

## Tommy Ladnier in Connecticut 1935

*Bo Lindström*

In “Traveling Blues” we have stated that “*Tommy Ladnier left New York and made a visit to a friend living in Connecticut. Originally he intended to stay for only a couple of weeks but according to what he told Panassié, he stayed for two years.*” (Page 171) This was based on Hugues Panassié’s statement.<sup>1</sup>

According to Panassié, Tommy played around Stamford and also gave trumpet lessons. Perhaps one of his students from that time is still living?

The Price & Lee’s Co City Directory, Stamford, Connecticut of 1935 shows this entry:

***Ladnier Thomas musician r 105 Pacific*** (r meaning “Resident with householder”)

—Salvatore (Mary G) h 22 Spruce  
Ladner Emma Mrs emp 168 Stamford av r do  
—Sherman W (Katherine) carp h 55 Lockwood av  
**Ladnier Thomas musician r 105 Pacific**  
Laetsch Paul (Sophie) upholsterer h 77 Ridgewood av Springdale  
SPO

As for the two other Ladners living in Stamford in 1935, it can be proved that there were only 14 Emma Ladner registered in the whole of the 1930 U.S. census and they were all white. There was no Emma Ladner at all registered in Stamford in 1930, so Emma Ladner probably had moved to Stamford after 1930.

According to the 1930 US census for Stamford, Sherman Ladner was a Canadian born carpenter born about 1890 living with his wife Katherine, also born in Canada around 1896

Therefore, since the Ladners living in Stamford in 1930 most probable were white, it can be concluded that there were no links between these Ladners and Tommy Ladnier.

In the 1935 Street Index, 105 Pacific has only two householders, *Baugh M Mrs* and *Scott Arthur* but it is not clear which of these was Tommy’s “friend”. The fact that he can be found in the 1935 directory indicates that he might have moved to Stamford already in 1934 – there are notations about people having died in November 1934. From the 1936 Stamford street index, it is possible to see that 105 Pacific was a three family house. Therefore, Tommy Ladnier probably lived in the third apartment, hired buy Baugh or Scott while he stayed in Stamford.

**Arthur Scott**, born 1884, lived at 203 Pacific as shown in the 1930 census with his wife Eddie, b 1887, his son Ellen (sic, the enumerator perhaps made a mistake), b 1912, four other children, his daughter in law, and a granddaughter. He was registered as a Negro, born in Georgia. Both Arthur and his son were “*laborers at asphalt work.*” Arthur Scott can also be found in the 1930 Price & Lee Stamford City Directory, which shows the address as “rear 203 Pacific” with 4 apartments and a shop (S Greenstein & Son, meat) fronting the street. The Scots remained at 203 Pacific in 1936 and 1937 but relocated in 1938 to 296 Pacific (rear). Considering the number of people the Scotts had in the apartment, it is unlikely that Tommy lived in their apartment.

---

<sup>1</sup> Panassié, Hugues, *Bulletin du Hot Club de France No. 88 et 89 (Juin/Juillet 1959 et Juillet/Août 1959)*

...Tommy, dégoûté de rejouer pendant des soirées entières une musique de manège, préféra quitter New York. Il 'se rendit chez un ami qui habitait à la campagne, dans le Connecticut, comptant y passer quelques semaines. Il y resta près de deux ans, donnant des leçons de trompette ou jouant (pour de modestes cachets) dans de petites villes environnantes. Cette vie paisible lui plaisait, tandis que la vie trépidante de New York avait fini par lui devenir insupportable.

**Mrs. M Baugh** was Marcella Baugh, in 1930 married to Joseph A. Baugh. In 1930, Joseph and Marcella, both registered as negroes, had a boarding house or hotel at Advocate Place, obviously specializing in attracting Afro-American customers. Advocate Place seems to have been demolished since then. Joseph, born in British West Indies in 1891, had become an U.S. citizen in 1913 and had married Marcella in 1924. Marcella was born in Georgia in 1898. With Joseph lived his brother in law, William Singleton, born in Florida in 1898<sup>2</sup>, and his sister in law, Antonia, born in Georgia in 1900. However, William's potential relationship to the well-known drummer remains unknown.

In 1935, Joseph Baugh owned Astoria Hotel at 24 Gay Street, probably very close to Advocate Place. If the Baughs had separated in 1935 is not known but they seem to have had separate households with Joseph registered as living at his place of business at 24 Gay Street and Marcella living at 105 Pacific. Marcella then completely drops out of the city directory; she either moved away or died. Joseph remained registered as owner of Astoria Hotel in the Stamford city directories up to 1944.

**So what clues does this give us** to the “friend in Connecticut?” None of these people gives any obvious lead to whom Tommy visited – it could of course also have been someone else. However, it seems more likely that this friend was Baugh. It is also plausible that Tommy lived in the third apartment at 105 Pacific.

Stamford, Connecticut, is situated some 35 miles (56 km) north-east of New York. The town population in 1935 was some 56,720 with only 1,154 colored. Neither 105 Pacific nor 24 Gay Street can be found today; they have been replaced by what appears to be a town centre.

According to Hugues Panassié, Tommy Ladnier lived in Connecticut for almost two years – probably from late summer 1934 to spring 1936 – and subsequently spent some time in Philadelphia from spring 1936 to early summer 1936. He returned to Connecticut again after the Joe Louis – Max Schmeling bout June 19, 1936 which caused him all his savings. Whether he returned to Stamford or any other city at that time is not known. In any case, he was not completely gone from New York.

One proof of his New York presence is that drummer Kaiser Marshall told Panassié in Paris in 1937 that Tommy had waved goodbye to him from the wharf when leaving New York.

Another proof that Tommy stayed close to New York is that when Sidney Bechet again tried to form a New Orleans group with Tommy early in 1938, Tommy's wife seems to have been with him and the old antagonism between her and Sidney once more surfaced. In his autobiography, Sidney wrote:

*I tried one time to get a real New Orleans band together, that was in 1938. It was with Tommy Ladnier. I wanted him to come with me and start a band where we could play how we wanted to play, composing our own numbers and all. ...Tommy, he was all enthused; but right away his wife, she began to get after him. She tells him, why don't he get a band of his own? “This way Sidney, he'll get all the credit.” ...I tried to talk to Tommy. I told him it could be his band; it didn't matter to me. ... But it didn't work out. That's how it would be and that's how it was. It was an idea I had, but nothing would come of it.*

When Panassié finally located Tommy in November 1939, he was living in Newburgh, NY, some 80 km north of New York City.

---

<sup>2</sup> A Draft registration card for William Singleton from 1942 shows him, still living in Stamford, as born in Daytona, FL, December 14, 1896. He then states one James Watts, Stamford, as a brother in law.