

Miss Nettie Goff – a minstrel and vaudeville trombonist

Gavin Holman, 20 March 2021

Nettie Goff was born on 2nd June 1875 in Rochester, New York (though some later records give this as May 1876 and 2nd June 1877). Nothing is known of her parents or her childhood, but she did learn to play the trombone which later became her career. As an African-American, and a girl, her education and musical opportunities may not have been the equal of her white, male counterparts, but this does not seem to have affected her abilities in later life.



She performed as a solo artist, with various minstrel troupes, and also as part of the bands that were associated with them.

Sadly, we have very few specific details of her trombone performances, and the only known photographs of her come from two of her passports.

The Nashville Students

She appears first as part of the Grand Colored Concert Company “*The Nashville Students*”, billed as the “only colored lady slide-trombonist”, providing an enjoyable entertainment of ‘songs and dances, and a great variety of specialities’, at the City Hall, Washington, Kansas, on Friday 22 September 1893.

A subsequent appearance was at the Opera House, Strong City, Kansas, on Wednesday 18 October 1893

The next recorded performance I have found is on Friday 23 August 1895, at the Opera House, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. The public were exhorted to come and see the

“best of singing, dancing and specialities all to conclude with their funny comedy ‘Aunt Janes Wooden Wedding’. Tickets 25 and 25 cents. Jas. White, the famous comedian; A. Watts, the best of all wing and buck dancers; P.G. Lowery, the great soloist; Ida Wright, the only colored lady serpentine and fancy dancer; Bell Askew, America’s best soprano singer; Nettie Goff, colored lady slide trombonist, and others of



P.G. Lowery

equal reputation; with the famous Nashville Students Quartette making the best and most refined colored company on the road.”

The proprietor and manager of the Nashville Students was P.T. Wright, with P.G. Lowery as the leader of the band, and C.F. Alexander the leader of the orchestra. Lowery was to become one of the greatest circus and sideshow band leaders, with his “Famous Concert Band” and other companies. During the early 1900’s he published a column, “The Cornet and Cornetists of Today” in *The Freeman*.

**THE OLD
AND ORIGINAL**
Nashville University Students
AND
P.T. WRIGHT'S
Grand Colored
Concert Company.
with SILVER CORNET BAND and ORCHESTRA

NINETEEN - YEARS - EXPERIENCE
REORGANIZED FOR THE SEASON 1893-4
This is the grandest effort of the age. The only genuine Colored Concert Company on the Road making a success.

LOOK OVER THE ARRAY OF TALENT
And you will be convinced that we have one of the finest Specialty companies on the road. By a long experience in the show business we know just what the public is clamoring for and can say that we will certainly be able to meet the approval of the most exacting.

JENNIE—THE ELDRIDGES—BILLY.
MISS IDA LEE WRIGHT. Serpentine Dancer. JAS. L. CROSBY.
MISS ALICE CLARK. The Black Patti.
PROF. JAS. WILSON. Equilibrist, Jugler and Wonder worker. MISS NETTIE GOFF. The only Colored Lady Slide Trombone Soloist.
MR. JOHN H. VIGAL. The Greatest Living Tenor Soloist.
NASHVILLE STUDENTS QUARTETTE. Crosby, Vigal! Eldridge and Wright.



Further engagements of the Students were at the Opera House, Eureka, Kansas, on Tuesday 24 March 1896, and at Topeka, Kansas, on Saturday 28 March 1896. At this latter location, Nettie featured in the local newspaper, under the headline “Nashville Students War”.

“Two of the Students Get Into a Bloody Battle Over Miss Nettie Goff

With a bruise under his right eye and the blood streaming from a wound in the forehead, Walter H. Jackson, leader of the orchestra in the Nashville Students Dramatic company, which gives an entertainment in Topeka tonight, appeared at the police station this morning. He had come in contact with the fist of Pete A. Wood, who is also a member of the orchestra. The trouble was about Nettie Goff, who plays a slide trombone and sings at the performance given by the company. Both men are in love with Nettie, but she preferred Wood, who is a shade or two lighter than his rival. Wood says that when the company was at Oklahoma City Jackson struck Nettie on the head and knocked her down. Since then, Wood has

kept his eye on Jackson. This morning Jackson was sitting in front of Nick Childs' boarding house on Quincy street, when Wood came out. Wood made some slighting remark and Jackson resented it. Wood then said that if Jackson was not careful he would "lick" him. "Oh, I guess you won't," replied Jackson. Wood started off, but soon turned and came back to where Jackson sat. "You think I won't lick you, do you?" he said. At the same time, he struck Jackson in the face and he rolled on the ground. Wood pummeled his fallen rival until he was tired and Jackson went to the police station and had Wood arrested for assault. Wood gave bond so that he might appear in the parade at noon."

We can assume everything got resolved, as the Students and P.T Wright's Company continued on their tour, next recorded at the Opera House, Alliance Nebraska, on Thursday and Friday 14, 15 May 1896. Also on the bill, aside from those already mentioned, were

"James Crosby, the renowned comedian; John Stewart, slack wire expert; P.T. Wright, the low basso; Madam Cecil Smith, America's sweetest colored lady soprano singer;... making the best and most refined colored company traveling."

The Opera House, Custer, South Dakota, welcomed the show on Wednesday 20 May 1896, which also included Baxter Reynolds, an impersonator.

23 May 1896 saw the troupe at Wayne, Nebraska, where Nettie was complimented, and the singing and dancing of James Crosby was praised. They then went on to play at the Rink Opera House, Chadron, Nebraska on Monday 1 June 1896.

Georgia University Graduates

Shortly after this, Nettie left P.T. Wright's company and joined the Georgia University Graduates and Operatic Minstrel Stars – whose minstrel company was on tour with over thirty performers of various sorts (though some adverts noted that the company numbered 25 people).

