, p. 6)

Cook's song "Wid de Moon, Moon, Moon: a Negro love song" (NY: Schirmer, 1907), to lyrics by a local Chicago black judge, W. [William] H. A. Moore, is featured in this show but was probably not written for it (Van Orden, ed., Music and the Cultures of Print (2000), p. 221); it gets picked up by Marie Cahill and is one of Cook's longest lasting and most often republished successes.
1907, in January: In Boston, "Marion Cooke presents Miss Abbie Mitchell and the ten Tennessee Students at the Orpheum theater this week" (NY Age, January 24, 1907, p. 8)

1907, in February: "Sweetie Dear" sung in the revival of The Man From 'Bam that opened February 4. Did Cook have any other hand in this revival?

1907, in February: Chicago Broad Axe, February 9, 1907, p. 2, says Cook is of NYC and is spending a week in the city [i.e., Chicago] and "it is rumored that he is soon to take charge" at the Pekin; this could have raised the ire of Joe Jordan! See below. Did Cook become estranged now or in June? Did he perhaps get angry now, but come back for the May/June shows?

In a personal letter, Mercer Cook shared an anecdote with Marva Carter from Cook's notes (perhaps meaning his memoir; see Carter thesis, p. 101 and bio. p. 75, where the footnotes are not in sequence):

"I also conducted a part of the show. This, to my great surprise, was not so acceptable to Joe Jordan, the regular conductor. Petty little arguments began to be so annoying that after the third or fourth show I commenced to lose the enthusiasm without which I cannot happily work. To this day I cannot understand what actuated Jordan's peculiar actions, except that he thought I desired his job. Nothing was further from my mind. I began to refuse to go into the orchestra pit, and even lost my zest for composition. Motts, the owner, argued with me once or twice, but since there was no proof of my suspicions (although Ed Green agreed with me), I failed to tell Motts why I had lost interest in the Pekin shows. So he threw me out, even refusing to give me my return fare to New York."

In Carter bio. (p. 75) this statement seems by her citation to have apparently been written around a year later about his struggles at Pekin with Joe Jordan after the third or fourth show (Carter's source ref. is to NY Age, February 20, 1908, p. 6, but I have seen that newspaper page and the letter is not on it; I have not yet seen/found this letter's original, which would have been Mercer Cook's source.)

Cook and Jordan did not stay estranged for long, if at all; Cook is writing for May 1907 revival of My Friend From Georgia, which was his first show with the company last November/December. He also
apparently contributed to the June 1907 revival of *In Zululand*. But he's mostly occupied elsewhere---see below. A few years later, a big hit of the Ziegfield Follies of 1910 is "Lovie Joe" for Fanny Brice with words by Cook and melody by Joe Jordan; see NY Clipper, September 10, 1910, p. 746; also, Jordan was the assistant conductor for the NY Syncopated Orchestra in 1919, and attended Cook shows in the 1920s.

1907, in February: "Abbie Mitchell Cooke is planning for an extensive tour of Europe, appearing in a special musical skit composed by her gifted husband Will Marion Cooke." (Indianapolis Freeman, February 16, 1907, p. 5). (Could this skit be Lucille?) Cook and the Tennessee Students are being fined because Abbie did not show up for a performance at Boston's Orpheum; in fact, she is at the Wintergarten, Berlin (Variety, February 16, 1907, p. 7). Abbie has gone to Europe; she is expected back in May (Indianapolis Freeman, April 20, 1907, p. 5); Cook is sued in court, and loses, over the salary of one of "The Tennessee Students" in Boston: salaries had been trimmed, apparently, to pay a fine, or absorb the loss of a $100 advance on salary given to Abbie, because Abbie did not appear (Variety, n.d., n.p. [May 1907]), although the Boston managers could not cancel the entire appearance, because their contact did not specify Abbie by name, leaving them no recourse at law (Variety 1907); NB: Abbie is said to be called recently back from abroad when she appears at the Pekin in its second season in Man From Bam in November 1907 and Panama in December 1907.

1907, in May: presumably having severed most ties at the Pekin, Cook is on the staff of Barron & Thompson Co. (a Tin Pan Alley firm) as one of five staff pianists, the others being Fred May, Rennie Cormack, Murray Bennett, and Al Pinatadosi (Variety, May 11, 1907, p. 22)

1907, in May: Henry Troy, the tenor, and Cook have formed a partnership and will do a vaudeville piano act "something on the order of the act once used by Cole and Johnson"; this seems to be his plan for a summer gig (Variety, May 18, 1907, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, May 25, 1907, p. 5)

1907 later May: from May 20 to June 2, My Friend From Georgia is revived at the Pekin with considerable changes; it is now a musical collaboration of Cook, Jordan, Brymn; especially noteworthy is an immense new fantasy number, "The Ghost Ship," by Cook with
stagecraft devised by J. Ed. Green

"Ghost Ship," a.k.a. "Slave Ship," has a long life; it turns up in Darkeydom, in Negro Nuances, at the Roxy, and at the 1934 Chicago Pageant; Eva Jessye and her Dixie Jubilee Singers do "The Slave Ship" on a 1931 program with tenor and bass soloists (NY Age, Saturday, April 18, 1931, p. 7); and it is performed from manuscript by the Eva Jessye Choir at Town Hall in 1948 (NY Times review), etc.

Then at the Pekin there is a show without Cook participation, "the play without a name," in which H; Lawrence Freeman turns up as part of the Pekin team for the first time.

1907, in June: from June 17, In Zululand revival with new material by Brymn, Jordan, and Cook (Chicago Broad Axe, June 22, 1907, p. 2; NY Clipper, June 22, 1907, p. 482); this may have been Cook’s last contact with the Pekin enterprise and may have been followed by Motts’s firing of Cook. It isn't known how much if any new Cook material went into this show.

By the end of the spring season Will Marion Cook has moved on. It is possible that H. Lawrence Freeman was brought on board as the third composer (i.e., alongside Jordan and Brymn) when Cook stepped out.

Possibly Cook only was principally on board from November through January, and we can read it that Brymn begins to compose for the company as Cook steps out of the picture. Brymn turns up with the February 4 revision of The Man From Bam, a show which Bauman says Cook had a hand in. Lawrence Freeman comes on board late in the first season, and so perhaps it is actually Freeman who is intended to replace Cook in the rotation of composers.

1907, in May: In May Williams and Walker already had a twenty-minute sketch or skit for summer vaudeville called "On the Road to Bandanna Land" (Indianapolis Freeman, May 25, 1907, p. 5; additional Ghost Walks hits)

1907, in July: first rehearsals for the next big Williams and Walker show were called in NYC for July 16, 1907 and nearly thirty persons were there, taken in charge by Messrs Cook and Willie Vodery (NY Age, July 25, 1907, p. 6). Cook and Vodery may have left Chicago together
for New York, although in this regard it is important to remember that Vodery was writing the music for *Oyster Man* for Hogan this summer, too.

1907-1908

**BANDANNA LAND**

1907, in September: *Bandanna Land*, or occasionally *In Bandanna Land*, just as *In Dahomey* (and sometimes *In Abyssinia*); note also that "Bandana" is a very frequent alternate spelling; Norton I: 885-886 (1908.08); runs two seasons, 1907-1908 and 1908-1909; this show is the last great vehicle for Walker and Williams; book once more by Jesse Shipp; Cook is composer and Musical Director, with Vodery assisting, and Cook conducts for the first couple of months of the run; Cook and Rogers do most of the original songs and the choral ensemble numbers, but they use lots of songs written by others; one big hit is Cook’s "Rain Song."

The big new show on tour beginning September 10, 1907 in Wilkes-Barre, then to Ohio, etc.; Cleveland *Gazette*, October 5, 1907, p. 1 says Cook and Abbie are in town, he’s with *Bandanna Land* and will leave the company in NYC at an early date; in NYC from February 3, 1908 at the Majestic for 11 weeks; Cook probably leaves the show upon its return to NYC; big rave review by Walton in *NY Age*, February 6, 1908, p. [6]

Scenario: Once more the story of new riches, here an inheritance, and there are schemers who plot to separate the heir from his money; no trip to an exotic locale, however, but just to the South.

1908, in February: a picture of the young Mercer Cook (age 4) is published in *NY Age* (*NY Age*, February 20, 1908, p. 6)

1908, in March: SPECIAL GALA with "Conjure Man" on March 31, 1908 to celebrate the Williams & Walker 16 year anniversary: on this date *Bandanna Land* is halted after two acts and a special gala with lots of memorable songs was held. Contains a huge new number by Cook and Alex Rogers, "The Conjure Man," written for new talent in the company, baritone F. J. Mores, and chorus. (NB: Cook and Mores had
both been at the Pekin.) Operatic and ambitious, a heavy bit of work; lasts eight minutes; to be sung in the show itself commencing next week (NY Age, March 26, 1908, p. 6; NY Age, April 2, 1908, p. 6).

NY Age, March 12, 1908, p. 6 has article on Mores leaving the Pekin company for Bandanna Land, and that Alex Rogers and Cook will give him a new song with chorus; here it says this will be in place of the first act finale; but other sources say it is a substitute at the end of Act II, where the regular finale was omitted; NY Age, April 2, says it is at the end of the second act, replacing "Until Then," but also says it did not produce the same effect as "Bon Bon Buddies," suggesting that that was the number replaced. The problem here is that two new numbers were tried out, evidently at the ends of both Acts I and II, and there are problems in the newspaper reporting; sounds simultaneously as if "Conjure Man" replaces "Bon Bon Buddies" but is at the end of Act I, not II; in a long article of praise for Cook (NY Age, May 7, 1908, p. 6), Lester Walton says the last four weeks of Bandanna Land added "Conjure Man", by Cook and Alex Rogers, as finale to first act, and it was not as big a hit as "Bon Bon Buddies"; it was "the heaviest bit of dramatic singing ever attempted in Negro musical comedy. In fact, it was more like grand opera."

NB a conjure man is a voodoo doctor or evil priest who puts a hex on people; it is a common expression. Is there any other trace of this big solo and ensemble number across Cook's later career?

After year one in Bandanna Land, Williams and Walker use a scene from it, together with interpolated numbers, for their own summer 1908 vaudeville tour.

1908, in May: Especially in mind of the current success and compositional virtues of Bandanna Land---in particular its ensemble writing---Lester A. Walton writes a long column of praise for Cook as "the foremost Negro composer in the United States," responsible for Hogan and Williams and Walker success; he is an eccentric with peculiarities; etc. (NY Age, May 7, 1908, p. 6)

1908, in June: BENEFIT with "Slave Ship"
on Wednesday, June 3 there is a giant benefit organized by Aida Overton Walker for the White Rose Industrial Home; on the bill is the dramatic ensemble "Slave Ship," with Frances Mores, baritone, assisted by Adolphus Haston, baritone, and chorus (see ad in NY
Age, May 28, 1908, p. 2; also an article), this is an alternative name for "Ghost Ship" (see 1929 copyright); possibly Mores had already performed "Ghost Ship" at the Pekin [needs checking, but likely]; in this ad, Abbie is called late prima donna with Bandanna Land, so she is about to go into the revived Memphis Students; "Slave Ship" had been sung in Bandanna Land during the first part of the season but had been taken off before the company reached NYC (NY Age, June 11, 1908, p. [6])

1908, in June: Memphis Students again
It is reported that this act may be revived for the summer with Bobby Kemp and Marion Ringgold (Variety, April 4, 1908); an ensemble of this name appeared with Tom Fletcher in a benefit directed by Joe Jordan in April 1908 (NY Age, April 23, 1908, p. 6) and the newspaper makes the comment that there is no reason why they should not re-enter vaudeville; in fact, they then reappear in NYC for the summer vaudeville season with headliners Abbie Mitchell and Tom Fletcher and 25 Memphis Students (Ghost Walks, p. 431, quoting Variety, n.d. [1908], p. 15, where it sounds as if their first appearance of the season was already in June 1908: they "are reappearing in New York vaudeville this week"); Joe Jordan trained the chorus and directs the singing (NY Dramatic Mirror, June 27, 1908, p. 14); they are at Keith & Proctor's 125th Street on the bill in the week of Sunday, June 14 (NY Dramatic Mirror, June 27, 1908, p. 14; NY Daily People, June 14, 1908, p. 2); they are at the Orpheum in Brooklyn in the week of June 25 (NY Age, June 25, 1908, n.p.); Abbie and Tom Fletcher and the Memphis Students are at Hammerstein's Victoria beginning in the week of Monday, July 6 (NY Clipper, July 11, 1908, p. 539), the name of this show is "A Night in Old Virginia" (NY Clipper, July 25, 1908, p. 587; Variety, July 11, 1908); they had a long run at Hammerstein's, ending in mid August (NY Herald, August 2, 1908, second section, p. 6; NY Sun, August 9, 1908, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, August 15, 1908, p. 5), so they had about two months together (mid June to mid August); for at least one week, in addition to their double bill at the Victoria, they drove up to the Alhambra and did two shows there, matinee and evening, on the same day, for a total of four a day! (NY Age, July 23, 1908, n.p. [6]; NY Dramatic Mirror, August 1, 1908, p. 14)

1908, in June: a giant testimonial for Ernest Hogan will be held on June 21; an amazing committee is organizing it, including J. R. Johnson, George Walker, S. H. Dudley, Bob Cole, Bert Williams, Joe Jordan,
Will Marion Cook, Sam Corker, Jesse Shipp, etc., with Cook as head of the committee on music (NY Age, June 18, 1908, p. [6], with photo, ad, and article; Variety, June 27, 1908, p. 30; Billboard, June 27, 1908, p. 30)

1908 in July: The Frogs club is formed in July 1908, apparently without participation, at least as an officer, of Cook; while Walker and Williams, etc., are officers

1908 in August: Abbie gets a divorce on August 1st (NY Herald, August 2, 1908, p. 5); after eight or ten years of marriage, the Cooks are divorced; "domestic life between the Cooks has not been the most pleasant for several years, and the legal separation was expected." (NY Age, Thursday, August 6, 1908, p. 6)

1908, in August: In the "Theatrical Jottings" bits in NY Age, August 6, 1908, p. 6, on the same page as the announcement of the Cook's divorce, it mentions that Cleo Desmond is to succeed Abbie Mitchell in the Memphis Students; Abbie is going to join the Cole and Johnson show (Variety, August 15, 1908, p. 14)

1908-1909

1908, in August: In its second season, Bandanna Land is freshened up with new faces, and Ada Overton Walker is dancing Salome, and Cook is still conducting and rehearsing it (see NY Age, Thursday, July 23, 1908, p. [6]; NY Age, Thursday, August 27, 1908, p. [6]); it is called the "second edition," with new songs and other changes; upon her divorce, Abbie Mitchell makes a big break away from Cook and Williams & Walker (Anita Wilkins replaces her, coached by Cook) and goes into the first season of Cole and Johnson's The Red Moon (as immediately below).

1908, in September: freshly divorced, Abbie elaborately and publicly celebrates her twenty-fifth birthday in 1908 (NY Age, October 1, 1908, p. [6]); this makes her born in 1883 and is the most solid confirmation of other data on the question of her birthdate. At this moment, she is touring with Cole & Johnson's The Red Moon in Cleveland, and members of that company celebrate with her, including Bob Cole, J. Rosamond Johnson, and James Reese Europe.
Bandanna Land is in Baltimore from August 10, Grand Opera House, NYC from August 17 (Indianapolis Freeman, August 15, 1908, p. 5) or from August 24 (NY Age, August 27, 1908, p. [6]), New Haven, Boston in early September for a month or so, then to Springfield, Mass. and Trenton, NJ in October, etc., Lincoln, Omaha, and Kansas City in December, Chicago around the turn of the year and then Indianapolis by early February 1909

"Most of the music of the company was especially prepared for it, consequently reflected great credit on colored composers, who, for the most part, did it. All of the music was under the direction of the well-known Will Marion Cook, composer, and James J. Vaughn. Cook is of good musical ability, much evidence of which was seen through the various renditions" (Indianapolis Freeman, big descriptive review of February 13, 1909 p. 5; Sampson, Ghost Walks, p. 451-454); by this point, though Cook prepared this season's effort, Vaughn is surely in the pit

1908, in November: The Boys and Betty opens on Broadway, with one Cook song, "Whoop 'Er Up with a Whoop La-La," for Marie Cahill; she sings it also in 1910's Judy Forgot; lyrics Andrew B. Sterling, music Cook (NY: W. M. Cook, 1910; NY: von Tilzer, 1910)

1909, in January: For at least four months or so Cook is in Chicago on business, as head of the Chicago office of Gotham-Attucks; Cook, in Chicago, entertains George Walker and others guests at his hotel (Chicago Broad Axe, January 9, 1909, p. 2); Cook is in charge of the Gotham-Attucks office at the Sherman House in Chicago (NY Age, January 21, 1909, p. 6); newspaper ads announce that Cook is representing Gotham-Attucks in Chicago, at the Sherman House or at Room 606, 87 Clark Street (NY Clipper, January 23, 1909, p. 1228; NY Clipper, January 30, 1909, p. 1252; NY Clipper, February 13, 1909, p. 1313); or at 67 Clark Street (Variety, January 30, 1909, p. 21); he has established a permanent office here in Chicago, and Noah D. Thompson is the assistant who will be in charge when Mr. Cook is at his main office in NYC (Chicago Broad Axe, January 30, 1909, p. 2); Cook is still in Chicago representing Gotham-Attucks Publishing Co. (NY Age, April 8, 1909, p. 6).

1909, in January: About a year ago [i.e., in Chicago in or around January 1909], Will Marion Cook, the renowned colored musician and song writer, dropped in the Grand to see a show, and heard Mr. Sweatman
[Wilber C. Sweatman] play. After the show Mr. Cook was introduced to him. He was so carried away with Mr. Sweatman’s playing that he made a verbal contract with him to lead the Williams and Walker show the season of 1909-1910, providing he (Mr. Cook) wrote the music. But George W. Waker dropping out of the business changed the plans” (Indianapolis Freeman, January 29, 1910, p. 5).

1909, in May: death of Ernest Hogan

1909-1910

When Cook leaves Bandanna Land after prepping the show for its second season, he delves into composing and vaudeville, but also into publishing and his school, from 1909 into 1911. During the Chicago months, Variety advertisements running from March to June 1909 announce two new acts of his comparable to Clorindy and to The Memphis Students, called Rose Land and Hawaiian Romance, and he’s also managing Abbie Mitchell. Roseland gets produced (see below), but no evidence for any production of Hawaiian Romance has yet turned up. In the ads he calls himself "The Originator" and gives two addresses, i.e. NYC (136 West 37th Street) and Chicago (67 Clark Street).

1909, in April: ROSELAND
"Colored Act with 20/"Roseland," with twenty people, colored, including The Kemps, Marion Burton, Muriel Ringgold and the others from the Williams and Walker show, will start on the vaudeville circuits soon, opening at Atlantic City. Will Marion Cook is producing the piece. William L. Lykens attends to the booking" (Variety, April 3, 1909, p. 6)

1909, in June-July: LIME-KILN CLUB
Cook writes a 25-minute vaudeville act, The Lime Kiln Club, starring Abbie Mitchell, Tom Fletcher, Muriel Ringgold, J. Leubrie Hill; Abbie is on board by special permission of Cole and Johnson, with whom she has been last season in The Red Moon (and to whom she will not return; what is her relationship now with Cook? she refers to him as her husband in September 1909); the show is managed/directed by R. C. McPherson; opening in NYC in late June at the American Music Hall and running into August in the area in vaudeville (Sampson, Ghost Walks, pp. 466-468, quoting a long review from "New Acts of
the Week" in Variety, Saturday, July 3, 1909, p. 15; the Variety reviewer had seen the act last Tuesday, i.e., June 29, and it may have begun on that Monday, June 28; see also NY Age, July 1, 1909, p. 6; NY Dramatic Mirror, July 10, 1909, p. 19); it also features other members of the Walker & Williams Company; it is based on the first act finale of Bandanna Land, so it is evidently calculated to give them employment at the end of the season. Twelve men sing "Rain, Rain", a big Bandana Land hit (Variety says “It is seldom that so good a singing organization of colored people hits vaudeville”); Abbie has two numbers, “Red, Red Rose” and "Down Among the Sugar Cane," also from Bandana Land; at the American Theater; it gets held over for a second week, i.e., the week of July 5, although Tom Fletcher is missing (Variety, July 10, 1909, p. 17); apparently also a mention (not yet seen) in Variety, June 26, 1909. It is at the American Music Hall at Rockaway Beach, with Abbie Mitchell, Muriel Ringgold, and the rest, in August (NY Dramatic Mirror, August 14, 1909, p. 22)

Songs include:

Rain, Rain
How do you do today?
Down Among the Sugar Cane
I’m Going to Exit
Amen song [Rain, rain?]
Red Rose
Any Old Place in Yankeeland

NB: The Lime Kiln Club is a famous imaginary black self-improvement society, a kind of fraternal order or lodge, the invention of humorist Charles Bertrand Lewis writing in the 1880s in the Detroit Free Press and for syndication; images of it show up in Currier and Ives prints and as comic cigar box labels.

Cook is preparing a big vaudeville act, The Lime Kiln Club, which will probably be booked over the Sullivan-Considine circuit (NY Age, September 16, 1909, p. 6); Indianapolis Freeman, September 18, 1909, p. 5 identifies the show as McPherson's [i.e., Cecil Mack], the manager of Gotham and Attucks---he is their pilot man, presumably meaning he's finding them gigs, and they are booked up solid, and they opened first at the American Music Hall in NYC (i.e., in June/July, as above); Billy Harper and Chris Smith are being featured in the Lime Kiln Club, which is in vaudeville under the management
of R. C. McPherson (NY Age, September 23, 1909, p. [6]); on same page, Abbie is elsewhere in vaudeville with a good, unnamed accompanist.

Cook probably worked with Jesse Ship to modify the Bandanna Land material, and Shipp himself brings the Lime Kiln show to the Pekin for productions in the fall of 1910 and spring of 1911.

Abbie is returning to the fold after a year away—returning to Cook and to Williams and Walker folks, although without the two big stars.

Sylvester Russell writes about the Lime Kiln Club in early 1911, in his column in the Indianapolis Freeman, March 11, 1911, p. 5, saying the book is by Jesse A. Shipp; also, Motts obit says it was produced by Shipp (Indianapolis Freeman, July 15, 1911, pp. 1, 4; Sampson, Blacks in Blackface, p. 459, says book by Shipp in 1911 production at Pekin), so it is still around—he says it is making its second appearance at the Pekin in Chicago, being done by the Pekin Stock Company, calls it a three-act comedy—so if it is based on Cook original it must be significantly expanded here, and describes the scenario in some detail and names the cast (Abbie is not in it, and a separate entry on the same page of the Freeman says she opened recently at the Willard)

This show is done as a skit on a Frogs show on Monday, January 29, 1912 at the New Star Casino (NY Age, February 1, 1912, p. 5), and as late as 1913, for the big Monday, August 11/13, 1913 Frogs extravaganza at the Manhattan Casino before their one-week grand tour, one of the events in the show is a special grand production scene with Jesse Shipp and a cast of stars from the famous colored show the Lime Kiln Club (NY Age, July 24, 1913, p. [6])

Acc. Sampson, Blacks in Blackface (p. 359), in 1913 there was a failed effort to create a series of "Lime Kiln Club" motion pictures starring Bert Williams and produced by Klaw and Erlanger; in NY Age, in obit column for Corker, it says "last fall he employed a large number of colored performers for the "Lime Kiln Club" series of motion pictures produced by Klaw & Erlanger in which Bert A. Williams was featured" (NY Age, August 20, 1914, p. [6]), which makes it sound as if they were made. And indeed, seven reels survive of an unfinished, untitled 1913 movie—the Lime Kiln material—starring Williams were found at MoMA; a romantic comedy; estimated to have been
intended to run ca. 35-40 minutes; uncut raw materials include over 60 minutes of raw footage (NY Times, September 21, 2014, pp. 1, 20 [first/national section]); the filmed material features not just Bert Williams but Sam Lucas, Abbie Mitchell, Leubrie Hill, and Hill's Darktown Follies company.

1909, in September: with The Lime Kiln Club established, Cook then goes on the road with Abbie Mitchell in vaudeville; she is in vaudeville from September, acc. Cleveland Gazette, September 25, 1909, p. 1; in the Jersey City Journal, August 28, 1909, p. 5 she's still in Red Moon, and she is also still with Red Moon in Philadelphia Inquirer, September 5, 1909, p. 14; Cleveland Gazette, October 2, 1909, p. 3 says Abbie is leaving the Red Moon company for vaudeville [NB basically after a year with the show] and says she does it both for the money and also because she loves vaudeville. "My husband, Mr. Will Marion Cook, will make the tour with me, personally conducting the orchestra at every performance that I appear." Given that there is an orchestra, they are not necessarily just doing their voice& piano act, though there may be a bit of a stretch here; [NB: Abbie is leaving the Red Moon/Cole & Johnson orbit for Williams & Walker orbit, at first rejoining Fletcher, with whom she had worked in the revived Memphis Students the summer before, and a reconciliation of sorts, at least professionally, with Cook, about a year after the divorce]; Indianapolis Freeman, September 18, 1909, p. 5, on same page as info about McPherson booking Lime Kiln Club, quite separately, it says Abbie Mitchell is again in vaudeville, on the William Morris circuit; possibly, Cook got the Lime Kiln Club show going with Abbie, etc. in the summer and then the two of them went off on their own in the fall??

1909, December: Abbie in vaudeville (Duluth News-Tribune, December 5, 1909, p. 9)

Cook AND BURLEIGH SCHOOL

1909, in December: Cook and Burleigh run ads for "The Marion School of Vocal Music" (NY Age, December 23, 1909, p. [6]; NY Age, December 30, 1909, p. [6]); NY Age, January 6, 1910, p. [6]); see also Carter thesis, p. 369; Brooks, Lost Sounds, says it was open 1909-1910

1910 in January: From December 1909 to May 1910, Cook runs ads in
the NY Age for the Marion School of Music, Will Marion Cook, director, and Harry T. Burleigh, vocal instructor, and with instructors in voice placing, piano, stage dancing; NB: no longer "of Vocal Music"; also, Cleveland Gazette, March 26, 1910, p. 1 has short paragraph on the new school, which is in the Gotham-Attucks Colored Music Company building located at 136 West 37th St., top floor, in NYC; the Gazette says "it has been opened" and this clearly suggests that the opening was recent.

1910, in March: Cook and Ford Dabney, who had just collaborated on the song "The Pensacola Mooch" (copyright 1910) for Ziegfeld, are completing plans to open a moving picture and vaudeville house in DC (NY Age, March 3, 1910, p. 6); at Ford Dabney's Theater, "much merriment prevailed" (Indianapolis Freeman, December 3, 1910, p. 5); it is at 9th and U street northwest, acc. ref. in Washington Bee, December 10, 1910, p. 5; at "Ford Dabney's theater," "moving pictures and vaudeville business is improving" (Indianapolis Freeman, March 16, 1912, p. 5).

1910, in January: Abbie is on the Sullivan-Considine circuit in vaudeville from January into May and June (Anaconda Standard, January 8, 1910, p. 9; Salt Lake Telegram, May 10, 1910, p. 5; Kansas City Star, June 7, 1910, p. 10)

1910, in April: William M. Cook, composer of music, is lodging with Daniel E. Murray, musician in an orchestra, at 148 West 52nd Street in NYC, according to the US 1910 Census

A number of 1909-1910 songs for a variety of shows:

1909 SONGS:

"Dainty," music Cook, lyrics by Mord Allen (NY: A. Payne, 1909); LoC Catalogue of Copyright Entries, November 11, 1909
"Mammy's 'Lasses Candy Chile," lyrics by Cecil Mack (NY: Shapiro, 1909), introduced by Alexander and Scott in Cohan & Harris's Minstrels

"Love Me With a Tiger Love," lyrics by Addison Burkhard, who is an active librettist/lyricist (NY: Von Tilzer, 1910)

"Whoop 'Er Up!," lyrics Andrew Sterling, for Marie Cahill in Judy Forgot (NY: Von Tilzer, 1910), for the October 1910 show

1910, in June and July: Abbie is in vaudeville in Chicago at Motts's Pekin and other variety houses (e.g., Indianapolis Freeman, July 2, 1910, p. 5)

1910, in August: marriage of Abbie to William Charles Phillips [Philipps, Phillipps] of Chicago, a railroad surveyor and “one of the leading young men of Chicago” (Freeman, August 20); a marriage that “will no doubt be a surprise to her many acquaintances” (Freeman, August 13), so it might have been quite sudden (Indianapolis Freeman, August 13, 1910, p. 5, says it will be August 21 (a Sunday); Indianapolis Freeman, August 20, 1910, p. 5 says the marriage was last Monday (i.e., making it Monday, August 15); NY Age, August 25, 1910, p. 6; Carter bio. also cites NY Age, August 18, 1910, p. 6); by August 22, Abbie was in DC with the Pekin Trio at the opening of the Howard Theatre, and at least for the rest of 1910 and into early 1911 she is based in Chicago. It is not yet known when they got divorced. By October 1911, in references to Darkydom, she is back to working with Cook. The former spouses work together professionally as a duo in vaudeville/variety, and in other theatrical contexts in the US and Europe for the next dozen or more years.

1910-1911

This is a slow season from the point of view of newspaper references. Is Cook running his school? or Gotham-Attucks? or the DC movie and vaudeville house? or writing songs? or what? Gotham-Attucks only lasts until 1911, when McPherson gets tired of running it (see Wayne Shirley article); Cook is writing for Von Tilzer in 1910

1910 in September: "Lovie" [or "Lovey Joe"] is a huge song hit for Fannie Brice in Ziegfeld Follies of 1910; music by Joe Jordan and words by Cook
1910, in September: "It is rumored that an effort is being made to get Will Marion Cook and Alex Rogers to take charge of the producing end at the Howard," but then after dickering about terms, there was no agreement (NY Age, September 22, 1910, p. 6; NY Age, September 29, 1910, p. 6); this is the moment of the debut of Vodery at the Howard. How is the Rodgers/Cook rumor squared with the involvement of Vodery and Leubrie Hill? Did Cook advocate on Vodery’s behalf for the job?

1910, in September: Carter thesis (p. 370) cites NY Age, September 29, 1910, p. 6 that Cook was in KC looking over the possibility of opening a colored theater

1910, in October: for Marie Cahill in Judy Forgot, one additional song

1911, in January: death of George Walker

1911, in February: a bit of a brouhaha: for the past year Cook has been working out of the Harry Von Tilzer Publishing Co. offices, as Von Tilzer has been publishing all his songs; now Cook writes to the Dramatic Editor of the Age that the firm’s professional manager, Max Winslow, has complained that Cook’s presence is bringing too many African Americans into the office: "too many spades come into the office"; two weeks later, the Von Tilzer Co. offers a mollifying response (NY Age, February 9, 1911, p. 6; NY Age, February 23, 1911, p. 6; Carter thesis, p. 371)

In 1911 Cook and McPherson are copyrighting songs together; see "What Makes Me Love You the Way I Do," words Cecil Mack, music Barney Barber (NY: McPherson and Cook, LoC copyright 1911); unpubl. or not yet catalogued anywhere

1911, in April: Sylvester Russell calls Cook "the fretful master" (Chicago Defender, April 22, 1911, p. 4)

1911, in May: The Clef Club played for 5,000-6,000 people at the Manhattan Casino on Thursday, May 18, under the baton of James Reese Europe; the closing chorus was Cook’s “Darktown is Out Tonight,” played and sung by the entire company (Washington Bee, May 20, 1911, p. 5).
1911, in May: Washington’s MU-So-Lit Club honored the memory of Dunbar with a memorial program, including vocal solos by Charlotte Wallace, “Negro Love Song” and “L’il Gal,” composed by Dunbar’s collaborator, Will Marion Cook (Indianapolis Freeman, May 20, 1911, p. 1)

1911, in spring: At some point Cook must be arranging for next season for Black Patti; her show opens in early August, with writing and rehearsals before then.

OVERVIEW OF UPCOMING BLACK PATTI SHOWS and Darkydom:

Beginning in the fall of 1911, Cook re-engages in musical comedy, preparing a full show for an old friend from Chicago 1893 days, Sissieretta Jones (Black Patti) entitled In the Jungles in 1911; he goes on to compose Captain Jasper for in 1912, and evidently prepared a show for 1913-1914, though Patti falls ill and it is not staged; plus there is the large 1911 double-mini-musical called Darkydom. Then The Traitor and Soldiers in early 1913, a revival of Clorindy in early 1914, and the new Darkydom in later 1915---all for the new theatrical company in residence at the Lafayette in which Cook was a driving force. In 1913-1914 and 1914-1915 he mixes such work with vaudeville with Abbie and with new, important choral activity in DC and NYC. His physical collapse in spring 1915 leaves a big show for London unfinished. Might it have been a version of Darkydom? Then there is the full-length big show, Darkydom, at the Lafayette, after which all of 1916 and 1917 seem pretty low key, or at least low visibility, since he appears t have been putting his energy not into theatre but into dance, i.e., in the clubs with a show orchestra/dance band. The year 1918 begins new burst of energy and visibility directed in support of the war effort and black soldiers.

