

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

1996

## FROMPIN' IN THE GREAT PLAINS LISTENING AND DANCING TO THE JAZZ ORCHESTRAS OF ALPHONSO TRENT 1925~44

Marc Rice  
*University of Louisville*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Rice, Marc, "FROMPIN' IN THE GREAT PLAINS LISTENING AND DANCING TO THE JAZZ ORCHESTRAS OF ALPHONSO TRENT 1925~44" (1996). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1091.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1091>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# FROM PIN' IN THE GREAT PLAINS

## LISTENING AND DANCING TO THE JAZZ ORCHESTRAS OF ALPHONSO TRENT 1925-44

MARC RICE

During the 1920s and 1930s, dozens of African American dance bands of various sizes crisscrossed the Midwest and Southwest United States. These organizations are called "territory bands" by jazz historians because they typically maintained a city such as Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Omaha, or Tulsa as a home base, from which they mounted tours of the surrounding towns. The territory bands had their best years just prior to the Great Depression, but most were devastated by the 1930s and disbanded. Most of these bands included jazz in their repertoire and were vital to its

development, creating a style of music distinct from that of New York, New Orleans, or Chicago. This midwest jazz style did not die with the demise of the early bands, for the careers of the Count Basie Orchestra and Charlie Parker were their legacy.

This paper focuses on one of the most popular and influential of the territory band leaders, Alphonso Trent. From 1925 to the mid 1940s, his groups were acknowledged by listeners and by other musicians as among the very best of the jazz bands performing in the Southwest and Great Plains. In the cities and towns that they visited, their performances were always a special event, particularly in the African American communities. Trent's orchestras played an important role as musicians and entertainers of African Americans in the Great Plains States in the 1920s and 1930s.

Although Trent did lead his first orchestra through the Midwest and Northeast, most of his career was set in and around the Great Plains, specifically in three cities, Dallas, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; and Deadwood, South Dakota. In Dallas Trent met with his first triumph, securing well-paying jobs that had previously been off-limits to African

*Marc Rice is a musicologist with a focus on jazz composition. A teaching assistant at the University of Louisville, he is writing his dissertation on the Bennie Moten Orchestra, a jazz band in Kansas City from 1925-30.*

[GPQ 16 (Spring 1996): 107-15]

American orchestras. Kansas City saw him during a period of hard times, when tragedy and the Depression had taken its toll on his group. In Deadwood, at the end of his music career, Trent again found financial success and stability.

#### ALPHONSO TRENT

Alphonso Trent was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas, in 1902. He came from a solidly middle class African American family that emphasized greatly the importance of education. According to Henry Rinne, his father was the principal of the black high school in Fort Smith, and was one of the first black graduates of Ohio State University.<sup>1</sup> In addition to formal classroom education, Alphonso was given piano lessons at an early age. By his early teens, he was playing professionally with local bands.<sup>2</sup>

In 1925 Trent joined a group of musicians in Little Rock, Arkansas. The personnel included Edwin Swayzee, trumpet; Eugene Crooke, banjo; James Jeter, alto saxophone; John Fielding, vocals; Leo "Snub" Mosely, trombone; and Trent on piano.<sup>3</sup> In the spring of 1925 the band, now called the Alphonso Trent Orchestra, traveled through Texas and eventually arrived in Dallas.

In most cities the Trent orchestra played their primary engagements at extravagant, exclusively white hotels. These hotels, catering to the economic elite, could offer the band steady long-term employment. During their off nights, however, in whatever city they were in, the Trent orchestra booked themselves into African American establishments. The orchestra did not make much money on these nights, but as their reputation grew, these dances became important events in the black communities.