The company performed at Helena, Montana on Friday 31 July and filled an 'open air' date there the following day, with a totally new programme '*entirely superior in every way to the night before*', as their private car, which was to take them to Boulder, had had an accident. The ventriloquist and the Suwanee quartet were particularly praised. A subsequent appearance at the Grand Opera House, Great Falls, Montana, was highly praised:

"Encore followed encore with such rapidity that it was difficult to remember what the regular program was, and not until midnight was the audience satisfied. Every member of the company has several specialities and is a feature himself. Their voices are unusually fine, and the education possessed by every member lends polish to the entire performance which is appreciated. Those who saw it wished for more and will give the company a packed house on their return."

OPERA HOUSE,
ONE NIGHT ONLY,
Wednesday, Aug. 12

The one great permanent and only genuine colored minstrel organization that has entertained all America.

The Georgia University Graduates
—AND—
J. Edw. George's Operatic Minstrel Stars,
Headed by
ERNEST HOGAN
Highest salaried colored comedian in the world.

30 Star Performers.
10 Great Singers.
10 Great Dancers.
10 Great Comedians.

Street parade at noon. Free exhibition in front of the Opera House at 7:15.

Prices: 50, 35 and 25
Tickets on sale at Edward Ryan's store on Thursday morning.

They appeared in a new season, starting at the Red Jacket Opera House, Calumet, Michigan, on Wednesday 12 August, and were also booked at the Town Hall, L'Anse on Friday 14 August, and at Lake Linden on Tuesday 18 August.

Then on to Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, on Wednesday 2 September 1896, with the artists including Watkins, Gillam, Oliver, McKinger and, of course, Miss Nettie Goff.

Friday 18 September found the company at Madison, South Dakota, where they played a game of baseball at the fair ground, before their performance at the Opera House in the evening. The county fair that day was well attended, with many agricultural exhibits, fancy work, and animals, and pony races. During the afternoon, as well as the baseball game against the local Indian nine, the Georgia University Graduates band, including Nettie Goff, entertained the crowds. They had previously had a similar sporting time at Monominee, Michigan, where:

“nine of the performers played a nine-inning game of baseball against the local club, defeating them by 6 to 3. Erusi Hogan, the famous colored comedian, coached for the Graduates and kept the audience in a roar all the time.”

Advertising the arrival of the company at Mitchell, South Dakota, on Monday 28 September, it was noted that they were composed of

“educated colored men and women, of recognized ability and talent as performers. The company travels in its own special car, and carries with them a magnificent band and orchestra.”

The company again engaged a local baseball team in a game on the afternoon of their performance, this time against the Dakota University ball players:

“for fun, it came up to all expectations. Hogan, the coacher, kept the crowd laughing most of the time, and is a whole show by himself. Of course, our boys won, and the score was all one-sided - 25 to 3.”

The company had arrived in Mitchell by the previous Sunday, and some had listened to the speech given by Colonel George W. Bain, at the Corn Palace, where he extolled the benefits of temperance and prohibition. A \$5 gold piece was donated by the Graduates, to the cause.

Friday 17 October 1896 found the company at the Opera House, Morris, Minnesota, with 25 performers and a band of 16.

An undated report of their performance at the Opera House, Aberdeen, North Dakota, states it:

“was the funniest thing in the fun-making line ever witnessed in this city. While the comedians are on the stage the audience was absolutely hilarious and tears rolled down cheeks that at ordinary entertainments refuse to wrinkle into even a smile. Ernest Hogan's comic speech was absolutely the most laughter-provoking performance ever seen or heard on an Aberdeen stage. The musical features were also very fine and the singing was exceptionally good, the ladies particularly showing well trained voices. The slack rope walking and juggling were pleasing

features of the evening, and the performance as a whole left nothing to the desired. The aggregation gives more show in the space of an hour and a half than any other combination on the road.”

A similar undated report, in November 1896, relates to their performance at the Metropolitan Theatre, Grand Forks, North Dakota:

"The attraction of the Georgia University Minstrels at the Metropolitan last evening was in every way a success, and certainly deserved to be better patronized. Grand Forks people who enjoy good minstrelsy should turn out and see this company tonight. Too much cannot be said about Mrs. Cecil Smith's singing. She has a voice of exceedingly good quality, and her singing was appreciated by all there. Of the star of the company, Mr. Ernest Hogan, too much could not be said. His reputation as a composer and author is well known to the American public, and his latest song, "All Coons Look Like to Me," is a good one. In his stump speech he was immense and brought the house down with his comments on the present campaign. John Pamplin, the equilibrist and juggler with his many clever feats was well deserving of applause. The company is one of many stars and to go on renumerating would take up too much space. but our advice is to go and see them, and you will all make up your minds that it is well worth your time and money."

Appearing at the Gross Opera House, Little Falls, Minnesota, on Friday 6 November 1896, the company was described as:

“Supported by J. Edward George’s challenge band and symphony orchestra. This company is genuine Negro – no burnt cork artists, and the American people realize that for good harmonious singing colored people are pre-eminent. This company carry the only colored ladies quartette in America; also two male quartettes; and in introducing them this season, Manager J. Edward George puts his personal recommend to every performance – and the people of Little Falls will never have a chance again to see this grand galaxy of talent, as next season they go to Europe, to remain indefinitely at Paris.”

“The largest audience that has been out for some time greeted the company, and everyone present was kept in a constant state of mirth during the performance. Ernest Hogan and Ab Watts were the leading fun-makers and they fully sustained their reputation as high-class entertainers...”