1911-12

1911, in August: death of Bob Cole

1911, in August: IN THE JUNGLES

The NY Age, September 22, 1910, p. 6 reports that next season the Black Patti Musical Comedy Company will tour with a new show, The Limit, with book by Jolly John Larkins, lyrics by Chris Smith, music by Joe Jordan; then the title of the new shows was changed to
The Cotton Picker (NY Age, October 20, 1910, p. 6); nothing seems to have come of this project under either of those titles; instead, opening August 8, 1911 there is a major new production, In the Jungles, for the Black Patti Troubadours; book by J. Ed. Green and Will A. Cooke [and Al. F. Watts], music by Will Marion Cook (and Alex Rogers); big Christmas edition advertisement purchased for the show in the Indianapolis Freeman, December 23, 1911, p. 6 names Green and W. A. Cooke as authors, with "music by" Cook; two Cook songs are mentioned as being sung by Sissieretta Jones, "My Jewel of the Big Blue Nile" and "Love is King" (NY Age, August 10, 1911, p. 6); almost all songs are by others---they are popular Tin Pan Alley songs published in 1910 and 1911; in NY Age, August 3, 1911, p. 6, Cook is rehearsing the musical numbers;

acc. NY Age, Thursday, August 10, 1911, p. 6, it opened last Tuesday [the 8th] in Goshen, NY; runs for the full 1911-1912 season, ending in NYC in May, 1912;

in May, 1912 Alex Rogers says that all he provided to the Black Patti company this season was the lyric for one song with music by Cook that she sings, "My Jewel of the River Nile" (NY Age, May 30, 1912, n.p. [6]) [NB: and he wrote it several years ago]

1911, in September: Alex Rogers and Cook are now writing as a team (NY Age September 14, 1911, p. 6)

1911, in October: DARKYDOM (I)

An elaborate vaudeville turn, a doublet, this first of the Cook shows called Darkeydom ran at least two week sat the American and one week at the Grand, plus more?? are they the same theater??; in Rhode Island in early November, so kind of hiding in the vaudeville world. Its run must have begun ca. Monday, October 9, 1911; acc. a citation in NY Age, October 12, 1911, p. 6 and Chicago Broad Axe, October 21, 1911, p. 2, Cook (music), Shipp (staging), and Rogers (lyrics) have worked up a big colored act featuring Abbie Mitchell and using over 25 people, called Darkeydom; Alex Rogers may well have been the librettist, too; Variety, October 14, 1911, p. 7 says the new act, spelled Darkeydom with the "e", is a colored turn with 18 people in it and it is at the American the first half of this week and Cook is producer; ran at least two weeks at the American Theatre (weeks of Monday October 9 and 16); the big act in which Cook, Shipp and Rogers have an interest is a headliner at the Grand Theatre, and the hit of the show (NY Age, October 19, 1911, p. 6); it "went so big" that the Schuberts engaged it as a feature for their Winter Garden (Chicago
Broad Axe, October 21, 1911, p. 2); Kelly and Davis left DC on Monday to join the big colored act in which Cook, Jesse A. Shipp, and Alex Rogers are interested (NY Age, October 19, 1911, p. 6); Chicago Broad Axe, November 4, 1911, p. 3 has little item that says the act put on by Cook and staged by Shipp was cut from 21 people to 10: "The managers could not see so many people in an act of its kind."

This kind of act (is it more a mini musical or a revue??--if copyrighted by Cook and Rogers, then presumably more of a mini musical comedy) is hard to trace because it is in vaudeville; it turns up in Pawtucket, RI in early November (Pawtucket Times, November 11, 1911, p. 4), and this is the last trace of it that has been found so far. Possibly rolling along a bit more on vaudeville bills not picked up by newspaper databases yet.

Two librettos or sketches exist at Library of Congress for an act called Darkydom (more a doublet than a two-act mini) and these were copyrighted in 1911. The copyright entry in each case is reported as one page longer than the extant LoC item. The two Library of Congress librettos are for:

(1) "Songs of sunny lands, or Darkydom: a forty-minute sketch of Negro songs and dances," by Will Marion Cook and Alex Rogers, in five leaves, (August 1911); The LoC catalogue of copyright entries has a typescript "Songs of Sunny Lands, or Darkydom," by W. M. Cook and A. Rogers. 6 p. typewritten., date August 15, 1911.

(2) "Black Bohemia, or, Darkydom: an act depicting life as seen in the Negro cafes and rathskellers around New York City," by Will Marion Cook and Alex Rogers, in two leaves (October 1911); the LoC catalogue of copyright entries has a typescript "Black Bohemia; or, Darkydom," by W. M. Cook and A. Rogers. 3 p. typewritten., date October 21, 1911; this libretto is reprinted in a modern anthology.

The general thrust here---an emphasis on dance and spectacle, and African Americans in the South and then the North---is a familiar one for Cook, and especially with respect to the nightclub/cabaret scene, will recur in Cook’s La revue nègre (1925) (see below). In each skit, development of material (and “development” is the specific word used by Cook and Rogers)
extends just a few song numbers into shows lasting upwards of forty minutes.

NB: Alex Rogers writes in 1922 in Billboard on J. A. Jackson’s page, and this is reprinted in NY Age (Billboard, August 12, 1922, p. 42; NY Age, September 16, 1922, p. 5), to claim his rights in the name Darkydom, etc.

1912, in May: BENEFIT
The famous mammoth Clef Club Concert, a benefit for the Music School Settlement, takes place on May 2, 1912 at Carnegie Hall; it is a historic "first concert of Negro Music" there; there is a chorus of 150 prepped by Cook, and he is the second assistant conductor after Europe and Tyers, with good reviews of his rehearsing, his arrangements, and the chorus (rev. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 3, 1912, p. 5; the concert has a long review in NY Age, May 9, 1912, p. [6]; and see also the revue by Emilie Frances Bauer in the Portland Oregonian, May 12, 1912, Section 5, page 2); the concert is essentially repeated in toto uptown at the Manhattan Casino on May 23, 1912; at both concerts, the two best received and heartily applauded pieces were Cook's "Swing Along" and "Rain Song," according to Lester Walton; famous anecdote that Cook picked up a fiddle and played with the orchestra at Carnegie Hall; Cook reportedly had issues early on with the plan but participated in the end (see esp. Badger, Europe bio., pp. 64-69, which also quotes later Sissle memoirs)
This event spurs a later 1912 retrospective article by Natalie Curtis that gets reprinted and/or paraphrased elsewhere, which contains effusive praise for Cook.

1912, in July: Miller and Lyles and Cook have framed a big act for Hammerstein's Roof Garden, New York City, possibly for a summer run. Miss Abbie Mitchell is selected as the star female attraction (Indianapolis Freeman, July 13, 1912, p. 5)

1912-1913

1912 in August: CAPTAIN JASPER
A major production, Captain Jasper, a three-act musical comedy, for the Black Patti Troubadours, toured 1912-1913 from August 26; composer is Will Cook--could be Will Marion Cook or Will A. Cooke; for "Will Cook," see, for ex., New Rochelle Pioneer, Saturday,
May 17, 1913, p. 7; same blurb in NY Dramatic Mirror, May 21, 1913, p. 6; The (NY) Evening Post, Saturday, May 17, 1913, p. 8, calls it "Will Marion Cook's operetta, "Captain Jasper""; more likely to be the more famous Cook because he also did In the Jungles and Will A. Cooke is not a composer; the list of songs makes it clear that it is assembled entirely from current 1912 Tin Pan Alley sheet music publications, including songs by von Tilzer and Irving Berlin; Cook would have been the arranger/orchestrator

The Indianapolis Freeman, August 17, 1912, p. 6 explains that this show has a book by the late J. Ed. Green, was never before produced on any stage, is here revised by Will A. Cooke; Green and Cooke provided the book for In the Jungles but Green died in 1911, so this may be pretty new work; D. L. Richards is named as music director, so Cook did not take the baton; much later in the season, Indianapolis Freeman, April 12, 1913, p. 6, says the show is a new musical comedy revised by Will A. Cooke, who also plays a tramp and is stage manager, while James Vaughn is musical director and conductor---which says nothing explicit about the composer, and is a hint that there really was no one "composer" per se; newspaper advertisements never mention anyone but Patti and the chief male comedian, "Happy Julius Glenn, the Wangdoodle Comedian."

1912 in August: NEGRO LIFE
Cook is planning a huge music festival, a "Big Negro Festival" called Negro Life, running eight days, October 19-26 inclusive, or "the week of October 19," at Carnegie Hall, in six parts, including Clorindy, for the benefit of the Music School Settlement for Colored People, that will employ 600 people, including the leading colored soloists, with J. R. Johnson and Harry Burleigh, and he is advertising for male and female voices for the chorus, and his office is at Madison Square Garden, 26th Street entrance (NY Age, August 1, 1912, p. 6, with article and advertisement; NY Dramatic Mirror, August 7, 1912, p. 8; ad again in NY Age, August 8, 1912, p. 6]; shortly thereafter in August it is postponed to next March and the Music School settlement withdraws as the beneficiary (NY Age, August 15, 1912, p. [6]), but then it seems altogether to have died on the vine.

[NB: the Music School Settlement for Colored People runs 1911-1919, after which its activities transfer to the Martin-Smith School; supported by white philanthropy led by David Mannes, Natalie Curtis, and others, and dir. David I. Martin, 1911-1914; then under J.
Rosamond Johnson, in new Harlem digs, 1914-1919; There had been a first one-evening Settlement benefit with Clef Club in Carnegie Hall on May 2, 1912 with Cook conducting (see above); February 12, 1913 (Lincoln's Birthday) without Cook’s participation; March 1914 with Cook; then April 12, 1915, at Carnegie Hall for the fourth year, but just with school groups; and much later, May 27, 1918, at a different venue, Aeolian Hall, with Cook and Clef club orchestra, etc.]

NB Deacon Johnson’s encomium of those who collaborated in concert to support the Music Settlement, in which list Cook is first (NY Age, May 31, 1924, p. 6):

"TO GROW AS WE SERVE/Singers and Players/Everywhere./And to Help Those Who Help Themselves/
Will Marion Cook, the late David I. Martin, Attorney Eldridge Adams, Prof. Mannes and the late King of Syncopation, James Reese Europe, collaborators in concert for the benefit of the late colored Music School Settlement, lifted the singers and players of Greater New York from a position hardly enviable to one of international esteem and confidence." (NY Age, May 31, 1924, p. 6).

The October 1912 plan for Negro Life was that "the gradual development of Negro music will be shown up to the present", a scheme that had been part of Cook’s personal thinking for over a decade, and had turned up, for example, in the 1911 "The Evolution of the Negro in Story and Song" in DC at the Howard theatre (no Cook involvement); later, similar pageants on this plan were W.E.B. Du Bois' Star of Ethiopia (October 22, 1913, with no Cook involvement) and the 1934 pageant in Chicago (with which Cook was deeply involved---see below), plus Cook’s Negro Nuances, etc.:

1. old African songs, the plantation melodies, to whose weird, crooning music many of us were rocked to sleep in the days of our insufficiency
   = Slave songs, hymns, and early minstrel songs, for a chorus of 300, an orchestra of 150, and fifty old men and fifty old women for character work

2. the "Essence" song and dance, produced by 100 people (Minstrelsy's most famous dance, "The Essence of Old
Virginia" [Stearns and Stearns, Jazz Dance], gives rise to soft shoe; a Billy Kersands specialty)

3. lighter minstrel songs and airs of the past fifty years
   = lighter and popular songs of the last fifty years

4. Clorindy (35 minutes)

5. popular songs by modern negro composers, among them
   Cole and Johnson
   = lighter songs of J. Rosamond Johnson, Burleigh, Cook and others

6. brief musical sketches, and more ambitious music by
   Burleigh, Coleridge Taylor, and Cook
   = heavier compositions of Negro composers including Coleridge Taylor

When Negro Life falls through, Cook redirects his attention to Washington, DC in the fall.

1912, in September: Cook and Abbie are at the DeKalb in Brooklyn in vaudeville, with other acts and 6 photoplays at each performance, in the second half of the week, from Thursday (Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Sunday, September 22, 1912, p. 3)

1912, in September: Coleridge-Taylor died September 1, 1912, and this called forth an article by Natalie Curtis (acc. the DC paper) in the New York Evening Post on September 7 about Negro accomplishment in music in which some remarks of Kurt Schindler, an editor at Schirmer, about Cook and the Music Settlement School benefit concert are quoted at length; folks like him may never have heard much or any Cook music before, if they did not go to black musicals; Curtis was, along with David Mannes, a founder of the colored Music School Settlement; Curtis is lavish in her praise of Cook; New York Evening Post, September 7, 1912, p. 3; reprinted in full in the Washington (DC) Herald, September 29, 1912, p. 32 (Magazine Section, page 6), and quoted in NY Age, October 12, 1912, n.p. [6] and Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, November 10, 1912, p. 12. Schindler singled out "Swing Along," "Rain Song," and "Exhortation," and these were promptly copyright by Cook and published by Schirmer in 1912. ["But it is to the development of his serious work
along the lines of the 'Rain Song' and the 'Exhortation' that we look forward, since herewith he not only performs a lasting service to his race, but intrinsically enrich [sic] the entire musical world."

1912, in December: Cook is one of the "Men of the Month" in The Crisis; this gets mentioned in other places in the national black press, e.g., Pittsburgh Courier, December 6, 1912, p. 1, Chicago Defender, December 7, 1912, p. 4, inter alia.

1913, in February: a Lincoln's Birthday event, February 12, 1913; the Music Settlement benefit with J. R. Europe and Clef Club, their second big Carnegie Hall appearance, without Cook participation, but including a chorus of 100, "recruited from some of the colored churches of New York and from the chorus of the Music School Settlement, under the training of Mr. Jackson, the choir leader of St. Mark's Church" (NY Age, January 23, 1913, p. 3), and with Cook pieces on program, which proved to be amongst the most popular numbers (Badger bio., pp. 72-74).

1913, in March: THE TRAITOR
Cook is one of the founders of a new colored stock company at the Lafayette, a troupe including Abbie Mitchell, Grace Lee Cook, Chris Smith, Billy Harper, "Boots" Allen, and William Shelton; this troupe is called the "Negro Players Company" or the "Negro Players" produced by the Lafayette Amusement company; it is a company of thirty comedians/ singers/ dancers; the Lafayette features vaudeville and photo plays, so this is a kind of resident vaudeville or review company, doing a nightly short show alongside the movie; Cook is "the foremost musician of the race," and he will rehearse the music and direct the orchestra;
This company opens with a tabloid musical comedy, a new playlet, The Traitor, with book by Rogers and Creamer; music by Cook; lyrics by Chris Smith; starring Abbie Mitchell and comedian Billy Harper; at the Lafayette from Monday, March 17, 1913, for one week only; on the bill are also a movie and some vaudeville acts; it is a two-act play, a playlet that runs before and after the movie (a split which Lester Walton objects to); Part I is on the plantation, and Part II has everyone dressed up in Sunday-go-to meeting clothes (NY Age, March 6, 1913, n.p. [6]; NY Age, March 13, 1913, n.p. [6]; NY Age, March 20, 1913, n.p. [6]; Indianapolis Freeman, April 5, 1913, p. 7)
1913, in April: SOLDIERS
Cook's next contribution at the Lafayette, four weeks later, from Monday, April 14, is Soldiers? (sic) or The Soldiers; in two acts of twenty minutes each, "a big time act", "a nice, clean, even musical sketch, minus slap stick and vulgarity"; Indianapolis Freeman, April 26, 1913, p. 5 calls the show The Soldiers and describes it as a farce musical comedy, and says "Mr. Cook intends from this time on to present other acts that will be as good nd some better"; written (or produced?) by Jesse Shipp, acc. NY Age; only the ref. in the Freeman identifies it with Cook; it is another playlet, in two parts, with acts and motion pictures between Parts I and II; starring Allie Gillam and Billy Harper; the NY Age says of the troupe that it is now called "The Lafayette Players, unencumbered by any additional references", which is a sidelong reference to the split off of a company called The Negro Players; personnel include Allie Gillam, Billy Harper, Ada Guigness, Sterling Rex, Elizabeth Williams, Frank De Lyons, Blanche Kelley, Edward Brown, Lillie Jewell, Hilda Offley, Gertrude Tisdale, Grayce Lee Cook, Lillian Jones, Mae Brown, Clarice Wright, Edna Logan, Carrie Lauder, Julian Keith, Fred Cozzens, Frank Smith; William C. Elkins did the musical preparation (NY Age, April 10, n.p. [6]; NY Age, April 17, 1913, n.p. [6], where it is called Soldiers?; Indianapolis Freeman, April 26, 1913, p. 5)

These two playlets are part of a larger series at the Lafayette.

1913, in May: TURKEY TROT OPERA
At the end of the Black Patti company's 1912-1913 run in Captain Jasper, Cook puts together a 30-minute summer vaudeville sketch, a musical comedy or "miniature comedy," for the pick of her company, thirty singers and dancers (just as Lime-Kiln Club had functioned as summer work for the Bandanna Land company at end of their spring run in 1909); the company had ten principals and a chorus of twenty girls; it is a novelty act with the scene laid in Turkeytrotville; pianist Lucky Roberts is with the company; Muriel Ringgoéld sings “Junkman Rag” with the song’s composer, Roberts, accompanying at the piano; originally called A Bunch of Gingers in Turkey Trot Opera, then shortened to Turkey Trot Opera; performed by Cook’s Turkey Trot Opera Company; he took the act to the Fifth Avenue vaudeville trials on Friday, May 23 and it was an immediate sensation; the manager of Proctor's 23rd Street house wanted them right away; a kind of trial run or out-of-town tryout at the Orpheum in Yonkers, Thurs.-Sat,
May 29-31 (Yonkers Statesman, Wednesday, May 28, 1913, p. 5); NY Times, June 1, 1913, p. 72 says he's offering The Turkey Trot Opera Company at Proctor's 125th St. Theatre; they began June 5, at Proctor's 125th Street house the first half of the week and then at Proctor's 23rd Street house, opening midweek for the last four days of the week. This mini musical headlines the bill on the second half of the program. It was still going strong in early July (NY Clipper, May 31, 1913, p. 4; Clipper, June 7, 1913, p. 9, 19; NY Clipper, June 14, 1913, p. 6; NY Clipper, July 5, 1913, p. 12; etc.).

NB: already a song in 1911 Darkeydom mentions the Turkey Trot, and now, not much over a year later, the Turkey Trot was the hot new nationwide dance craze of the 1912-1913 season.

The show's numbers (solo rags and dancing duets and ensemble numbers) featured performers included:

Muriel Ringgold, singing "The Junkman Rag" by Lucky Roberts ("the wizard at the piano"), with the composer at the piano
Sarah Green Bird/Byrd, "The Hoosier Nightingale"
Madame Dempster
Abbie Mitchell
The Griffin sisters
Bob Kemp, "The Parson"
Anna Cook, Daisy Martin, Sam Bailey
Lucky Roberts, piano

1913, in June: Cook is one of the producers of The Frog Follies, with J. Rosamond Johnson and Jim Europe (the reference is probably to the Frolic of the Frogs, a summer event, most often in June; see Sampson, Blacks in Blackface, p. 459)

1913, in July: with the close of Turkey Trot Opera, Cook and Abbie take their act on the road for the summer; Abbie Mitchell and Cook are scoring a success with their piano act, and last week they were in Philadelphia at the Circle Theater (Indianapolis Freeman, July 12, 1913, p. 4, 6, and Indianapolis Freeman, July 26, 1913, p. 5); Rye, "Roster," calls their act "The Singer and the Composer"

1913, in July: Will and Abbie do their songs act as part of a huge benefit run by Ford Dabney in Baltimore, at Ford's opera house, for the
Provident hospital (Indianapolis Freeman, July 12, 1913, p. 6); they were ninth on a big bill, and their act consisted of four songs: "Wid de Moon, Moon, Moon," "My Lady Nicotine," "Exhortation," and "A Darkey Serenade."

1913-1914

1913, in August: BLACK PATTI THIRD SEASON

It is announced that Black Patti will go out this season in a three-act musical comedy by Cook (Chicago Defender, August 9, 1913, p. 6); this gives confirmation, if any was needed, that he was composing/arranging for her troupe; in late July, Patti's new show was to be an un-named new three-act comedy with a book written by Will A. Cooke; however, in the Clipper and the Freeman in August, what is spoken of is a new version of Captain Jasper (Variety calls it a sequel), with no mention of a composer by name, but described as introducing "Europe's latest and greatest" dance sensations, the Turkey Trot and Tango, surely reflecting the summer's Turkey Trot Opera; in any event, Black Patti's illness turns out to mean that there will be no big show this season

1913, in October: FOLK SONG SINGERS

Cook, of NYC, is in DC, superintending rehearsals of a "Festival of Negro Music" (the dates of which are explicitly unspecified, suggesting the reporter does not know exactly what is going on), soon to be held under the auspices of the Washington Conservatory of Music, esp. working with his festival chorus (Indianapolis Freeman, October 11, 1913, p. 1; Chicago Defender, October 11, 1913, p. 2); given the dates of the report in these papers, Cook probably had been in town from around the first of the month; indeed, the opening concert of the Washington Conservatory had been expected to be "a Choral Concert of negro music" in October (Washington Bee, September 6, 1913, p. 5) but this obviously gets pushed off; this is the chorus that begins singing in public in later October at the Emancipation Exposition (see just below); the Festival takes place in DC on November 21 (see also below) (Washington Bee, November 1, 1913, p. 5). Note that in the previous spring, the Washington Conservatory fielded a recently organized Choral Society under the
leadership of Mr. Harry A. Williams (Washington Bee, February 15, 1913, p. 5).

On the Washington Conservatory of Music (1903-1960), see the art. by Doris E. McGinty in The Black Perspective in Music 7/1 (Spring 1979), pp. 59-74, where she says Cook launched the choir in DC in 1913 and prints a concert program for November 21, 1913; the conservatory’s director, a direct contemporary of Cook born in 1869, Mrs. Harriet Gibbs-Marshall (1868/69-1941), had to have been a friend from Oberlin days; as Harriette A. Gibbs (note the spelling), she graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory in 1889 but reportedly had been in town from much earlier to advance her education; she is in Kentucky in the 1890s, then to DC in January 1900 and shortly thereafter becomes [assistant] director of music in the colored public schools (1900-1906); she founds the conservatory in 1903, and marries Napoleon B. Marshall in 1906, at which time she lets go her public school position at the very end of May;

Henry Lee Grant, a 1910 graduate of the Conservatory in its first graduating class, is a vocal soloist (and accompanist, I believe); Josephine Muse, Mrs. Gibbs’s niece, is also an accompanist. The Folk Song Singers are in existence from at least 1913-1914 to 1921-1922, into their ninth season, "a popular local organization"; taken over by Lottie Wallace in spring of 1914, and she is in charge until circa 1918, at which time Henry Lee Grant takes the reins for about four years.

The Crisis mentions a concert in January 1914 at the Howard in the concert series of the Washington Conservatory, featuring the Conservatory Folk Song Singers (The Crisis 7/4 (February 1914), p. 163/164)

1915: At the Howard on March 20, 1915: a "Home Concert," with the "Will Marion Cook-Abbie Mitchell Folk Singers", or Folk Song Singers, acc. Defender and two refs. in the Indianapolis Freeman;

1915, in March: Cook, Abbie Mitchell, and many local performers do their annual "Home Concert" March 20 at Howard Theater in DC, and it is one of the “society events” of the season (Indianapolis Freeman, March 20, 1915, p. 5); Indianapolis Freeman, April 17, 1915, p. 2 mentions this recent concert in DC of "the Will Marion Cook-Abbie Mitchell Folk Singers" at the Howard; I cannot otherwise trace the event than in these two Freeman references and Defender ref.
Charlotte (Lottie) Wallace (c.1885-1982, age 97) takes charge of the group in the spring of 1914, and there are newspaper hits every season through 1921-22, with the last reference in the fall of 1921; she undoubtedly leaves the group in the later teens, after 1917-1918 season is most likely; she sang in NYC in April 1918; Lottie Wallace is still "of DC" but in NYC for health in Fall 1918; she toured with Cook in spring 1919 with NYSO; NB: Lottie Wallace began her career as a grade school teacher in the DC public schools (e.g., Washington Evening Star, July 2, 1909, p. 15; Washington Bee, July 9, 1910, p. 5; Washington Evening Star, October 22, 1922, p. 14, where she is "formerly teacher of music in the Shaw Junior High School"); one web hit says 1906-1915, and same web hit, from Nettles, African American Concert singers, says she married in 1915, but a bio of her husband, famed doctor Peter Murray Marshall, says they married in 1917, and while January 1917 papers call her Miss Charlotte Wallace, the papers from August 1917 onward call her Mrs. Wallace Murray; possibly she holds this job until she is married; husband got the MD from Howard in 1914 so they married soon after; he is at Freedman’s Hospital in DC until 1920 and moves to NYC in 1921; her farewell DC concert is in January 1921, as below; her steadfast accompanist in DC is Mary L. Europe for more than a decade in the 1910s; becomes a great singer; Wallace is advertised as a soloist for Cook’s NYSO in 1919; She gives a "Farewell Recital" at Dunbar with accompanist Mary L. Europe on January 20, 1921 (Washington Bee, January 15, 1921, p. 7) before she and husband leave for NYC.

1917: The Folk Song Singers appear on the bill at the Friday evening concert during the week of celebration for the opening of Dunbar High (Washington Bee, January 4, 1917, p. 9; Washington Evening Star, January 17, 1917, p. 10)

1918: They sang [or were scheduled to sing] in 1917-1918 season in DC at the Dunbar Annual Music Festival and Conference of Musicians at Dunbar High on May 3 and 4, 1918, still directed by Charlotte Wallace Murray (Washington Evening Star, April 28, 1918, p. 49) the ensemble was taken over by old hand Henry Lee Grant, probably beginning in the 1918-1919 season;

1919: In 1919 a half-dozen or more references to this group then all occur in the Washington Bee: they rehearse weekly at the
Washington Conservatory of Music under director Henry Lee Grant, who had sung in and also accompanied the earlier group; they concertize in Philadelphia in April and Cook is along; a month later they sang in DC at the Dunbar Annual Music Festival and Conference of Musicians: Greatest Gathering of Negro Musicians In History of Race on May 1, 2, 3, 1919 at Dunbar High, though evidently without Cook around;

1920: Henry Lee Grant is director, but for this concert Nathaniel Dett is featured with the group; they sing in Washington DC at Poli's Theater on June 5, 1920 in a benefit for the Salvation Army under Dett in a program of Dett compositions (etc., etc., including Savannah Tribune, June 12, 1920, p. 2);

1920: they sang in July 1920 in NYC at the second annual convention of the National Association of Negro Musicians (Brooks, Lost Sounds (p. 297)---this convention ran July 27, July 28, etc. and there was planned to be a kind of monster choral concert where 9 or so groups all participated in singing the same two arrangements);

1920: they sing at Bethlehem, Pa. on October 7, 1920, with contralto Marian Anderson (1897-1993) of Philadelphia as soloist, Nathaniel Dett as composer-pianist, Eugene Morse Martin, violinist (NY Age, May 10, 1919, p. 6; Washington Bee, April 19, 1919; April 26, 1919, p. 7; May 17, 1919, p. 2; October 18, 1919, p. 6; October 16, 1920, p. 5; November 6, 1920, p. 1; November 13, 1920, p. 2);

1920: they are rehearsing weekly at the Washington Conservatory of Music under H. L. Grant (Washington Bee, November 13, 1920, p. 2)

1921: the singers under Grant, called the Afro-American Folk Song Chorus, are scheduled for a busy season (Washington Bee, November 12, 1921, p. 1)

no other hits in DC papers after fall 1921 that I can find

a quartet from the group sang in the April 24, 1921 NYC Town Hall benefit concert for a national Negro Conservatory

Henry Lee Grant (1886-1954, age 67) was placed on the eligible list to teach music in the public schools in 1908 (Washington Evening Star, March 26, 1908, p. 8); he was 1910 graduate of the Washington
Conservatory, then a freelancer, more or less (I think) in the 1910s as pianist accompanist, then core activity as a long-time Dunbar High music teacher and director of the orchestra (1917-1952), and piano teacher of Ellington around 1919, then by 1920 the director of the Washington Conservatory of Music [?], which he would have had to have taken over directly from Mrs. Harriet Gibbs Marshall [though she is referred to as director in 1920, 1921, 1922, at time of fund drive], and in 1920 a founder and first president of the National Association of Negro Musicians [which is perhaps what is meant], and a busy soloist, and an accompanist for violinists Clarence Cameron White and Joseph Douglass. At the May 1921 Racial Harmony convention where Lenore Cook sang "Mammy," Mrs. Henry Grant also rendered a solo. His World War I draft registration has his birth as September 28, 1886 in DC, but Census dates shave a couple of years off, while obit settles 1886; son of Henry Grant, the well-known DC music teacher, in 1900 Census; in June 1917, he's a self-employed teacher of music; wife is Mamie [or Mayme; in error, Mary] A. Grant; 1930 Census; 1940 Census

1913, in October: Baltimore concert of the Folk-Song Singers; they are "a great success in Baltimore and New York" (Washington Bee, November 1, 1913, p. 1). No date give for Baltimore, but just immediately before NYC performance on October 26 (they sang "en route" to NYC), so October 24 or 25. They do not sing in DC before going to NYC.

1913, in October: EMANCIPATION EXPOSITION
a giant celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Emancipation Day was held at New York’s 12th Regiment Armory at 62nd and Columbus for ten days from Wednesday October 22 to Friday October 31; it is called the The National Emancipation Exposition (definitively, as in the souvenir booklet mentioned below) or simply The Emancipation Exposition or the New York Emancipation Proclamation Exposition.

See Joshua Berrett, "The Golden Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation," Black Perspective in Music 16/1 (1988): 63-80. The Berrett article reports (p. 78) that on the final night Cook received a certificate and gold medal as a distinguished musical artist; he was among the "100 distinguished freedmen" so recognized, of whom five were musicians: composers Cook,
JRE, JRJ, concert pianist Raymond A. Lawson, comedian Bert Williams.

[At the Exposition, "The Historical Pageant of the Negro Race" [not called Star of Ethiopia], written by W.E.B. Du Bois, ran on the 23rd, 25th, 28th, 30th, with 350 actors, orchestra, chorus, and regiment of Boy Scouts (Barrett art., p. 76, in souvenir booklet program)]

Joshua Berrett, "The Golden Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation," The Black Perspective in Music 16/1 (Spring, 1988), pp. 63-80, at pp. 76-77 prints the program from the Souvenir Booklet, which calls Cook's ensemble simply the "Washington Conservatory of Music Double Quartet," and indicates that it performed on Sunday, October 26, "singing Mr. Cook's newest compositions now rendered for the first time." [See also Badger, 74-75; Carter bio., p. 96; there are extant programs]. It is evidently the same concert as they gave in Baltimore and would give in Washington. See below for details.

The Washington Bee, November 1, 1913, p. 1, says "The Conservatory Folk Song Singers, twenty-five in number, under the direction of Will Marian [sic] Cook, appeared before large and enthusiastic audiences in Baltimore and the Emancipation celebration in New York in a program of Negro music. . . . . Wm. M. Cook was the musical genius of the affair." Mention of a few items indicates it was the same program as presented soon after in DC.

Lots of references to a similar exposition in other cities; for NYC see also, inter alia, NY Age, October 30, 1913, p. [2].

1913, in November: Back from their Emancipation Exposition tour, Washington Bee has a forecast of concerts to come for this group of 25 or 30 (Washington Bee, November 1, 1913, p. 1, 8); the Bee calls them "The Conservatory Folk Song Singers" and also "The Folk Song Singers of the Washington Conservatory"; said to number either 25 or "about 30"; the Bee November 1 provides names of 20 in the chorus and five soloists:

soloists William Speights, Abbie Mitchell, Lottie Wallace, Lillian Evans, Harry Nugent; pianist Henry Grant; chorus Lillian Evans, Mamie Simmons, Estelle Collier, Mrs. Henry Grant, Lottie Wallace, Miss Wilkes, Anne Johnson, Mrs. Blagburn, Georgia Sheffy, Miriam Wormley; Harry Nugent, Scott Mayo, Mr. [Harry A.] Williams, Mr.
Savoy, Earnest Amos, Ralph Amos, Jas. Cowen; Nettie Murray, Annie Murdock, Mr. Amos.

1913, in November: the chorus, now called the Afro-American Folk Song Singers, makes their first appearance in DC on Friday evening, November 21, 1913, at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church on M Street between 15th and 16th Streets NW (Washington Post, November 15, 1913, p. 9, which calls them a choir of 25; Washington Post, November 22, p. 16); the event is called "the Will Marion Cook concert of Afro-American folk songs" (Washington Bee, November 15, 1913, p. 5); Cook directed, assisted by Ernest Amos; featured performers are Abbie Mitchell, Harry Nugent, Lottie Wallace, and Henry Lee Grant; their musical numbers include "folk songs of the negro race" (Washington Herald, November 16, 1913, p. 8); program printed in McGinty article; Tucker, Ellington (1991) cites the program on p. 11; reviewed in Washington Bee, November 29, 1913, p. 5). Program recap the tour repertoire. This event is evidently the anticipated Festival of Negro Music mentioned in the Chicago Defender above, as a later Defender says "Will Marion Cook will be able to present his Festival of Negro Music about the middle of November. The interpretation will be given by the pupils of the Washington Conservatory of Music" (Chicago Defender, November 1, 1913, p. 6)

Their first concert program "will show the progress of the Afro-American singer from the old spirituals of the slave, to the more highly developed works of such colored composers as Coleridge-Taylor, Burleigh, Johnson, White and others, and finally his study and grasp upon the masterpieces of musical literature." (Washington (DC) Bee, November 8, 1913, p. 1)

Washington Bee, November 1, 1913, p. 1 mentions some pieces, and Washington Bee, November 29, 1913, p. 5, names all the repertoire for the concert (which matches the Nov. 21 program), including "Characteristic Afro-American Compositions" by Will Marion Cook, i.e.:

Swing Along
Lover's Lane
Rain Song
Exhortation
and "Oh, Yes", called a choral transcription (i.e., an arrangement) of a Negro Folk Song composed for this program by Cook in Sept. 1913

plus "My Lady Chlo" by Henry Clough-Leiter and Myron Freese (1901),
"De Coppah Moon" by Harry Rowe Shelley and William Fraser (1908),
"Troubled in Mind" by Coleridge Taylor (1905), [in a choral transcription made for this program];

NB: the Washington Bee, November 1, says "Oh, Yes" and "I'm Troubled in Mind" are "the first choruses ever developed upon Negro melodies" and in context seems to ascribe both to Cook

And the original folk songs "Steal Away" and "Nobody Knows" (arr. Cook??)

and other numbers by the soloists, who included Abbie Mitchell

In the Cleveland Gazette, July 3, 1915, p. 4 Cook has an article in which he refers to "The Afro-American Folk Song Singers, Washington DC" and calls it a university choir like Fisk and Howard.

1914, at New Year's: NY Age, January 1, 1914, p. [6] Walton's column says "A movement is afoot to organize a Negro Choral Society in Greater New York in connection with the Musical School Settlement for Colored People . . . . Will Marion Cook and Harry Burleigh have been prevailed upon to do pioneer work in getting the choral society together, and they have enthusiastically entered upon their duties. On February 11 the choral society will make its initial appearance at Carnegie Hall." This February event was announced in The Crisis (April 1914) as having taken place, but in fact it was postponed for a month, and another choir was substituted. [See below in March.] Perhaps the obvious conflict with Lawrence Freeman's group of basically the same name has to do with the association with the Music School Settlement, whence my italics above.

Walton's column is also of the greatest importance for his quotation or paraphrase at length of Cook statement(s) that "the Negro writer
and composer must have the inspiration that can only come from the encouragement of his own people" and "All over the country there should be choral unions established," etc. No Cook direct source has turned up for these remarks.