#### DALLAS

The orchestra first established this method of operation in Dallas. In 1925 the city had

three arenas for an African American orchestra to play and for a black audience to dance and listen. There was an outdoor pavilion in a section of Dallas called "Oak Cliff." There was the Pythian Temple, a large building downtown for the use of black businesses and organizations. And there were two nightclubs in the area, the L.B. Mose Theater and the Hummingbird.<sup>4</sup>

The Oak Cliff pavilion was the scene of the Trent Orchestra's first engagements in Dallas. According to Essie Mae Trent, Alphonso's widow, who first met her husband shortly after he moved to Dallas, the pavilion at Oak Cliff was at a ballpark in a predominantly African American neighborhood. The audience was generally ninety percent black as well. In Mrs. Trent's words, the facility was

a large area and plenty of parking space. I wouldn't say that it was cultivated like they have now. It wasn't like the modern parks and things are now. But you had your space. Plenty of parking space. Oh it took up, say, two blocks.

It wasn't anything modern. You had your bandstand. It was large. Huge, you could say. You could accommodate 1000 people easily. During those times it was outstanding. I wouldn't be wrong in using those words.<sup>5</sup>

In the beginning of their stay in Dallas, the Trent Orchestra struggled with small crowds and little recognition, but their biggest break came a few weeks after their arrival. A bellman from the luxurious, white Adolphus Hotel convinced the hotel secretary to attend one of the band's Oak Cliff performances. She persuaded her boss to offer the orchestra a two-week engagement.<sup>6</sup> The two weeks became an eighteen-month stay, during which the orchestra established itself as the best band in the Southwest.

In the segregated Adolphus Hotel, the dances that the Trent Orchestra played were off-limits to African Americans. The bands-

men and their families, including Trent's future wife Essie Mae, endured the Jim Crow policies at the hotel, but these dances were broadcast over a 50,000 watt radio station, WFAA. It was heard throughout much of the country and served to disseminate the music of the band to people across the land, particularly the African Americans of Dallas.<sup>7</sup>

In this manner the Trent Orchestra became an important element in the multi-faceted musical culture of Dallas. During the 1920s, jazz and blues-based music thrived in the African American communities of the city. The Central Track section of the town in particular was host to many blues singers, boogie-woogie pianists, and small combos, who worked in various types of small clubs.

Buster Smith, a saxophonist who grew up in Dallas during the twenties, was a witness to the musical activities in the African American communities. As Smith recalled, "there were many, *many* good bands and musicians around [Dallas] then, and you'd see them everywhere you went . . ." Smith remembered hearing African American orchestras such as those led by Jap Allen, George E. Lee, and T. Holder. There were also "any number of little four and five-piece bands playing around the roadhouses and after hours spots." Smith was quite familiar with the Trent Orchestra; it and the Troy Floyd Orchestra from San Antonio, "were the big bands."<sup>8</sup>

Their radio broadcasts quickly spread the popularity of the Trent Orchestra in the African American communities of Dallas and across the Midwest and Southwest. When they were not playing at the Adolphus Hotel, the band frequently played in either the L.B. Mose Theater downtown or the Hummingbird on Hall street in the Central Track district. According to Buddy Tate, then a young Dallas musician who eventually became a member of the Count Basie Orchestra:

[The Trent Orchestra] would come uptown [to black dance halls] and play from 9 to 12 every Sunday after they finished their date

at the Adolphus . . . and man, you couldn't get in when they played. They used to make as much as \$75 a night a man, they were so popular. They had all that airtime over WFAA in Dallas, and they were heard all the way to Canada.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the Oak Cliff pavilion and the two nightclubs, African Americans could also hear the Trent Orchestra at the Pythian Temple, a downtown, black-owned building used by various businesses. In the words of Mrs. Trent, the building was

all brick. And there was a ballroom in there. And of course on the first floor there was a drug store. On the second floor you had your different doctors. And then you had your schools like your commercial schools. This is owned by Blacks. A five story building. And you could rent the auditorium out, if one wanted to rent it. Bands and things would come in, they would book them in there. Oh it was a lovely place. It was first class.<sup>10</sup>