The company appeared at Jamestown, North Dakota, where they

“... came in from the west in their special car, and after giving a street parade, during which time excellent music was rendered by the band, made their next appearance at the opera house.”

Tuesday 17 November 1896 – the company arrived in Langdon, North Dakota for their performance at the Court House (they had been there previously in January 1896). Having been widely praised in advance, based on their earlier visit, the performance did not seem to be enjoyed by the audience:

“The minstrelsy production given by the Georgia University Graduates in this city Tuesday evening was by no means on a par with the performance of that company when here last winter. They drew a good house, but we do not think they could draw another on their merits. The Democrat [*newspaper*] apologizes to its

readers for having so highly indorsed the company as it is evident they are touring the country on their last season's record with artists of inferior ability.”

On Christmas night, Friday 25 December 1896, they appeared at the Auditorium, Pullman, Washington state.

Sunday 3 January, the company started a week’s engagement at the Third Avenue Theater, Seattle, Washington.

“The street parade attracted a great deal of attention. The band is a good one, and their natty Zouave uniforms made quite a brilliant spectacle.”

14 January 1897 – the Olympia Theater, Olympia, Washington.

Later at the Vogt Theatre, The Dalles, Oregon, on Tuesday 26 January 1897, where Nettie Goff was mentioned in some of the pre-show advertisements.

VOGT * OPERA * HOUSE

+ One Night Only +

TUESDAY, JAN. 26th

A BIG BLACK BOOM!
Georgia University Graduates.....
.....HEADED BY
Ernest Hogan
.....AND.....
30 Star Performers, 10 Great Singers, 10 Great Dancers,
10 Great Comedians.

WATCH FOR OUR GRAND STREET PARADE AT NOON.

Seats now on sale at the Snipes-Kinersly Drug Co.....Price 50 cents

“The Georgia University Graduates have come and gone, and everybody who attended their entertainment was pleased. The entire troupe is composed of real artists in their line, and they give an exceptionally good minstrel show, affording abundant amusement, and at the same time displaying first rate musical talent. The slack-rope performer and juggler were experts, both giving performances that are new and very entertaining. “

At the Opera House, Weiser, Idaho, on Monday 1 February 1897.

WEISER OPERA HOUSE Feb. 1
MONDAY,

The **Georgia**
Famous **University**
Graduates
AND OPERATIC MINSTRELS.

PROGRAM.

THE U. R. G. CLUB.

JESTERS—Allie Brown, Master Frank Cooper, Harry Gilman and John Pamplin.
TOASTMASERS—Miss Ellen Watkins and Madam Cecil Smith.
LADIES OF THE CLUB—Mme. Cecil Smith, Laura Edwards, Miss La Belle Green and twin sisters Thompson.
RECEPTION COMMITTEE—John Turner, Will Robb, Wm. Franklin, J. B. Williams, Ben Bunery, Sam Penmore, Luke White, J. R. Morton. Twin Sisters Thompson in their novelty dance.

During the intermission of the first part there will be introduced the two famous comedians, Al F. Watts and Earnest Hogan.

PICNIC—A good time. Duel. Principals in duel: Al F. Watts and Earnest Hogan. Parson's Boot Leg, Harry Gillman. Seconds and spectators by the company.
John Pamplin, Equilibrist, Juggler, Champion Balancer.
Watts and Smith in their original comedy creation, "De Africana," a la Banjo.
Allie Brown, Monarch of the Slack Wire.
Gillman and Green in a few spare moments.
Earnest Hogan, America's highest salaried comedian.

The whole to conclude with our new farce operatta

La Blackville Picnic.

CAST

Parson Coat Foot.....	Earnest Hogan
Deacon Devinne.....	Al F. Watts
Jimmy Fresh.....	Harry D. Gillman
Hog Foot Tom.....	Will Robb
Roger Jim.....	Lou White
Chicken Bill.....	Sam Penmore
Good Time Charley.....	Ben Bunery
Willie In It.....	Master F. Cooper
Precilli Wigloss.....	Mme. Cecil Smith
Ginevie Knowhat.....	Bill Green
Lucy Smallface.....	Ollie Thompson
Peggy Longjaw.....	Mandy Thompson
Longvoice Mary.....	Laura Edwards

Tuesday 9 February 1897 saw the company at the Grand Theater, Salt Lake City, Utah, moving on to the Lyceum Theater in Salt Lake City for three nights from 11 February, and the Opera House on the 14th, returning back to the Lyceum on the 25th.

16 February 1897 saw the company at the Park Theater, Portland, Oregon, where they were clearly well received:

“The entertainment was refined, fresh and sparkling. The audience was kept in the most enjoyable humor during the entire evening and encores were hearty and many. The programme contained many enjoyable numbers. including numerous old-time specialties and southern melodies, among the latter being "Suwanee River," "Old Kentucky Home," and "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia." The company has three woman who are sweet singers and clever specialty artists. The first part was made up of the usual jokes and songs and ballads and choruses, and in which the entire company appeared. Jack M. Oliver and Hally Gilliam, the comedians. told some really funny gags, and the singing was creditable. The second part was replete with musical selections, songs, dancing and plantation melodies. An instrumental duet by Brown and Hughs was well played, and a singing and dancing sketch by the Gilliams, Harry and Miss Bessie captured the house. Their dancing was exceedingly clever, and both possess excellent voices, and their witticisms were fresh and crisp. The Lime Kiln oration, by Jack Oliver, created much hearty laughter and several recalls. A ventriloquial entertainment by Prof. Geo. M. Watkins created considerable merriment. The Suwanee River quartet made quite a hit and was called upon to respond to about a dozen encores during the course of the evening. Miss Eleen Watkins sang the "Suwanee River" and also several other solos, and took part in an autoharp duet with Prof. George M. Watkins. The performance concluded with the Whitewash Army of the Lord by the company. ending with an old-fashioned walk around.”