1914 in February: CLORINDY

CLORINDY is mounted in 1913-1914 season in a big revival at the Lafayette, running two weeks, Monday February 9 and 16 (NY Age, February 12, 1914, p. [6]; NY Age, February 19, 1914, p. [6] with Cook himself directing the orchestra; first review in the Age says he ought to extent it to three acts; here it is still short and on a bill with other things, including the Four Brass Men.

1914, in February: FOLK-SONG SINGERS

concert on February 27 in Baltimore of "the celebrated Washington Choral Society which thrilled New York City last fall at the Emancipation Celebration . . . for months this organization . . . has been under the instruction of the noted Will Marion Cook" to include Harry Burleigh and Abbie Mitchell (Afro American Ledger, January 24, 1914, p. 8); this is the night before they take the show to the Howard in DC---a kind of out-of-town try-out in Baltimore

1914 in February: FOLK-SONG SINGERS

concert on February 28, 1914 in DC---a folk song concert on February 28 in DC at the Howard Theatre, with Harry T. Burleigh and J. R. Johnson of New York, and Jim Europe and Cook of this city, i.e., DC, and Abbie Mitchell and a mixed chorus; the chorus ("The Folk Song Singers") was organized early in the season by Mrs. Harriet Gibbs-Marshall, director of the Washington conservatory, and Cook directs the concert, with assistant conductors JRE and Harry Burleigh, with Abbie Mitchell and Burleigh as soloists; The Crisis says Mary Europe was the accompanist, and that Abbie Mitchell, Lottie Wallace, and Harry Burleigh were soloists, but not J. R. Johnson; Defender expects just Cook, Burleigh, Mitchell (Chicago Defender, February 21, 1914, p. 6; Washington Post, February 22, 1914; The Crisis, 7/6 (April 1914), p. 268); Tucker, Ellington (1991) mentions a surviving program; Brooks, Lost Sounds (p. 295) says the Afro-American Folk Song Singers describes a detailed personnel listing with 23 names, including six sopranos, five
altos, five tenors and seven basses, and says that Mary Europe was the accompanist.

1914, in March: BENEFIT
First NYC appearance of Cook's DC group, evidently basically the conservatory choir but now out on its own (scheduled originally for February 11, as in NY Age and The Crisis); on Wednesday, March 11, in the benefit concert that was the third annual concert for the Music School Settlement for Colored People at Carnegie Hall, with the Negro Symphony Orchestra under Jim Europe (more or less the Clef Club/Tempo Club folks under a different name); Burleigh and Cook said to be the big figures in some preliminary mentions; Cook conducts quite a bit, esp. in his own numbers, as does Burleigh; solo performers include Abbie Mitchell, Harry Burleigh, and J. Rosamond Johnson, but now evidently not Lottie Wallace; Cook's numbers included "Rain Song," "Ghost Ship," "Swing Along," plus his harmonization ("development", acc. the program) of "I'm Troubled in Mind"

An immense press barrage---and early mention just of Cook and Burleigh, suggest that Cook is the driving force this time around for the Music School Settlement benefit.

NY Age, February 26, 1914, p. 8; NY Evening World, February 26, 1914, p. 12 (mentions Cook and Burleigh only, and a chorus of eighty voices); NY Times, March 1, 1914, p. 13; Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Sunday, March 8, 1914, p. 16; NY Herald, Sunday, March 8, 1914, third Section, p. 9 (says the concert is going to be at Aeolian Hall under direction of Cook and Burleigh); NY Times, March 12, 1914, p. 3; NY Sun, Thursday, March 12, p. 5; NY Herald, Thursday, March 12, 1914, p. 14; NY Evening Post, Thursday, March 12, 1914, n.p.; NY Evening Post, Friday, March 13, 1914, p. 7; Musical America, March 21, 1914, p. 37; The Outlook, March 21, 1914, p. 611-12; The Crisis 7/6 (April 1914), pp. 267, 268, 269 (calls it a single chorus of eighty); The Crisis 7/7 (May, 1914), pp. 16-17, "Opinion," quoting reviews;

No NY Age follow-up?? Apparently not. Why not?

NY Times and NY Sun reviews say there was choral singing by the Settlement School chorus, conducted by Harry T. Burleigh, and by the Afro-American Folksong singers, conducted by Will Marion Cook. Also Reid Badger (p. 93) says that on the program there were
both a chorus from the Music School Settlement and in addition the Afro American Folk Song Singers.

Evening Post review on Thursday, March 12 says "the best musician of all those who took part in this concert is Will Marion Cook," and mentions "Ghost Ship" and "Rain, Rain."

The NY Sun, March 1, 1914, p. 14, says "Will Marion Cook has written for this concert several new works in the manner of folk songs and has trained a chorus of negro voices to sing them." Europe and Tyers will conduct their orchestras, etc. Big review in Variety, March 20, 1914, p. 20, which says there was intense applause for the choruses that he directed.

NB: We need to know more about Burleigh’s group, i.e., the chorus at the Music School Settlement at this moment. Probably what happened was that Burleigh (or Cook and Burleigh) started something but let go of the name, since Freeman had already used it. A year or so later, the chorus at the Music School Settlement was reorganized by J. Rosamond Johnson and renamed the Music School Choral Society (NY Age, May 16, 1915, n.p. [6])

Lawrence Freeman founds his Negro Choral Society (or Negro Choral Society of New York or Negro Choral Society of Greater New York) in the fall of 1913 and it concertizes for the first time in December 1913 (etc., etc., incl. NY Age, ; Indianapolis Freeman, May 8, 1915, p. 2); it was founded to be part of the Fifty Years of Freedom pageant (the New York Emancipation Proclamation Exposition organized by W.E.B. Du Bois) in NYC in fall 1913; it takes part in the bit October 1914 Autumn Exposition (see below), where it is a special attraction and will render two selections, so it seems to have won out over the Cook/Burleigh chorus with this name; sings in Christmas events in December 1914 (NY Times, December 20, 1914); the chorus operates until 1928, when it is merged into the Negro Grand Opera Company (Lawrence Freeman, “Down Memory Lane,” The Afro American, August 15, 1936, p. 35 [Theater and Amusement, p. 11])

1914, in March: IN THE RECORDING STUDIO

After the March 11 concert, the Afro American Folk Song Singers recorded in the studio the very next day, i.e., Thursday, March 12, 1914 (Brook, Lost Sounds); a group of this name recorded for
Columbia and is mentioned in an ad in Springfield Massachusetts Union, July 20, 1914, p. 7, with no mention of Cook; a later Columbia brochure says Cook trained them. The reference here is presumably to "Swing Along" and "Rain Song" as recorded by his Afro American Folk Song Singers. [NB: the Right Quintette also recorded "Rain Song" and "Exhortation" in 1915.] See above all Terry Brooks, "Will Marion Cook and the Afro-American Folksong Singers," in Lost Sounds (2004), pp. 292-299; Brooks thinks not the full group but at least a dozen sang at the session.

1914, in April: Indianapolis Freeman, April 11, 1914, p. 6 has column of DC news, which says Cook and Abbie spent last week there and this week they are in Boston. Sounds as if they are on the road with a program.

1914, in April: Variety reports that Cook is involved in promoting a circuit: "FOR COLORED SHOWS/ Will Marion Cook, colored, is promoting a circuit of theatres in a number of cities in the east, backed by some influential white folks. It is proposed to encourage the productions and performances of the colored race to the end that a higher grade of Senegambian entertainment will result" (Variety, April 17, 1914, p. 7)

1914, in June: CLEF CLUB CONCERT
On June 4, giant fourth annual Clef Club concert, at the Manhattan Casino under conductor Brymyn, with Cook as assistant conductor and chorus master of the Clef Club Chorus; this is the first appearance of the Clef Club Glee Club of 100 male voices in Cook's newest and greatest music, personally conducted by the composer; Abbie is also on the bill, singing two Cook songs (NY Age, June 11, 1914, p. [6]); as a chorus of sixty, this group will go out on the huge November 1914 Clef Club concert tour of the south under Brymyn, without Cook along; there had been large Clef Club glee clubs or chorusses before, so it must be that what is most new this June is Cook participation, and Lucien H. White says in his NY Age review, "As a composer and cultivated musician Will Marion Cook is without a peer, and when he seriously and earnestly gives his mind to musical endeavor the result is always beyond cavil. As a consequence the instrumental and vocal endeavors of the club at this presentation suffered no whit in comparison with the efforts of previous years. As a matter of fact, if anything, there was improvement."
1914, in June: from June 9--- F. Ziegfeld, jr. has engaged Cook to arrange special dance music [arrange special dance novelties; arrange special novelties in dance music] and to conduct the orchestra (or one of the orchestras) at the Danse de Follies atop the New Amsterdam Theatre (NY Dramatic Mirror, June 10; NY Clipper, June 13, 1914, p. 9); see also NY Tribune, June 8, 1914, p. 9, where it also says he will appear for the first time tomorrow night, Polo Night [June 9]

1914, in June: Abbie Mitchell is the guest of her mother-in-law, Mrs. Cook, at 1724 Eighth Street in DC, where she is playing leading roles in the James W. Brown Stock Company at the Howard theater (Indianapolis Freeman, June 13, 1914, p. 1).

1914, in June: Abbie and Cook are at the Lafayette in the week of June 18 on a vaudeville bill whose principal drawing card is S. H. Dudley; Abbie Mitchell sings with Cook at piano; they were so successful that they were held over from the first half of the week to the second half (NY Age, June 11, 1914, p. [6]; NY Age, June 18, 1914, p. [6]; Indianapolis Freeman, June 20, 1914, p. 5; NY Age, June 25, p. 1914, p. [6])

1914 in August: UNCLE TOM'S CABIN
In the week of Monday, August 24, Uncle Tom's Cabin is the chief film at the New York Theatre on Broadway, in five reels, with Mary Eline as Little Eva, and with the veteran black actor Sam Lucas as Uncle Tom. An augmented orchestra will play music arranged by Will Marion Cook. (NY Evening Post, August 22, 1914; The NY Age, August 27, 1914, n.p. [6]); NY Age says the incidental music was written by Cook.
[Lots of hits on this movie playing around the country; May Eline is a famous child star.]

1914, in August: Jesse A. Shipp, Alex Rogers, James Reese Europe, Henry Troy, R. C. McPherson, Lester A. Walton and other interested parties are proposing to mount a big production that will run first at the Lafayette and then, if successful, transfer to Broadway; it is hoped that it will reach the stage "before many months"; it will be a production "which will remind [folks] of the days of Williams & Walker"; those directly concerned with the project must take the chance to promote it; although Cook is not named here, this sounds like what will become Darkeydom II a year later (NY Age, August 27, 1914, n.p. [6])
1914 SONGS

Cook writes two songs with J. W. Johnson after Johnson leaves the diplomatic service and returns to NYC.

1914-1915

1914, in October: Abbie Mitchell is appearing with J. Leubrie Hill's current company, the Darktown Follies of 1915, in My Friend From Kentucky in Louisville, KY (Washington Bee, October 17, 1914, p. 7), Pittsburgh (Indianapolis Freeman, October 24, 1914, p. 5), and Philadelphia (Philadelphia Inquirer, November 17, 1914, p. 11); she will then go out in vaudeville with Cook (see below)

1914, in October: AUTUMN EXPOSITION
This fall in New York City there is a giant multi-day event, the Autumn Exposition and Amusement Festival, running September 28 to October 2 up in Harlem at the Manhattan Casino at 155th St. and 8th Ave., with Alex Rogers and J. A. Shipp among the members of the Managing Committee and a Music Committee of J. R. Johnson, Jas. Reese Europe, Will H. Tyers, Ford Dabney, Jim Brymn, Daniel Kildare, and Will H. Vodery---in effect, the Clef Club and Tempo Club are joining forces; events included a concert Thursday night (Oct. 1) called "Composers and Reminiscent Night", where "all of the songs composed and made famous by Williams & Walker, Cole & Johnson and Ernest Hogan will be played and sung. Many of the latter-day composers . . . will conduct an augmented orchestra in their own compositions," including Cook, Dabney, Brymn, Vodery, Tyers, etc. etc. (see NY Age, September 3, 1914, n.p. [6]; NY Age, September 24, 1914, "The Autumn Exposition Supplement," and NY Age, Thursday, October 1, 1914, n.p. [not p. 6]).

1914, in November: Abbie Mitchell is doing a turn in vaudeville with an array of songs showing different character types, with Cook at the piano; possibly same program as in June; see Indianapolis Freeman, November 28, 1914, p. 6 on their appearance at Gibson's New Standard Theatre in Philadelphia in vaudeville for a week.
1914, in November: is it announced that Abbie Mitchell and Cook will be in an act at the Lafayette with the Blanko sisters in Thanksgiving Week (NY Age, November 19, 1914, n.p. [p. 6])

1914, in December: Cook and Abbie are at the Lafayette in vaudeville from Monday, December 7, 1914, after a week's postponement due to Abbie's bad cold; she is a great artist and earned unstinted applause (NY Age, December 3, 1914, n.p. [6]; reviewed in NY Age, December 10, 1914, n.p. [p. 6]; Chicago Defender, December 19, 1914, p. 6)

1915, in February: Cook in Washington last week on business (cit. Carter thesis from Freeman, February 13, 1915)

1915, in February: Lincoln Day concert today on Ellis Island with Clef Club musicians including Abbie and Will Marion Cook, etc. doing negro folksongs and original numbers written by negro composers (NY Times, February 14, 1915)

1915, in March: Cook, Jordan and Henry Troy are working on a new musical comedy "that promises to lay in the shade any effort ever put forward by Afro-American composers." (Indianapolis Freeman, March 20, 1915, p. 5) [the Alhambra act, or Darkydom II, or both??]

1915, in March: Cook, Abbie Mitchell, and many local performers (including Dannie Murray and Lillian Evans) do their annual "Home Concert" March 20 at Howard Theater in DC, and it is one of the "society events" of the season (Indianapolis Freeman, March 20, 1915, p. 5); Indianapolis Freeman, April 17, 1915, p. 2 mentions this recent concert in DC of "the Will Marion Cook-Abbie Mitchell Folk Singers" at the Howard; so far I cannot otherwise trace the event than in these two Indianapolis Freeman references, but see Taylor bio of Daniel Murray, p. 347.

1915, in March: Cook is at the Clef Club from 12:00 to 4:00 every day (Carter thesis ref. to NY Age, April 1, 1915)

1915, in April: Big clef club concert is Music School Settlement benefit on April 12, with no mention of Cook, who apparently is otherwise involved (NY Age, April 15, 1915, p. 1)

1915, in April: Indianapolis Freeman, April 17, 1915, p. 5 says Cook "is rehearsing a big colored act to be presented at the Alhambra Theater,
London, for two months”; see also NY Age, April 8, 1915, p. [6] and NY Age, April 22, 1915, p. [6], where the latter says the review is for 35 people, is to open in London on May 15, and is going to continue in rehearsal in the Clef Club club house while Cook leaves April 19 for Chicago to conduct on the 23rd; see also below in June.

1915, in April: ALL COLORED COMPOSERS CONCERT
Cook is scheduled to conduct in a big "All Colored Composers Concert" at Orchestra Hall on Friday, April 23, in Chicago; he is going to conduct the famous Umbrian Glee Club in a big post-Lenten concert in Chicago in a program of his own works; a concert run by W. Henry Hackney, initially with the involvement of Nathaniel Dett as pianist (though he is not on final program); Hackney and Dett had previously been involved with such an "All Colored Composers Concert" in past years (Chicago Defender, March 20, 1915, p. 6; Chicago Defender, April 17, 1915, p. 5, 6; Indianapolis Freeman, April 10, 1915, p. 1; NY Age, April 22, 1915, p. [6]).

This engagement gets cancelled when Cook falls ill.

1915, in May: Chicago Defender, May 1, 1915, p. 6 prints a review of the April concert, without mention that Cook had been supposed to participate but did not.

Same issue, same page, Chicago Defender, May 1, 1915, p. 6 prints a major, lengthy interview / statement, presumably prepared in anticipation of the big concert, that, however, mentions his illness; Cook argues for a school to be established, etc. This Cook important statement is also in NYC Evening Post, May 20, 1915, p. 6; Kansas City Sun, July 3, 1915, p. 2 and Cleveland Gazette, July 3, 1915, p. 4, in a syndicated column called "Afro-American Cullings"; and NY Age, September 21, 1918, p. 6.

Cook’s scheme is very much like his fall 1912 Negro Life proposal, or like his 1924 Negro Nuances, and goes back to 1898 and before:

1619-1850: The Beginning: African roots and slave songs
1850-1865: Minstrel songs
1870: Jubilee singers
1875-1888: no further developments
1888: Ragtime
Dvorak and the renaissance of Negro music
Harry T. Burleigh  
Nathaniel Dett  
J. Rosamond Johnson (only in 1918)  
Carl Diton  
Melville Chariton (all but 1918)  
Encomium of George Walker  
Need for a school

SERIOUS ILLNESS

1915, in April: Cook falls seriously ill in Chicago in mid April and cancels all engagements; he is attended to first in Chicago and then is sent to his mother's in DC; the concert of April 23 was cancelled, but news of his illness only hits the black press on May 1; he first falls ill on a visit to the Wabash Avenue Association in Chicago; headline: "Will Marion Cook Dying" appears in the Philadelphia Tribune, which goes on to say that he is dying from TB at his home in DC, and he was rushed there after his collapse in Chicago (Philadelphia Tribune, May 1, 1915, p. 1; see also Indianapolis Freeman, May 1, 1915, p. 1; Chicago Defender, May 1, 1915, p. 5; the Cleveland Gazette, May 29, 1915, p. 2 repeats that he is dangerously ill with TB (and notes he lived some years in Cleveland as a boy); The Crisis 10 (June 10, 1915), p. 63, repeats "Will Marion Cook, the well known colored musician, is dangerously ill with tuberculosis."

However, Indianapolis Freeman, May 8, 1915, p. 1 says he is greatly improved in health; Chicago Defender, June 19, 1915, p. 3 and Indianapolis Freeman, June 26, 1915, p. 1 both have a little note that Cook is himself again and that he says the story of his illness was greatly exaggerated.

1915, in May: on Saturday, May 8, a big pantomimic rendition of Coleridge-Taylor's "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast" in DC at the Howard, with Abbie Mitchell as one of the soloists and Cook directing the Folk Song Singers, as a benefit performance for the Manassas Industrial School, put on its pupils, and promoted by the Washington Auxiliary of the Manassas Industrial School, with the assistance of Harry Burleigh and Miss Abbie Mitchell of NYC and Miss Jean Kelly of Manassas (Washington (DC) Evening Star, March 21, 1915, p. 16; Chicago Defender, May 15, 1915, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, June 5, 1915, p. 8)
1915, in June: Variety, June 4, 1915, has a short note:
"LARGE COLORED TURN/
Will Marion Cook and J. Leubrie Hill, the colored composers, are at
work upon an idea suggested by H. B. Marinelli for the formation of
an elaborate vaudeville turn, composed of colored people. The layout
at present contemplates expensive costuming, with 12 chorus girls, 8
chorus boys and seven principals."
Marinelli is a well-known international booking agent. Even though
this appears several months after the Alhambra show turns up in the
news, I wonder whether it is the same project, or the piece with Troy
and Jordan?

1915, in July: Letter of Cook in Cleveland Gazette calls for a national school
for Negro musicians, possibly in DC, and says "New York and other
large cities of the North are neither seeking nor finding the right
way" (Cleveland Gazette, July 3, 1915, p. 4); see also Cook’s May 1915
statement in the Chicago Defender

1915-1916

DARKYDOM (II)

1915, in August: WAY DOWN SOUTH
Lester Walton had been promoting a huge project for over a year (NY
Age, August 27, 1914, n.p. [6], mentioning Jesse A. Shipp, Alex
Rogers, James Reese Europe, Henry Troy, R. C. McPherson, and
Lester A. Walton, but not Cook; in March 1915, Troy and Cook are
working on something big (as above); anticipated to open a new era
and be epoch-making (NY Age, September 16, 1915, p. [6]); under
original name: as of Monday, August 30, a big musical production,
initially called Way Down South, headed by Miller & Lyles with
Cook at the helm, is now in rehearsal; this will be renamed in October
as Darkydom; early accounts say the book is by Jesse Shipp and the
music will be by Cook, Jim Europe, and Will Vodery (Indianapolis
Freeman, September 4, 1915, p. 6, in "New York News" says unnamed
production began rehearsals last Monday; for the original name, see
Chicago Defender, September 4, 1915, p. 6; NY Age, September 16,
1915, n.p. [6]); name change to In Mt. Bijou, and it is expected to open
in Trenton (Indianapolis Freeman, October 9, 1915, p. 4)

Salem Tutt Whitney's column, "Seen and Hear While Passing," says
what Miller and Lyles are up to is a resurrection of Hogan’s *The Oyster Man* (Indianapolis Freeman, September 25, 1915, p. 6)

The final name settled on (Darkydom) is hated by many, and Walton takes heat for it, and is kidded about it in the *Freeman’s* Christmas list of December 25, 1915 (Indianapolis Freeman, December 25, 1915, p. 4) ends up with book by Troy, staged by Shipp, most music by Cook plus two songs by JR Europe.

1915, in October: DARKYDOM  
Darkydom (or infrequently, *In Darkydom*) opens; two acts and four scenes; to open out of town and then make its only NYC appearance at the Lafayette (*Variety*, October 8, 1915, p. 000); plays NJ, DC, NYC, Newark, Philly, running just over five weeks in all, October 14 to November 22 or so.

The show had its initial performance in Dumont, NJ on Thursday, October 14 (Salem Whitney Tutt column in Indianapolis Freeman, Saturday, October 23, 1915, p. 6; NB: Reid Badger, p. 129, notes that it had a first shakedown performance in NJ); then opens at the Howard in DC from Monday, October 18 for a week, with Cook at the premier and afterward turning the baton over to JRE (see ad in Washington Post, October 17, 1915, p. 3, where it says "Melody by Will Marion Cook and James Reese Europe"); *Indianapolis Freeman*, October 30, 1915, p. 4, on the other hand, says that Alexander Caldwell of DC let the local orchestra (i.e., not JRE?) with Cook on piano, and Cook also wielded the baton in some of his own numbers

then two weeks in NYC at the Lafayette from Monday, October 25 and Monday, November 1 (big rev. *NY Age*, Thursday, October 28, n.p. [p. 6]; Abbie Mitchell retires from the cast after the first week in NYC (Indianapolis Freeman, November 6, 1915, p. 1)

then at the Metropolitan Theater in Newark in November (Indianapolis Freeman, November 20, 1915, p. 6 says it was there "last week," which must be the week of Nov. 8);

then in Philadelphia in November at Gibson’s New Standard Theater beginning in the week of November 15, though not clear for how long in town (says "holds the boards this week" in Indianapolis Freeman, November 27, 1915, p. 6; *Washington Bee*, November 27,
1915 says it was in Philly "last week", which could be the week of the 15th or the 22nd; a Tribune review is very positive, saying "Cook is well and back in the harness looking better that ever, and working like a Trojan" and mentioning that "The Ghost Ship" with Creighton Thompson and chorus "is exceedingly impressive" (Philadelphia Tribune, November 20, 1915, p. 3)

In big NY Age review by "UNO" (presumably from Variety, quoted in NY Age, October 28, 1915, n.p. [6]), it is said that this show has already been booked over the $2 John Cort houses to the coast and that negotiations are pending to take it to Broadway.

In the Indianapolis Freeman article about Darkydom in DC, there are hints at concern over Cook’s health that must have stemmed from the time he was recuperating at his mother’s place in the previous spring: "Will Marion Cook renewed acquaintance last week with a host of Washington friends, all of whom were glad to see him back in the harness, looking better than ever, although working like a trojan with brain and baton. His music in "Darkydom" is great" (Indianapolis Freeman, October 30, 1915, p. 4).

In early November, Variety echoes the NY Age review: it reports that an effort is being made to transfer it to a Broadway house, and mentions that 19 numbers are by Cook (Variety, November 5, 1915, p. 18); Walton is negotiation for one of two theaters in downtown NYC, and also it is reported to be booked and will open in the west on the John Cort time ---i.e., a theater circuit---next month, i.e., in December (Variety, n.d. [November 1915]); in a story about Cook and the "Mammy" song-prize money, Variety says it is now playing in the northwest (Variety, November 26, 1915, p. 3; Indianapolis Freeman, November 20, 1915, p. 6); thus, after Philadelphia the company may have really gone west, which has proved hard to trace otherwise, but it may have died out west by December 1 or thereabouts. See immediately below.

In December, Harry Cort is said to be planning to be opening it in NYC in a Broadway theatre (Variety, December 3, 1915) and Cort is also said to be negotiating to take Darkydom to London (Variety, December 24, 1915, p. 1; Seattle Daily Times, December 31, 1915, p. 8); but instead, it evidently closed for good before the New Year, and probably in Philadelphia at the end of November; "When the all-colored show, Darkydom, headed by Miller and Lyles, closed in
Philadelphia recently it was said John Cort had ordered the closing to reproduce the show for Broadway Theater. Mr. Cort had the company booked for a tour of the west. But after looking it over in Philadelphia concluded he might make it go in New York for a run" (Indianapolis Freeman, December 11, 1915, p. 6)

Darkydom is Cook's last major completed musical, and it is "the biggest and best colored attraction since Williams & Walker's Bandanna Land" (NY Age, October 28, 1915, p. [6]); a full evening big show; in two acts and five scenes [another account says four scenes]; by one account Cook wrote 19 numbers; also some music by Jim Europe, who is ID'd as an assistant to Cook in preparations in one story but says he wrote some of the songs in another; Henry Troy wrote the book (not Jesse Shipp??; not Alex Rogers--see 1911, but this might still be the Rogers scenario--NEEDS CHECKING); Reid Badger says three major choral numbers and more than 17 song and dance numbers, largely by Cook, but not excluding Europe, who wrote 2; lyrics by Creamer; staged by Jesse Shipp and Will A. Cook; directed by Lester Walton; Lester Walton wrote the lyrics to "Mammy"; starring Miller and Lyles, in their first appearance in musical comedy in NYC [?], with Abbie Mitchell, Opal Cooper, Creighton Thompson, etc.; it is Opal Cooper's first big break; review of Howard run says Darkydom is on the road in DC with Abbie Mitchell, etc. and that Mr. Will Marion Cook, James Reese Europe, and Henry Creamer furnished the melody, mirth, and lines (Washington Bee, October 23, 1915, p. 5). Cook was the director; Indianapolis Freeman, October 30, 1915, p. 4 says that in DC Cook played the piano for some numbers and wielded the baton in some numbers; show closed before April 1916 and in context, much earlier; his second new musical for the Lafayette stock company (third overall, counting Clorindy revival), but a much bigger one; Indianapolis Freeman, October 23, 1915, p. 4; Variety, November 5, 1915, p. 18 (cit. Carter bio; the Variety column also quoted in NY Age, Nov. 11, 1915, p. 6); Cook is the director but it is not clear that he is present at these performances, though as director, he probably is; [see also Reid Badger, pp. 128-131]

Darkydom scenario : "there is not much plot to "Darkydom, only a thread connecting comedy situations and musical numbers" (NY Age, October 28, 1915, p. 6)

"It tells of two tramps (Miller & Lyles) who were caught while stealing a ride on the special train of the road's president. The special
had the right of road but was switched onto a siding in order the tramps would be thrown off. While on the siding a freight running without orders passed the special, and the president noting the narrow escape, sent his valet (Mr. Troy) to find the tramps whose stolen ride averted a calamity, and give them $500. The valet goes into Mound Bayou, Miss., where the entire locale of the piece has been placed, and runs across another set of local bums (Gillam and Cook). Steve Jenkins (Mr. Miller) and Sam Peck (Mr Lyles) had wandered into the village. Hearing the valet speak to the locals about stealing a ride, Jenkins and Peck suspect he is a railroad detective, searching for them. The story then continues with the two local tramps trying to secure the money while the two hoboes entitled to it are running away from the reward." (Variety, as quoted in NY Age, November 11, 1915, p. 6)

1915, in November: Cook’s song "Mammy" wins a song-writing contest on November 19, and Cook gets $10 and goes ballistic (Variety, November 26, 1915; Indianapolis Freeman, December 4, 1915, p. 6; NY Age, December 9, 1915, n.p. [p. 6]).

1915, in December: Cook gave testimony in a lawsuit in NY in later December involving Billy King's troupe at the Lafayette and why their appearances there were cut short at the time of Darkydom last fall (Indianapolis Freeman, January 1, 1916, p. 5)

1916, in February: daily Jubilee Concerts with the Jubilee Glee Club, assisted by Abbie Mitchell, soprano, Cook, piano, Gordon Kahn, violin, and Alexander Russell, organ, at Wanamakers, in the Auditorium: two weeks of daily concerts celebrating Lincoln's birthday

1916, in April: Indianapolis Freeman, April 8, 1916, p. 5: Jack Trotter reporting, says Abbie Mitchell ("the preeminent singer of the colored race") and Cook appeared in recital at the Lafayette last Sunday; her songs included "If You Don't Want Me Send Me To My Ma," by Chris Smith; "My Lady's Lips," "Exhortation," and "Mammy" by Cook; and "The Kiss of Love I Crave," by Noble Sissle.

1916-1917
Another very seemingly quiet, low visibility year; Cook may very well be doing steady work in roof garden/night club gigs with an orchestra; specific performers in the band are seldom named in ads for the club acts; colleagues like Brymn, Dabney, Vodery, and even Europe are similarly invisible---at least through newspaper accounts.

NB: Tellingly, Cook’s Chicago Defender obituary says that "After a nine-month training period he organized the Clef Club orchestra which played at Hammerstein's Theatre for three summers. He proved with this orchestra that jazz could be musical and they toured not only the United States but Europe with great success." (Chicago Defender, July 29, 1944, p. 2); hard to know exactly what to believe here, but this could help explain where he is for summers of 1916, 1917, 1918, for example

1916, in Fall: son Mercer starts high school at Dunbar in DC

1916, in September: Cook has returned to violin playing, and he journeyed with Whitney & Tutt’s Smart Set company from Baltimore to NYC (Indianapolis Freeman, September 30, 1916, p. 6)

1916, in October: Indianapolis Freeman, October 14, 1916, p. 4, in Jack Trotter’s "New York Notes of Stage and Sport," says "the race's foremost music composer" is back in NYC after a five months' stay in Baltimore (basically the summer, i.e., five months would be June-September 1916 or thereabouts)

1916, in December: Cook and Will Vodery are among those socializing at CVBA headquarters in NYC last Monday night, acc. Jack Trotter’s column, “New York Notes of Stage and Sport” (Indianapolis Freeman, December 9, 1916, p. 4)

1917, in June: Cook is visiting DC; "Mr. Will Marion Cook is in the city this week." (Washington Bee, 6/16/1917, p. 5)

1917-1918

Continued work in bands, and now also the war effort in camps, with entertainers, in Broadway benefits, etc.
1917, in August, September, and October: JAZZ LAND
Abbie and Cook in Philadelphia at the Standard in "Jazz Land";
the Syncopated Idyll, Jazz Land, "Songs of Yesterday and Today";
"Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Idyll Jazzland, with an all star cast"

Cook is touring with Cook's Syncopated Jazz Land Company of 26 people. They were at Gibson's New Standard Theatre in Philadelphia for two weeks---the week beginning August 24 and the week beginning September 3;

this a new act; the group heads a vaudeville/variety program, so they are essentially an elaborate variety tab; it featured the music of Cook and the dances of Irvin C. Miller; they then return to Gibson's New Standard Theatre in Philadelphia "for the present week" in early October with Abbie Mitchell, Speedy Smith, Muriel Ringgold, and William (Babe) Townsend; the troupe sounds like folks from the Lafayette Players; on this return to Philadelphia and Gibson's the repertoire is now more elaborate; the jazz orchestra has three female members---the tuba, the drummer, and the pianist (Philadelphia Tribune, August 25, 1917, p. 4; Chicago Defender, September 1, 1917, p. 4; Philadelphia Tribune, September 1, 1917, p. 4; Philadelphia Tribune, October 6, 1917, p. 3; Rye, "Roster")

1917, in December: on December 8, 1917, it is announced by the Military Entertainment Service Branch of the War Department's Commission on Training Camp Activities that Lester Walton will be "the chairman of a committee to organize the talent among the colored draftees into dramatic and minstrel organizations" (Billboard, December 15, 1917, p. 15); shortly thereafter, a Walton column mentions that he will be working to organize minstrel shows at Camp Upton "assisted by colored theatrical men of ripe experience" (NY Age, February 2, 1918, n.p. [6]); Lester A. Walton is working for the "War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities," and he and his assistants Alex Rogers and Will M. Cook had been searching for theatrical talent among the colored drafted men at Camp Upton (NY Age, April 13, 1918, p. 1); NB George Lattimore is manager of the "Buffalo Auditorium" at Camp Upton and ran a vaudeville show there last week (NY Age, April 27, 1918, p. 6); in Alex Rogers obit (NY Age, September 20, 1930, p. 1), it says "When Mr. Walton was appointed director of the entertainment committee for colored draftees at Camp Upton, he named Alex Rogers and Will Marion Cook as his assistants. They staged minstrels (sic) and gave many
concerts for the entertainment of the colored soldiers." Further, "When the war broke out, Mr. Cook began work as a musical entertainer among troops at Camp Upton, Long Island, and Camp Meade, Md." (Portland Oregonian, December 10, 1919, p. 13)

1917, in December: BENEFIT for the 367th
New Yorkers adopt the 367th out at Camp Upton, the only black regiment at that camp, which had been assembled in November 1917 and was in camp until shipping out in June 1918; there was a big NY New Year's Eve affair on December 31 for the 367th---actually a Military Ball---held at the Seventy-First Regiment Armory under the auspices of the 367th Infantry Welfare League (George Lattimore, Secretary), with dance music by the regimental band under E. E. Thompson, "who is bending every effort to make his musical organization one of the best in the army" (NY Age, Saturday, January 5, 1918, p. 6)

1918, in March: ANOTHER BENEFIT for the 367th
Sunday, March 10, 1918 sees the next huge benefit for 367th at the Manhattan Opera House, with most of the talent provided by men from the 367th itself, but some professional ringers, including Abbie Mitchell, who sings two numbers---"Exhortation" and "Mammy"---accompanied by Cook himself, as well as singing other numbers accompanied by J. Turner Layton (NY Age, March 16, 1918, p. 6)

1918, in March: Cook is playing piano with Robert J. Young and his augmented sextet who are still entertaining at the Royal Poinciana Hotel in Palm Beach, Fla. (Cook accompanies singers in Negro Music: "the singing of Negro music, as interpreted by Will Marion Cook, who accompanied at the piano, was considered a special feature of the Daily News, a Palm Beach society paper"); the augmented troupe includes Robert J. (Bob) Young, Opal Cooper, Joseph Caulk, Charles Jones, Bernard Brown, Carl White, Garfield Carter, Cook, Joseph Breen, Mitchell Lewis, Pat Toy (NY Age, March 16, 1918, p. 2); this was a good gig at a very famous venue---for example, Jim Europe had been engaged there in January and February 1917 (Badger, p. 145)

1918, in April: Vaudeville show held in the last week at the "Buffalo Auditorium" at Camp Upton for the 367th is under the management of Lattimore, featuring black stars like Harrison Stewart and others, and no Cook (NY Age, April 27, 1918, p. 6)
1918, in April: the Clef Club orchestra played in Philadelphia on April 22, 1918 under Frederick M. Bryan, and teenager Marian Anderson was a soloist (NY Age, April 27, 1918, p. 6) Cook was apparently not yet a part of the show, but he would be a few weeks later (see immediately below)

1918, in May: MUSIC SETTLEMENT BENEFIT
Monday, May 27 at Aeolian Hall, a major concert arr. by J. Rosamond Johnson as a benefit for the Music Settlement School, including the Clef Club Singers and Players under Cook’s baton ("a dynamic force with the baton"), etc. (NY Age, May 25, 1918, p. 6; rev. Lester A. Walton in NY Age, June 1, 1918, p. 6); possibly it is only around now that Cook gets back into Clef Club gigs; however, there is that reference to three summers at Hammerstein’s, and, of course, Cook had participated several times before, earlier in the decade, under Clef Club organization of James Reese Europe, before J. Rosamond Johnson had taken on direction of the school. Johnson's main purpose here, as elsewhere after he took over in 1914, was to showcase talent among school students and faculty, and the Clef Club group was the big outside element in the program.