The Pythian Temple's dance hall could be rented out for various occasions. As Mrs. Trent recalled

the dance floor was just for anybody who wanted to rent it. For organizations. Lodges. Dances. Church affairs. If they wanted to have school affairs or plays. Sometimes the different clubs they'd say, "Well now what are we going to do? Let's have a play." So we know what we have in our club, and we know what they can offer. Well, we'll have a play.<sup>11</sup>

Often the Temple was rented out for public dances. In fact, when the Trent orchestra had a night off, they themselves sometimes rented it out. Their tuba player, Brent Sparks, was in charge of advertising, and anyone who could afford the admission price could come. The dance hall could also be rented for private

affairs, and the Trent Orchestra frequently were hired to provide the entertainment. Most important were the dances given by the two society clubs to which Mrs. Trent belonged, the Idlewild and the Dunbar clubs, which presented the African American debutantes. Mrs. Trent's sister was in charge of selecting the girls who would have their coming out at the Pythian Temple dances.<sup>12</sup>

These private clubs played an important role in the culture of Dallas's mid- and upper-class African Americans. They were a meaningful part of Mrs. Trent's life, and she met her husband at one of their meetings. She still has vivid memories of society dances at the Pythian Temple, for which the Trent Orchestra often played. When asked what one would see upon entering such a dance, she recalled with much laughter,

the band playing and people dancing. And women getting cool drinks or punch or whatever. No setups and tables like they have now. You would go to this fountain and they'd serve you punch. But they had chairs around and people'd sit and visit with their friends that way. Then they'd get up and dance. And some of the dances would have programs. And fellows was coming, wanting to see my program and fill in You're there! Everybody's frompin'! Everybody's doing their own thing! Everybody's got their own flask and bottle of whatever.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE RESPECTABILITY OF JAZZ

The popularity of the Trent Orchestra spread like wildfire among both black and white audiences. Dancing to jazz was a vital mode of social expression. There were those people, both African American and white, however, who saw jazz such as that played by the Trent Orchestra as dangerously decadent. Historian Paula Fass described this phenomenon among whites:

By accepting the sensuous and exciting rhythms of modern jazz and its well-known

association with the least savory parts of the cities, the young accepted as respectable what their elders logically could not, the excitement and those very qualities of indecency that they formally disdained.<sup>14</sup>

There were also African American parents who found dancing to this music to be less than respectable. For example, a 1927 editorial, "The Dance Craze!" in the black-owned *Kansas City Call* states:

After all has been said that can be said in favor of the dance, it remains true that it is demoralizing. It rests on a purely carnal basis. It is absolutely and exclusively of the flesh. But for its sex complex it never would have been known. Take this out of it and it would perish for lack of motive. It is a pleasure, no doubt, but it is the pleasure of sin. It excites and thrills—and kills . . . police courts and morgue records testify to the debasing influences of the dance . . .<sup>15</sup>

This attitude was also found in the Great Plains states. Ralph Ellison, an African American writer and social commentator who grew up in Oklahoma City in the 1920s described the social status of jazz in his home town:

Jazz was regarded by most of the respectable Negroes of the town as a backward, low-class form of expression and there was a marked difference between those who accepted it and lived close to their folk experience and those whose status stirrings led them to reject and deny it.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, when dancing to jazz became popular in the twenties, some adults, both African American and white, had a certain fear for the souls of their children. Even if their music was seen by some as decadent, however, the members of the Trent Orchestra, contrary to the image of the jazz musician as a shifty social degenerate, were well-educated young men of middle- and upper-middle class backgrounds. In addition, when they arrived in Dallas, the

band associated primarily with the residents of the city who had similar backgrounds. In the words of Mrs. Trent, the band members

were all high school graduates. And they were not like regular musicians at all. They had *culture*. These young men had been reared, you know, had had training at home. And you could tell from the churches [that they attended] on down. See, they got with the people that they'd been used to being around at home, and they'd go to church and the people there just fell in love with them.<sup>17</sup>