Other dates and locations were: 9 March 1897, at the Grand Opera House, Pueblo, Colorado; 2 April 1897, at Fort Collins, Colorado; 6 April 1897, at Lloyd's Opera House, North Platte, Nebraska; 9 April, at the Bartenbach Theater, Grand Island, Nebraska; 16 April 1897, at Love's Theater, Fremont, Nebraska; 18-21 April at Boyd's Theater, Omaha, Nebraska. This latest engagement seems to have had a somewhat luke-warm reception:

“The demonstrations of the two audiences left no doubt as to their being pleased. As a minstrel performance it cannot be said to equal some that have been seen here, but when the reduced price of admission is taken into consideration, in all fairness to the organization, it can be said to give a pretty good entertainment. Gillam and Watts received approval for their work on the ends, and some of the music was pleasing. The balancing and juggling of John Pamplin and the exhibition of slack wire walking by Ollie Brown were loudly applauded. The engagement is for three more nights and a Wednesday matinee. The band will give an operatic solo concert in front of the theater, commencing at. 7:15, this evening.”

ANNUAL OPENING.

ROOF GARDEN

MONDAY, MAY 31st.

WITH A

BIG BLACK BOOM

*Georgia University
Graduate and Operatic
Minstrel Stars. ..*

30 Star Performers 30

10 GREAT SINGERS 10

10 GREAT DANCERS 10

10 GREAT COMEDIANS 10

**Watch for Our Grand Street
Parade every day at noon.**

**The only Colored Ladies
Quartette, "If I were you I'd
go."**

PRICES. 10, 20 and 30 cents.

Reserved seats at Cigar Stand in Obser-
vatory building.

Friday 7 May 1897, at the Cornell Hall, Valentine, Nebraska. Monday 31 May 1897, at the Roof Garden, Des Moines, Iowa.

OLYMPIA THEATER.

JOHN MILLER MURPHY, Manager and Proprietor.

FOR ONE NIGHT. THURSDAY, FEB'Y 9.

GEORGE'S OPERATIC
Colored Minstrels.
 COMBINED WITH THE FAMOUS
GEORGIA UNIVERSITY GRADUATES
 With the Challenge Brass Band and
 Symphony Orchestra.

New Acts & New Features

Old - - - Favorites Retained.
 New Ones Added - - -

No Minstrel Company has met a more cordial reception. None has left a better remembrance of their charming melody.

CLEVER CLEAR MIRTH MUSIC
 CLASSICAL MIMICRY

A Choice Melange of Comicalities.

Tickets on sale at O'Connor's Tuesday, Feb. 8th. Popular prices, 75, 50 and 25 cents.

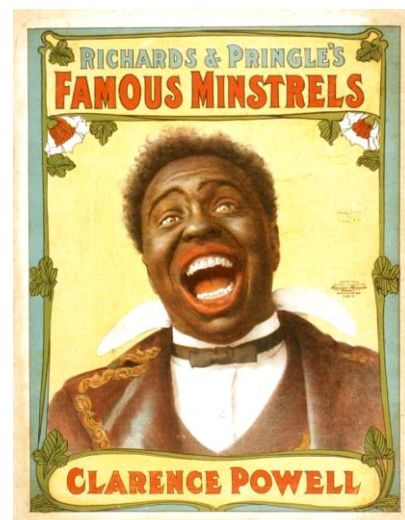
After this, the company does not reappear on the circuit until early October, remaining in St Paul, Minnesota, en route to a week's engagement at the Grain Palace, Aberdeen, South Dakota; then to the Grand Opera House, Mitchell, South Dakota, on Friday 22 October 1897; the Opera House, Brookings, South Dakota on Thursday 28 October 1897; and the Opera House, Warren, Minnesota, on Monday 22 November 1897 – with Nettie Goff receiving higher billing, together with Watkins, Gillam, Oliver, and McKinger.

St Vincent, Minnesota, is their next venue, on Friday 26 November 1897; and a stop at the Gross Opera House, Little Falls, Minnesota, on Thursday 2 December 1897, was a success, despite the severe weather. They spent Christmas 1897 at Butte, Montana, appearing in a matinee at Maguire's Opera House on Christmas Day, with two further performances on the Sunday and Monday.

The leader of the band at this time was Charles Alexander. Further dates included Lewiston, Idaho, in mid-January 1898; Olympia Theater, Olympia, Washington, on 9 February 1898; Opera House, Aberdeen, Washington, on 11 February 1898; Fisher's Opera House, Astoria, Oregon, 18 February; Reed's Opera House, Salem, Oregon, 28 February; Le Grande, Oregon, 10 March; Weiser, Idaho, 12 March; the New Grand Theatre, Salt Lake City, Utah, week of 21 March; Lehi, Utah, 28 March; Springville, Utah, 29 March; Provo, Utah, 5 April;

“Yes, the great show is coming to town in all its entirety, and we will shortly have an opportunity of witnessing what is promising to be not only the grandest company ever organized, but the most varied program yet presented, embracing everything and all the novelties in the minstrel line that are entertaining and in pace with the times.”

The Salt Lake City engagement was interesting due to the simultaneous performances by another troupe at the Salt Lake Theatre on the 21-22 March – that of ‘Richard & Pringle's Georgias in Mighty Union with Rusco & Holland's Operatic Minstrels’ with 40 artists and two bands. Their parade started at 11.30, with the Georgia & George's preceding them at 10.30 a.m. The two troupes were obviously competitors for audiences, indeed the local press announced a ‘rather vigorous coon fight which had been raging all along the road’, pointing out that it was not



known what the row was about, nor why the two companies seemed to follow each other up along the road, nor why their names were confusing – George’s, Georgia’s, and Georgias.