1918, in June: Clef Club annual spring/June concert and dance at the Manhattan Casino on Friday, June 7, 1918; "the Clef Club has come back good and strong"; Cook and Fred M. Bryan were announced to conduct; in the end, Cook, Frederick Bryan, and also Tim Brymn of the 350th all conducted (photo of the orchestra with caption, NY Age, June 1, 1918, p. 6; NY Age, June 15, 1918, p. 5)

1918, in July: Cook is a visitor to Boston last week (Chicago Defender, July 27, 1918, p. 9)

1918, in July: MONSTER BENEFIT on July 27 at the Alhambra for the Colored Men's Branch of the YMCA with many of same stars who will be in Cook benefits in the fall (but not Cook here): Bert Williams, Irving Berlin, Eddie Leonard, Sophie Tucker, Eddie Foy and Company, Miller & Lyles, Wilber Sweatman, Deacon Johnson and the Clef Club Orchestra, etc., are expected (art. and ad in NY Age, Saturday, July 20, 1918, p. 6)
1918, in September: big War Savings Stamps campaign in Harlem from September 3-21. A musical program was brought to the steps of the NY Public Library on 42nd Street on Monday, September 16 that included a chorus of 200 led by Cook; also, speakers, and performances by J. Rosamond Johnson and Joseph Douglas, etc. (Chicago Defender, September 21, 1918, p. 5).

1918, in September: Cook, Deacon Johnson, and the Exposition Jubilee Quartette provide some entertainment at a big introductory meeting of the United Civic League, 184 W. 135th Street, on Saturday evening, September 21, at which the fall’s Republican candidates were introduced. Cook “composed a lyric containing the names of the candidates ten minutes after he entered the hall,” and Deacon Johnson sang it (Chicago Defender, September 28, 1918, p. 4).

1918, in September: PROPOSED CLEF CLUB TOUR by the New York Clef Club Orchestra in November, with burst of news reports in September; "The itinerary will include Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, and possibly St. Louis." In the end, the tour did not happen, but it spawned the NYSO. Seems likely that this is part of move by Cook back into Clef Club activities that we first see in May, and probably was affected by the October incorporation of the Clef Club and the creation of touring units of Players and Singers.

NB: Relevant here is that the Clef Club had been incorporated in 1910 as a social organization; it was formally organized by Deacon Johnson as a business corporation on October 18, 1918 (NY Times, October 19, 1918, p.19; NY Clipper, October 23, 1918, p. 5) to manage the Club's own performing groups and act as a clearing house for other artists; the Clef Club had had an ensemble of its "jazzers" out on the road in April-September, accompanying William Rock and Francis White; that fall the Clef Club sprouted several touring groups---an orchestra and the "Clef Club Singers and Players"; it is important to specifically call them the "Singers and Players," here under Cook; with up to five troupes on the road, which appear under the baton of Cook, Deacon Johnson, Fred. W. Bryan, E. Gilbert Anderson, Wm. H. Tyers, Clarence N. Johnston, and Wm E. Cole (NY Age, November 30, 1918, p. 6); possibly the incorporation in October 1918 is related to why Cook canned the Clef Club tour he had been proposing in September 1918 (see below); Clef Club orchestra (or
orchestras, plural) running in 1919 while NYSO is also on the road (e.g., an ensemble of fifty under E. Gilbert Anderson in Jan-April 1919 or so at the Selwyn and then in Newark, as in NY Times ads and Newark Sunday Call, April 6, 1919, p. 28).

1918, in September: Justification for Clef Club tour in long art by Cook in NY Age, September 21, 1918, p. 6 ("Will Marion Cook on Negro Music"). It will be "for the express purpose of fostering and developing the best Negro music," and contents sound just like NYSO, SSO, ASO programs over the next few years. Cook plugs "the establishment of a national school of Negro music, one where the colored child may secure instruction regardless of financial condition."

NB: THIS IS A BRICKS AND MORTAR SCHOOL.
A summary version of the news release is printed in Washington Bee, September 21, 1918, p. 8: "We are endeavoring to strengthen and uplift the Clef Club that all the Afro-American musicians of the United States will become actively associated with its growth, and through this association a national school of Afro-American music will be established. A school that will teach the child of great talent, regardless of his financial condition. Our first effort in this direction will be a tour . . . ." Incl. sixty singers and players plus soloists, conducted by Fred Bryant, Allie Rose, and Cook.

1918, in October: BENEFIT
Early in the month, on Thursday, October 3, Canteen No. 5, Mrs. E. C. Goode in charge, runs a big benefit at the Manhattan Casino; the Clef Club orchestra of thirty under the leadership of Deacon Johnson and Will Marion Cook provided the music; program also included Sergt. [Irving] Berlin from Camp Upton, who was there through his personal friendship with Will Marion Cook; plus Wilbur Sweatman, Tom Fletcher, etc. Canteen No. 5 is the canteen for soldiers and sailors in Harlem. It opened September 5, 1918 and is run out of the Music School Settlement on 131st Street; J. Rosamond Johnson is its director; Mrs. William Randolph Hearst attended the formal opening (NY Age, September 7, 1918, p. 1; Chicago Defender, October 12, 1918, p. 4; NY Age, October 26, 1918, p. 1)

1918, in October: in mid month, Cook is ill from overwork and needed to be hospitalized under the care of “some specialist” at Bellevue, now convalescing (Chicago Defender, October 19, 1918, p. 13)
1918, in October: BENEFIT
Late in the month, another huge gala benefit for the Buffaloes of the 367th for the Christmas Smoke Fund, at the Century Theater, on Sunday, October 27, with Lattimore as general director, some seventy Clef Club Players and Singers with Will M. Cook as musical director and conductor, plus Ziegfeld stars, Keith and Albee stars, Bert Williams, Eddie Cantor, Irving Berlin, etc. (NY Clipper, October 23, 1918, p. 5; Chicago Defender, October 19, 1918, p. 5; Chicago Defender, October 26, 1918, p. 4, 5; NY Age, November 2, 1918, p. 6; Chicago Defender, November 2, 1918, p. 5)

1918, in November: The Crisis 17/1 (November 1918), p. 32, reports that Cook and the New York Clef Club will tour New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Washington, Virginia, Illinois, and New Jersey during November (but as mentioned above in September, nothing comes of this)

1918, in November/December: Cook is assembling the New York Syncopated Orchestra (NYSO)

1919, January to April: NYSO proposed last fall and formed in November/December, the NYSO evidently did not get off the ground at that time; but now, it makes two round-trip tours in late winter/spring over a span of three months; Joe Jordan assists in the conducting duties; review of Chicago appearance in Chicago Broad Axe, February 15, 1919, p. 2; concert on Sunday, March 16 at Winter Garden with Cook and his NYSO, etc., etc. (NY Clipper, March 19, 1919, p. 23); Soloists include Mrs. Reavis-King, Buddie Gilmore, and others who went to Europe.

Jan. 30 Lancaster, Pa.
Jan. 31 Baltimore, Md.

Feb. 1 Washington, DC
Feb. 2 Washington, DC
Feb. 3 Hagerstown, Md.
Feb. 4 Johnstown, Pa.
Feb. 5 Altoona, Pa.
Feb. 6 Pittsburgh, Pa.
Feb. 7 Pittsburgh, Pa.
Feb. 8 Cleveland, Oh.
Feb. 9 Akron, Oh.
Feb. 10 Columbus, Oh.
Feb. 12 Chicago, Il.
Feb. 14 Chicago, Il.
Feb. 15 South Bend, Ind.
Feb. 17 Sandusky, Oh.
Feb. 18 Canton, Oh. (matinee and evening perfs.)
Feb. 19 Wilberforce University (Springfield)
Feb. 19 Springfield, Oh.
Feb. 20 Youngstown, Oh.
Feb. 21 Marietta, Oh.
Feb. 22 Clarksburg, Oh.
Feb. 23 NYC at the Manhattan Opera House, a benefit for the Urban League
Feb. 26 Williamsport, Pa.
Feb. 27 Allentown, Pa.
Feb. 28 Long Branch, NJ

March 4 Bridgeport, CT
March 5 Bridgeport, CT
March 9 NYC at the 44th Street Theatre

Variety, March 7, 1919, p. 8 reports this appearance as a vaudeville act. Variety, March 14, 1919, p. 13, reported that they had been so successful at the downstairs theatre that it is expected that they will move to the roof garden and stay a week or so, but this possibility is trumped by tour plans. NY Age, March 8, 1919: Speaking of NYSO at 44th Street Theater on Sunday, March 9, "After the performance the company will leave on its second Western tour." And so they do.

March 10 Syracuse
March 11 Syracuse
March 12 Auburn
March 14 Watertown
March 15 Amsterdam, NY
March 16 NYC Winter Garden with others on a huge bill
March 17-23 NYC a week at the Nora Bayes Theatre
[NY Clipper, March 26, 1919, p. 23 says Cook and NYSO played in the Reisenweber Star Carnival last Sunday the 23rd for men of the 27th Division, at the Park Theater]
March 24 Elmira
March 25 Elmira
March 26 Wilkes Barre, Pa.

Apr. 1 Olean, NY
Apr. 4 Titusville, Pa.
Apr. 5 Oil City, Pa.
Apr. 6 Akron, Oh.
Apr. 7 Canton, Oh.
Apr. 8 Canton, Oh.
Apr. 9 Alliance, Oh.
Apr. 10 Youngstown, Oh.
Apr. 11 Sandusky, Oh.
Apr. 12 Elyria, Oh.
Apr. 13 Columbus, Oh.
Apr. 14 Marion, Oh.
Apr. 15 Lima, Oh.
Apr. 16 Toledo, Oh.
Apr. 17 Toledo, Oh.
Apr. 18 Fort Wayne, Ind.
Apr. 20 Chicago, Il.
Apr. 27 Milwaukee, Wis.
Apr. 28 Chicago, Il. third appearance
Apr. 29 Cincinnati, Oh.
Apr. 30 Pittsburgh, Pa.

London contract signed in March (Rye, 2009). The men were applying for passports from mid-April to mid-May for the trip to London.

1919, in March: A NEW MUSICAL:
"Will Marion Cook, conductor of the New York Syncopated Orchestra, is writing the music for a comedy to be produced by the Schuberts" (NY Sun, March 18, 1919, p. 9; NY Clipper, March 19, 1919, p. 23; Cleveland Plaindealer, March 21, 1919, p. 16); no later trace of this show.

1919, in March: Variety says that "H.B. Marinelli has arranged for Will Marion Cook and fifty colored players of the New York Syncopated Orchestra to appear as a vaudeville act. The group is to show this Sunday at the 44th Street Theatre."

1919, in April: FOLK SONG SINGERS again
in the midst of April touring with NYSO on the way out to Ohio, Cook has a big concert of "The Afro-American Folk-Song Singers of Washington, D.C." in Philadelphia on Friday, April 4, 1919 at the Academy of Music, with Cook conducting his own numbers (Philadelphia Evening Ledger, Friday, April 4, 1919, p. 13; NY Age, April 12, 1919, n.p. - not p. 6; Washington Bee, April 26, 1919, p. 5); the Evening Ledger ad calls the show "Largo and Jazzo," and they are "singing Negro music both grave and gay"; NY Age, April 12, 1919: "Washington Letter": last Friday evening the Afro American Folk Song Singers of this city [DC] directed by Henry Lee Grant, Cook, and Carl Diton, appeared at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia; music by Burleigh, Cook, Diton, and Rosamond Johnson; a review is reprinted in the Washington Bee, April 26, 1919, p. 5, and it says Cook conducted his own numbers, lists repertoire, etc.

1919, in May: DUNBAR MUSIC FESTIVAL
Cook is apparently expected at the Thursday, May 1 to Saturday, May 3 Dunbar Music Festival in DC [the NYSO tour finished in Pittsburgh on April 30], and on Community Night the Folk Song Singers are to perform; NY Age and other reviews do not mention Cook's presence, so he probably did not make it, but the Folk Song Singers sang on Saturday night; Burleigh was expected but did not
make it, according to Wellington Adams in the Bee; actual performers included Eugene Mars Martin, Lydia Mason, Ethel Richardson, Mme. Talbert, Estelle Pinckney, Cleota Collins, Charleton, White, Taylor, Diton (Washington Bee, April 26, 1919, p. 9; NY Age, May 10, 1919, p. 6; NY Age, May 17, 1919, p. 6; Washington Bee, May 17, 1919, p. 2 (art. by Wellington A. Adams); McGinty, ed., Doc. History of the NANM, p. 18 [not entirely reliable].

1919, in May: Cook and the NYSO are reported to be hired for the summer by Harry L. Cort, manager of the Standard Theatre, to play all summer as the house orchestra in this movie house (NY Sun, May 8, 1919, p. 13)

1919, in May: just before departure, Cook is said to be bringing his orchestra to a May 29 Elks reception in Newport, R.I. (Chicago Defender, May 31, 1919, p. 16)

1919, in May/June: the SSO, in three groups, departs for Europe on May 31, June 5, June 22.

IN EUROPE FOR FOUR SEASONS, 1919-1923

Cook’s post-war European sojourn can be divided into two pairs of years, 1919-1921 and 1921-1923. Both pairs of years begin with Cook leading an ensemble and then spinning off into other things. In what would be a recurring theme, Cook was said to be writing in 1919, 1921, 1922, 1923.

1919-1920

1919, from July to October: the SOUTHERN SYNCOPATED ORCHESTRA under Cook.
Beginning July 4, 1919 and running over three months, to October 22, 1919, Cook brings over and conducts the SSO in England, including at Buckingham Palace for the King, etc. Ernst Ansermet is very impressed with jazz and with Cook’s conducting. Back in the States, some ads for the ASO expect him to conduct in October, as the tour begins, but he is not back in US until mid November 1919.

NB: Arthur Briggs’s testimony useful about variety of music the SSO (= NYSO, = ASO) played, and the lack of scope for improvisation.
1919, in July: *Variety*, n.d. (1919), on its "Cables" page (p. 4), has an article dated July 23 from London about the SSO’s growing success; troupe of 35, program of 25 numbers, generous encores.

1919, in August: Cook’s daughter Marion marries Louis Douglass in England on August 15, barely a month after arrival; granddaughter Marion was born just over nine months later in May 1920. Cook (and Abbie) probably see a fair amount of the couple and their grandchild from 1919-1923.

1919, in August: NEW OPERA

*Variety*, August 29, 1919, reports that Cook "has arranged to produce a new opera here." i.e., in London; ditto in NY *Clipper*, September 3, 1919, p. 21.

1919, in September: Back in the US, a new ensemble is formed under Cook’s name and with him as its nominal conductor. This is the American Syncopated Orchestra (ASO), set up on the model of the NYSO and SSO. The group initially is described as Will Marion Cook and 40 musicians, with George E. Dulf as assistant conductor. Cook is said to have selected personnel from the original NYSO, Dulf’s 370th Infantry regimental band (the Black Devils), and Jim Europe’s band. The instrumentation includes violins, banjos, double basses, clarinets, flutes, saxophones, trombones, and tympani, while ten of the men can become a chorus. (San Francisco *Chronicle*, October 5, 1919, p. E5). The ASO began touring with a scheduled September 29 appearance in Wichita.

1919, in October: E. E. Thompson travels from NYC to London (departs October 4 and arrives October 14); Cook is released from the SSO on October 24 (Rye: "On October 24, Will Marion Cook requested leave of absence for six weeks to return to the United States (Chancery Division 1920 L No. 542, Affidavit 304). He ends up being gone for more like three months."

*Variety* (1919) states that "Will Marion Cook's complete American Syncopated Orchestra" was returning to the States. The latter comment is explained by a remark in a Chicago newspaper when the ASO played there on October 28; the group was reported to have appeared without Cook and some thirteen of the former NYSO players who had been with him last year, and are not yet returned from Europe (Cook had been expected back for ASO concerts in Chicago in the last week in October, but he has been so delayed that
he would not make it, etc.; Chicago Tribune, October 30, 1919, p. F5 [15]). Clearly in some quarters there was the expectation that some NYSO/SSO players would be returning to the states as early as October.

1919, in November: Cook goes over from London to France ca. November 1 (acc. Variety), and then sailed for the US from Le Havre on the La Savoie on November 13, 1919, arriving in NYC on November 22, 1919, giving home address as 2224 6th St. Washington, DC (NY Passenger List, Rye, Variety)

1919, in November: Cook returns to US to work with ASO for about two months from late November 1919 to mid January 1920; he's in NYC in early December, having returned from London (NY Age, December 6, 1919, p. 8, in "News of Greater New York" column, not on music page; (Rye, Roster, Chrono)

1920, in early January: Cook is on the road with the ASO; he shared conducting duties with Dulf in Springfield, Ill. on January 11, 1920 (Daily Illinois State Register (Springfield), January 11, 1920, p. 19; Daily Illinois State Register (Springfield), January 12, 1920, p. 5); then returns to England in mid month; the St. Paul Appeal, January 24, 1920, p. 4, had expected him to be the conductor there

1920, in later January: RETURN TO ENGLAND: Cook arrives back in England on January 20, but does not immediately return to the SSO (Rye chronology)

1920, in February: SSO collapses in Liverpool on February 18, apparently not on account of Cook (Chicago Defender, April 24, 1920, p. 6, etc.); with this split, about half the men go with Lattimore and half with Cook; "Lewis Douglas has gone with his father-in-law's show" (Chicago Defender, April 24, 1920, p. 6); a later report in Gazette says Lattimore "fired" Cook, putting that word in quotes (Cleveland Gazette, May 29, 1920, p. 2); a big Letter to the Editor from Joe Porter in NY Age, September 25, 1920, responding to an article of June 26, 1920, which itself followed up on one of April 24, 1920, says (1) Cook and Lattimore were already at odds in the US over unpaid NYSO salaries, etc.; (2) SSO musicians agreed to split from Lattimore while Cook was back in the US with the ASO; (3) a total of 22 quit in Liverpool and only 4 returned "instanter," plus a few more later, not just 14 quitting (NY
an article in New York Tribune, June 20, 1920, p. 10 prints material from the London Daily Telegraph of May 18, 1920 that gives "a report of court proceedings" about a suit between Lattimore and A. P. de Courville concerning a breach of contract for a five week engagement that had been scheduled for the Folies Marigny Theater in Paris from January 14 to February 17. Cook gave testimony. "William Robert Tatten, another member of the orchestra, who said he was a singer, said disputes arose between members of the orchestra and the plaintiff at Liverpool. They wanted more money for their families in America, owing to depreciation of English currency. They also wanted Mr. Cook to be restored as their conductor."

1920, in March: Cook ran troupes in competition with Lattimore's SSO from March 8, 1920 through September 1920 (but already doubling up by doing vaudeville in August), never explicitly called SSO but rather identified with Cook and called Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Players or his Southern Syncopated Players, or Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Orchestra or The Famous American Syncopated Orchestra; a big group at least into June and then a small group (says Rye in Chronology); Chilton, Bechet bio., says it ran April-September and was called Marion Cook's Band or Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Orchestra (p. 43); by mid April, Lewis Douglas has left to do his own act (Chicago Defender, May 29, 1920, p. 7)

1920, in March: Abbie was starring with the Lafayette Players at least into early February, then leaves for Europe; article about how she breaks her contract with the Quality Amusement Corporation to go abroad runs in NY Age, March 13, 1920, p. 6; she takes serious heat for this move (e.g., NY Age, April 24, 1920, p. 6); in her March 1922 passport application she says she left the US on March 6, 1920; arrives in London on March 16, 1920 (acc. Rye); by the timing, she could have been travelling to join Cook after the split-up of the SSO or to be there for the birth of her first grandchild, or both; she is, in fact, just in time for the birth of her granddaughter; Variety, April 2, 1920 has a little article dated March 31, saying that Abbie is leaving for Paris to join her husband with his orchestra; a couple of weeks later, Abbie is with Cook and his orchestra in Liverpool by mid April (Chicago Defender, May 29, 1920, p. 7).

1920, in Spring: son Mercer graduates high school in DC and starts college in the fall of 1920 in US at Amherst.
1920, in May: On May 21, 1920, Cook's daughter Marion gives birth in London to his granddaughter Marion.

1920, in May, June and July: Rye (Chrono, p. 9) cites engagements of Cook's SS Players at the Empire Hall of the Trocadero Restaurant for dancing.

1920, in May and in June: Cook and his syncopated orchestra play on and off at London's Coliseum in Charing Cross on a two-a-day variety bill with six other acts (London Times, May 21, 1920, p. 14, etc.; also, Rye, Chrono., p. 11); at least four weeks total and maybe more

1920, in June: On the road, Cook is with his own "Syncopated Orchestra" on a two-a-day vaudeville bill at Manchester's Hippodrome for the week including June 14-18 (Manchester Guardian hits)

1920, in July, August September: Cook and his "Syncopated Orchestra" are playing for dancing at the Australian Pavilion on the ground of the Crystal Palace in London, having come directly from the Coliseum, from early July to end of September (London Times, July 2, 1920, p. 8; Manchester Guardian, July 3, 1920, p. 14; Rye, Chrono, p. 11)

other gigs through September in Rye, Chrono.


1920, in August: Evidently Cook folds his own orchestra by the end of September; he is mixing its engagements with his vaudeville appearances with Abbie by August.

Cook and Abbie Mitchell are together at Manchester's Hippodrome in two-a-day vaudeville for the week including August 2-6 (Manchester Guardian hits in ProQuest, e.g., Manchester Guardian, dates in August 1920, p. 1), in an act called Southern Harmonies, a.k.a. Southern Melodies, and they continue together into early 1921.
1920, in the fall: From fall 1920 to January 1921, Lattimore's Syncopated Orchestra continues to play (without Cook) this season (see, e.g., Chicago Defender, January 1, 1921, p. 11), though Lattimore temporarily goes bankrupt in December 1920 (Billboard, December 25, 1920, p. 12); see also Rye, Chrono, pp. 11-14. As for Cook, after leaving his own ensemble by the end of September, he does not again lead a large troupe in the 1920-1921 season; rather, he appears in variety as an act with Abbie Mitchell for a half season from Aug 1920 until Feb 1921, including in Belfast, Ireland, in Nov/Dec 1920; then Cook leaves for US where he again works up a new show and another large company; while he is in the US, Abbie begins touring with her Quartette.

1920, in December: "Will Marion Cooke . . . is now doing an act with a singer on the London Music Hall stage" (Billboard, January 1, 1921, p. 89)

1921, in January: Will and Abbie are concertizing together as a duo on a bill at the Empire in Nottingham for a week in mid-January 1921, where she is "the sweet-voiced soprano from their syncopated orchestra" and he is "the famous conductor" [NB: Upon her return to the US stage in 1923, Abbie is said to have been abroad for three years; that would be essentially three seasons and a bit more from March 1920 to mid 1923.]

1921, March-June: COOK RETURNS TO AMERICA;
An emergency passport is issued on February 22, 1921 for Cook so he can return from England to US; he's been in Britain since January 1920, after leaving the ASO in the US; now, after over a full year in England, he sails from London on March 3 on the "Albania," giving home address as 1724 8th St., Washington, DC, and arrives in NYC on March 16 (NY Passenger Lists); it is reported that he is back in this country from England to organize a new company; "Cook, the composer, has returned from abroad and is organizing a new company to play in England" (The Crisis, vol. 22/2 (June, 1921), p. 79; Washington Bee, June 4, 1921, p. 2);

He returns to NYC "to obtain material in regards to staging a musical revue . . . . and expects to take a fully written book and score back to London for presentation over there some time during the summer" (Variety, March 25, 1921, p. 15).
Another passport issued on June 24, 1921 in US says he is a resident of London, and is going to Europe for concert work in England and France, intending to leave June 25 or soon thereafter; Bee hit (below) has him in London in July with the new company; then back and forth again, returning to Britain August 8, 1921 (or is this just an error? [CHECK]---he seems clearly to have been there in July); Bee hits on Cook activities in issues of June 4, July 23, September 24.

1921, in May: while Cook is back in US, there is a "Big Convention for Amity" in DC at the First Congregational Church, running May 19, 20, 21, which included the singing of Master Lenore Cook, doing "Mammie," and an admirer gives him a diamond (Washington Bee, May 21, 1921, p. 1, NY Age, June 4, 1921, p. 6; etc.); did Cook attend?

1921, in June: It is reported this month that the Blue Ribbon Picture Company of NY has contracted to produce a movie on Toussiant L'Overture and Cook will be involved in the musical accompaniment; further, Cook and a London theater magnate "have contracted for the exclusive European rights of the picture and its musical accompaniment" (Washington Bee, June 18, 1921, p. 4)

1921, March-August/ September: During Cook’s absence from England, Abbie starred on her own and then began touring for what became six or seven months with her Harmonic Quartette (or Full Harmonic Quartette), i.e., Oscar Paul, Donald Harvey, Edwin Covington, and William D. Burns (The Observer, March 6, 1921, p. 10; Chicago Defender, April 9, 1921, p. 7; Manchester Guardian, June 4, 1921, p. 1; Manchester Guardian, August 26, 1921, p. 1; etc.); then Abbie joins Cook in his new company Cotton Blossoms, in September 1921 (see below).

MEANWHILE, FURTHER ON THE SSO, WITH COOK NOT ON THE SCENE

1921, in January: Wm. R. Tatten writes from England to Tony's letter column, in a contribution dated January 16, 1921; Lattimore "is a bankrupt," and "the orchestra is split up into small bands" (Chicago Defender, February 12, 1921, p. 5); then it is re-assembled, as below (perhaps without Lattimore, and then again with Lattimore?) CHECK
1921, in April and May: the SSO had played to late 1920 under Thompson, but in April and May 1921 it is in Paris under Wellmon (see references in Le Figaro, Le Menestrel, Le Journal, etc.), perhaps while Lattimore is hassling with bankruptcy; then in London, etc. under Thompson/Lattimore from June 1921, including touring that takes them to Scotland and Ireland.

1921, in May: in early May, the Southern American Syncopated Orchestra [l'orchestre synchronique sud-américain et ses Chanteurs (in Figaro)--or "symphonique" in Le Menestrel and on a program] was playing at the Theatre des Champs-Elysees for seven days, including five solo singers (three men, and Mme. King-Reavis and Mlle. Sadie Hopkins), twenty male choristers, one string quartet, ten banjos, one trumpet, one saxophone, one trombone (acc. the Herald, Buddie Gilmore, who uses his hat as a mute), one kettledrum, one trap player (Buddie Gilmore), and two grand pianos, under the baton of H. W. Wellmon, conducting in the uniform of a Brazilian general (lots of hits in Parisian papers, among which, Le Populaire, May 6, 1921, p. 4, calling it the American Southern Syncopated Orchestra, in English; Le Figaro, May 9, 1921, p. 3; Le Menestrel, May 19, 1921, p. 000; and also The Washington Herald, July 3, 1921, p. 4 [24], quoting the Paris correspondent of Musical America); Rye, "Chronology," pp. 13-14, with hits from Parisian papers, identifies this as the SSO; Rye, in Wellmon entry in "Roster," calls Wellmon "a member" of the group; Blake, Le tumulte noir, p. 65, fig. 37 prints a two-page program for this group from its gig at the Theatre des Champs-Elysees, with Wellmon conducting; it is a typical/standard Cook NYSO/SSO/ASO program

Hits in Le Matin for May 3 and May 6 indicate E. E. Thompson is in Paris

1921, in July: Then, two months later, hits for "Le Fameux Negro Syncopated Orchestra of America", "Composé de Negres Jouent, Chantant, Dansant" in July in Paris at the Trocadero; e.g., Le Matin, July 5, 1921, p. 3 calls it, in mixed French and English, "Le Fameux Negro Syncopated Orchestra of America"

THE SECOND TWO-YEAR EUROPEAN STINT, 1921-1923

1921-1922
In sum, Cook has his own company, then joins forces with a remnant of the older SSO: Lattimore's SSO with E. E. Thompson plays into November 1921, and is involved in the Rowan sinking in October. And meanwhile, in parallel this fall, Cook, with his new company, a hit of all Europe, plays London and then goes on to the continent with big summer 1922 gig in Vienna; possibly then on to Budapest, etc., although he seems to be based in Paris in 1922-23 season. I have had no success tracing the names of the musicians he recruited in the US in 1921 to come over to Europe at this point.

A later reference in the NY Age: "Will Marion Cook's International Orchestra and Entertainers. Sensations of London, three times Buckingham Palace by Royal command; Philharmonic Hall, 8 months [sic? hard to read and could be 3? or 9?]; Coliseum, 3 months. Paris, Casino de Paris, Gaumont Palace, Berlin, 3 months. Vienna, Vernigungs (sic) Park, 5 months. Budapest, 3 months." (NY Age, May 12, 1923, p. 6). (Abbie is also said to have spent 3 months in Berlin and 3 months in Budapest.) This tally clearly has to take into account the orchestras under his baton over four seasons, and just as clearly suggests his deep involvement in 1922.

Cook's activities around Europe clearly need more work than even Rye and Nowakowski give them, and his association with the later manifestation of the SSO needs affirming more than these two scholars are willing to accept. See ""'30 Negroes (Ladies and Gentlemen)’: The Syncopated Orchestra in Vienna” by Konrad Nowakowski (Black Music Research Journal, vol. 29, no. 2, 229–282) for references. England and Paris are not a problem but Berlin and Budapest are.

1921, in June: “Mr. Will Marion Cook, the composer, is again in this country [i.e., the US], organizing a new company to play in England.” (Washington Bee, June 4, 1921, p. 2.)

1921, in July: Cook and his new show, developed and recruited for over four months in US and possibly with collaboration of Alex Rogers, are now in Europe; it is Cotton Blossoms, or at least that is the name of his company, which is not necessarily synonymous with the show. Washington Bee, July 23, 1921, p. 2, says "The new company formed by Mr. Will Marion Cook, known as "Cotton Blossoms," which is now playing in London, is meeting with the greatest success."

Immediately after this small notice, there is another about Abbie. She
is in London in an act called "Full Harmonee" (sic) and is supported by a male quartette (this is the Full Harmonic Quartette"). They are singing Negro music from primitive spirituals to grand opera, and this sounds like a Cook program. NB: Rye, "Roster," says Cook does not return to Britain until August 8, 1921, but the ref. from the Bee already quoted indicates that he was there earlier.

1921, in September: Washington Bee, September 4, 1921, p. 5 says Cook "is making good in London with his syncopated orchestra. His wife, Abbie, has also joined the party." That is, she's leaving the Quartette with which she had been touring, and rejoining Cook.

1921, in October: the sinking of the Rowan, with the SSO troupe on board, on October 9.

1921, in November: it is announced that Cook will lead a benefit concert for the wives and children of the Rowan victims on November 4 in London, but this is ultimately cancelled (Rye); SSO survivors are in Ireland, and the last concert of the SSO as such is apparently in Belfast on November 7, 1921.

1921, in December: Billboard reports that Abbie is a London favorite and that Will Cook's Orchestra is an "established feature of England's amusement world" (Billboard, December 10, 1921, p. 223)

**The World Famous International Orchestra and Singers, salle Gaveau**

1922, in early February: a year, more or less, after the 1921 SSO visit to France, an orchestra associated with both Cook and Wellmon and Thompson goes to Paris from London; Rye (Addenda) views this as a re-forming of the SSO, in effect. Obviously, instead, whatever the name, it could be the "Cotton Blossom" gang, with some of the SSO players absorbed into the group, or the SSO with some “Cotton Blossom” company members.

There are hits in Le Figaro from January 24 and February 2, 1922 forward (see also Le Gaulois, Le Journal, Le Temps), where the group is playing at the salle Gaveau and is called "The World Famous International Orchestra and Singers" with Wellmon, Buddie, and Carlish. They play matinee and evening gigs from February 2 to February 13; Nowakowski cites a February 12, 1922 Vienna newspaper review from Paris that makes clear that the group has
already been playing there earlier in the month (Nowakowski, p. 249); Buddie is Buddie Gilmore; Carlish is Dick Carlish, who had teamed up with Wellmon since 1919; Rye says he also played the Elysee gig below (Rye, Roster)

January 24 mention in Le Figaro says Lieutenant E. E. Thompson will be the conductor, while flyer shows both Cook and H. M. Wellmon in an ad for a concert in February, so evidently things are fluid; in the flyer, Cook is "Chef d'Orchestre" and Wellmon is "Sous-Chef de Musique"---note that this is military language; passport applications made in London show Cook's involvement in these Paris gigs; it is important to note that the ensemble's name is similar to what Cook will call his NYC group in 1923 ("Cook's International Orchestra and Entertainers").