According to Mrs. Trent, the culture of the upper-class African Americans in Dallas, the culture to which the Trent Orchestra attached themselves, was quite vibrant. Perhaps she is a bit biased, but she feels that neighboring towns such as Fort Worth were "cowtowns" in comparison. As Mrs. Trent recalled, "When you get that society in Dallas, you're hitting something *heavy*. With carriage, culture, everything. That's the way people acted and carried themselves. These folks went from the top and entertained from the top."<sup>18</sup>

Young people danced two main types of dances to the music of the Trent Orchestra. Historians cite the Charleston and the Black Bottom as the two most important dances in the 1920s. Both were introduced in black vaudeville shows in the mid-1920s and were quickly appropriated by the young. Mrs. Trent remembers both white and African American dancers performing these steps to the music of the Trent Orchestra.<sup>19</sup>

#### ON TOUR

After eighteen months, the Trent Orchestra concluded their engagement at the Adolphus Hotel in the spring of 1926. In 1927 the orchestra worked the major cities of Texas and toured Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi. They then headed east, playing St. Louis, Louisville, Lexington, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Buffalo in 1928 and 1929.<sup>20</sup> In each city

they would play the major white hotel for two weeks to three months and on the side play dances for African Americans at various venues. As the engagement ended, tuba player Brent Sparks would secure them a job at another white hotel and accommodations in the new city.

These were prosperous times for the band. Their radio broadcasts at the Adolphus gave them a great deal of recognition. Dancing was more popular than ever, and they had no trouble finding places to play. In early 1930, however, tragedy struck. The club in Cleveland in which they were booked caught fire, and their instruments, uniforms, and sheet music were all destroyed. The disaster and the deepening of the Great Depression reversed their fortunes.

#### HARD TIMES

Trent's father paid for new instruments and uniforms, but jobs were difficult to come by. In early 1931 the band played its last job in the East and returned to the Southwest to regroup. Hayes Pillars, a saxophonist in the band, recalled that through most of 1931 and into 1932 the band based themselves in Trent's hometown of Fort Smith, Arkansas, while playing jobs in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Missouri, but they also required financial help from their families.<sup>21</sup>

Their first jobs upon returning to the Southwest in 1931 were in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and smaller towns in the same vicinity. Then they returned to Arkansas, where their financial situation deteriorated rapidly. For some jobs they were paid only three or four dollars a person. According to Hayes Pillars, "things just never got better . . . everybody kept thinking it would be better next week or next month or the next few months, but it just kept getting worse and worse, so we finally realized that we were in the grip of a deep depression and that was it."<sup>22</sup>

The bright spot during this dark period was a two-week booking at the end of October and beginning of November 1931, in El Torreon, a

white dance hall in Kansas City, Missouri, that also allowed them to play one night at the African American Paseo Dance Hall. Perhaps this engagement rejuvenated the band, for jazz and dancing were vital aspects of Kansas City life, and indeed, this city is of crucial importance in the history of jazz.

### KANSAS CITY JAZZ

From the mid-1920s through the 1930s, Kansas City was the scene of the most vibrant jazz community in the western United States. It had several large dance halls, and, especially in the African American communities, many smaller cabarets where enthusiasts could hear and dance to jazz throughout the night. Most large cities were host to one territory band, but no less than three, and at times as many as eight, bands called Kansas City home.<sup>23</sup>

Kansas City nightlife was the beneficiary of Thomas Pendergast's control of city government. According to Theodore Brown and Ross Russell, alcohol was, for all practical purposes, legal in most Kansas City establishments during Prohibition. Pendergast controlled the police department, and for a price, would keep the law away from any nightclub.