May 1898 started with the company, now more generally known as ‘George’s Operatic Colored Minstrels’, at the Crawford Grand Theatre, Wichita, Kansas on Monday 9th, and the New Crawford, Topeka, Kansas, on Wednesday 11th.

Now being billed as the ‘Georgia Up-to-Date Minstrels – in Mighty Union with the Georgia University Graduates’, they appeared at Kootenai, Idaho, 10 August; Seattle Theater, Seattle, Washington, 5 September.

During all this time, Nettie Goff was mentioned in various advertisements, but the first time she featured alone in the press was a short statement in the Paducah Daily Sun, Kentucky, of 18 October 1898:

Miss Nettie Goff is said to be the only colored lady slide trombone player in the United States.

Mahara’s Minstrels

At some point Nettie left the Georgia Minstrels and took up with Mahara’s Minstrels.

She had also gained a boyfriend – William Garland (1878-after 1938). It is not known where they met or got together, but they were certainly a couple when she joined Mahara. Garland was originally a member of the Ponce de Leon Comedy Four with the Mahara Minstrels, and also played tuba in W.C. Handy’s band. William Christopher Handy is often called the "Father of the Blues" because of his major contribution during the early years of the 20th century to its introduction. He himself stated that, far from inventing the blues, he merely wrote them down and brought the blues to the masses.



Nettie first publicly appeared with Mahara in August 1899, at St Joseph, Missouri:

“Without a doubt, one of the greatest novelty street parades connected with a traveling amusement attraction is with Mathara's Big Minstrel Carnival that comes to the Lyceum Theater tonight. It is an enormous one, and excels in grandeur anything ever before attempted by a similar organization. Mathara's Big Minstrel Carnival covered five blocks of our street yesterday, and was one mass of dazzling array. Mounted people, bugles, twelve handsome colored ladies, three beautiful bannered coupes. Prof. William Handy's military land of twenty pieces, live cute little pony carts drawn by ten magnificent Shetland ponies, the carts being loaded with all kinds and sizes of dogs, keeping time to the music and adding to the excitement of the occasion with their barks. Taken all in all it was, with probably the exception of a circus parade, the finest ever seen in our city. A pleasing and moral feature of the concert given by the band on the circle was the slide trombone solo of Miss Nettie Goff, a little lady, that caused many of our best musicians to express remarks of high praise. As Mahara Brothers are old favorites here, and this year's efforts so far eclipse anything in the colored minstrel line, they are assured of a packed house.”

As the minstrel market was declining and competition becoming more fierce, the Mahara's show had become more circus-like. The act featuring thirty trained dogs was added, as well as one with ten performing ponies. W.C. Handy's band, featuring Nettie Goff, became one of the troupe's most popular elements. The band moved up to become the second unit in the parade (after Mahara himself and his St. Bernard dog), and Handy's cornet playing was said by some to rival that of the eminent P. G. Lowery (who had performed with Nettie four years earlier with the Nashville Students).



W.C. Handy

28 August 1899 - Topeka, Kansas; 30 August – Crawford Grand Theatre, Wichita, Kansas:

“A big black boom is headed this way. It travels in two private palace cars, comprising some forty colored people, namely Mahara's Big Minstrel Carnival, now recognized as among the largest and finest colored company of ladies and gents on the road, prominent among whom are Gordon Collins, the Prince of Blackville, styled "The Warmest Coon in Town," Miss Anna Dardis, the "Texas Nightingale;" Lew Hall, eccentric comedian; the Thornton sisters, a trio of sweet singers; Malone and Scott, musical artists; Leroy Bland, phenomenal male soprano; Hillard Brewer, wonderful boy contortionist, and a score of singers, dancers and comedians, augmented by a large military band and orchestra.”

[Note: Anna Daris accidentally met her estranged husband in Atchison, after this performance. They were reunited and she left the minstrels to live with him there]

However, the reviewer of the Topeka engagement was not exactly full of praise:

“An unusually noisy audience saw the performance of Mahara's Minstrels at the Crawford theater Monday night. The balcony and gallery were filled with people, and but little was needed to throw both floors into spasms of applause of heterogeneous character. The noise seemed to be somewhat infectious, as there was more noise than harmony in the choruses of the first part. There is nothing startlingly new about the performance the Mahara brothers have arranged for their organization. The second part has few features of any worth, the educated pony and dogs constituting one of the best. Of the work of the performers, Gordon Collins is entitled to the greatest credit for his step dancing in the first part.”

1 September 1899 – the Opera House, Wellington, Kansas; 12 September – Wood's Opera House, Sedalia, Missouri; 16 September – the Davidson Theater, Fort Scott, Kansas; 20 September – the Opera House, Pittsburg, Kansas; 22 September – Baldwin Theater, Springfield, Missouri;

AMUSEMENTS.

WOOD'S - OPERA - HOUSE,
TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 12
 The Great Double Show,
Mahara's Big
Minstrel Carnival.

36 Colored Artists 36.
 Prof. Gentry's Dogs and Ponies.
 10 Beautiful Shetlands,
 30 Highly Educated Canines.
 Grand Military Band.
 Classical Orchestra.

Miss Nettie Goff,
Slide Trombone Soloist.

Grand - Noonday - Parade.

PRICES---Gallery, 25c; Balcony, Dress
 Circle and Parquet Circle, 50c; Parquet 75c

All the balcony reserved for colored people.

Opera House!
Wednesday, Sept. 20
 THE BIG DOUBLE SHOW!
Mahara's Minstrel Carnival
 AND
 Prof. Gentry's Trained Dogs and Ponies.