Variety, February 17, 1922, p. 2, reporting on cables from its London office, says Wellmon has been giving a series of concerts in Paris with "the world-famous International Orchestra and Singers"; Billboard, April 1, 1922, p. 45 reports that "H. M. Wellmon and his world-famous International Orchestra and Singing Troubadours opened a series of engagements at Paris at the Salle Gaveau"---presumably, these February appearances

**The Synco-synco at the Theatre des Champs-Elysees**

1922, in later February: then, what seems to be the same troupe, in a new venue, with a new name, and still featuring Wellmon and Buddie, and playing together into later April:

See Le Figaro, February 11, 1922, p. 3:

"Au Theatre des Champs-Elysees.
On se souvient du succès obtenu la saison dernière par le Syncopathed orchestra (sic).
Après-demain, un ensemble noir "The synco synco", formé des meilleurs éléments du Syncopathed (sic), commencera une série limitée de représentations, avec le célèbre buddi et sous la direction du général Wellmon lui même."

and in Le Petit Parisien, February 11, 1922, p. 5:

"Le Synco-Synco est composé des meilleurs éléments de l'ancien
Syncopated." It will appear at the Theatre des Champs-Elysees for a week, from the 13th, but then they get extended a week.

The "Synco synco" negro orchestra and chorus then played in later February and March under Wellmon (hits in Le Humanité, Le Radical, etc.); Rye, "Roster," Cook entry, and "Chronology," has this group in Paris for two weeks, Feb 13-March 2, 1922, and in "Addenda," that is extended into April (for Easter, i.e., April 14-20); See also Nowakowski, p. 244, for singers making contracts with Cook on March 13 for Parisian gigs March 22-April 15, etc.

NB: Concerning Wellmon, Rye finds Wellmon in concerts in London in November 1921, apparently unrelated to Cook or SSO, and then in Paris in February 1922 in the Cook gig. He conducts in uniform. Later 1922 Vienna reports indicate that he is very active and theatrical on stage in his role--fancy, flashy. A big article on Wellmon several years later in the Philadelphia Tribune (Philadelphia Tribune, July 19, 1928, p. 9), quotes him as saying he took over the SSO from Cook, and that he took it to Vienna as a band of 30 with Abby Mitchell, Miss King Rivers, and Buddy Gilmore.]

1922, in February:

Abbie is clearly back to vaudeville in February, March, April, May of 1922 with the Harmonic Quartette, so it seems she did not make the cross-channel jump immediately, i.e., she did not go to Paris in February (unless she goes back and forth);

Abbie applies for a US passport in London on March 9, 1922 in order to be able to go to France to participate (passport issued April 4).

Abbie is in Vienna from early May, though. In April she had just finished eight week in London with her Quartette (Chicago Defender, May 6, 1922, p. 6); Billboard mentions she is being booked by a London office for England (Billboard, June 3, 1922, p. 61); art. in Baltimore Afro American is "Abbie Mitchell Now in Paris" (Baltimore Afro American, July 7, 1922, p. 11 [CHECK])

l'Orchestre syncope des Etats-Unis du sud

1922, in mid April: here is what appears to be the same troupe, with another change of name, l'Orchestre Syncope des Etats-Unis du Sud--
-advertised in Paris from April 15-21 playing at the Gaumont-Palace on a variety bill (Le Temps, La Presse, Le Figaro, Le Matin, Le Petit Parisien)

1922, in late April: this is the ensemble that then goes out on the road in Europe; Nowakowski (pp. 238-239, 245) has the group arriving in Vienna in late April; this would be directly after Paris

Vienna

1922, in May: a syncopated orchestra in Vienna, the American Syncopated Orchestra or the American Original Syncopated Orchestra (very much a Cook title), or Amerikanischen Neger-Show runs for four months from May 9 to the end of August 1922 at the Vernüngspark (Nowakowski [p. 243, 244, 245] says they were initially going to open on May 2, as announced on April 9 & 12, but that got pushed back by bad weather to May 9); Abbie Mitchell and Buddie Gilmore are with this group from the start in May, acc. ads cited by Nowakowski, which claim either 30 or 40 in the group; Abbie and her Quartet, however, are announced for the Arwick Empire for as late as May 1, 1922 (Manchester Guardian, May 1, 1922, p. 1), so maybe weather is not the only issue in the delay

Wellmon conducts, and the reviews cite the appearance and conducting of "Kapellmeister Wellmon" (Nowakowski, pp. 246-247, 249, 250). Lattimore is mentioned a couple of times as manager. This ensemble dissolves and participants scatter in earliest September 1922.

They mount a "big show," an evening concert in the large, open music hall, so nearby diners could enjoy an alfresco concert with their meals; on offer is a full bill of variety, with chorusses, dances, art songs by Abbie Mitchell, drumming by Buddie Gilmore. Singing, playing, dancing. Wagner's Pilgrim's Chorus jazzed up. By late June and early July, the better part of two months later and about half way through their run, the instrumentalists also played for dancing ("Das Publicum tanzt"). By later August the principals were accepting other gigs. Seems to be finished by the last week of the month or so, from Nowakowski evidence. But possibly a remnant is playing with Buddie Gilmore deep into September.

Rye says there is no evidence for involvement of Cook in Vienna.
Clearly, the later NYC newspaper ads from 1923 suggest a different story.

NB: As asserted above, this is not the SSO per se, but the newest version of this syncopated orchestra, with shared personnel. The 1919 group had lots of strings, and in Paris in February this was still true (24 instrumentalists, 11 on strings, acc. Rye, cit Nowakowski, p. 251). In Vienna there were a total of 30 in the troupe (or 40 by some newspaper ads), including two women, 10 men as singers/dancers, and about 15 in the band (mostly brass—a jazz band). Drummer Buddie Gilmore is the biggest hit in Vienna.

It offers a stand alone "big show" lasting 2 and a half hours in one report (Nowakowski, p. 247).

Though Nowakowski and Rye disagree, I think Cook and Lattimore possibly are again working together, although Nowakowski ad says Lattimore and never mentions Cook. The conductor in Vienna is H. M. Wellmon, the African-American composer and vaudeville artist who had been making a career in London and on the continent since 1906. Nowakowski describes a detail in one program—a version of Wagner's "Pilgrim's Chorus"; surely Cook had a hand in that arrangement (?). Maybe he is just a camp follower at this point, or music director but not conductor, which would fit best. (NB: Carter thesis cites Jean-Christophe Averty, Hot Jazz, p. 23 [i.e., in some article in Hot Jazz] that Cook and Lattimore are reconciled and perform at the Kaiser Garden in Vienna.

Carter thesis, p. 159, mentions a Cook letter to Mercer (undated, but from Asheville), that mentions that "after the Syncopated Orchestra's visit to Vienna, "Swing Along" was played and sung in most cabarets."

A later profile of Wellmon in Pittsburgh Courier says "He took over the Southern Syncopated Orchestra from Will Marion Cook. With him at the time in Vienna was Abby Mitchell, Miss King Rivers and Buddy Gilmore, all of whom he speaks of with high praise" (Pittsburgh Courier, July 21, 1928, p. 5), and similarly a year later, "In Vienna, he said that he took over the Southern Syncopated Orchestra from William Marion Cook. With him at the time was Abby Mitchell and Buddy Gilmore of who he speaks highly." (Pittsburgh Courier, August 3, 1929, second section, p. 7)
If Paris is Feb-March and Vienna is May-Sept, perhaps Berlin and Budapest are before and after Paris?

ABBIE ON FILM: A 1922 interlude

Lee de Forest made a short film of Abbie Mitchell singing, Songs of Yesterday (1922), using his DeForest Phonofilm sound-on-film process. (The film title is very much an Abbie - Cook title!) This film is preserved in the Maurice Zouary film collection at the Library of Congress. There is a problem here in that she was in Europe, but the solution is simple: De Forest lived in Berlin from October 1921 to September 1922 working on sound-film systems, and surely could have made the film there. The 1922 phonofilm has been remastered and can be found on the Internet (Facebook). It is a two-minute take, with Abbie singing Cook's "Mammy."

NB: The unseen pianist is likely to be Cook himself.


1922, in July: "'Cotton Blossoms,' Alexander Rogers' latest show, will in all probability be produced this season. Will Marion Cook is the writer of the music. He is in Vienna at present." (Billboard, July 15, 1922, p. 59). Sounds like this show, possibly a revision of the 1921-22 show, thus in which Rogers may have had a hand during Cook four months in US in 1921, was going to be produced in US. This show turns up a year later (see below), so it had some life for more than two years.

1922, in July/August: letter from Frank A. Dennie, probably written in very late July or early August, says Cook and Mitchell "are in Vienna, Austria. As Lattimore has an orchestra down there now." (Chicago Defender, August 19, 1922, p. 7).

1922, in August/September: letter from William D. Burns (of Abbie's Quartet) to the Defender (Chicago Defender, September 30, 1922, p. 6), says, "Cook is writing a new play and he thinks it will bring home the bacon." Burns "joined Lattimore's Syncopated orchestra in Paris, then went to Vienna, Austria." Then he returned to Paris and on to the US, evidently aft the end of the Vienna engagement circa September 1. NB: in this letter, he spells Bechet's name as Basshay.
1922-1923

1922, in fall: Cook is in his fourth post-war season abroad, and has spent a full year abroad after his trip back to the US to assemble the “Cotton Blossoms” troupe;

upon the close of the Vienna engagement, Cook evidently moves to Paris; Abbie Mitchell and Cook take separate paths this fall; Cook is in Paris by ca. October 12, but perhaps mostly in Budapest (?) in October/November/December (?), and then he goes to Paris (again?) and Abbie takes off for Australia

Cook reported in Paris by mid 1922, acc. Rye, or else in Dublin, but he actually seems to be in Vienna until September. This has everything to do with his relationship with the SO at this moment.

1922, in October: Abbie Mitchell possibly leaves Vienna for Budapest around October 3.

1922, in October: Wellmon goes to Budapest on October 18 (Acc. Nowakowski). If he goes there, does Cook also??

1922, in October: Lattimore leaves Vienna for Paris on October 22.

1922, in October: Cook runs an organization in Paris called the American Negro Musicians (Savannah (GA) Tribune, November 2, 1922, p. 1; Wichita Negro Star, November 3, 1922, p. 1), which, from the title, could be a kind of union or it could be an orchestra;

"During the stay of Major Robert Russa Moten in Paris he was entertained by the Negro musicians playing in the city at the time. The affair was under the leadership of Will Marion Cook." (Billboard, November 18, 1922, p. 49); Moton was the guest of honor at a reception given by the American Negro Musicians, an organization headed by Will Marion cook, a famous composer of the Negro race: (Wichita Negro Star, November 3, 1922, p. 1); the event for Moten has to have taken place around October 12-14, between Moten's arrival in Paris and his departure for Scotland.
1922, in December: Cook’s grandson, Louis Winston Douglas, jr., is born in NYC to daughter Marion in November, but only lives until April 1923.

1922, in December: "Abbie Mitchell is in Vienna in vaudeville and Cook is with a phonograph company in Paris" (Billboard, December 1922 [n.d., n.p., but evidently a single digit in the date---a 6? an 8?]; repeated in Afro American, February 27, 1932, as a short paragraph amongst several under headline "10 Years Ago"); Carter thesis, p. 377, cites Averty, Hot Jazz, p. 23 to say that Cook supervises the recording of the Mitchell's Jazz Kings for Pathe in Paris in December.

1922, in December: "Cook was in Paris managing to live by writing a little music for anyone who happened to need a bit of music written" (Chicago Defender, April 8, 1923, p. 13)

1922, in December: Abbie goes to Australia with some of the SSO guys by December (Chicago Defender, April 8, 1923, p. 13)

1923, in January: after about four or five months in Paris (?), or with more touring including Budapest and Berlin in there (?), Cook leaves for home January 27, 1923, arr. NYC on February 7, 1923 (acc. travel/immigration records). Salem Tutt Whitney says Cook has returned from a trip that included the entire continent of Europe, and he was encouraged to return to the US by theatrical promoters ("Salem Sez" column in Chicago Defender, March 3, 1923, p. 8)

Cook sailed from La Havre on the Rochambeau on January 27, 1923 and arrived in NYC on February 7, 1923, giving his US address as 2224 6th St., Washington, DC (NY Passenger Lists); NY Age, February 17, 1923, p. 7: "Cook arrived in town last week from dear old London and says he is here to stay this time."; Chicago Defender, March 3, 1923, p. 8: Salem Sez column: "the old master . . . . has returned"; see also Allen, Hendersonia, p. 44)

1923, in February: Cook’s mother Belle dies in DC on February 18; it may well be that he came back to the US right now upon news of the illness of his mother, as well as more generally on account of tough times in Paris and encouragement to return from NYC folks
BACK IN AMERICA

1923, in the first half of the year: Back in the US in early 1923, Cook seems does two big things.

(1) For one, he jumps into the recently reinvigorated scene for black revues and musical comedies.

(2) For the other, he tries to create institutions to support African American music, and African American musicians and actors: The Negro Folk Music and Drama Society, and the Negro Art School, or Negro School of Dramatic and Musical Art. He was said to be going to open the latter in 1926, and was fund-raising for it.

This thread of schools and school benefits goes back to his own school with Burleigh, and is presumably acknowledged in the scholarship fund set up in his name at the Metropolitan Music School.

Several of his show projects seem not to have gotten off the ground. In the end, he actually may not have composed and seen onto the stage an entire musical after the Lafayette's *Darkydom*. He becomes a conductor/director and show doctor kind of figure, as well as an impresario and promoter. His orchestra was his most important vehicle since 1916 or so in the US and while in Europe; now choral preparation comes back to the fore.

In addition, he was concertizing with Abbie and a choral group, and supporting the careers of younger performers and creators like Sidney Bechet, Josephine Baker, Arthur Briggs, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Paul Robeson, Ethel Waters, Donald Heywood, Eva Jessye, Hall Johnson, Margaret Bonds, etc. (etc., as in Mercer 1944 list, etc.).

CLEF CLUB ORCHESTRA and COTTON BLOSSOMS projects

1923, in February: immediately upon his return to the US, from around February 25, Cook assembles and rehearses an orchestra and jumps right into work with it, over about three months (March-May), much like he had been doing abroad; a Clef Club lawsuit in June mentions
Clef Club involvement of some kind beginning February 25, and that they were in vaudeville on the Keith circuit; this spring ensemble is mostly called the Clef Club orchestra, except at the giant May benefit, where it is called Cook's "International Orchestra".

It is not clear how many men came back with him from Europe, or were assembled from Clef Club rosters in NYC, but Cook says that the new orchestra includes not just Clef Club men but "some of the men who helped me make my successes abroad" and after naming some those who are doing well over there, he says that many are suffering the "homesickness blues" and are "homeward bound."

(Chicago Defender, March 17, 1923, p. 8).

1923, in March: Salem Tutt Whitney column in Chicago Defender, March 3, 1923, p. 8, says "Mr. Cook was encouraged to return to the states by some of the leading theatrical promoters, who, with the assistance of Mr. Cook, plan to promote one of the biggest things ever attempted in Racial show business."

1923, in March: Cook writes to Jenkins sr. in London on March 7 on Clef Club stationery to invite Edmund T. Jenkins to return from London to the US and join Cook in his tour (Jeffrey P. Green, Edmund Thornton Jenkins (1982), p. 122)

1923, in March: Chicago Defender, March 17, 1923, p. 8 has letter from Cook to Tony Pastor?/Langston?: (1) he is "preparing for a concert tour in connection with the Clef club, and some of the men who helped me make my successes abroad; (2) the tour begins March 18 in Jersey City, then south for 15 days and around to the West, then extended until May 1; (3) then he'll return to NYC to put on the musical comedy Cotton Blossoms, written by Alex Rogers with additional numbers by Luckyth Roberts and Jimmy Johnson

NB: he had been using the show name Cotton Blossoms in Europe since 1921 (see above); he says now of the anticipated US production, "this will be the last light music I write, so I hope to make it a masterpiece." Apparently, what is being referred to is the same show that Salem Tutt Whitney referred to as "one of the biggest things ever."

1923, in March: Cleveland Gazette, March 17, 1923, p. 1 has article with lots of important stuff, such as that (1) Cook and Alex Rogers are writing
for a musical comedy of 75 people to go out in the spring, and (2) meantime Cook is planning a series of three Sunday concerts in Schubert theatres (might turn into the May benefit); (3) on the last of the month [i.e., in April, and this does take place] he will make a ten-day tour with 35 members of the Clef Club Orchestra, going as far south as Richmond, and (4) then take 35 with some additional specialty artists, including a Haytian (sic) folklore dancer, and head out on a trip to the far West; Louis Douglas will join him, and son Mercer is helping with his preliminary work. Some of this may be true, or at any rate, the kind of things he was planning and thinking about shortly after his return from Europe. The Winston-Salem Journal, March 24, 1923, p. 9 also says he is planning a trip through the south this spring and folks hope to have him in Winston-Salem; it says his orchestra of fifty pieces has just returned from abroad.

1923, in March: Mercer Cook writes an article for The Crisis that remembers the Clef Club tour (Mercer Cook, "'De Lawd' and Jazz: An Incident in the Life of Richard B. Harrison," The Crisis 47/4 (April 1940), pp. 112, 114). Mercer mis-remembers the year as 1922. Says Harrison and Cook were very old friends, from 1893 or before, that they met Dunbar in 1893, that Cook introduced Harrison to the woman who would become his wife. (Mercer's presence at rehearsals for the tour is noted in Cleveland Gazette, March 17, 1923, p. 1.) About the rehearsals, Mercer recalls:

"Rehearsals were in progress down at the old Clef Club headquarters on 53rd Street. Every afternoon, Paul Robeson, Carl White, the inimitable Tom Fletcher, Taylor Gordon, the unforgettable "Bass" Foster, the late Hartwell Cook, and a few others whose names I no longer remember, would practice vocal numbers. Sidney Bechet, Ralph "Shrimp" Jones, Henry Saparo, Duke Ellington's Broh [sic; recte band?], the late Julian Arthur, and unknown man named Fletcher Henderson, and about twenty-odd musicians would be working on such current favorites as "Tiger Rag" and "When Hearts Are Young," as well as more difficult selections like Brahms's (sic) Hungarian Dance (Number Five), and Dvorak's Bohemian Dances. Georgette Harvey, the Rivera Sisters, and a young dancer, Bessie de Sessaure, provided the feminine relief." And, of course, Richard Harrison.

1923, in March: the NY Age, March 31, 1923, p. 6 gives a similar roster of names in its review of the week-long Lafayette run beginning March 26: vocal octet, Paul Robeson, "Bass" Foster, Georgette Harvey, Henry
Saparo, Hartwell Cook (Cook’s nephew), Bessie Arthur, Tom Fletcher, Richard B. Harrison.

Roster advertised for concert in Baltimore at the Douglass Theatre on Friday, March 23, 1923 included "35 Musicians and Players" including nephew Leroy [Lenoire] Cook singing "Mammy", plus Tom Fletcher, Abbie Mitchell, Fletcher Henderson (at the piano), Paul Robeson, Henry Saparo, Richard B. Harrison, etc.

NB: Ellington and his Washingtonians, as they would come to be called, are very much in Cook world at least from 1923-1931. Probably from before, as well, in Washington, DC. According to standard sources, Ellington comes to NYC in late February or earliest March 1923 to join the band supporting the act of Wilbur Sweatman running March 5-12 at the Lafayette, and then some additional work in NYC, Greater NY, and out to other cities like Philadelphia, perhaps through late April, but when Sweatman goes farther out on the road (e.g., Chicago), Ellington goes back to DC; returns to NYC in June 1923 to join a five-piece band, this time to stay. Makes perfect sense that he would hang out with Cook sr and jr et al around the Lafayette and Clef Club.

Ellington and a jazz band of eight pieces played in the Cook January 1926 concert, and he reportedly helped try to get the tab version of Dusk and Dawn to the stage in 1930. Ellington is involved with Hotsy-Totsy-ness, with Jo Trent, with Spencer Williams, with Ethel Waters and Earl Dancer, in 1925. Claude Hopkins (b. 1903) was a near contemporary in DC, and was in the same Washington musical crowd.

FINALLY, THE TOUR ITSELF:

1923, in March: The tour opened at Gibson's Dunbar Theater in Philadelphia, then moved to the Lafayette, Washington, Baltimore, the Century Theater in NYC, and a few weeks in vaudeville.

1923, in March: a first concert in Philadelphia before March 23 (acc. Mercer Cook in Crisis; Allen, Hendersonia, p. 44-45; Carter bio, p. 107, with no exact date provided; Pittsburgh Courier, April 7, 1923, p. 12 puts Philadelphia before Baltimore)
1923, in March: concert in Baltimore at the Douglass Theatre on Friday, March 23, 1923, with "35 Musicians and Players" including nephew Leroy [Lenoire] Cook singing "Mammy", with Tom Fletcher, Abbie Mitchell, Fletcher Henderson (at the piano), Paul Robeson, Henry Saparo, Richard B. Harrison, etc.; "The Sensation of London, Paris, Vienna, Budapest, and Other European Countries" (Baltimore Afro American, March 16, 1923 (ad); Baltimore Afro American, March 30, 1923, p. 15; Allen, Hendersonia, p. 44-45; Pittsburgh Courier, April 7, 1923, p. 12)


1923, in March: at Lafayette from Monday March 26 to Sunday April 1; this is Cook’s first public NYC appearance since he returned from Europe; he is at the Lafayette for the week of March 26 with the Clef Club Jazzers and Tom Fletcher, Paul Robeson, dramatic reader Richard B. Harrison, and a number of vaudeville artists; the Pittsburgh Courier says the group consists of "the Clef Club, its glee club contingent, and an auxiliary force of girls"; an ad calls him "The World’s Greatest Negro Composer";
(NY Age, Saturday, March 24, 1923, p. 6; Chicago Defender, March 24, 1923, p. 9; NY Age, Saturday, March 31, 1923, p. 6: "Will Marion Cook Makes Big Hit at Lafayette"; Pittsburgh Courier, April 7, 1923, p. 12 "Will Marion Cook Scores Great Hit with Clefties"),

A fuller Pittsburgh Courier report of the talent (Pittsburgh Courier, April 7, 1923, p. 12) itemizes:

  twenty-four Clef Club musicians
  a glee club of eight,
  supplemented by Georgetta Harvey, Miss F. McKinney, William Elkins, Will Tyers, Tom Fletcher, Bessie De Sasso, Marie DeVoe, and the Three Riverie Sisters, Paul Robeson, "Bass" Foster, Henry Saparo, Carl White, Joe Gray.
  McKissick and Haliday in a rough comedy act
  Tom Fletcher's comedy songs

Lots of old friends come to greet Cook at the Lafayette premiere, including Rosamond Johnson, Alex Rogers, C. Luckyeth Roberts, Charles Gilpin, William C. Elkins (NY Age); the
Pittsburgh *Courier*, April 7, 1923, p. 12 reports that at opening night the crowd included:

- Jack Goldberg and Sam Crismar of the "How Come" show
- Charles Gilpin, with Miss "Lil" and Messers Shields and Pryor of "The Emperor Jones"
- Rosamond Johnson from the Keith circuit
- Oscar Micheaux of film fame
- Monty Hawley, late of the "Salome" company
- Jack Johnson, the boxer
- Alex Rogers
- etc.

NB: the expression Clef Club Jazzers is used to identify the Clef club orchestra at other times; see, for ex., Binghamton (NY) *Press*, December 16, 1921, p. 27)

1923, in April: Rave review with superlatives of this gig in *Courier* under title "Will Marion Cook Scores Great Hit with Clefties" (*Pittsburgh Courier*, April 7, 1923, p. 12)

1923 in April: Cook jumps into a tour with the Clef Club group in South and East; in part or whole they are on the Keith circuit; they had been in Baltimore in March, and now a return engagement at Douglass Theatre in Baltimore on April 9 (acc. Allen, *Hendersonia*, p. 45); then, Cook and the Clef Club, featuring dramatic reader Richard B. Harrison, were just in Washington, DC, presumably in the week of April 9 (*NY Age*, April 14, 1923, p. 5)

1923, in April: "Will Marion Cook and the Clef Club Orchestra," as a 21 minute, full-stage vaudeville act; 26 cast plus Cook makes 27; seventeen musicians in the band, a solo shimmy dancer, a dancing quartet and a vocal quartet, make a cast of 26; reviewed by Sime in column under "New Acts This Week" in *Variety*, who saw it when the act had been out only four days, playing at the Proctor's 58th Street theater, so from Sunday, April 16 (?) (*Variety*, April 26, 1923, p. 30; reprinted Chicago *Defender*, May 5, 1923, p. 8); Will Marion cook and His Crack Orchestra play the Strand in Hoboken, a Keith vaudeville house, on April 16-18 (Jersey City *Journal*, April 14, 1923, p. 11); Cook's orchestra is at Proctor's Theatre, NYC (*NY Age*, April 21, 1923, p. 6)
1923, in April: later in the month, from the week of April 23, in NYC at the Jefferson Theatre on 14th Street (NY Morning Telegraph, April 15, 1923, p. 4), with only twelve men on the payroll (acc. Allen, Hendersonia, p. 45); they may have played only for six or eight weeks, from March into May

1923, in April: Will Marion's band, from the 58th St. [sic], was an act on a Bohemian Night program at the N.V.A. Club on Sunday, April 22 (New York Vaudeville News, May 4, 1923, p. 14)

POST-CLEF-CLUB TOUR BENEFIT CONCERT

1923, in May: BENEFIT CONCERT on Sunday, May 20 at the Century Theatre, 62nd and Central Park West, there was a benefit concert for a Negro Scholarship Fund for a sorority; announced as "Will Marion Cook's International Orchestra and Entertainers," and Brymn and his Liza orchestra, and Abbie Mitchell and Miller & Lyles, and Charles S. Gilpin, and Greenlee & Drayton, and stars from Shuffle Along and How Come and a dozen singers of spirituals, all in giant benefit concert at the Century Theater (63rd and CPW) for the Negro Scholarship Fund; How Come was in its fourth week at the Apollo in mid May (NY Age, May 19, 1923, p. 6); participants included Paul Robeson, Revella Hughes, Alberta Hunter, Georgette Harvey; one newspaper speaks of the last appearance of the year in NYC is in May, and the reference must mean the appearance of the orchestra in NYC, since Cook is around; Cook is "the Old Master"; lots of ads (incl. NY Times, May 17, p. 22/May 18, p. 26/May 19, p. 16/May 20, Sunday Amusements section, p. 3; NY Age, May 12, 1923, p. 6; NY Age, May 19, 1923, p. 6; NY Evening Post, May 19, p. 13); ad in NY Age, Saturday, May 19, 1923, p. 6, calls Abbie "our own Abbie Mitchell, who is returning from a successful three year tour of Europe."

The Chicago Defender carries a review in "NYC Briefs" that says there was only a fair sized crowd and that a number of entertainers were promised but did not show, including Abbie Mitchell, Gertrude Saunders, Miller & Lyles, Greenlee & Drayton, and others (Chicago Defender, May 26, 1923, p. 9), so Abbie probably was not yet have been back in the US (which correlates with "just arrived" at the end of July, below)
1923, in June: there is a June 1 letter by one Mr. C. A. Parker to Edmund T. Jenkins in London (quoted both by Howland and by Jeffrey P. Green, Edmund Thornton Jenkins (1982), p. 122), that says that Cook intends to develop an all-black revue and a colored symphony; the colored revue would include Charles Gilpin, Abbie Mitchell, Richard Harrison, Alberta Hunter, and Cook wants Jenkins; this report may reflect big plans dreamed of in February and March, and/or foreshadow "Negro Nuances" of early 1924, but mostly sounds like Chauve-Souris plans of July (see below) that go nowhere—until La revue negre, that is. The interest of Cook in Jenkins correlates with Jenkins's association with the SSO in Europe in 1922 (Nowakowski, p. 265)

1923, in June: the Clef Club sues Cook for $591.89 (over unpaid wages?) in June (see the New York Clipper, June 27, 1923, p. 5, and Carter bio., p. 107), so he must have been out on the road until at least early June (?) with them; perhaps only until late May, and thus for only about a month and a half or two months on the circuit (March to May)?; the text in the Clipper says the issue concerns February 25 to April 1, when Cook was in vaudeville with the Clef Club orchestra on the Keith circuit.

1923, in July: CHAUVE-SOURIS. Winfield F. Kelly plans a kind of exotic review for NYC in the autumn on the model of the Balieff's Russian/Parisian Chauve-Souris that was wowing NYC; he says he will call his by the same name (which means "the bat"), and draw on colored players of note, including Charles Gilpin, Will Marion Cook and the Clef Club Orchestra, Abbie Mitchell, Tom Fletcher, and William H. Harrison (probably means Richard B. Harrison, dramatic reader); this is, in fact, essentially the roster of Cook's spring troupe—lock, stock, and barrel—but evidently the plans fall through. (Seattle Daily Times, July 20, 1923, p. 11; Oakland Tribune, Saturday, July 21, 1923, p. 17)

1923, in July: summer vaudeville featuring Abbie in a number of turns; Cook performs with Abbie Mitchell at the Lafayette for two weeks—the weeks of July 23 and 30; she "has just returned" from Europe and it is her first appearance in NYC in more than three years (NY Amsterdam News, July 18, 1923, p. 5; Chicago Defender, July 21, 1923, p. 8; NY Age, Saturday, July 21, 1923, p. 6; NY Age, July 28, 1923, p. 6; Pittsburgh Courier, August 4, 1923, p. 11 "Abbie Mitchell Proves She is One of Greatest Actresses on Stage Today/ Artis
"Premiere" Stars in Greatest Vaudeville Bill Ever Presented at Lafayette Theater--Assisted by Will Marion Cook and Eddie Brown"; Pittsburgh Courier August 11, 1923, p. 11, "Abbie Mitchell, Just Back From France, Retained as Headliner"); she has been gone for three and a half years;

Thus she never appeared at her advertised earlier concerts with Cook; Rye has her returning to NYC from Cherbourg on June 23, 1923, and his report says she spent three months each in Berlin and Budapest;

Mitchell and Cook are one turn on a fairly elaborate bill at the Lafayette; in their second week there, Mitchell and Cook bring out an entirely new show, sharing the bill with acts including featured attraction Okeh record star Sara Martin, "the Blue Sensation from the West"; in fact, she has already appeared in NYC, but not yet in Harlem

1923, in summer: No further sign of the vaunted Cotton Blossoms project announced in March that was to involve Alex Rogers, Luckyeth Roberts and Jimmy Johnson (who does the music for Runnin' Wild---see below).

1923, in August: at the end of August, Abbie was in Chicago on a vaudeville bill without Cook (Chicago Defender, September 1, 1923, p. 6)

1923, fall or spring??: maybe Cook had some part in Just for Fun produced by Irvin C. Miller; a touring vaudeville revue; did it ever actually exist? (He's also in the cast, apparently, acc. Peterson, A century of musicals in black and white; is this altogether just a Peterson fiction?? Sampson, Blacks in Blackface, also lists it for 1923). I think it may just be a ghost, but if there is any truth to it, then the problem may be that it is a tab review in vaudeville and virtually invisible in the newspapers. Moreover, I think the Will Cook in the cast of whatever he saw was probably Will A. Cook, not Will M. Cook, and he says Ida Andrews is in it, but I cannot track that name at all. Could all of this be an early name for Runnin' Wild??

NB: Irvin C. Miller says he is going to be putting into rehearsal a new play with most of the old Liza company (Pittsburgh Courier, October 27, 1923, p. 11)
1923, in August: RUNNIN' WILD a.k.a. RUNNING WILD

Through the summer/fall, Cook contributes compositions and/or arrangements to a big new Miller and Lyles production, Runnin' Wild, with the two stars in their famous roles as Steve Jenkins and Sam Peck; this is their successor to Shuffle Along; it is very much a revue; two acts and ten scenes; book by Miller & Lyles; principal music by James P. Johnson and lyrics by Cecil Mack; a big star is Revella Hughes, and also starring Adelaide Hall, Ina Duncan, and Arthur Porter; Mercer Cook’s memoir says Cook held it together through rocky try-outs; then on the road (so at least August, September, October); it was "directed by Cook, "the old master" himself" (Pittsburgh Courier, September 1, 1923, p. 11) and the pit orchestra is Cook’s orchestra (Pittsburgh Courier, September 8, 1923, p. 11); Cook is directing the company (Cleveland Gazette, September 8, 1923, p. 1)

The show was at the Howard Theatre in DC from August 23, then in Cleveland (Cleveland Gazette, September 8, 1923, p. 1 says Cook is directing the company, and that they were in DC last week), then in a solid Boston run from September 3 to Saturday, October 20; it is in its last week on October 14 (Boston Herald, August 26, 1923, p. 37; Pittsburgh Courier, September 29, 1923, p. 11) Boston Herald, October 12, 1923, p. 16; Boston Herald, October 14, 1923, p. 45), then opened at the New Colonial Theatre on Broadway on October 29, 1923 (New York Times, October 30, 1923, p. 17; New York Sun, October 31, 1923, p. 20) and stayed for twenty-seven weeks, to May 3, 1924, and then back for a week from June 23 to June 28---this is basically the entire season---the theatrical year; then on road again (e.g., to Rochester, NY, etc.); then back to Colonial for a week in June 1924.

Runnin’ Wild plays an entire second season, 1924-1925 on the road with its stars; in Canton, Ohio in January 1925 with Miller & Lyles and eighty associates; they did a stint in Brooklyn at Werba’s for the week of February 15, 1925 [Brooklyn Daily Eagle, February 15, 1925, p. 2E], and the week after that in Utica, NY for three days; then in Pittsburgh in March 1925
Did Cook conduct at all in NYC? Possibly he gave over the reins upon arrival in NYC? Or only before Boston? He leaves hardly a trace in the fall; I sthis because he is in the pit.

The claim is made by some that this is the show that introduces the Charleston, but the credit for that is also given to Liza. There is a distinction to be drawn. The dance was introduced in Liza earlier in the year, but Runnin’ Wild introduces the song “The Charleston” by James P. Johnson.

"Whoever arranged the music of James Johnson and Cecil Mack is something of a genius, we think" (NY The Sun and the Globe, October 31, 1923, p. 20)

Talent includes:

James P. Johnson & Cecil Mack; Cook

Miller & Lyles
Revella Hughes
Honeyboy Thompson (who will be in the Revue negre in 1925)
Mattie Wilkes
Adelaide Hall, Ida Duncan, Arthur Porter,
and many others

There is a relative lack of mention of Cook or of any other arranger/orchestrator in newspaper accounts of Runnin' Wild, but enough to confirm he's on board; further, in addition to one ref. to Cook and Mercer recollection, the tie-in to Negro Nuances (see immediately below) in both of its versions is enough to confirm that the arrangements here are Cook's; Mercer remembers that Cook assisted with the production (Carter thesis, p. 380).