The abundance of alcohol and music established dancing and listening to jazz as important pastimes for both Kansas City residents and visitors. An advertisement in a July 1931 *Kansas City Call* announces excursion trains for Kansas City from Dallas, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City, to bring African Americans to the Paseo Dance Hall for two nights of celebration. The music would be provided by the George E. Lee Orchestra, that, like other bands based in Kansas City, had traveled throughout the Southwest and was quite famous in that part of the country.<sup>25</sup>

During these years the entertainment section of the *Kansas City Call* was filled with advertisements describing dances in the African American halls and nightclubs. Some of the most vivid ads depict the spectacular

battles of the bands, in which a hometown band, such as the Bennie Moten Orchestra, would perform with a visiting band, such as the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra from New York City.<sup>26</sup> Also advertised were the dances held by the African American musicians' union, Local No. 627, at which eight or more large orchestras would perform.<sup>27</sup>

One advertisement for the Trent Orchestra's performance at the Paseo Hall appeared in the 30 October 1931 *Kansas City Call*.<sup>28</sup> Most notable is the statement "Victor Recording Band." In fact, the Trent Orchestra never had the opportunity to record for the famous Victor label. Eight recordings, made for the smaller Gennet label, represent the only extant music of any of Trent's orchestras. It is quite possible that the advertisement used the Victor name to attract a larger audience. Victor was highly recognizable to Kansas City dancers because the favorite local band, the Bennie Moten Orchestra, recorded for it.<sup>29</sup>

One week after the advertisement appeared, the *Call* carried a review of the band in a column titled "Dance Gossip." Since the Trent Orchestra's eight Gennet recordings vary in quality, the review provides insight into the sound of the band:

With a might tooting of trumpets, a flock of 'horsing around' by the men in the band, a great deal of 'oompah—oompah' on the tuba and a new variety of low down stomps, Alphonso Trent and his band moved into Paseo Hall last Tuesday night to receive a positive ovation . . . the band played a lot of fast hot numbers, but they slayed the dancers with their rendition of the blues tunes . . .<sup>30</sup>

The reviewer described violinist Anderson Lacy as a "bundle of vertical motion," while Trent "handled the instrument in the most approved fashion." And "good-looking Chester Clarke (a Kansas City native) did some special tricks on his trumpet for the

home folks." The bandsmen were not only good looking but, as Mrs. Trent had said, well-reared. Eppie Jackson, a tuba player originally from Kansas City who had joined the orchestra in 1929, told the reviewer "nearly all of the men are college men, and they all act like gentlemen. I consider it rare good fortune to be associated with them."<sup>31</sup>

The article describes three types of tunes performed by the Trent Orchestra: fast hot numbers, blues tunes, and low down stomps. In fact, the band was exceptionally versatile and could play music not only for jazz dances but also "sweet music" for dances attended by older, white audiences. As saxophonist Hayes Pillars recalled,

They played everything you could think of: dinner music; they played hot music . . . they had a glee club in the band. I joined that band, and I found out that all of our arrangements were head arrangements. They would take a tune and start rehearsing it, and everybody'd put their idea in it and sometimes they would be a week rehearsing one tune. But they rehearsed every day . . .

And in the brass section they had a trio singing, and in the reed section we had a trio singing. Then we all sang together as a choral group. We had novelties. We could clown. We did everything . . . Back in those days you'd play a dance, and the people just wouldn't dance. They'd just stand around the band, watch the band . . .

Everybody had big tones in this band. They could play waltzes. They could play that pretty music, and could play hot music too.<sup>32</sup>

When the job at the El Torreon Ballroom ended, the band went to Texas, but they were no longer the top band in the state. As trombonist Snub Mosely recalled, the musicians' union excluded them from playing the white ballrooms and hotels and they were relegated to the less profitable African American

dances.<sup>33</sup> The band had a few more profitable times, including an engagement at the Ritz Ballroom in Oklahoma City and a tour of Indiana with jobs at Indiana University. During a tour of New England in the spring of 1933, however, the work finally stopped coming. The band staggered back to Albany, New York, and disbanded.

Several of the musicians reorganized in Cleveland, but Alphonso Trent, who had actually left the band in late 1932 to return to Fort Smith, was not among them. By 1934 he had organized another orchestra, and at some point before 1935 he and his wife had taken this group to a far more profitable place, Deadwood, South Dakota.