36	..... COLORED ARTISTS	36
10	... HIGHLY EDUCATED SHETLANDS....	10
35	WONDERFUL PERFORMING CANINES	35

High Class Singing. Pretty Singing Soubrettes.
 Magnificent Choruses 4- Complete Quartettes-4

Grand Military Band MISS NETTIE GOFF,
 Slide Trombone Soloist.

PRICES 25, 35, 50 and 75 CENTS.
 Street Parade at Noon. Seats on Sale Monday. Phone 226.

OPERA HOUSE
WEDNESDAY, Sept. 20.
The BIG DOUBLE SHOW.
MAHARA'S
MINSTREL
CARNIVAL
 Prof. Genthers Tamed Dogs and Ponies.
36-- COLORED ARTISTS--36
 10 Highly Educated Shetlands; 35 Wonderful Performing Canines,
 Strictly an entertainment for Ladies and Children. High Class
 Comedians, Pretty Singing Soubrettes, Magnificent Choruses,
 Four--Complete Quartettes--Four.
Grand Military Band, Miss Nettie Goff, Slide Tron-
bone Soloist.
PSICES--25, 35, 50 and 75 cents.
 Street Parade at Noon. Seats on Sale Monday.
 Telephone 200.

BALDWIN THEATER,
THE BIG DOU- Friday, Sept. 22.
BLE SHOW
MAHARA'S MINSTREL CARNIVAL:
Prof. Genither's Trained Dogs
and Ponies.
 36--COLORED ARTISTS--36 10--Highly Educated Shetlands--10
 40--Wonderful Performing Canines. High Class Comedians.
 Pretty Singing Soubrettes. Magnificent Choruses.
 4 Complete Quartettes. GRAND MILITARY BAND.
 (Miss Nettie Goff, slide trombone soloist).
 Prices 25, 50 and 75 cents. Street Parade at Noon.

21 October saw the company at the Sandoz Opera House, Opelousas, Louisiana; 22 October at the Opera House, Lafayette, Louisiana.

After appearing at Houston, Texas on 14 November, the company moved on to Tyler, Texas, where Mahara's Minstrels, together with W.C Handy's grand military band of 26 pieces, were quarantined for a while in a railroad wagon on a siding, after a suspected case of smallpox. The band were threatened with being lynched and the wagon burned if another case was to develop. They were eventually allowed to leave the state under guard.

Returning back to Texas, they attended the theatre in Fort Worth, on Wednesday 8 December 1899:

"It would be unfair to apply the usual standards of criticism to this exhibition of negro talent. It was in strict accord with the negro idea of humor, though some special features were acceptable to any standard. The chorus, "A Glass of Sparkling Wine," was musical and well given. Gordon C. Collins gave an exhibition of gymnastic dancing that was fully deserving of the liberal applause he received. Nettie Goff's trombone playing was a good number and Hillard Brewer was a contortionist who performed some unusually difficult feats."

The company visited Cuba in December 1899 returning to the USA in January 1900, touring the northern towns of Alabama and Tennessee. During their time in Cuba, Nettie was:

"causing the people to stand in open-mouth wonder at her brilliancy."

The new century saw the company at the Opera House, Grenada, Mississippi, on 15 January 1900; the Auditorium, Birmingham, Alabama, on 23 January; Brunswick, Georgia, on 30 January; the Opera House, Ocala, Florida, on 2 February; Hopkinsville, Kentucky, on 12 March; Earlinton, Kentucky, on 13 March:

GO
WHERE THE CROWDS GO
AUDITORIUM
 --B.S. THIESS MNGR.--
TUESDAY, JANUARY 23.
2 BIG SHOWS CONSOLIDATED
100 MEN, WOMEN,
PONIES AND CANINES!
MAHARA'S
MINSTREL
CARNIVAL
50--COLORED ARTISTS--50
PROF. GENTHER'S
 Highly Educated School of Performing
 Ponies and Dogs.
 10--BEAUTIFUL SHETLANDS--10
 40--WONDERFUL CANINES--40
 By all odds the largest attraction that
 will visit your city this season.
GRAND MILITARY BAND.
 Street parade at noon.
 Prices 25c, 35c and 50c.
 Entire gallery and balcony for colored
 people.

“ ... the leading colored minstrel organization of the country, presenting minstrelsy from the plantation and log cabin to the more up-to-date style of to-day. It is the only minstrel show that has kept up to and ahead of the times. Traveling in their own train of Palace Cars and having more money invested, more people on the stage, more special scenery, more beautiful costumes, more stars and playing to more people than any similar company catering to the public to-day. New features are constantly being introduced with this big show. Chief among the stars and features this year are: Gordon Collins, "the warmest coon in town" with a budget of new jokes and songs, Le Ro Bland, the greatest of all male sopranos and female impersonators. Nettie Goff, the only colored lady trombone soloist in the world. Prof. Genther's Troupe of Animal Actors, consisting of 75 educated dogs and ponies, the Grand Prize Cake Walk introducing 20 couples all attired in the height of fashion, representing the creme de la creme of colored society.”

The only colored woman on earth
that plays the slide trombone is
with Mahara's Minstrels who will
hold the boards here next Monday
night.

Harper's Theatre, Rock Island, Illinois, was the venue for their show on 28 April 1900:

“Jennie Golf [*sic*], the only lady trombone soloist in the world, is with Mahara's big minstrel carnival, which will appear at Harper's theatre, matinee and night, Saturday. April 28. This lady will play the most difficult instrument during the grand free concert given on the street at noon on the day of performance and at the same time Mahara's big band of 20 solo musicians will be heard in various popular and classical selections. The Mihara show is stronger than ever this year, and has been breaking all previous phenomenal records in every city where it has appeared. The program presented during the entertainment is an extensive one, and comprises many novelties. To enumerate each and every act and star would take up too much space, but it can safely be said that the show presented by the Mahara minstrels is the best ever brought to the city.”