1923, in fall: Abbie Mitchell is busy with recitals in NYC

1923, in December: Abbie Mitchell was the star attraction of the evening at a big social event of December 25 in the African American community in Chicago (Broad Axe, December 29, 1923, p. 1)

1924, in January: NEGRO MUSICAL NIGHT or NEGRO NUANCES (I)
1924, in January: Advertised initially as a series of Sunday concerts, "Negro Nuances," beginning January 27; in the end there was only one concert, on Sunday the 27th, at the Schubert's 44th Street Theatre, a "Negro Musical Night," an expression which is partly a description and partly a name.

Some ads say "Negro Nuances," but others, e.g., NY Times, January 27, 1924, p. X4, say it is a "Negro Musical Night," led by Cook and Edmund T. Jenkins; it is a benefit for the "Negro Folk Theatre Association" or "Negro Folk Music and Drama Society (an organization for the purpose of developing and exploiting Negro talent)"; likewise called a Negro Musical Night for the "Negro Folk Theatre Association" in the Evening Telegram (NY Evening Telegram, January 24, 1924, p. 8); NB: Chicago had a Negro Folk Theatre that relocated to NYC, and surely it is this troupe that is meant; this is the first of three such benefits, held during the course of four theatrical seasons, 23/24, 25/26, 26/27, always December/January---perhaps during the break between fall and spring runs of shows--except in the silent year of 1924-1925

Sponsored by the "Negro Folk Music and Drama Society (an organization for the purpose of developing and exploiting Negro talent)," which will present artists---so the language is deliberately that of a society already formed, and in this language represented as presenters not benefiters (New York Age, Saturday, January 19, 1924, p. 6; New York Evening Telegram, January 24, 1924, p. 8; NY Evening Post, January 26, 1924, p. 10; NY Age, Saturday, January 26, 1924, p. 6, 8; NY Evening Post, Monday, January 28, 1924, p. 7) or a.k.a. the "Negro Folk Music and Drama Association, a society formed for the purpose of developing negro talent," in this phrase again making clear that the organization already exists (Brooklyn Standard Union, January 27, 1924, p. 15; New York Evening Post, January 28, 1924, p. 7)

"Negro Musical Night" was in fact first scheduled for the Times Square Theatre, then moved at the last minute to Schubert's 44th Street Theatre; called the first NYC appearance of Cook since last May 1923 at the Century Theater; features Abbie Mitchell, Gertrude Saunders (of Liza), the Misses Hughes, Welch, Duncan and Harvey (the ladies quartet of "Runnin' Wild), Paul Robeson, Alberta Hunter, Edith Wilson, Arthur Byron, George Stamper, Charlie Davis,
dramatic reader Richard B. Harrison; other who have promised to appear include Dannie Small, May Brown, Florence Parham, Nora Bayes, Ada Ward, Tom Fletcher, Billie Mitchel, and Walter Richardson; an orchestra of 25 under "Edward T. Jenkins" of London and Cook "will render spirituals, Jazz music, and modern negro classics as only Negroes can"; draws in small part on performers from Runnin' Wild and from Liza (and other current reviews?); according to Edmund T. Jenkins, who says he got out of it at the last moment, the show was a failure (Jeffrey P. Green, Edmund Thornton Jenkins (1982), p. 143); but the NY Evening Post January 28 review says Jenkins was there and led his own work, a rhapsody whose main theme is "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," against which other Negro folksongs were used contrapuntally, and the reviewer also notes the contribution of Harry Burleigh, Paul Robeson, Abbie Mitchell, James P. Johnson, and Gertrude Saunders (NY Evening Post, January 28, 1924, p. 7). Caution: could be a review written on the basis of a publicity blurb! In a newspaper column written in 1938, Cappy Barra, Harmonica King, recalls how as a little boy in NYC he followed Cook's Clef Club orchestra, and that "he did a concert at '44th Street theater,' N.Y.C. and for the first time introduced the saxophone (sic). I think the player's name was Bashe . . . ." That would be Sydney Bechet. (Pittsburgh Courier, August 13, 1938, p. 20)

See John Howland, "'The Blues Get Glorified': Harlem Entertainment, Negro Nuances, and Black Symphonic Jazz," Musical Quarterly 90/3-4 (Fall/Winter 2007): 319-370, for reproductions of two ads for the January event and a scenario for the later big show of Negro Nuances (for which show, see below) and see also his book, chapter 5

1924, in February and March: NEGRO NUANCES (II)

1924, in February: Abbie Mitchell and Cook intend to expand the concert program into a book show, a Broadway show of ninety minutes running time.

Big mention in mid month, with a New York, NY (A.N.P.) February 14 byline: Negro Nuances is in rehearsal for a tentative opening March 4; "The piece is an assembling of the Negro musical history from early Africa's barbarian tunes to the modern day jazz that has been put into a libretto by Abbie Mitchell"; further, "Marion Cook and Louis Douglas are en route from London to participate in the
production" (Philadelphia Tribune, February 16, 1924, p. 1; Pittsburgh Courier, February 16, 1924, p. 10)

An elaborate working outline to this expanded version of the show exists in Mercer Cook's papers, and in an abridged and edited form this outline was published by Howland; a Defender article in March, anticipating the enlarged show, mentions Sidney Bechet's contribution, so he's aboard at this point. Cook says Bechet and Jimmie Johnson wrote the last 22 minutes (which by the outline makes sense since it would be the scene taken from Runnin' Wild; all earlier material seems to be taken from Cook compositions and arrangements, and this 22-minute stretch might also be arranged/orchestrated by Cook)

Bechet recalls (Treat it Gentle, p. 145) "At this time Will Marion Cook wanted to write a show with Jimmie Johnson, and he wanted me as well. We used to meet every day to get this show going. It was called Negro Nuances and it was a wonderful thing, but we just couldn't get it started. I had done quite a few numbers there with Will Marion Cook, but nothing happened, so I had to stop."

In the Cook letter printed in the Chicago Defender, March 22, he says that "After this, [I] shall produce grand opera in Paris." (NB: the boast about Paris is already found in Chicago Defender, March 2, 1924, continuation of art. of p. F1)

Acc. Cook's letter to the Defender, the show will feature Abbie Mitchell, Gertrude Saunders, Alberta Hunter, Louis Douglas and Marion Douglas, Charles Olden, Tom Fletcher, and Leonard Harper, who will stage it. [NOTE the participation of Louis and Marion Douglas.] See also Pittsburgh Courier, April 5, 1924, p.16.

Acc. Lotz, cast was to include Abbie Mitchell, Louis Douglas, Lucille Handy (daughter of W. C. Handy), and Miller & Lyle. I'm not sure where his info comes from, but could be Peterson, Century of Musicals (1993) or Sampson, Blacks in Blackface, p. 271 (I have not yet found the source, with reference to Lucille Handy Springer). These latter two sources also say James P. Johnson will direct the orchestra. The confusion about Miller & Lyles (if it is confusion) may be because Nuances (I) drew on Runnin' Wild, and so would the last 22 minutes of Nuances (II).

One or the other or both of two short articles in "However, comma---
a widely syndicated column from NYC by James W. Dean, report
that Dean has visited Cook in NYC and saw in rehearsal "Negro
Nuances, a play or revue about the drama of the race over 450 years
from African through slavery to jazz, written in just three days, will
be going to Broadway in a few weeks." It evidently never made it out
of rehearsal, though; John Chilton, in his biography of Sidney Bechet,
says it "never progressed much further than the embryo stage."
Nonetheless, many reference books claim that it existed, though I
have seen no further trace in newspaper databases. Louis Douglas
and Marion Cook, who were to be in it, were back in Paris by late
March/early April (Lotz). There are strong similarities to the Ethel
Waters vehicles Miss Calico and Africana of 1926-27.

Danville (NY) Bee, February 18, 1924; Niagara Falls Gazette, February
19, 1924, p. 15; Niagara Falls Gazette, February 20, 1924, p. 13;
Kokomo Tribune, February 20, 1924; Olean Evening Times, February
20, 1923; Middlesboro Daily News, February 20, 1924, p. 6; Fitchburg
Sentinel, February 21, 1924, p. 14; Sandusky Star Journal, February 22,
1924, p. 11; Modesto Evening News, February 23, 1924, p. 4; Chicago
Tribune, March 2, 1924, p. F1; Chicago Defender, March 22, 1924, p. 7

FIRST NUANCE
Scene 1: Africa
Interlude
Scene 2: Ghost Ship

SECOND NUANCE
Scene 3: Cotton fields of Georgia
Interlude
Scene 4: ca. 1860 and Emancipation

THIRD NUANCE
Scene 5: Clorindy
Interlude
Scene 6: Garden of Flowers

FOURTH NUANCE
Scene 7: New Orleans and the Charleston; one number here is
"Darkey Love," which might be the song from 1911's
Black Bohemia
1924, in April: The show, "the soul of the race told in song and dance," is to open on Broadway in one of the Schubert houses on Easter Monday [i.e., April 7], with cast including Abbie Mitchell, Gertrude Saunders, Alberta Hunter, Chas. Olden, and Louis and Marion Douglas (some of the text is close to that of Cook letter in Defender, here in Pittsburgh Courier, Saturday, April 5, 1924, p. 16); evidently, though it does not open

1924, in April: Cook’s studio is at 232 W. 138th Street (the Spiller’s house) and son Mercer entertains friends there, including Daisy White, Bernice Wilson, Luela Moses, Ethel Moses, Percy Andrews, Charles Gilmer, Rudolph Holcombe, and Dick Thomas (Chicago Defender, April 12, 1924, p. 9)

1924, in June: On midnite Sunday, June 22, at Philadelphia’s Garrick Theater, Will Marion Cook, Paul Robeson, and local Philadelphian Helen Underhill headlined an all-star show that was a benefit for the "Outing Fund"; "Cook was the same charming director and won the hearts of his audience upon his first bow" (Pittsburgh Courier, June 28, 1924, p. 12)

1924, August: Cook and Clarence Cameron White are the two "race composers" among a total group of 30 just elected to ASCAP (Chicago Defender, August 9, 1924, p. 11); later he is said to be one of the first three so recognized, the other two being James Reese Europe and Will Tyers (Chicago Defender, April 9, 1927, p. 6)

1924-1925

On the basis of newspaper references (or the lack of them), there is a big gap of around a year in Cook’s biography, essentially from September 1924, from the collapse of the enlarged "Negro Nuances" project, to June/July 1925. Is he abroad in Europe or South America? Or at a sanitarium? Or holed up writing an opera? Basically, one very long season out of the public eye. What is up? The gap also includes silence about the whereabouts of Abbie Mitchell and Louis Douglas. Are they in some production together? Is Cook in Asheville, NC? Or in Brazil?

Cook usually does benefit concerts around Christmas or New Year’s Day (January 1924, January 1926, December 1926, December 1927)
but apparently not in this gap year.

Micoh Seigel cites a contemporary Brazilian journal in early 1926 for a "dubious" but not entirely ruled out reference that Will Marion Cook and Louis Douglas were in Rio during the run of a French revue ("Ba-ta-clan") there in 1924 (Micoh Seigel, Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States, p. 109 and pp. 274-75, fn. 57);

Louis Douglas had been playing with Mistinguett at the club Ba-Ta-Clan in Paris in April 1923, and then he was in South America with her on tour in 1923. Lotz (p. 309-311) says this was initially to be a 45-day tour that ended up running May-October. (Ba-ta-clan was the name of a French-language periodical in Rio from 1867 that covered the stage, etc., and the name was taken for a Parisian vaudeville theater.) Douglas seems to have come back to the US at the end of that 1923 tour (Lotz, p. 311). He was reportedly going to be involved in Negro Nuances (II), but he is in Paris by April 1924 (Lotz, 309, 311 and web hits). Possibly the French troupe goes back to South America in 1924 and father-in-law Cook tags along. Nothing in Lotz supports this, but there is a gap in the Louis Douglas chronology from around July 1924 to July 1925 (gap at Lotz, pp. 311-312), just as in Cook’s own chronology.

1925, in January: "It is rumored Will Marion Cook has finished the score of his new Grand Opera and hopes to produce it during the coming season" (Pittsburgh Courier, January 17, 1925, p. 2); almost exactly a year later, in January 1926, the Courier again forecasts the completion of this opera (see below).

1925, in May: Abbie, very busy in 1924-25, is the soloist in a vocal recital on Friday, May 22, 1925 during the May Music Festival of the Bluefield Colored Institute in Bluefield, WV.

1925, in May: In Baltimore Afro American, May 16, 1925, p. 21, Will Marion Cook is interviewed at the time his son, Will Mercer Cook, in his senior of college, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and won the Simpson Fellowship at Amherst College for a year's study at the Sorbonne (it is the most coveted prize at Amherst). Evidently Cook is in town in NYC, and he is identified as leader of the Clef Club's Symphony Orchestra (an expression not used otherwise after about 1914). The article says Mercer had to leave school for a year while his parents were in Europe in 1923, implying that they are not in Europe
now. This would mean he sat out the 1922-1923 academic year. That makes sense if he graduated from Dunbar High in 1920 and went right to Amherst College, but only graduated from Amherst in 1925.

1925, in mid summer: In the 1925 NY State Census, Grandma (Abbie’s aunt) is running the household with Louis Douglas, Marion, and daughter, plus Mercer, plus cousins Hartwell and Louise. It is the greater part of her extended family, minus Will and Abbie themselves.

1925, in June: Cook’s son Mercer marries in NYC on June 24, and he and his bride sailed for France on July 19 (Pittsburg Courier, July 26, 1925, p. 6).

1925-1926

1925, in June: TAN TOWN TOPICS

Cook re-appears, as it were, in mid-1925. This is first in conjunction with Tan Town Topics. The context: the Plantation is a roof club over the Winter Garden at Broadway and 50th Street; opening there on Tuesday, June 23, 1925 is the latest summer Plantation revue, Tan Town Topics. With Florence Mills deciding to take a break and then working in vaudeville, it instead stars Ethel Waters and 8 Plantation Beauties, accompanied by Will Vodery’s Plantation Orchestra. The show had been scheduled to open June 5, then was delayed almost three weeks, and the management asked Cook to step in and help fix things up; reportedly, he added Josephine Baker to the chorus, but he certainly had to work in Ethel Waters’s numbers (J.-C. Baker, Hungry Heart, pp. 82, 83; Bogle, Ethel Waters bio., p. 109); is Vodery actually doing Cook some kind of favor? Is this at all parallel to the situation in 1929 with Swing Along? NB: As late as mid-June 1925 Ethel (“America’s ebony comedienne”) and Earl Dancer are on the road for B. F. Keith’s in vaudeville, doing the skit "Negro Folk Songs, Sayings, and Dances" (e.g., Boston Herald, June 16, 1925, p. 5), so that June 5 date was pretty optimistic!!

1925, in July and August: HOTSY-TOTSY, a.k.a. LA REVUE NEGRE

The wealthy white liberal socialite turned arts patron and theater
producer, Mrs. Caroline Dudley Reagan, whose businessman husband Daniel J. Reagan had become associated with the Paris Office of the US Department of Commerce as a trade commissioner, decided she would take a black revue to Paris. She came back in NYC from Paris on May 8 and at some point thereafter turned to Cook for advice and assistance in choosing talent. By one account (Reagan’s unpublished memoir?) she jumped on a bus and headed uptown to Harlem in July, and went straight to the office of Cook (J.-C. Baker, Hungry Heart, pp. 88, 91). Mercer Cook reports that she had in hand a six-week contract from the Theatre au Champs-Elysees and told Cook of her plans, and that it was Cook who urged her to consider hiring Josephine Baker. Reagan apparently had her eye set first on Florence Mills, and in fact, Florence Mills appears in a July 9 program of the Theatre as the fall’s coming attraction (J.-C. Baker, Hungry Heart, p. 92). Next Ethel Mills was approached.

Finally, with a new orientation of the production away from a female star and towards dance, the young eccentric dancer Josephine Baker was approached. Cook may have had a hand in recommending and negotiating with all of those ladies (or at least the latter two). Baker at this moment was one of four principals, but the big stars were to be dancers Louis Douglas and Marion Cook Douglas, with dancer Baker and singer Maude de Forrest in secondary roles.

In respect to composition, Cook was “the composer,” but that means here in the sense that he was the orchestrator and arranger of the songs of others (e.g., Variety/Defender art says Cook is the composer; see below). Most of the songs were the work of Spencer Williams, the pianist and composer, who actually came on board as a member of the company only shortly before departure. A Paris program says he and others were composers of the numbers. Williams sang in the Bootlegger's Quartette with Mercer, etc. Josephine is known to have sung at least three of his songs in the show, and she records them in Paris in 1926.

Son-in-law Louis Winston Douglas returns to NYC from Hamburg with wife and daughter (Cook’s daughter and granddaughter) on Monday, June 15, 1925 (Variety, June 17, 1925, p. 6). He initially seems not to have come back to the US to assist in the new show. (He will be one of its stars, perhaps the very best known.) Rather, he and Marion have come back "to engage in stage work" in New York.
Louis immediately gets sick, though, so this is put on hold (Variety, July 15, 1925, p. 40).

Mercer makes Phi Beta Kappa, wins a $1500 [or $1000] scholarship to study at the Sorbonne, graduates in the Amherst Class of 1925, marries Bernice on June 24, 1925, and he and his wife sail for Paris on July 19 (or on Saturday, July 18, acc. Pittsburgh Courier, July 25, 1925, p. 6); he will meet the company on the dock, help with arrangements and as translator, and eventually spend some of his free time on stage with the troupe.

Abbie Mitchell and Hartwell Cook are at the Club Alabam (Variety, July 8, 1925, p. 47), and to hold onto this gig, Hartwell decides in the end not to go with the revue. (Articles on Too Bad (see below) mention that he had been scheduled to depart.)

This late in the summer, Cook mostly goes cheap and hires very young talent.

1925, in August: Variety has headline "Colored Tab for Paris With Will Marion Cook" (Variety, August 26, 1925 p. 5); Chicago Defender and Baltimore Afro American reprint this report about week later (Chicago Defender, September 5, 1926, p. 6; Baltimore Afro American, September 5, 1925, p. 4); here we learn it is a company of 20 with six girls and an eight piece male orchestra; the show will run about 75 minutes and occupy the second half of a vaudeville bill, plus "It will be made flexible for rearrangement to a full evening's entertainment. Will Marion Cook is composing the music and Mr. Cook is to accompany the show as its orchestral leader." The show is called "an all-colored tabloid" in the Pittsburgh Courier, September 5, 1925, p. 10, which identifies the principals as Louis Douglas, Marion Douglas, Maude de Forrest. The show is also called a tab in "Colored Troupe's Hit/ Caroline Dudley's Tab Act Opens in Paris" (Variety, October 7, 1925, p. 3)

A "tab show" is a stage show: a short, travelling version of a review or cut down musical comedy; in the US, it would have a short life at any given theatre, then move to the next town; the kind of live stage show that would work on a bill with a movie; this would fit "La revue negre" which was only about 45 minutes to an hour if that, i.e., a half a bill. What Cook creates is, in point of fact, a tab not of a musical but of a dance revue. Dance, not songs, predominates, and Louis
Douglass is in the spotlight throughout the show. NB: In New York, the revue consistently goes under the name Hotsy Totsy.

1925, in August: on the same day as the Variety blurb appears, Carl Van Vechten writes in his daybook that he saw a rehearsal of the revue on Wednesday, August 26 at the Harlem Casino.

Anyway, there is clearly some kind of a falling out by early September. Mercer Cook memoir in The Crisis says Cook, sr., walked out of rehearsals in a huff, otherwise he would have gone over. Bessie Taliaferro also says Cook quarreled with Lewis Douglas and Mrs. Reagan. Thus Cook, who had expected to go abroad, stayed in NYC instead. Joe Trent turns up in Carl Van Vechten daybooks on September 6 and Spencer Williams on September 9, so the flare-up might have come very shortly before departure. NY Times reporter Margo Jefferson says Cook and Reagan quarreled and then Spencer Williams took over the music, and this seems to have been only shortly before departure. There does not seem to be too much of a problem in the Cook family. Son-in-law Louis Douglas and daughter Marion Cook Douglas are in the show, and then son Mercer (studying in Paris) also gets a part. Nephew Hartwell Cook was also under contract to go, but opts to stay in NYC instead.

1925, in September: Josephine Baker leaves for Europe with the essentially leaderless troupe in September (sailed on the Berengaria on September 16-22, 1925; opening in Paris on October 2, 1925); and rapidly becomes a huge star in La revue negre, skyrocketing out of the orbit of Louis Douglas. Bechet goes along, and Louis and Marion Douglas and their child Marion, too. J.-C. Baker, Hungry Heart, p. 97, says Cook was at the dock to see them off.

Micoh Seigel, Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States p. 123, cites a reference to an image supposedly showing both Cook and Louis Douglas in Paris in La revue negre wearing primitive costumes. Perhaps it is Mercer in the photo??

THE WHIRL OF DIXIE

1925, in August: THE WHIRL OF DIXIE

This is a revival of a project from 1918, when a show is announced that is to be called The Whirl of Dixie, "a big all-colored road show
along the lines of the early Williams and Walker shows," with book and lyrics by Rucker, and featuring John Rucker and Harry Fiddler (Nashville Glove, April 12, 1918, p. 1; Variety, n.d. [after March 27, 1918], p. 5; Variety, April 12, 1918, p. 9).

Another effort had been made to get a show of this name off the ground in 1924, when it was described as the work of Jimmie Johnson, Eddie Green, and Leonard Harper (Variety, July 9, 1924, p. 10); NB: in this light it is significant that Johnson was to be involved with the 1924 Negro Nuances, and that one number from the 22 minutes of Runnin' Wild that was to go into the bigger Negro Nuances was "Sunshine Sammy." See below.

Cook’s 1925 connection: "A new show entitled "The Whirl of Dixie," featuring "Sunshine Sammy" [Sammie Morrison, child actor and an original Our Gang member] and John Rucker, will open on Broadway in one of the Schubert houses and will carry their own band, under direction of Will Marion Cook. The book was written by John Rucker and Joe Morrison. Cecil Mack and Jimmie Johnson wrote the lyrics and music." (Pittsburgh Courier, August 15, 1925, p. 10). NB: Mack and Johnson are the principal Runnin' Wild team.

This show is possibly the one that had been called Sunshine Sammy, with music by Johnson and Mack, in a mention in the Amsterdam News (September 9, 1925, p. 000; ref. in Peterson, Century of Musicals); moreover, Peterson notes that a show by Jesse Shipp with music by Johnson and Mack but without Sammy, Moochin' Along, might actually be identical and just renamed; Moochin' Along was at the Lafayette in December 1925, with dances staged by Hartwell Cook, etc., and was to go on to play TOBA houses, and played Philadelphia's Dunbar in Christmas week, and then closed there after just three weeks---on which see NY Age, Saturday, December 8, 1925, p. 6; Variety, December 16, 1925, p. 24, Philadelphia Inquirer, December 22, p. 17, NY Age, January 2, 1926, p. 6; Variety, January 13, 1926, p. 10).

In light of these plans, Cook was never intending to go to Paris. In the end, there is no further sign of this show per se, but Too Bad (see just below), in which Rucker was to be involved, may very well have been a successor in some manner.
TOO BAD


The farce tentatively called Too Bad is slated to open October 26 in DC; the book is by Jesse A. Shipp and Abbie Mitchell, lyrics by Andy Razaf and Russe [sic; Russell] Simmons; music by Sidney Basha [sic; Bechet] and Donald Haywood [sic; Heywood], ensembles by Will Marion Cook ("Will M. Cook attending to the singing and producing"), and dances by Louis Douglas and Leonard Harper. Cast is to include Abbie Mitchell, Ethel Waters, Richard B. Harrison [the old friend and dramatic reader], Billy Mills, Sydney Kirkpatrick, Ada Ward, Laura Bowman, and John Rucker. This is an impressive, elite, older, established group with ties to Lafayette companies in NYC and Chicago.

"'Too Bad' Colored Show From Cohen's Serial Story" (Variety, September 16, 1925, p. 7; Cleveland Plaindealer, October 18, 1925, p. 85 (Drama Section, p. 7); Billy E. Jones, "New York Notes, Chicago Defender, September 26, 1925, p. 6, and Variety column reprinted in Chicago Defender, September 26, 1925, p. 7).

A second story thread accompanies this show: Variety has headline "Some Colored Artists Dodged Paris Trip" and says Cook does not board the Berengaria but instead stays behind to stage and produce Too Bad, and Hartwell Cook, also under contract, also did not make the trip (Variety, September 30, 1925, p. 8; Chicago World reprints under title "European Trip Dodged by Will Marion Cooke" in Chicago World, October 29, 1925, p. 7).

I suspect that this show is not just an expanded version of the Revue negre, and not related to The Whirl of Dixie, though Rucker is involved, and also Leonard Harper. Possibly, however, some of its intended material came from earlier projects. Note presence of work from Bechet, Douglas, Harper, Ethel Waters, etc. Given the claimed participation of Bechet and Douglas, it sounds as if this was running parallel to the revue in its development. Possibly this was an
alternative being considered if Hotsy-Totsy fell through.

Biggest creative force in La revue negre not represented here seems to be Spencer Williams, replaced by Heywood in a sense; biggest name missing from Ethel Waters circle is Earl Dancer. Perhaps was timed to be Ethel Waters's show after the summer's Tan Town Topics closed up at the Plantation, but she actually went off into vaudeville. The new Plantation show starting in November again featured Florence Mills.

All the possible principals for Too Bad end up working elsewhere this fall, of course (most named in Billy Pierce, "Hittin' Here and There" column, Chicago Defender, December 5, 1925, p. 6):

Ethel Waters went back into vaudeville and then in early 1926 began a run of tab shows now for the first time under the direction of Earl Dancer. (Did Cook have any hand in the arrangements they used?)

Billy Mills ends up by November 1925 in Irving C. Miller's first "Brownskin Models" (called "Brown skin Artists and Models" in Trenton Sunday Times-Advertiser, November 8, 1925, Part 4, p. 11), which had a Heywood score

Laura Bowman is Mrs. Sydney Kirkpatrick: see Billboard, August 26, 1922, p. 42; much later in time, she is "veteran actress and ex-Lafayette Player"; they were both with the Lafayette Players, and in the early 1920s with the Ethiopian Art Theatre, etc. Beloved dramatic actor Kirkpatrick died in October 1930 but his wife had a major later career; they were in the Lafayette Players from 1917-1922 and then in vaudeville as a duo; then with Ethiopian Art Players in Chicago in 1923-24; in late 1925 and 1926 they go out as a duo act in vaudeville.

Ada Ward [Aida Ward] gets famous as a black soprano; she is in Cook's January 1924 benefit concert; in 1924 Lew Leslie's Dixie to Broadway starring Mills; quasi-Florence Mills understudy; she's in the 1927 Florence Mills benefit; star of Blackbirds of 1928, Blackbirds of 1929; sings with Cab Calloway in 1932, 1934 as "most popular of colored singers."

NB: Later in the 1920s there were short films (1928) on stories of Octavus Roy Cohen.
1925, in December: BENEFIT

A production that is scheduled and then delayed: Will Marion Cook is going to hold "evenings of negro music" beginning next Sunday [a week from today, i.e., December 27] at a theatre yet to be announced, in aid of the Negro Art School or Negro Music School, and with Abbie Mitchell, the Dixie Jubilee Singers, and Hann's Cotton Club Quartet (NY Times, December 20, 1925, p. X9); by another report the concert is on the 27th and Dixie Jubilee Singers are to take part, and the concert is a "monster concert" (Baltimore Afro American, December 19, 1925, pp. 4, 5);
"An Evening of Negro Music," scheduled for Sunday the 27th, sponsored by Dr. Sigmund Spaeth, annoys columnist Kennard Williams in the Afro American by the use in an advertisement of the term "Darkey" as in "Darkey Love Songs" (Baltimore Afro American, December 26, 1925, p. 5);
this event ends up taking place on January 10, for which see below; this is apparently the second benefit, the first having been two years prior in 1923/24 season (i.e., Negro Nuances)

1926, in January: Cook is at work on an opera on characteristic Negro music themes (NY Age, Saturday, January 2, 1926, p. 6); "It is rumored Will Marion Cook has finished the score of his new Grand Opera and hopes to produce it during the coming season" (Pittsburgh Courier, January 17, 1926, p. 2); Note that almost a year before, in January 1925, the Courier is predicting a new opera from Cook.

1926, in January: BENEFIT FOR A NEW ART SCHOOL (as in December) or a CONCERT CELEBRATION OF NEGRO MUSIC

This is "An Evening of Negro Music"; evidently rescheduled from December 27; Cook is planning a series of concerts of the "better" race music and the concerts are to begin January 10; by other reports, there were to be two concerts, on January 10 and January 17; and by another report there will be three, on the 10th, 17th, 24th (NY Age, Saturday, January 2, 1926, p. 6; Chicago Defender, January 9, 1926, p. 6; New York Times, January 9, 1926, p. 6; New York Sun, January 9, 1926, p. 9)

In the end, only one concert took place, on the 10th, at the Ambassador Theater, under the sponsorship of Dr. Sigmund Spaeth; "the program . . . included numbers by jazz band, spirituals, folk

The context: Cook looks to found a Negro Art School or Negro School of Music in NYC, and the intended concerts are a benefit for the new school; as mentioned above, this is the fourth year (and third such concert) to benefit such a school; just into the new year, he is reportedly going to open an art school in NYC, with free tuition (Chicago Defender, January 9, 1926, p. 6; Kansas Advocate, January 15, 1926, p. 1); the "Negro Art School", for which he is directing a big benefit (Chicago Broad Axe, January 23, 1926, p. 2); and "New York Celebrates Negro Music" is from another article on the same event (NY Times, December 29, 1925, p. X 9)

NY Times, January 3, 1926 says it will be two concerts, on Sunday, Jan. 10 and Sunday, Jan. 17 on Broadway, at the Ambassador Theatre on West 49th Street, in aid of the Negro School of Music, or a proposed Negro Art School, which is to be founded by Abbie Mitchell, Henry Creamer, and Cook, and Dr. Sigmund Spaeth was one of the sponsors, and the concert will be presented under Spaeth's personal direction; New York Sun on January 9 prints only information, mentioning three concerts, on January 10, 17, and 24 at the National Theater, and says "in aid of a proposed music school for negroes," and "sponsored by a committee including Muriel Draper and Dr. Sigmund Spaeth."

NB: Muriel Draper (c.1886-1972) was a white interior designer, socialite and salonist a writer and activist, and participant in the Harlem Renaissance; a close friend of Carl Van Vechten, Jean Toomer, etc.; one of leading white intellectuals on the interracial arts and salon/partying circuit; Cotton Club regular; a figure not unlike Nancy Cunard; author of Music at Midnight (1929), a memoir of her years in Europe before WWI. Family money derives from fact that father was one of earliest investors in AT&T. Papers are at Yale, and best short bio is part of on-line finding aid for Yale papers. Small article in Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance.

It was announced that the program would feature Abbie Mitchell, soprano, Van Cleave, ukelele, the Dixie Jubilee Singers [Alta Melba Browne and Eva A. Jessye, sopranos; Bertha T. Powell, contralto; Purnell Hall and Charles Parker, tenors; Edward S. Jones, Philip Patterson and Percy Smith, basses], Hann's Cotton Club Quartet
Earley Greyson and Percy Colsten, tenors; George H. Jones, jr., baritone; Wm. Hann, basso, and the Syncopated Symphony Orchestra, with Cook and Russell Wooding as accompanists (NY Age, January 9, 1926, p. 7; NY Times, January 11, 1926, p. 32); this line-up is heavy on Baltimore and Washington folks, and that continues to be true even after some changes.

NB: In the fall of 1925, the Dixie Jubilee singers were the hot ticket in NYC in vaudeville, in churches, and on the radio; traditionally, Eva Jessye (1895-1992) is said to have joined the group in 1926, but the interest of the Baltimore Afro American in the group in late 1925 makes it pretty clear that this Baltimore-based ensemble is likely to already have Éva Jessye on board; Jessye then runs Dixie Jubilee singers on a vaudeville circuit in February 1926, and later, in the fall of 1926, on the Keith circuit with slightly different personnel list, featuring singers Marie Bar--, --Johnston, Carrie Yates, Eva Jessye, with men Edward S. Jones, Purnell Hall, William Veasay, J. W. Maxwell and Oliver Nichols (NY Age, September 4, 1926, p. 7);

Cook's mentoring association with Jessye may date from around this moment; she had previously been living and working mainly in Oklahoma [e.g., Topeka Plaindealer, December 2, 1921, p. 1; etc.], with a stint from 1919-???? in Baltimore; she seems to have returned to Baltimore in later 1925; her home and studio in NYC were at 224 W. 129th St.

In the end, participants in the single concert included Abbie Mitchell, Tom Fletcher, Hann's Cotton Club Quartet (the 4 Emperors of Song), the Dixie Jubilee Singers, and Duke Ellington's Washingtonians (a jazz band of eight pieces), which played a jazz number after each vocal selection in the first half, including opening with "Swanee Butterfly" and closing the first half with Ellington's own "The Jig Walker"; Joe Jordan came to the stage from the audience and accompanied Tom Fletcher in two numbers.

Abbie sang a group of songs in Part I including Lawrence Brown's "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child" and Harry Burleigh's arrangement of "Little David, play on your harp," plus an encore of Cook's "Mammy"; in Part II she sang Cook's "Exhortation" and J. Rosamond Johnson's setting of Dunbar's "Li'l Gal", with Cook as accompanist; Hahn's quartet sang "All God's chilluns got shoes," "Ev'rybody talkin' 'bout Heaven ain't goin' there," and other jubilee
songs and spirituals; the Dixie Jubilee Singers sang songs including "So I can change my name," and "Swing low, sweet chariot"; and Fletcher and Jordan performed "Oh, wouldn't that be a dream," and encored it with "I'm goin' to exit" (from the review in NY Age, January 16, 1926, p. 3).

"Cook is establishing in NYC a school of Negro Art. Mr. Cook has some splendid original ideas upon the cultivation and preservation of Negro music and this new school should accomplish a great and much needed work in racial advancement in the Arts" (Pittsburgh Courier, January 16, 1926, p. 9).

Reports of this concert, "New York City Celebrates Negro Music," in the black press include Kansas Advocate, January 22, 1926; Chicago Broad Axe, January 23, 1926; Kansas City Plaindealer, February 18, 1926.