#### DEADWOOD

According to Mrs. Trent, Alphonso's new orchestra spent most of the next eight years playing for the largest nightclub in Deadwood. Occasionally they would go on tour through the Dakotas and Wyoming. The band was so successful that Trent was soon asked to organize another orchestra for a club in a nearby city, perhaps Rapid City. For most of these eight years Trent directed both bands concurrently.<sup>34</sup>

Moving to Deadwood, the Trents literally discovered a gold mine. The city is adjacent to Lead, South Dakota, the location of one of the largest gold mines in the country. During a gold rush in the 1870s, Deadwood had become legendary for its brothels, bars, and other forms of nightlife, patronized by miners who had made their fortunes at Lead. By the early 1930s, however, Deadwood was in economic decline. The gold at Lead was not attracting miners, and the population of Deadwood had declined from 4200 to 2400, but through the 1930s the population rose dramatically, reaching 4100 in 1937. The increase came in response to the 1934 Federal Gold Reserve Act, which prohibited the use of gold as legal tender and made the federal government the sole buyer of Lead's gold—at higher prices. As the



price of gold rose, miners flocked to Deadwood.<sup>35</sup>

Alphonso Trent and his two orchestras returned to economic success in the middle of the Depression. As Mrs. Trent recalled, money was pouring into Deadwood. According to her,

those people didn't care about money. They made money. That's where your money was. They didn't care nothing about money, only to spend. You take the kids that were going to school. They'd get out of school, and do you know how much money they would make in the bowling alley? The children, just the kids, would make \$3.50 an hour, just the little bit they'd be doing around the bowling alley. See those folks made money, they didn't care anything about it, they drank, they had a good time.<sup>36</sup>

Not only were the residents of Deadwood prosperous during the Depression, but Alphonso Trent's new orchestra was one of the few entertainments in town. According to Mrs. Trent

the nightclub in Deadwood was the largest nightclub, and of course that just drew people from all around, you know, and those small places . . . And you see, those people hadn't really been, I don't mean to say used to music, they hadn't had the opportunity. And they were just wild about musicians. And they enjoyed themselves, enjoyed the music. Because, you see, there wasn't a lot of activities . . .<sup>37</sup>

The Trent orchestras drew listeners from as far away as Minneapolis and Sioux City. According to Mrs. Trent, many people would come just to listen or to watch the tap dancer who performed with the band. Others would dance, but by the late 1930s the Charleston and BlackBottom had been replaced by the Jitterbug and the Lindy Hop.<sup>38</sup>

Aside from a woman married to a white man and their two children and a doctor who owned a downtown building, the Trent play-

ers and their families were the only African Americans in Deadwood. Perhaps this fact, the band's status as the city's best-known entertainers, and the presence of a much larger "minority" population—the Lakota people of the nearby Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations—accounted for a perceived lack of racism toward the orchestra. According to Mrs. Trent, the treatment that the band received in Deadwood was a far cry from the days when they could not stay or even eat at the white hotels where they played.

It reminded me in a measure sometimes when I think about it of when I was in Europe. It seemed like you just went out of the United States, because it's different, and the people were different. They acted different, they talked different, they treated you different.

The people there were happy to know you. They were happy you were there cause you brought happiness to them. They appreciated the music, and we were known by everybody. You were just like a baby in the arms of Jesus.<sup>39</sup>

## CONCLUSION

By the end of World War II Alphonso Trent's prosperous days in South Dakota had come to an end. For many different reasons he was never able to achieve national recognition and financial security. He was also vulnerable to losing his best musicians to more famous and wealthier orchestras, as when the great guitarist Charlie Christian joined Benny Goodman.

At some point in the mid 1940s, Alphonso and Essie Mae Trent returned to Fort Smith. During the last years of his life, Mr. Trent still played music professionally on occasion, and the couple managed a large housing project. Alphonso Trent died in 1959, and every musician that ever played with him has also passed. In the autumn of 1994, however, Mrs. Trent was alive and well, and extremely gracious in the telling of her story.