The last known show that Nettie Goff played with the Mahara Minstrels was at the Royal Hall, Edgerton, Wisconsin, on 9 May 1900. At some point after that she switched her allegiances to the Black Patti Troubadours, and also married William Garland, occasionally being billed as Nettie Garland-Goff.

In the 1900 US census, on 1 June 1900, there were two Nettie Goff's recorded as living in Chicago. One resided at Ward 4, South Town, number 3538 - she was born in May 1876 in New York, and her occupation was given as “theatrical troop”. The other lived in Ward 25, Lake View Township, number 2310 - she was born in June 1875 in Rochester, New York, and her occupation was given as “actress”. This latter entry was the correct Nettie, as she was rooming with William Garland (b. December 1874, in Iowa) and other “actors”. The other minstrels living with her at this lodging house were:

Albert Krause
Andrew Jackson
Arthur Rosemond
Bessie L Gillan
Charles Boothman
Charles Minor
Charles Washington
Dora Patterson
Drucilla Vervalin
Edward Green

Frederick L Dahse
Frederick Schmidt
Harvey Goodall
India B Allen
James E Hood
John Dougherty
Julius L Glenn
Lizzie Herald
Louis Wright
Nettie Goff

Peter Stanley
Richard Lewis
Samuel R Burns
Samuel Steward
Thomas Fallor
William Craine
William Garland
William Johnson
William Murray
William Reese

Black Patti Troubadours

This company started their late 1900 season at the Royal Theatre, Montreal, Canada, in mid-September; the Jefferson Theatre, Portland, Maine, on 26-27 September:

“Black Patti’s troubadours offered a variety entertainment which starts off with a farcical absurdity entitled *A Darktown Frolic on the Rialto* and continuing with a group of specialties concludes with what is termed an operatic kaleidoscope, in which several familiar selections are given, Miss Jones (Black Patti), singing the leading part. The farce is really bright, with new drolleries, although there is the usual excess of nonsense. It introduced almost the entire company and was a good skit for the latest coon songs, among the worthy of which was *Just a Little Nigger*, which was rendered very sweetly by the little Misses Green and Forcen. We also had *Rag Time Liz*, by Sadie Jones, and Irving Jones set the crowd wild by his rag time numbers such as *All Birds Look Like Chickens to Me*. He is a clever variety star and held the interest throughout, giving us in part second *Get Your Money’s Worth*, etc. The dancing by the several members made a decided hit. In the second division The Troubadour Sextette did work which was very commendable and the Watts gave us a musical sketch which was one of the best things of the evening, Miss Watts’s action being artistic, while her voice rang out splendidly. Miss Nettie Goff’s trombone solo was excellent, and the cake walk was expounded by several couples quite amusingly. Of course, a marked feature was the singing of Miss Jones, who had a high soprano voice which was heard to advantage and being recalled she sang most feelingly *My Old Kentucky Home*.”

Subsequent venues included the Opera House, Wheeling, West Virginia, 16-17 November 1900; the Grand Theatre, Asheville, North Carolina:

“... the Black Patti herself will positively appear, since there is no cheap number two of this organization, and will discourse sweet music from her remarkable throat. Her managers have surrounded her with a great aggregation of mirth-provoking crowd and chocolate colored cake walkers, dancers and merry Andrews. Among these will be discovered that incorrigible individual, Jim White - superabundant of the colored joke-factory and director general of the mint of melody. With laughter in the paramount issue of this theatrical campaign, the new burlesque for this year, with all new costumes and scenery, is called *A Darktown Frolic on the Rialto*, and is a roaringly funny concoction.”



Capital Theatre, Frankfort, Kentucky, 23 November:

“The personnel of the company, which numbers two score or more, includes the most talented stage artists known to the Afro-American race. Black Patti (Mme. Sissieretta Jones) whom nature has endowed with a marvelously sweet voice, is the stellar attraction, and prominent among the other principals are: John Jones, *The Rag Time Millionaire*, coon singer and colored comedian. Al. and Cecil Watts, *The We-Wandering Coons*. Mattie Phillips, *The Real Thing*, Champion Colored Lady Cake Walker of the World. Ida Forcan, *The Essence of Ole Virginny*, and phenomenal buck and wing dancer. Dora Patterson, *The Virginny Rosebud*. Nettie Garland-Goff, the only colored lady slide trombone soloist in the world. W. M. Garland, tenor soloist and instrumentalist. Leslie Triplett, the celebrated coon cop. Walter Richardson, who sings soft and sweetly. W.W. Allen, *The Black Meister Singer*. Anthony Byrd, *The Black Eduardde Reszke*. J.P. Read, the phenomenal basso. James Lightfoot, the most accomplished colored baritone singer in the world. Sarah Green, *The Indiana Nightingale*. Laura Bailey, *The Charleston Gal*. Carrie Washington, *The Lass of the Levee*. James White, the eccentric brudder bones. John Jones, *Japanese Tommy*. And many others, including the Troubadour sextette; The Troubadours Chorus; and the cake walk and buck dancing contingent. J.A. Raynes continues as musical and stage director.”