1926, in April: Abbie Mitchell marries again (NY Age, April 24, 1926, p. 7), this time to a Mr. Thompson or Thomkins or Tomkins, a NYC postal clerk; a Leslie A. Thomkins is in a NYC Manhattan city directory on 442 St. Nicholas Ave, and this is probably him; he acts as her manager; they are together for about four years; in the 1930 census they are caring for her granddaughter Marion; they divorce in 1931 (see below). At the time of his death in 1937, the Baltimore Afro American, February 27, 1937, calls him Leslie Thompkins, age 32, and if this is accurate, he is obviously quite a bit younger.

1926-1927

1926, in June: in theatrical column from New York by Billy E. Jones, Cook is said to be writing the lyrics for a new show for next season, RUGGED ROAD (Chicago Defender, June 19, 1926, p. 7)

1926, in July: "Cook is laying low these days. He has something up his sleeve." (Chicago Defender, July 10, 1926, p. 8, quoting Billy Jones's "Theatrical News" column from NYC)

1926, in August: Cook, who is 56, is called "the elderly conductor" in a column, "The Musical Bunch," by Dave Peyton (Chicago Defender, August 21, 1926, p. 6)
MISS CALICO

1926, in September: Ethel Waters had been starring in a series of tab shows that had run under a couple of different names, with mostly the same material, and which were produced and managed by her husband, Earl Dancer; in September, in a hastily prepared revised edition known as the Black Bottom Review, she was at the Lafayette in the week of September 20; her show gets a lengthy review by Sime in Variety, and he notes that it is going to be in Philadelphia from the week of Monday, September 27, at the Gibson Theatre, with Abbie Mitchell as an added feature (Variety, September 29, 1926, p. 47); at the Lafayette it was a lengthy tab show (95 minutes) preceded by a movie. Sime writes that "there is a chance the show will be reshaped. It must be padded out for a road attraction. . . . . . . The chances are that in the lengthened performance some numbers will be composed for the show, also Miss Mitchell, by Will Marion Cook, who may travel with it for a few weeks while the show is shaping up."

In fact, what was reported in Variety is what transpires. Cook steps in and directs and conducts a new touring version of this "Broadway" revue, produced and managed by Earl Dancer, with music by Donald Heywood, called Miss Calico, starring Ethel Waters and Abbie Mitchell (Richmond Times Dispatch, October 10, 1926, p. 50); note that despite Abbie's recent third marriage, she's here; one newspaper says this is Cook's first big tour since returning to America; top billing for Ethel, and this opportunity is sometimes called her first big role; Cook is "The Old Master" in some ads for the revue; they are a class show and toured in Schubert theaters; he is not at the helm the whole time, though he's conducting at least through the last week in October; his presence is not advertised in the Cleveland papers so he probably leaves at that moment, i.e., ca. November 1; after Miss Calico gets rolling, other conductors lead it, include trumpeter Thornton Brown and most importantly, violinist/saxophonist Louia V. Jones, who joined the outfit and is featured a big scene; one Chicago paper calls Jones new there in December.

In some form, Miss Calico ran from the end of August to the end of December; the run began at with two weeks at Keith's Alhambra at 126th and 7th at the end of August, then at Chelsea Theatre in NYC in earliest September; then at the Lafayette from September 20; they take time out to go into the recording studio in September 1926 to
record "I'm Coming, Virginia" for Columbia, with Cook conducting the chorus---"Ethel Waters and Her Singing Orchestra", aka "Will Marion Cook's Singing Orchestra"; then, refreshed and retitled, and now a "big show," in appears in Philadelphia from September 27, with a midnite show Sunday and then all week at Gibson's Theatre, with Cook's Philharmonic Orchestra (Philadelphia Tribune, September 25, 1926, p. 3); in Norfolk, VA and Richmond, VA in mid October, headed north to Harrisburg, PA, Lancaster, PA, Cumberland, MD; plays Cumberland, MD on October 23; in Pittsburgh for one week at the East End Theater beginning with a midnite show on Sunday, October 24 and with matinees on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday (described in Pittsburg Courier, October 9, 1926, p. 9 as Ethel Waters and her company performing with Abbie Mitchell and Will Marion Cook's Orchestra; see also Pittsburg Courier, October 23, 1926, p. 10); in Cleveland the week of October 31, and it was held over for at least three weeks in all; in Detroit in November; in Chicago in mid to end of December, where it ran out of money on New Year's Eve and closed; star Ethel Waters is in vaudeville/variety in Chicago at a south side cabaret in early 1927; NB: her next big show, Africana (see below) is based closely on Miss Calico: both have roots in Hotsy Totsy.

1926, in November: Cook is scheduled to appear at the Savoy Ballroom in a big benefit for disabled actors; this is a benefit to establish a permanent fund for disabled and sick actors, to be held Thursday, November 4 at the Savoy, and run by a committee headed up by Cook with members including Jessie Shipp and Lester A. Walton, and with lots of talent to appear from current shows including Miller & Lyles, Vodery, etc., etc. (Pittsburgh Courier, October 30, 1926, section 2, p. 1 [p. 9]; Allen, Hendersonia, p. 185)

1926, in November: "Cook is planning to revive his "Clorinda" company to play picture houses" (Pittsburgh Courier, October 30, 1926, section 2, p. 1 [p. 9])

1926, in November: Cook is cited in an article about the current review at Connie's Inn; what is on stage there is a Leonard Harper show, and is alleged by some to be indecent; Cook agrees it is; others say it is no
worse than many other shows (NY Age, November 6, 1926, p. 1; Pittsburgh Courier, November 13, 1926, p. A1)

THE NEGRO SCHOOL OF DRAMATIC AND MUSICAL ART
and
VIRGINIA NIGHTS

1926, in December: Cook, identified as "director" or "head" of The Negro School of Dramatic and Musical Art, is going to run a series of Virginia Nights beginning December 5 at the Greenwich Village Theatre as a benefit that will help aid [or whose proceeds are devoted to establishing] the Negro School of Dramatic and Musical Art; this is the third such benefit of its kind, the others being in 23/24 (Negro Nuances) and 25/26 (no special name)

Cook writes a letter to the Defender about the school, saying "We must have a school now" and "We, a small group of Race people, are attempting to establish a Race school for dramatic and musical art," so it may be that as director he is the only piece of the school up and running at this moment; apparently only one concert was actually held.

The concert was to start at 9:00; with 8 soloists and an ensemble of 16 in "Negro spirituals, part songs and folk songs" (Courier); the seven named soloists are Abbie Mitchell, Revella Hughes (a Washingtonian, lyric soprano, concertizer with Lottie Wallace, the prima donna of Running Wild), Sadie Johnson, Mme DeKnight, Tom Fletcher, Harry Saparo, and Hinton Jones, so they are short one man or woman in this report; the Courier says "the affair was a success"; NB: "folk songs" encompasses Cook new pieces when sung by DC choir in 1910s, and probably here as well; Courier article has December 16 A.N.P. byline.


1926, in December: Cook writes a letter to the NY Times dated December 19, 1926 that is published December 26, 1926, p. X8, arguing at length against giving credit to George White and his revue for inventing the Charleston and Black Bottom dances; Cook is taking on the role here
of historian of African American modern dance; he had been overtly involved with modern dance at least since Darkydom (I), apparently led dance bands in the later teens, and dance is important in his family (daughter Marion and son-in-law Louis Douglass, nephew Hartwell, niece Louise); specifically in respect to the Charleston and Black Bottom, Cook had a hand in getting Runnin' Wild (1923) up and running, featuring the song "The Charleston"; the Black Bottom is new in Irvin C. Miller's Dinah (1923-1924, music & lyrics by Brymn and Bechet, at the Gibson in Philadelphia in the weeks of November 19 and 26, 1923, then at Lafayette in the week of Monday, December 3&10&17, 1923) and is seen as the dance-craze successor to the Charleston in references that explode in 1926 and 1927; Cook’s Hotsy Totsy (1925) features the Charleston, and perhaps also the Black Bottom, and both dances are in the Paris version of that show (La revue nègre), which Cook mentions in the Times letter

1927, in spring: What is Cook up to? Is the school up and running?

1927-1928

What is he up to primarily?? Composing? Ill? With family in DC? There is another gap here in the biographical data from newspapers.

1927, in July: A big Ethel Waters vehicle Africana, in two parts and thirty scenes; Norton II: 497-498 (1927.32); directed and produced by Earl Dancer, with music and lyrics by Donald Heywood, and with the dance and ensemble numbers staged by Louis Douglas, who came back from Europe just to help with this show, and also featuring "I'm Coming, Virginia" with lyrics by (not music by) Will Marion Cook, which had been in Miss Calico; Africana draws on Miss Calico and some other tab shows; it has mostly the same creative team as Miss Calico and the Ethel Waters character in Africana is called "Miss Calico," so the two shows are sometimes confused; some other participants are carried over, including the Taskiana Four; no actual evidence that Cook had any role in Africana, though I suspect his hand in its preparation; lots of Miss Calico material carried over, but some new elements, too. NY Sun calls it "not so much a musical revue as a dance carnival," which would reflect Louis Douglass's participation in it, and says that aside from a few songs, "the night is given over to the dance" (NY Sun, July 12, 1927, p. 18); the first midnight show, on Thursday, July 21, 1927, was attended by notables
including Caroline Dudley Reagan (NY Age, July 23, 1927, p. 6)

Often called her first major show (which could also apply to Miss Calico), Africana is Ethel Waters' first big Broadway musical; it is on Broadway from July 11 to August 24 at Daly's 63rd Street Theatre, then moves to the National (not without some contractual controversy) from August 27 into September or October (Pittsburgh Courier, July xx, 1927, p. xxx); NY Age, August 27, 1927, p. 6; NY Age, September 3, 1927, p. 6); it closes at the National at some point—later ads while on the road claim it was on Broadway for an impossible six months—and goes on the road; in Chicago in the last week(s) of November; returns to NYC at the Lafayette, December 11-18; it is thought that Waters would immediately go into a new show, the one she would take to Paris, but that plan falls through; instead, she goes back out on the road with Africana; they are at the Gibson in Philadelphia at the end of December (NY Age, December 31, 1927, p. 6), in Pittsburgh in January, then to Cleveland for three weeks from January 29 to February 18 at the Colonial, then to other cities including Youngstown, then to Chicago at the Adelphi from March 12 initially for a month but said to have been given an extra six weeks, so at any rate into April, then to KC and Milwaukee (with trouble meeting payroll and a restive cast), and to St. Louis in May; there the show was cut down into a vaudeville version (a tab!) and played Milwaukee in May, then Philadelphia at the Standard for the week of June 18-24, and back to the Lafayette for the wind-up of the tour. For the Lafayette gig, Monday June 25-July 1, 1928, Africana is advertised as "the 1928 edition," and it runs there on a bill with a photoplay (NY Age, Saturday, June 30, 1928, p. 6, etc.); all in all, it ran for eleven and a half months.

A few years later it is announced that Africana will be filmed in Hollywood. Earl Dancer has made arrangements on the West Coast and has formed the Earl Dancer Motion Picture Corporation and is coming east to sign talent, including Ethel Waters. "Will Marion Cook will be sought for his knowledge of negro folklore and as a technical advisor for the film," while Will Vodery and Donald Heywood will do the music (Pittsburgh Courier, Saturday April 16, 1932, p. 20)

1927, in September: the New Bamboo Inn is re-opening in the first week of October under colored management, the management previously having been white; Cook's long-time colleague and musical collaborator Harry Saparo is to conduct the New Bamboo Inn
Orchestra and manage the revue, but in fact, it is Cook who is rehearsing the orchestra daily at the Mah Jong Inn prior to the opening, and he is also rehearsing a revue for the Inn, so in effect he's acting in a familiar role as Musical Director, not unlike his role in Runnin' Wild or Tan Town Topics, etc. (NY Age, September 24, 1927, p. 6; Pittsburgh Courier, October 8, 1927, second section, p. 7); the Bamboo Inn is the former Palace Garden (acc. Allen, Hendersonia, p. 185)

1927, in September: Cook plays on a concert at the Second Presbyterian Church in Patterson, NJ (Chicago Defender, October 1, 1927, p. 8)

1927, in October: Abbie Mitchell will be broadcasting out of Chicago tonight, in a recital program almost exclusively of Cook compositions (Illinois Republic, October 6, 1927, p. 12)

1927, in October: not actually related at first hand to Cook, but noteworthy in respect to his later ambition for St. Louis Woman (see below), is the opening of Dubose Heyward's Porgy on Broadway, turning the novella into a play; directed by Rouben Mamoulian, and including some music, running October 10, 1927 to September 1928 (NY Times, September 18, 1928, p. 33 says in an advertisement that the Theatre Guild production of Porgy is entering its last seven performances on Broadway); NB: after 49 weeks on Broadway, it goes on the road.

1927, October: Cook is preparing Silhouettes Negre, "a series of dramatic and musical sketches, a style of entertainment that is new, and the composer hopes it will prove a world-wide success. It will be produced in New York the middle of November in one of Broadway's theaters. There will be 90 people in the cast and 23 in the orchestra. Mr. Cook says if the new idea hits in New York he intends to rehearse companies and spread them all over the world" (Dave Peyton column, "The Musical Bunch," in Chicago Defender, October 22, 1927, p. 6; reprinted in Baltimore Afro American, October 29, 1927, p. 8)

1927, in December: FLORENCE MILLS BENEFIT
Florence Mills died November 1, 1927, and Cook is announced as one of the speakers at a planning event for the Florence Mills Memorial Fund that drew an audience of 400 performers to the Lafayette on Monday midnite, November 14 (New York Age, November 19, 1927, p. 3);
Then, Cook, Brymn, and Jordan, the three biggest Pekin hands of 1906-1907, are announced to conduct at the Florence Mills Monster Midnite Memorial Benefit (a.k.a. Monster Testimonial Benefit) on December 3; a short item on the three (NB: not two, but three) Midnites to be held simultaneously at the Lincoln, Alhambra, and Lafayette Theatres, without naming the music directors at each (NY Evening Post, November 30, 1927, p. 3; Baltimore Afro-American, December 3, 1927, p. 8); Carter thesis, p. 380, says he volunteered to appear but that he is later not mentioned as having performed, citing NY Age, December 3, 1927, p. 6, NY Age, December 10, 1927, p. 6 (with participants), NY Age, January 14, 1928, p. 6.

Articles in the NY Age, etc., say only two theaters ended up hosting, i.e., the Alhambra and the Lafayette (whose theaters were offered free of charge) but not the Lincoln, and there is mention of no conductors or arrangers by name; no mention of Jordan or Cook or Brymn.

NB: The Florence Mills Memorial Benefit Drive to establish a Florence Mills Memorial Fund that will raise $500,000 to either erect a marble or granite monument or to build a home for aged and infirm actors, is initially managed nationally by Jesse Shipp (president of the Florence Mills Theatrical Association) and is supported by mammoth benefit concerts in January 1928 in Philadelphia at the Gibson and at the Lincoln theater in Los Angeles staged by Bill Robinson, the Regal Theater in Chicago on May 3, and a planned one for the Howard Theater in DC on May 8, also managed by Bill Robinson, that got cancelled, and a planned one in London, England; eventually the funds that were collected were dissipated in expenses and court squabbles.

1927, in December: Showboat opens on December 27.

1927: song "Ups and Downs," with lyrics by Mercer Cook (in ms at Howard)

1928, in February: After a year (1926-1927) as Professor of French and English at Agricultural and Technical College, Greensboro, NC, this is Mercer Cook’s first year at Howard (1927-1928); now, in February 1928, Will Marion Cook is to be in DC for about a month, visiting Mercer at Howard and directing a glee club there, the Omega Glee Club of DC; this is the chorus of the local chapter of Mercer’s old
fraternity, and he is getting his father to prepare the group for a tour (Baltimore Afro-American, February 18, 1928, p. 3; Pittsburgh Courier, March 3, 1928, section 2, p. 2); "Will M. Cook Again Directs" is a headline in Pittsburgh Courier, March 3, 1928, second section, p. 2, (deadline Washington, March 1).

1928-1929

1928, in October: The year 1928-1929 is Mercer's second at Howard. Cook is in Baltimore, working on an opera; he’s isolated himself at a farmhouse on the Washington Boulevard (a major Baltimore road); moreover, “he is also training a chorus of 30 to broadcast on a big hook-up of radio stations soon”; perhaps he ended up staying with Mercer for eight months, from February to now.

His opera is probably the opera mentioned in 1925 and 1926, and he's likely working with Mercer on it, though the newspaper does not say (Baltimore Afro American, October 6, 1928, p. 1). The piece is sometimes identified with St. Louis Woman, which is usually dated 1929, but this date for St. Louis Woman is an error. In fact, the opera under discussion here is more likely the operatic expansion of Negro Nuances that becomes Dusk and Dawn [NB: Cook was also apparently working at the end of his life on an opera with Mercer about Toussaint L’Ouverture in Haiti]

1929: Cook publishes "Troubled in Mind: Negro Spiritual" (NY: G. Schirmer), for which Mercer writes lyrics and Cook arranges and adapts the music; also publishes "Harlem Band" this year, with Mercer lyrics and musical collaboration of nephew Lenoir Cook, acc. Carter. These songs suggest he’s been hanging around with family in Baltimore/Washington. In 1929, Lenoir and Mercer also publish a song together.

1929, early in the year: he must now be back in NYC

1929, February: Mercer's first wife dies in a car accident in February 1929 (NY Age, February 23, 1929, p. 1: "Will Marion Cook's Daughter-in-Law Dead in Accident").
1929, in April: Cook and Vodery are writing a new show, which is going to open at the Lafayette (NY Age, Saturday, March 30, 1929, p. 6); it opened Monday, April 1; a tabloid, it will run a half evening or so in place of the usual vaudeville acts; it might go on to be part of a Ziegfield production or might be part of a show at the motion picture palaces controlled by Publix circuits, in which Vodery is involved; definitely will premiere at Lafayette in conjunction with the Lafayette's current photo play; it was originally identified as Swinging Along, but is ultimately presented under the title Swing Along; huge cast of 75; it has a little story that unfolds, and the actors, "Most of them vaudeville headliners, strut their stuff";

At the Lafayette in April, running a week from Monday, April 1 to Sunday, April 7 inclusive; (NY Age, March 30, 1929, p. 6; NY Age, April 5 (recte 6), 1929, p. 6, p. 7); it is called Vodery's Swing Along with Cook's Band; initially, Vodery had to conduct; later NY Age, Saturday, April 20, 1929, p. 7 has story about Cook not having NY Union Local 802 card and Vodery helping him to get it, in order to conduct in the pit at the Lafayette; it is Vodery's show with "Will Marion Cook's Singers and Band"; it could be read as a situation in which Vodery is trying to do Cook a favor, i.e., keep him busy, when he's otherwise in retirement to the point that he does not carry a union card. This production also can be seen as the beginning of a burst of NYC activity from early 1929 into early 1930, perhaps in a period of good health. The show features Revella Hughes (who had been in Runnin' Wild), "the famous chorus girls from "Show Boat", and Cook's Band and Singers; shares the stage with a Vitaphone melodrama and a Vitaphone comedy (Pittsburgh Courier, April 20, 1929, p. 3, second section).

1929, in April: just after the run of Swing Along, the Cook Band and Singers, together with chorus girls from Showboat [NB: Vodery prepared them] will be performing at a fashion show being held at the Alhambra on Wednesday, April 10 (NY Age, April 5, 1929, p. 6) NB: Showboat closes May 4, 1929.

1929, in May: huge full-page, six-column article in the Washington Post by E. H. Lawson entitled "Praying Deacons of Harlem: Organization of Versatile Negroes Whose Influence is Nationwide," which goes on mainly to identify and describe the activities of a number of DC figures; says Cook "has written and directed the best box-office music
of any American negro" and "he is now interested in an opera that will unify all that is negroid in music" and says in a photo caption of Cook that he is "probably [the] most successful and most widely known negro composer"; the article also insistently associates Cook with *Shuffle Along* (Washington Post, May 5, 1929, p. SM 5)

1929, in May: the Philadelphia *Tribune* publishes a gossipy tongue-in-cheek column by Maurice Dancer entitled "7th Ave. Sunny Afternoon," with chatter about the New York scene. He jokes about Cook: "---Will Marion Cook, at one time our greatest songwriter, pauses near Ted's newsstand, wondering when he will present his next opera. Which any actor will tell you is very funny." [I am sure that this is a gentle dig at Cook's constant reference to the work in progress that is never completed.] (Philadelphia *Tribune*, May 9, 1929, p. 6)

**GREAT DAY**

1929, in June: *Great Day: A Story of the Southland*, a new show with planned opening on June 3, then Tuesday, June 4, in Philadelphia at the Garrick; composer and producer Vincent Youmans; starring Miller & Lyles; the show's band was to be Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra until Henderson dropped out;

Cook shares choral direction/choral preparation (arrangements and training) with Russell Wooding and conducts the chorus as chorus master; it is a jubilee chorus of sixty singers acc. the *Inquirer*; ASCAP bio says just that Cook trained the chorus; this was a dancing chorus of forty by another account, so whether 40 or 60, the chorus is no small thing; Cook was expected to accompany the show to Philadelphia to direct the jubilee singers there; their two biggest choral numbers are "Great Day" and "Without a Song", and these are still remembered as among Youmans's greatest hits.

*Billboard*, July 22, 1950, p. 40 has an entry for Harold Arlen in its ongoing "Honor Roll of Popular Songwriters" and tells the anecdote that Arlen was rehearsal pianist for the preparation of the Will Marion Cook Negro chorus for this show, and Cook encouraged him to be a songwriter;

*(Philadelphia *Inquirer*, June 2, 1929, p. 9; *NY Age*, June 8, 1929, p. 7; *NY Age*, September 28, 1929, p. 7*
This show had a long gestation; early in its development it was called Horseshoes, and then Emily Lou. It was scheduled to open in Philadelphia on June 3 before coming to Broadway, does open there June 4, and stumbles on to Atlantic City, Long Island, Boston, Newark; in an article dated NYC June 3 and printed a couple of weeks later, it is said to have opened in Atlantic City "within the last week" (Pittsburgh Courier, July 6, 1929, p. 15);

NYC references in October call it "new" and IBDB says it only ran a short run in October and November, i.e., October 17 to November 16; This, in fact, may be the last big piece of work Cook saw onto the stage, and clearly it was important to him, given the ref. in his ASCAP bio. (Allen, Hendersonia, pp. 228-233, has a detailed account of the history of the show).

1929, in August: Mercer remarries

1929 SONGS

"Troubled in Mind--Negro Spiritual," lyrics Mercer Cook, music arranged and adapted by Will Marion Cook (NY: Schirmer, 1929); later referred to in reviews of recitals, e.g., in 1933

1929-1930

1929, in September: Youmans's Great Day finally opens on Broadway on October 17.

1929, in October: Mercer, in a letter of 1950, recalls that it was around now that his father helped with Miller & Lyle's Runnin Wild, which opened at the Colonial Theatre (Carter thesis, p. 380), but this show actually was from much earlier in the decade (see above)

1929, in November: "Ghost ship; the slave ship, words and music by W. M. Cook," copyrighted on November 8, 1929, unpublished; perhaps in anticipation of its use at the Roxy in February 1930 (see below).

DUST AND DAWN
1930 in January: news of a new show, unnamed; “Will Marion Cook is once again as busy as a bee assembling a company to be seen soon at the Lafayette theatre. Among those assisting him are Duke Ellington, Jimmy Johnson, Porter Granger, Mercer Cook and Gus Smith” (NY Age, January 4, 1930, p. 6, in Bob Slater’s column, “Theatrical Jottings”); the unnamed show gets a title in a brief entry two weeks later, saying that the rehearsal of Dust and Dawn has been set back a week, without any specific mention of the Lafayette (NY Age, January 18, 1930, p. 6, again in Bob Slater’s column); and then no more is heard of it; there is no sign that it every was produced in 1930 and the Lafayette schedule is full without it through at least June, when it would have been expected in February, given that these one-week tabs tend to go into rehearsal only three or so weeks out. (Gus Smith takes over Bob Slater’s column, and he’d know and say something.) Both Ellington and Johnson bring their bands to revues at the Lafayette in the spring, without any ties to Cook. Duke Ellington (1899-1974); Mercer Cook (1903-1987); Jimmy [James P.] Johnson (1894-1955); Porter Granger (1891-c. 1955); Gus Smith (1891-1950); all 20-30 years younger

Maybe the “busy as a bee” is to stand in contrast to previous lethargy?? Maybe the phrase “assisting him” suggests he’s not up to the task any longer by himself, due to health issues?? The men named all come to NYC by the early to mid 1920s and begin to make names for themselves then; Duke Ellington and James P. (“Jimmy”) Johnson are connected to Cook from that time.

The show re-appears in 1934: see below.

1930, in February: "Will Marion Cook's composition, the "Ghost Ship," will be played at the Roxy Theatre, New York City, week of February 8" (NY Age, February 8, 1930, p. 6); just one number/turn; one of the greatest cinemas ever built, the Roxy theatre was a huge, 5920-seat movie house at 153 W. 50th featuring major films and lavish stage shows.

1930, in March: "Will Marion Cook, the old master, is at present making talkies with a mixed quartet. Here is one of the old boys who have adopted modern methods and "keeps on moving along."" ("Actors Doing Well Despite Hard Times," by Gus Smith, byline dated New York, March 28, in Chicago Defender, March 29, 1930, p. 7)
Vodery is mostly based in Hollywood from 1929-1932, so it is not out of the question, for example, that he is sending work to Cook.

Note: IMDB has a reference that I have not been able to flesh out that Cook was the "composer: stock music - uncredited" on the 1931 film *Pardon Us*, a Laurel and Hardy comedy mostly filmed in June 1930 and released on August 15, 1931; he is one of a dozen or more associated with the film this way, which probably means someone else used his music, and not that he had any part in it; Leroy Shields is credited with the musical score.

NB: The lack of almost any mention of Cook for a full year from February 1930 to February 1931, when he is said to leave hospital in NYC for Asheville (see below), may indicate that he has been unable to work or get out in public. Or that he is working facelessly in the talkies, as above.

1930, in May: Cook’s first grandson, Mercer, jr. is born in May 1930, nine months after his parents marry. Is Cook hanging out with son and daughter-in-law?

1930-1931

1930 in December: J. Rosamond Johnson, Cook, WC Handy, and Clarence Williams will be part of a NYC monster program Monday, December 29 for a church benefit (NY Age, December 20, 1930, p. 5).

1931: the Manhattan, NY, City Directory has Cook living at 2370 7th Avenue, between 138th and 139th.

1931, in February: "Will Marion Cook, the oldest living colored composer, who has been confined to the Edgecombe Sanitarium, is reported improving and will soon leave for Asheville, N.C., to recuperate." (NY Age, Saturday, February 7, 1931, p. [?]).

Edgecombe Sanitarium is a private Harlem facility at 137th and Edgecombe Ave., in the heart of Cook territory. From now to the end of his life, Cook is fighting tuberculosis and is in and out of health facilities in NYC and Asheville, NC. NB: in the 20s and 30s, Asheville was the leading tuberculosis treatment center in the US.
1931, in March: Carter thesis, p. 381 cites NY Age, March 21, 1931, p. 6 that Cook is resting in Asheville, and about to make a tour of the South, going as far as New Orleans, and then back to NYC; I have this below, in 1932

1931, in April: Eva Jessye's Dixie Jubilee Singers do a concert on April 7 at St. James Presbyterian Church on St. Nicholas Ave. in Harlem, and their first number is Cook's "The Slave Ship," for mixed choir with tenor and bass soloists. (NY Age, April 18, 1931, p. 7)

1931, in June or earliest July: Cook is in NYC on business, accompanied by Mercer and Mercer's wife, but he resides in Asheville for his health (NY Age, July 4, 1931, p. 6)

1931-1932

1931, later in the year: Cook is still in Asheville

1931, later in the year: Abbie Mitchell divorces Leslie Anthony Thomkins (Kansas Plaindealer, December 4, 1931, p. 3); NB: aka Thompkins, etc.; Abbie is now at Tuskegee, and she will be there for for three academic years, 1931-1932, 1932-1933, 1933-1934. (NY Age, May 13, 1933, p. 7).

1932, in March: Cook writes a song "Slim Greer" to words by Sterling Brown while in Asheville; "Slim Greer in Hell" is a poem in Brown's collected works (Carter thesis, pp. 173, 381).

1932, in March: Cook is resting at Asheville, NC and may tour the South as far as New Orleans before returning to NYC (NY Age, March 21, 1932, p. 6). So, he's putting on a good face and still full of plans. In fact, he has a burst of activity in May through July, as below.

1932, in March: It is announced that Africana will be filmed in Hollywood. Earl Dancer has made arrangements on the West Coast and has formed the Earl Dancer Motion Picture Corporation and is coming east to sign talent, including Ethel Waters. "Will Marion Cook will be sought for his knowledge of negro folklore and as a technical advisor for the film," while Will Vodery and Donald Heywood will do the music (Pittsburgh Courier, Saturday April 16, 1932, p. 20)
1932, in late May or earliest June: Cook made a flying visit to Harlem last week and then returned to Asheville, NC, where he has been residing for more than a year (i.e., since February or March of 1931). Could this trip be on account of arrangements for the folk opera in the Countee Cullen dramatization, as below? (NY Age, June 4, 1932, p. 6). In 1932-1933 and 1933-1934, Cook is clearly in NYC, as is documented below, even if his health is not great; Abbie Mitchell remembered that at the 1934 summer pageant, he was at low ebb (see below).

1932, in June: Cook is identified as a “Negro Composer Living In Asheville” in Asheville (NC) Citizen-Times, June 12, 1932, p. 37; Cook is said to be a well-known Negro composer who has won world-wide acclaim with his compositions and who is now living in Asheville.

1932, in June: Cook will discuss the life and works of James Bland as a guest speaker on the Southland Sketches program over NBC-WEAF (a New York station) radio network on Sunday, June 12, 1932 (Rochester (NY) Democrat and Chronicle, Sunday, June 12, 1932, p. [?]; Asheville (NC) Citizen-Times, June 12, 1932, p. 37). Cook says Bland taught him the rudiments of songwriting. 
NB: Southland Sketches is a standard Sunday network show at this time; usually gets an entry in radio listings without any indication of content.

1932-1933

ST. LOUIS WOMAN

1932, in July: A part of Cook’s burst of energy: St. Louis ’Ooman or St. Louis Woman, called a folk opera, for which the music was written with Mercer, is to be staged; the 1932 papers say there is going to be a production that is going to go into rehearsal in early July 1932 in NYC; [NB: occasionally, the lyrics are by Cook and the music is by his son, Mercer, which cannot be right!!: e.g., Louisiana Times-Picayune, July 10, 1932, p. 26]

St. Louis ’Ooman [‘Oman] or St. Louis Woman, a folk opera, unproduced show; libretto by Mercer and music by Cook (or vice versa, in some reports):
“a drama of the Mississippi river banks in the gay ’90s.”
Peterson gives the often-cited date 1929; apparently via a reference in Mercer’s memoirs (??); most ref. works say 1929, but some say it was written in the 1930s. Since it is derived from the 1931 novel by Arna Bontemps (1902-1973), which draws on Bontemp's own "Uncle Buddy" for inspiration, the date 1929 cannot be accurate. Indeed, at least judging by references in the 1992 Bontemps biography and the edition of his letters to Langton Hughes, the Cooks---father and son---did not loom large in his life.

NB: Louis Brown, The Encyclopedia of the Harlem Literary Renaissance, p. 96, says that the folk opera is related to Wallace Thurman's [sic] but this must be flat out wrong.

Based upon Arna Bontemps’s first novel, God Sends Sunday (1931), the story is about a black jockey on the Mississippi river racetrack circuit in the romantic 1890s who is entangled in a rivalry for a woman. A very lengthy gestation as a stage play or musical or opera eventually culminates successfully when the Bontemps novel becomes the basis of the 1946 Broadway show of the same name as Cook’s opera, with book by Countee Cullen (1903-1946), songs by Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen, direction by Rouben Mamoulian (see below).

Chronology:

1929 Bontemps begins work on his novel, God Sends Sunday, and it is finished in 1930

1931 Bontemps publishes God Sends Sunday in early 1931 with Harcourt, Brace; its NY Times review is on March 15, 1931

1931-1932: Countee Cullen (1903-1946) makes his first dramatization of the Bontemps novel for the musical stage; this is later remade into a spoken play, and then it is remade once more into the book of a musical, reaching the Broadway stage fourteen years later, in 1946. Initial work by Cullen probably done in late 1931 and early 1932, around or by the time of the February 1932 publication of Cullen’s first novel, One Way to Heaven.

Very public expectation of a production of this musical or folk opera, re-titled St. Louis 'Oman, to Mercer libretto, or with Mercer lyrics, with Cook music and Cook as producer/director; Cook is credited with this form of the title; production never
happens, but it was anticipated as late as September and October:

1932, end of June: "To Produce Cullen’s "God Sent Sunday" /
Plans have been completed for the production of a new musical comedy adapted from Countee Cullen’s dramatization of "God Send Sunday." Will Marion Cook, who will produce the play, has named the vehicle "St. Louis Ooman (sic)." A cast of 150 will go into rehearsal early in July. In the cast will be Freddie Washington and Mantan Moreland in the leading roles. The play opens in New York, after a short run in Philly, about August 1st" (Philadelphia Tribune, June 30, 1932, p. 7)

Mantan Moreland (1902-1973), actor and comedian, vaudeville, etc. plus huge later career in movies from 1933 forward
Freddie (Fredi) Washington (1903 - 1994), female singer, dancer, etc. with big bio column in NY Age, July 6, 1935, p. 4, also with later movie career

1932, in July: The show is to go into rehearsal in the week of July 11-15; that is next week, acc. the principal source, the New York theatrical column dated July 9 and printed widely on Sunday, July 10, of Mark Barron, well-known AP syndicated staff writer, and Broadway and NYC columnist
See the Kansas City Star, July 9, 1932, Springfield (Mass.) Republican, July 10, 1932, p. 29; Dallas Morning News, July 10, 1932, Tampa Tribune, July 10, 1932, New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 10, 1932, Zanesville Signal, July 10, 1932, Charleston News and Courier, Portsmouth (Ohio) Times, July 12, 1932, p. 11, etc., etc., including an abbreviated version in Omaha World Herald, July 31, 1932, p. 20), and this column says the author is Cook and the music is by Mercer, who is called Cook’s son and identified further as the composer of "Stop the Sun, Stop the Moon", and it is to be a negro drama with music on a more lavish scale than "Porgy" (i.e., Mamoulian’s Porgy, not Gershwin’s Porgy);

The show is in rehearsal in NYC as of last week, in a report dated July 18, and "The plan is to have the drama make such cities as Philadelphia, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Detroit, Indianapolis, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and other
important theatrical centers"
(Kansas City Plaindealer, July 22, 1932, p. 1, with headline "St. Louis "Ooman" a Season's Success"; Pittsburgh Courier, Saturday, July 29, 1932, 2nd section, p. 6).