## NOTES

1. Henry Q. Rinne, "A Short History of the Alphonso Trent Orchestra," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 3 (March 1986): 213.
2. Uncited biographical information was compiled and corroborated from these sources: Rinne, "A Short History" (note 1 above); interviews with musicians Hayes Pillars and Snub Mosely, conducted as part of the Jazz Oral History Project, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, cited hereafter as JOHP, IJS; and personal interviews with Essie Mae Trent.
3. Rinne, "A Short History" (note 1 above), p. 232.
4. Personal interview with Essie Mae Trent, October 1994, and Don Gazzaway, "Conversations with Buster Smith," *Jazz Review* 2 (December 1959): 20.
5. Essie Mae Trent interview, *ibid.*
6. Rinne, "A Short History" (note 1 above), p. 233.
7. In 1926 a listener with good equipment could hear a radio station the size of WFAA from hundreds of miles away. For more information concerning the distance of radio broadcasts, see Susan Smulyan, *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting 1920-1934* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), pp. 13-36.
8. Gazzaway, "Conversations with Buster Smith" (note 4 above), p. 20.
9. Buddy Tate, "My Story," *Jazz Review* 2 (February 1958): 18.
10. Essie Mae Trent interview, (note 4 above).
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Personal interview with Essie Mae Trent, November 1994.
14. Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 301.
15. S. M. Brown, "The Dance Craze!" *Kansas City Call*, 27 January 1927, p. 6.
16. Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 238.
17. Essie Mae Trent interview (note 4 above).
18. Essie Mae Trent interview (note 13 above).
19. *Ibid.* For more information concerning African Americans and jazz dance see Lynne Fauley Emery, *Black Dance: From 1619 to Today* (Princeton: Princeton Book Company Publishers, 1988); Russel B. Nye, "Saturday Night at the Paradise Ballroom: or, Dance Halls in the Twenties," *Journal of Popular Culture* 7 (July 1973): 14-21; and Marshall and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1968).
20. Rinne, "A Short History" (note 1 above), pp. 238-43.
21. Pillars interview, JOHP, IJS (note 2 above).
22. *Ibid.*
23. For more information on jazz in 1920s Kansas City, see Ross Russell, *Jazz Style in Kansas City and the Southwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), and Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).
24. Russell, *Jazz Style*, (note 23 above), p. 8, and Theodore A. Brown, *The Politics of Reform: Kansas City's Municipal Government 1925-1950* (Kansas City: March, 1958), p. 54.
25. "Dances Monday and Tuesday," *Kansas City Call*, 31 July 1931, p. 10.
26. For example, "Mighty Monarch of Melody," *Kansas City Call*, 11 February 1927, p. 8.
27. "Musicians Ball," *Kansas City Call*, 4 September 1931, p. 10. The bands featured in this advertisement are Andy Kirk and his 12 Clouds of Joy, George Lee's Great Novelty Band, Elmer Payne's Music Masters, Bill Little and his Little Bills, the Bennie Moten Orchestra, Alvin Wall's Rhythm Band, the Jap Allen Orchestra, and Paul Banks Rythm [sic] Aces. These are just a few of the dozens of musical ensembles active in the Kansas City area in the late 1920s and 1930s.
28. "Alphonso Trent Orchestra," *Kansas City Call*, 30 October 1931, p. 10.
29. In their many appearances in the *Kansas City Call*, the Bennie Moten Orchestra is always described as being "Victor Recording Artists." Indeed, with approximately thirty-five recordings for this label by 1935, the Moten band was by far the most recorded, and probably most nationally known, of the territory bands.
30. "Dance Gossip," *Kansas City Call*, 6 November 1931, p. 10.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Pillars interview, JOHP, IJS (note 2 above).
33. Mosely interview, JOHP, IJS (note 2 above).
34. Essie Mae Trent interview (note 4 above).
35. John Milton, *South Dakota: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), p. 118.
36. Essie Mae Trent interview (note 4 above).
37. Essie Mae Trent interview (note 13 above).
38. *Ibid.*
39. Essie Mae Trent interview (note 4 above).