NB: Mercer Cook, Harty Cook, and J. Russel Robinson (white, and a big composer of jazz, blues, and pop songs) wrote "Stop the Sun, Stop the Moon," publ. in 1932 and a big hit that year; recorded in February 1932 by the Boswell Sisters trio accompanied by the Dorsey Brothers dance orchestra; Mercer is called its composer in the credits but he probably provided the lyrics; this song's success may be why Mercer is sometimes called the composer of the folk opera at the time

1932, in July: in the mid-1932 burst of newspaper publicity, the Chicago Defender July 16, 1932, p. 5, makes the association of Cook with the novel, citing the column "Around New York" by Bessye Bearden, dated July 15: "There is a new musical comedy called "God Sends Sunday," with both Colored and white performers, headed by Fredi Washington, Mantan Moreland, Jimmy Baskett and three others, for which Will Marion Cook is doing the music. It is due to open in New York in September."

Jimmy Baskett (1904-1948), who later in his career sang "Zipadee doo dah" as Uncle Remus in Disney's 1946 Song of the South;
all three actors named here are young up-and-comers in black stage shows, dramas, reviews, etc. in Harlem in late 20s and early 30s; they are of the generation of the Cook children

1932, in fall: Evidently Cook is putting the show together as well as composing for it, and he decides the book isn't working, and the production is halted; Cook intercedes to ask that Sterling Brown do a rewrite:

1932, in September: Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) mentions an unidentified Countee Cullen play in a comment in a letter of September 16, 1932 to her godmother Charlotte Osgood Mason during a trip by Hurston to NYC, where she was living at 53 E. 132nd St. (Carla Kaplan, ed., Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters (2002), p. 272): "I met Sterling Brown, Alain's good friend. Will Marion Cook introduced me to him. He is also in
New York on call as I am. (Countee Cullen's play)". That is, Brown is in NYC "on call" on account of the play, whatever that play is. And these are Cook circles.

Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth, Alain L. Locke: Biography of a Philosopher (2008), p. 268, say "Will Marion Cook was unhappy with Cullen's play, God Sends Sunday, for which he supplied the music, and he wanted Sterling Brown to rewrite the dialogue. He asked Locke to intercede, and he agreed."

1932, in September: the last reference to this 1932 musical treatment comes around the end of September; Variety comments on this production, in language that could have been two months old at this point, and makes Cook as much producer as composer, under column "Future Plays" on page devoted to "Legitimate" theater: "'St. Louis 'Oman,' based on a novel by the same title [sic], will be produced by Will Marion Cook with an all colored company. Better known as a composer, Cook will contribute musical numbers to the production. Dramatists not announced" (Variety, September 27, 1932, p. 51); this short report is reprinted in the Defender in a contribution by the same NY-based columnist, Bessye Bearden, as above, in her "Around New York" column in the Defender, evidently drawing on Variety, though here making reference to an "all-Race cast": Chicago Defender, October 8, 1932, p. 5)

1932, at the very end of December: Cullen and Bontemps complete "the first dramatic version of Sunday" (Jones, pp. 74, 77), which must mean the first spoken stage play version that is not the libretto of a musical/opera, and, I think, the first where Bontemps has stepped back in.

1933, in early January: acc. Jones citations, publishers Harcourt are "considering engaging Mercer Cook and Sterling Brown to write an entirely new dramatic version of Sunday" (Jones, p. 77); sounds as if they had not really got anything going yet, or were being brought in because they had been considered for the revised book of the opera/musical.

Although there seems to be no trace of any music or lyrics, later references suggest as well that there was something complete
and able to be produced in 1932. Maude Cuney-Hare (1936), p. 166, makes reference to the opera, saying "He has just completed" it. And in the NYT obituary of Cook, there is specific mention of this work: "he wrote . . . a Negro opera called "St. Louis 'Ooman."

1933, in November: late in 1933, after about a year, a stage play, St. Louis 'Oman, with that spelling, staged in Cleveland by Gilpin Players at Karamu Theater, beginning Wednesday, November 22; described as by Cullen, based on Bontemps novel; apparently ran into 1934, since that date is often cited (e.g., Jones, p. 92 and fn 31); the script in Karamu archives at Emory University is called "St. Louis 'Oman or Leaving Time."

1936, in January: After the Cleveland run of the stage play, there is a series of failed revivals; first a potential WPA project in 1936, as one of three productions of the Negro Theatre in NYC under the supervision of John Houseman and Rose McClendon (NY Times, January 5, 1936, p. X1, 36); by late spring Cullen and Bontemps finish a second version of the play St. Louis Woman (Jones bio, p. 88)

1938, in January: next, the play is one of two being considered for mounting by WPA's Federal Theatre Project at the Lafayette late in January (NY Times, November 30, 1937, p. 26)

1938, in December: next, the Cullen dramatization is to be rewritten by Langston Hughes for the WPA's Federal Theater project in LA (LA Times, December 31, 1938, p. A8); Bontemps and Cullen corresponded over this possibility, as did Hughes and Bontemps, into 1939 (Jones, pp. 91-2; Nichols, p. 31)

1943: rewritten by Bontemps and Cullen, and sent to publisher; a copy of this revision sent to them in the fall; Cullen had written the lyrics for ten songs for it (Jones, p. 106)

1944: a newest version (same as 1943 above??) (Jones, pp. 110-112)

1945: a typescript dramatization of play St. Louis Woman dated 1945 by Cullen and Bontemps in NYPL
1945: turned back into a musical; Cullen said to be composing the music himself, and seeking Lena Horne to star (NY Age); content attacked (Jones, pp. 113, 114-115)

The 1945-1946 typescript and mimeograph of several drafts of the play St. Louis Woman are at UC Berkeley, together with MGM screenplay of 1954

1946, in March: the musical makes it to Broadway, now with Mercer/Arlen music (Jones, pp. 116-117), plus participation of director Rouben Mamoulian and featuring Pearl Bailey's Broadway debut; Cullen has just died in January 1946, but Bontemps tweaks the libretto; ran March 30 to July 27, and there was a later movie 1954 MGM and revivals, up to 1959, 1998, and 2003 ballet version; has classics "Come Rain Come Shine" and "Any Place I Hang My Hat is Home"; music is liked but libretto is repeatedly slammed

Some bibliography:

Jones, Kirkland C. Renaissance Man from Louisiana: A Biography of Arna Wendell Bontemps (Greenwood Press, 1992)

1933, in July: Cook and Abbie played at the Lafayette (Carter thesis, p. 381, citing NY Age, July 28, 1933, p. 6)

1933, August: Did Cook have any part in Negro Day at the Century of Progress in Chicago on Saturday, August 12, 1933, with a chorus of 3000? No. There is no evidence for this. The Century of Progress Fair ran in the summers of 1933 and 1934. Negro Day in 1933 was on August 12, without any huge chorus. Carter bio. (p. 109) reports that Cook is one of two guest conductors on August 25, 1933, along with Eubie Blake, on Black Achievement Evening at the Chicago World's Fair (Carter’s source evidently mixed up 1933 with 1934 and Eubie Blake with Noble Sissle; the August 25 event is in 1934; see below)
1933: Cook composes music to Mercer's lyrics for "A Little Bit of Heaven Called Home", publ. Schirmer 1933 (Cook bio., p. 109 says 1934, but its list of songs says 1933, as does WorldCat)

1933-1934

1933: in later 1933, Alain L. Locke (who was teaching at Howard) now begins to help Cook with his memoirs, and this continued throughout the 1930s; Locke, sixteen years younger than Cook, was a close friend and correspondent, as well as a colleague of Mercer's (Locke bio by Harris and Molesworth, pp. 273, 313).

1934: Cook's old song "Mammy," with lyrics by Lester A. Walton, from his 1915 Darkydom, is Ethel Waters' new hit (Baltimore Afro American, January 6, 1934, p. 18)

THE CHICAGO PAGEANT

In year two of the Chicago Century of Progress exposition, a Negro Pageant is planned for August at Soldiers Field

1934, in May: Noble Sissle issued a major statement about those who are going to assist him in preparing for the Chicago Pageant. He named Will Marion Cook, Harry Lawrence Freeman, J. R. Johnson, Luckey Roberts, William Grant Still, Will Vodery, William C. Handy, Flournoy Miller, Eubie Blake, and others; significantly, Cook grabs the credit for the whole business:

"Will Marion Cooke [sic] said: "My idea of such a tribute to the American Negro and his contribution is just like a dream that I have had for years. I am glad that Sissle asked me for assistance, and I intend to give my all for this mammoth pageant depicting our art that is recognized as one of the outstanding accomplishments the world has ever known."

Said Sissle: "What a world of material Will Cooke [sic] possesses, and what an opportunity for an expression from him in art, that I know will astound the world."

(Chicago Defender, May 5, 1934, p. 1)
1934, in May: Cook is one of the leading African American musicians who heard auditions for the Chicago August pageant in New York City at the Lafayette on Thursday, May 17; the group included Noble Sissle, Will Vodery, J. R. Johnson, Will. C. Handy, Charles L. Cooke, Waldo Freeman, Harry Lawrence Freeman, William Grant Still, and others, and they met later with Will Marion Cook at the home of J. R. Johnson to learn about the plans (Chicago Defender, May 19, 1934, p. 9); this group---including Handy, Lawrence Freeman, Will Marion Cook, William C. Elkins, Will H. Vodery, Homer Smith, Cecil McPherson, and Lucky Roberts---continued to meet twice a week in NYC at the private offices of W. C. Handy at 48th and Broadway to work on details of the pageant; Cook is identified as “genius, composer, and director”; Handy’s son Wyer Owen Handy will go early to Chicago to work on the event and will be joined there after July 4 by Vodery, Cook, Freeman, and Sissle (Chicago Defender, June 30, 1934, p. 1-2).

Noble Sissle had overall musical coordination of this huge, three-hour spectacle. Cook is one of four musical directors/conductors, who were N. Clark Smith plus the three buddies H. L. Freeman, Will Vodery and Cook---but not, in the end, J. Rosamund Johnson, as in some early reports, and Johnson is mentioned in the Chicago Tribune’s August 26 review), each conducting his own work. Richard Harrison was narrator.

Chicago Defender, August 25, p. 3 has a staged photo of eight of the composers and executives of the pageant, including Nahum D. Brascher, production manager; Walter Dyett, director; Will Marion Cook, composer and director; Maj. N. Clark Smith, composer and director; Howard Southgate, director of pageant; Noble Sissle, composer and director; Harry Lawrence Freeman, composer and director; W. Louis Davis, business manager. Others involved but not present for the picture are said to include W. C. Handy, J. Rosamond Johnson, Harry Burleigh, Will Vodery, and N. K. McGill.

The proceeds from the pageant were to go toward establishing musical scholarships for Negroes (Chicago Defender, August 16, 1934, p. 7)

1934, in July: said to be doing much better physically, Cook is one of the conductors/directors/participants in the Century of Progress's
Negro Pageant in Chicago on Saturday night, August 25, 1934; “Famous Musicians Arrive in Chicago” (Pittsburgh Courier, July 21, 1934, p. 19; Cook is a frustrated genius); he is said to have arrived in the city shortly before August 11, in time for the National Auditions (Chicago Defender, August 11, 1934, p. 8), and indeed, he is in town by Monday, July 16 when he met with other music directors and chorus masters at Metropolitan Community Church (Chicago Defender, July 21, 1934, p. 1)

1934, in August: Individual groups are rehearsing in the Wendell Phillips auditorium at 39th and Prairie, the 8th Regiment armory, the Washington Park boathouse, and the Roseland tearoom; rehearsing alternately at Wendell Phillips are individual groups under Freeman, Cook, Vodery, James A Mundy, J. Wesley Johns, and N. Clark Smith (Chicago Defender, August 5, 1934, p. SW 4)

1934, in August: Saturday, August 25 at Soldiers' Field:

A Negro Pageant, a three-act, three-hour spectacle with a cast of 5,000, in musical numbers with song and dance, and immense costumed pantomime scenes, entitled: "O, Sing A New Song."

Part I: in the jungles of Africa (the Negro in his native Africa).

"Ode to the Sun" (a.k.a. "An Ode to the Rising Sun"), by Harry Lawrence Freeman
"Muttering Thunder"
the Witch Song

(on Cook's "Ghost Ship" at the Pageant, see Time 24/1 (1934), p. 39)

Part II: on the cotton plantation (Plantation scene).

Three Spirituals: "Bye and Bye," "Go Down Moses," and "Steal Away to Jesus"
"Pickin' Cotton"
"John Brown's Body" and "Dixie"
"Rise, Shine, Give God the Glory" (?same as "Praise God a'Mighty, I'm Free At Last")
The Umbrian Glee Club did Cook's "Swing Along"
Part III: in the modern age.

"Carry Me Back to Old Virginy/Virginia"

For Part III, Noble Sissle and his orchestra played,
Earl Hines played the piano (including Maple Leaf Rag)
Abbie Mitchell sang "Red, Red Rose" with Cook at the piano
and took a leading role in the version of St. Louis Blues
conducted by W. C. Handy
Irene Castle McLaughlin participated, directing a revue of
dances she and her late husband had made famous (Cake Walk,
Bunnie Hug, Texas Tommy, Castle Walk), and introducing Bill
"Bojangles" Robinson.
comedy chorus of doughboys
Jungle rhythms in modern setting
a mechanistic ballet, depicting modern industrial life

Grand Finale: To close, Sissle (or an ensemble) sang "O sing a
new song," which he and Vodery wrote.

(Lots of Chicago Defender and Tribune hits, incl. Chicago
Tribune, July 22, 1934, p. 14, Chicago Tribune, August 3, 1934,
p. 7, Chicago Tribune, August 5, 1934, p. SW4, Chicago
Tribune, August 15, 1934, p. 17, Chicago Tribune, August 16,
1934, p. 7, Chicago Tribune, August 21, 1934, p. 5, Chicago
Tribune, August 22, 1934, p. 7, Chicago Tribune, August 25,
1934, p. 5; Chicago Defender, August 25, 1934, p. 3, 4; Chicago
Tribune, August 26, 1934, pp. 7, 16; Chicago Defender,
September 1, 1934, p. 1-2, 3
Philadelphia Tribune, August 30, 1934, p. 2 with a big Chicago
(A.N.P.) wire service story on the pageant, etc.).

Twenty years later, Abbie remembers this event at Soldier's Field as
Cook's last public appearance, recalling that they did "Red, Red
Rose" together, and says "He was in broken health, at life's ebb"
(Pittsburgh Courier, February 27, 1954, Courier Magazine
Section, p. 3)

1934-1935

Mercer is in France this year, and Cook is largely NOT in Asheville.
1934 in September: Cook is staging a comeback and is reported soon to appear on the radio with a large orchestra (NY Age, September 15, 1934, p. 4). This and the November reference below may be the choral experience about which composer and pianist Margaret Bonds (1913-1972) tells an anecdote. The very young Bonds played a piano concerto under the baton of Florence Price at the August Pageant, and Price and Cook both socialized at her parents’ Chicago house. Bonds remembers that Cook was preparing a radio program for NBC presenting a Negro choir (given Bonds’ age and Cook's itinerary, it probably is a reference to Chicago that fall) and kept revising his scores.

DUSK AND DAWN

1934, in October: Cook announced in the last week in October that a production of Dusk and Dawn would open in December; surely an expanded from of 1930’s Dust (sic) and Dawn

It was to be a musical extravaganza for Broadway with a cast of 200; libretto by Sterling Brown, R. Butcher, and Mercer Cook; Mrs. Florence Price of Chicago is joining Cook in the musical tasks (she is a Wanamaker Prize winner for 1927). Mentioned for the cast are Abbie Mitchell, Bessie Smith (1894-1937), Jasmine [Jasmino in Afro Am] Leroy, Jazzlips Richardson, Edward Boather, and Mantan Moreland [who was also mentioned for St. Louis Woman, as above]. This production does not take place---once more a big false alarm---a failure to thrive under Depression-era conditions.

(big column in Philadelphia Tribune, November 1, 1934, p. 15; same text, not as accurate, in Baltimore Afro American, November 3, 1934, p. 6; Pittsburgh Courier, November 3, 1934, p. 8, with by-line as "CHICAGO, Nov. 1--(ANP)").

Given the available outline description (see below), this is the latest iteration of a project that Cook had struggled with for over ten years.

Jazzlips Richardson, jr. (0000 - 0000), comedian and eccentric dancer, is new on the scene in Hot Chocolates (1929), then in the Blackbirds of 1930, and Green Pastures (1931, 1935)--- all around 1929-1931; he is traceable to at least 1954; crosses paths with Mantan Moreland and
Jimmy Baskett

Edward Boather is very probably Edward Boatner (1898-1981), baritone concert singer, choir director, composer

1934 Dusk and Dawn, brief outline description:

Africa
The slave ship
Slavery in America
The folk song period
Ragtime
The work song
A Forest Fantasie

When Dusk and Dawn is announced by WMC, which is picked up in the Baltimore Afro American, November 1934, he says he's been at work on it for 14 years. This declaration might pull together a number of references:

1919: a new opera for London
1924: Negro Nuances working outline
1924: after this I shall produce grand opera in Paris!
1926: January references to his opera
1926: June ref. to Rugged Road; July ref. to "something up his sleeve"
1926-27, 1927-28, 1928-1929: at work on an opera
1927: Does Silhouettes Negre belong here?
1930: Dust and Dawn as a mini for Lafayette in NY Age, January 18, 1930, p. 6, with lots of helpers
1934: Dusk and Dawn as a big show, a Broadway extravaganza

1934, in November: Alain L. Locke met Cook while in Chicago, and there, Cook was planning a radio series on "Black Master Music" (Locke bio by Harris and Molesworth, p. 275)

1934, in December: Cook writes a letter to the Defender, addressed from Chicago (Chicago Defender, December 1, 1934, p. 14)

1935, in January: Cook is at home in Washington [NB: not in Asheville, and not in NYC], and says he has been approached about the possibility
of succeeding Stokowski with the Philadelphia Symphony (Baltimore Afro American, January 5, 1935, p. 9); this could be Cook puffery. Is he staying in Mercer’s house? Perhaps. Mercer himself is not back in the US until July.

1935, in February: "Will Marion Cook, dean of musicians, left New York last week for Asheville, N.C., where he will spend two weeks resting" (Chicago Defender, February 9, 1935, p. 6).

1935-1936

1935, in July: Mercer and family are back in the US at Howard.

1935, in December: it is interesting that after the failure of his productions in 1932 and 1934, and the rise of National Theatre movement and WPA project, Cook has agreed to be a member of an advisory board for the National Negro Theatre, a non-profit organization that is going into play production after two years of preparation (Chicago Defender, December 7, 1935, p. 8)

1936, in January: Cook’s step-father dies.

1936, in May: Cook visited the Brainerd Institute (about 100 miles SE, in Chester, SC) in May, "with the intention of helping to build its programs" (Carter bio, p. 109; Carter thesis, p. 382, citing letter to Alain Locke of July 28, 1936, quoted from thesis, which says the dates of the visit are May 4-7)

1936, in July: Cook says he is "at last, the old Cook" in a letter of July to Alain Locke; he had been worried about illness, and about money in relation to "helping my poor stranded children in France and Italy" --- presumably Louis and Marion Douglas (Carter bio, p. 109; Carter bio, p. 109; Carter thesis, p. 382, citing letter to Alain Locke of July 28, 1936); Marion Douglas is in a hospital in Paris and will undergo an operation in August 1936, which must have been a big Cook concern, and why his family in Europe are in both France and Italy (Chicago Defender, August 22, 1936, p. 24)

1936-1937
Mercer and family move to Atlanta. Could this have spurred the trip in the fall by Cook?

1936, in the fall: Cook, still full of vim after a trip through Western North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, writes two letters to Dr. Robert Weaver, adviser to the Secretary of the Interior, on the economic status of the colored citizenry, complaining that the WPA is discriminatory and is not doing enough for poor blacks (Baltimore Afro-American, December 26, 1936, p. 2; Indianapolis Recorder, December 26, 1936, p. 9: “COOK LAMBASTES WEAVER FOR ‘LACK OF COURAGE’ ON WPA JIMCROW; SAYS A ‘DOUGLASS’ NEEDED”; this article describes Cook as a “distinguished composer and writer, who is now recuperating in Asheville”)

1937, in April: Cook kicks up a fuss. There is a radio program with Louis Armstrong featuring black variety on NBC radio, sponsored by Fleischman’s Yeast, starting Friday evening, April 9; it is the first all-colored radio variety show; Cook evidently did not like some of Armstrong’s "muggin", his way of singing and talking; he fired off telegrams of protest to the Fleischmann Yeast Co. and the press, which get publicity and draw some comments negative to Cook (Philadelphia Tribune, April 15, 1937, p. 15; Philadelphia Tribune, April 22, 1937, p. 13; Plaindealer (KS), April 23, 1937, p. 3; Plaindealer (KS), June 25, 1937, p. 3)

1937: Rainer Lotz reports a letter from Cook to his friend Alain Locke, asking for money to get Louis Douglas (and family?) home. [Is this the 1936 communication mentioned above?]

1937, in February: Cook writes a letter in Atlanta for ANP, dated February 11, that gets reprinted; he has things to say about men he has heard at an event in the city; he also remembers that he attended the memorial for Seidl at the Met in NYC long ago; he also says he was so moved that he cried and that his daughter drove him out of the hall, so daughter Marion (with granddaughter Marion?) was already in Atlanta then (Pittsburgh Courier, February 13, 1937, p. 5)

1937, in July: Alain Locke invites Cook to a concert by Marian Anderson (Harris and Molesworth Locke bio., p. 313)

1937, in August: Cook’s older brother John Harwell Cook, dies.
1937-1938

1937, in the fall: Lewis Douglas and Marion Cook Douglas are back in the US by this fall; daughter Marion, in fact, was back by February (see above). Granddaughter Marion attends Spelman in Atlanta. Her uncle Mercer and his family are close by in town.

1938, in April: Ethel Waters' Africana is going to be produced as a movie by the newly formed Earl Dancer Motion Picture Corporation, and "Will Marion Cook will be sought for his knowledge of Negro folklore and as a technical advisor for the film" (Pittsburgh Courier, April 16, 1938, p. 20)

1938, in June: Will Cook and Mercer Cook have written a new ballad for Alberta Hunter (Washington Afro American, December 3, 1938, p. 11); Bill Reed (Hot From Harlem, p. 27, and p. 228, fn. 73, citing the New York Amsterdam News, June 19, 1938: “Will Marion Cook Writes New Song”) says he wrote this song for a broadcast by Hunter; the Indianapolis Recorder, January 7, 1939, p. 14, mentions that Alberta Hunter recently sang Cook’s first popular song in over 20 years, “A Little Bit of Heaven Called Home,” over an NBC radio chain; seems likely that it is the song being referred to; this song is actually new in 1933, as above, but possibly it was modified now; Schirmer reissues it in 1939.

1938-1939

1938, in August: Cook sends a letter from the Brainerd Institute, and he is still writing his autobiography (Carter bio., p. 383) [NB: he had been there in 1936---see above; the school closed in 1939]

1938, in August: Carter bio. (p. 110) quotes a swatch from the Cook memoir during account of the Washington, DC run up to the trip to Berlin in which he says he is currently sixty-nine (memoir, Carter thesis, p. 412), which should mean he was writing after January 1938, and it sounds like early days for the memoir if he is only working on the
year 1887; Cook says his autobiography will be titled "A Hell of a Life" and a first draft will be finished Wednesday (Baltimore Afro American, August 6, 1938, p. 11), though in a letter of August 10, 1938, he says he is still writing the memoir (Carter thesis, p. 383). The same newspaper prints a poem from the "new book" alongside a photo in October (Baltimore Afro American, October 22, 1938, p. 9)

1938, in September: Kansas City Plaindealer, September 2, 1938, p. 6, prints article "Harlem: Negro Capital of the Nation," by Willis N. Huggins, "pinch-hitting" for Floyd G. Snelson in NY Age column of that name, and dated New York, August 29:

"WILL MARION Cook/ This veteran in the world of music and the theatre, is planning to establish himself in France, "never" again to reside in America. Within a year he plans to put together his reminiscences, some of which may not be pleasant to earlier colleagues who walked with him by the way."

1938, in September: Cook is to produce a new musical for New York, says Billy Jones in his NYC column: "it is said that the show will be of a different type from any that has been offered on Broadway" (Chicago Defender, September 17, 1938, p. 18); a month later, Billy Jones reports it as a new play (Chicago Defender, October 22, 1938, p. 19); a week later in the Billy Jones column, Cook is working hard on a script, and also on the music, for a musical show (Chicago Defender, October 29, 1938, p. 19) No name is ever offered up for this show, and there is no further trace of it.

1938: Cook’s Chicago Defender obit says he had a severe heart ailment for six years before his death, hence from ca. 1938 (Chicago Defender, July 29, 1944, p. 2), but he sounds vigorous as late as the fall of 1938, anyway

1939, in spring: no refs.

1939-1940

1939 in fall: no references
1940, in March: Cook writes his will on March 14, 1940 at Atlanta, Ga. Atlanta is 200 miles SW of Asheville. Son Mercer lives in Atlanta with wife and family, teaching at Atlanta Univ. (1936-1943), and granddaughter Marion is going to college there at Spelman. Cook gives his permanent home address as in Baltimore in the will.

1940-1941

1940, in the fall: no references

1941, from June to August: Cook is writing from NYC in June, and then from Asheville by mid-August

1941, in June: a surviving letter to Claude Barnett of the Negro Associated Press; Cook is writing from NYC using ASCAP’s Rockefeller Plaza address; he’s revising Hell of a Life (Carter thesis, p. 183, 384)

1941, in June: The Pittsburgh Courier, June 28, 1941, p. 21, with ANP byline New York, June 26 and Cleveland Gazette, July 26, 1941, p. 3, say that Will Marion Cook and son Mercer have written a new song, "A Little Bit of Heaven Called Home"; the Courier says “Will Marion thinks it is one of the best things he has done in his long career”; the article also mentions that "Mr. Cook is writing the chronicle of his life," which is to be called “The Hell of a Life” and will be published by Schirmer (Pittsburgh Courier, June 8, 1941, p. 21); the song dates back to 1933 and was sung on the radio by Alberta Hunter on her return to the US in 1939, so this mention now seems to be part of the publicity campaign that Cook undertook through the newspapers when he came back to NYC for about two months in the summer

1941, in mid July: Cook has come out of retirement in Asheville, NC to look after some ASCAP musical affairs with ASCAP officials in NYC; he has been in poor health for the past few years, but is looking sprightly; he is accompanied by "his favorite relative," Mrs. Cora Parchment, a cousin; this is his Oberlin cousin, with whose family he lived for several years as a schoolboy in the 1880s, and now of NYC, where they roomed in the same building in 1918-1919; she is now living at 555 Edgecombe Avenue, Manhattan, a handsome 14-story apartment building between Amsterdam Avenue and the Harlem
River and between 159th and 160th Streets, and across from a park; the Philadelphia report says he "announced gingerly to reporters" that only something important could bring him to NYC, which is echoed in the Cleveland Gazette for August 2: "[he] said that only business of great importance could possibly have brought him to New York" (Philadelphia Tribune, July 17, 1941, p. 11; Baltimore Afro-American, July 19, 1941, p. 14; California Eagle, July 31, 1941, p. 2 B; Cleveland Gazette, August 2, 1941, p. 1, with headline "Will Marion Cook Ill")

Other reports put even more spin on his appearance: a festival of Negro music is going to be organized in his honor, "50 Years of Swing Along," the fiftieth anniversary of the composition of "Swing Along" [NB: it is really the 40th Anniversary, since "Swing Along" was written for the 1901 version of The Cannibal King]; this event is to happen at Lewisohn Stadium on the City College Campus on Labor Day (Monday, September 1, 1941), and feature Abbie Mitchell, Andre Kostelanetz, Frank Black, Count Basie, who are just a few of those scheduled to honor him; this brings him back to NYC in July from retirement in North Carolina; he stays at "Harlem's Waldorf-Astoria," the Hotel Theresa, which only accepted blacks as guests from spring 1940 (Maurice Dancer's "Tan Manhattan" column, Chicago Defender, July 12, 1941, p. 21; Bessye J. Bearden's "New York Society" column, Chicago Defender, July 19, 1941, p. 9; California Eagle, August 28, 1941, p. 4 B);

One wonders whether he is spinning this to NY newspaper columnists when he is actually just in town to deal with ASCAP; no September festival or concert takes place

1941, in July: Cook copyrights on July 22, 1941 the newly written but unpublished "Over Here (Let's Save the U.S.A., to Hell with Over There)"; the copyright citation attributes the lyrics to son Mercer and grandson Mercer;

The story is told that Cook dashes off the music and sends it to Mercer in Cuba, who cables him back some lyrics (Philadelphia Tribune, August 14, 1941, p. 11)

1941, mid-August: by now Cook is back in Asheville (Carter thesis, p. 384); Cook writes a letter from Asheville to Hall Johnson on August 29, 1941 (printed in Eugene T. Simpson, Hall Johnson: His Life, His
Spirit, and His Music (2008), p. 543; preserved at the Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University) that, among other things, refers to “my projected school” and apparently also to a possible Madison Square Garden extravaganza (a reference to the Lewisohn Stadium project?); whatever is brewing, he does not have an agent or a manager or a contract for it yet, and he did not see his lawyer about it when in New York; sounds as if he is organizing a benefit for the new school; in New York, Cook was “doing a million things, mostly badly”

1941-1942

1941, in October: surviving letter to Alain Locke, of October 2, 1941 (from where was it written?)

1942, in March: new copyright on "My Lady", a 1912 Schirmer song with Dunbar lyrics

1942, in July: three generations of Cook’s family members appear together in an Atlanta University Summer Theatre production: Abbie, Mercer, and grandson Mercer, jr., plus granddaughter Marion, now a year out of college. Did Cook come see it?

1942-1943

1943-1944

1943, in October: Mercer Cook gets a position in Haiti and takes a year's leave from Atlanta University; he will end up being there from 1943 to 1945. Cook follows soon, as he evidently does not want to be far from Mercer, or perhaps Mercer wanted him nearby.

1943, in December: Cook moved to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to be near his son Mercer, and is soon hospitalized at Saint Francois de Sales Hospital.

1944, in March: Cook returns to US; en route to his home in NYC from Port-au-Prince, he stops in Baltimore and immediately enters the hospital with a stomach ailment picked up in Haiti (Baltimore Afro
American, March 25, 1944, p. 15).

NB: he is not headed to Asheville, NC. Did he close up a home there in later 1943?

1944, in June: Cook is in Harlem Hospital from 21 June (Chicago Defender, July 29, 1944, p. 2; Carter bio., p. 110; Carter thesis, p. 384)

1944, in July: Cook died on Wednesday night, July 19 in NYC, after four weeks in hospital. Abbie is said to have attended him in his last illness and made funeral arrangements for him (Baltimore Afro American, November 4, 1944, p. 16). Monday, July 24 funeral at Rodney Dade Funeral Home in Harlem at 2332 7th Ave.; then he was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Washington, D.C. (and hence also has a DC certificate of death). Several different statements about immediate cause of death, including heart trouble and cancer. Carter thesis, pp. 182, 384, says he had heart problems, but died of pancreatic cancer (from interview with Mercer Cook, thesis p. 182). Obit in Pittsburgh Courier (Pittsburgh Courier, July 29, 1944, p. 1, 4) repeats that he died after a four-week illness, which probably means no more than that he had been hospitalized for four weeks.

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1944, in August: radio station WNYC has a regular Tuesday evening program at 5:30 hosted by Lola Hayes and devoted to music of Negro composers; on Tuesday, August 8, Abbie Mitchell made guest appearance on a program devoted to music of the late Will Marion Cook (NY Age, Saturday, August 12, 1944, p. 10; Chicago Defender, September 9, 1944, p. 9)

1944, in August: last rites for Cook to be part of a movie theater newsreel (Baltimore Afro American, August 12, 1944, p. 000)

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1944, in November: Cook’s will names grandson Mercer Cook 3rd as his heir; the will was written on March 14, 1940 in Atlanta, Georgia; the estate consists only of royalties from his music publications (NB: no townhouse in Harlem); evidently at first his children, siblings Mercer and Marion, are to get $1 each, but then his daughter Mrs. Marion Cook Douglass of NYC gets a token $500; the will may have cleared
probate in December 1946 (Baltimore Afro American, November 4, 1944, p. 16; Baltimore Afro American, December 14, 1946, p. 15)

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1948-1949

1948, in October: On October 28, 1948, the Eva Jessye Choir gave a concert at Town Hall which featured Cook’s "The Ghost Ship" performed from manuscript (NY Times, October 29, 1948, p. 29).

1949-1950

1950-1951

1950, in October: the Citizens' Committee of the Metropolitan Music School established a Cook scholarship (Chicago Defender, October 14, 1950, p. 8); "Negro students of any age are eligible to enter a competition for the Will Marion Cooke Scholarship at the Metropolitan Music School" (NY Times, December 7, 1950, p. 55); the winner, a Barnard student, will be presented the scholarship by Abbie Mitchell (Chicago Defender, March 10, 1951, p. 8); an auction of art in 1951 was held to provide funds for scholarships for Negro students (NY Times, May 30, 1951, p. 15); NY Age has a 1952 article on the Metropolitan Music School of NYC, established in 1935 with an interracial faculty and student body, and says "The scholarship fund of the Metropolitan Music School is named for the late Will Marion Cooke" (NY Age, February 9, 1952, p. 10); this is apparently a scholarship fund just for African American students
SOME BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Manuscript Division of the Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University contains the papers of Will Mercer Cook, and among these are a series of materials related to his father Will Marion Cook, including autobiographical notes and a large typescript autobiographical draft of his life, entitled “A Hell of a Life.” Another series includes autobiographical notes by his mother, Abbie Mitchell, about her career. A 1992 finding aid for all this material, put online by Digital Howard on 10/01/2015, is at http://dh.howard.edu/finaid_manu/ (accessed 10/12/2017).


Cook, Will Marion. Excerpt from Cook typescript memoir in Theatre Arts 31/9 (September 1947), 61-65; probably written in the late 1930s; published posthumously by Mercer; this is just the Clorindy narrative. Reprinted in Readings in Black Music, ed. Eileen Southern, 2nd ed. (NY: Norton, 1983).