Staub's Theatre, Knoxville, Tennessee, 26 November:

“The performance opens with a skit called *A Darktown Frolic on the Rialto*, in which the entire company takes part, excepting Black Patti, the prima donna, who appears at the end. Following this coon conceit will come an olio of specialists which includes turns by the Troubadours' male sextette, Al and Cecil Watts,

delightful duplex darkies; Mattie Phillips, queen of fantastic cake walkers; Ida Forcen, the greatest buck and wing dancer that ever stirred up the dust; Dora Patterson, a smiling rose-bud just out of the Old Dominion; Nettle Garland-Goff, who plays a trombone which slides like Kelly to third; W. M. Garland, tenor tooter and musical melanger; Leslie Triplett, just one of him despite the name, and a cyclone of comicality; Walter Richardson, sings sweet songs silverly; W.W. Allen, the mirror of merriment and music's minion; Anthony Byrd, the tenored Eduard de Reske's replica; J.P. Reed, the basso bravura from Baltimore; James Lightfoot, renowned baritone; Sarah Greene, pride of the Wabash; Laura Bailey, with a thrush's throat; Carrie Washington, the *Pride of the Levee*, James White, brisk brother bones; John Jones, just joyous, and a lot more too numerous to mention – cake-walkers, singers, and dancers.”

The Academy of Music, Raleigh, North Carolina, 12-13 December 1900;

“... It was negro sense and nonsense enacted by negroes: negro songs, negro dances, negro dialect and negro jokes and all good. The audience was in a roar of laughter from the rising of the curtain to the going down of the same. You simply laughed and applauded because you couldn't help it, and that's all there was of it. Black Patti has truly a fine voice and is deservedly renowned for her singing. She was enthusiastically applauded, especially by the colored people of the city, who crowded the galleries to hear her.”

ACADEMY OF MUSIC.
Raleigh's Leading Theatre
Thursday Night, December 13.

THE WORLD FAMOUS.

Black Patti Troubadours.

Greatest Colored Show on Earth

Black Patti

30 AND **30**
Ebony Ecstasies

A BUNCH OF FUN AND MELODY.
Seats on sale. Regular prices.

JEFFERSON THEATRE

CHRISTMAS MATINEE AND NIGHT

"Get Your Money's Worth." The World-Famous

BLACK PATTI TROUBADOURS

Greatest Colored Show on Earth.

BLACK PATTI AND

THIRTY EBONY ECSTASIES.

A bunch of fun and melody. Coon comedy, darkey fun, cake walks, buck dances, and sweet melodies. This is the original company, which has made one of the most popular hits of any show of its kind in the annals of American amusements. It is better than a circus.

Balcony reserved seats for colored people both performances. Night prices 25c, 50c, 75c, \$1. Matinee prices 25c, 50c, 75c. Reserved seats for matinee.

The Opera House, Wilmington, North Carolina, on 15 December (where the 'entire gallery will be reserved for colored people'); the Theatre, Savannah, Georgia, on 20 December; the Jefferson Theatre, Birmingham, Alabama, 25 December; the Veazey Opera House, New Iberia, Louisiana, 13 January 1901:

“The Black Patti Troubadours played here on last Sunday night, at the Veazey Opera House, to a large audience. The performance was good, and the large audience seemed to be thoroughly satisfied with it. The company left here on Monday morning, going west.”

They toured Texas in the week of 21 January 1901; appeared at the New Crawford Theatre, Topeka, Kansas, on 15-16 February; Boyd's Theatre, Omaha, Nebraska, 2 March; the Odeon Theatre, Marshalltown, Iowa, 7 March; Alhambra Theatre, Chicago, Illinois; the Grand Opera House, Akron, Ohio, 8 April; the Lyceum Theatre, Scranton, Pennsylvania, 29 April; the Lyric Theatre, Allentown, Pennsylvania, 2 May; the Hollibanstr Theater, Baltimore, Maryland, 9-11 May; the Opera House, Annapolis, Maryland, 13 May; the Opera House, Wilmington, Delaware, 15 May – where one of the Troubadours ran into a little trouble:

“John P. Reed, colored, of the Black Patti Troubadours, plead guilty to carrying a concealed deadly weapon and paid a fine of \$25 and costs.”

Finally, ending up at Reading, Pennsylvania to end their touring season.

A Holiday in Coontown

During the autumn of 1901 Nettie and Will Garland were part of the “Holiday in Coontown Company” which was touring with its show, appearing at the Gennett Theatre, Richmond, Indiana, 19 December 1901; the Empire Theatre, Indianapolis, Indiana, 9 January 1902.

There was a suggestion that Nettie Goff and Will Garland also toured with Craine & Garland's Big Alabama Minstrels, followed by engagements with G. W. Washburn's Southern Minstrels (1900), and Johnson and Stratter's Colored Minstrel Carnival (1901). However, I have not found any evidence of this.

GENNETT THEATRE.
MURRAY & SWISHER,
Lessees and Managers

THURSDAY. DEC. 19th.
THE LARGEST OF THEM ALL

**A HOLIDAY
IN ...
COONTOWN**

35 PEOPLE 35

All Colored Talent. Traveling in their own special car. The Mascot. Good Singing and Dancing.

Elegant Costumes. Full Band and Orchestra. Watch for the Big Street Parade.

PRICES—15, 25 and 35c.

Sale of seats at Westcott Pharmacy.

A.G. Allen's Big Original New Orleans Colored Minstrels

During the 1902/3 season, Nettie performed with Allen's Minstrels at Abbeville, Louisiana, on 7 October 1902; at New Iberia, Louisiana, on 10 October – where they clearly were not a huge hit:

The Allen Minstrel corps d'Afrique gave one of their performances last night. The thing was a fake from start to finish, many of our plantation quarters have a better show every Saturday night at the 'Plantation Store'. One thing was very evident and that was that the Louisiana Tobacco Co. was running the show, or the show was running the Tobacco Co., as all the jokes turned on some production of the Co., especially the 'Premios'.

In Newport, Arkansas, on 14 November 1902, the Minstrels arrived and set up their tent, which freed them from having to use the town's theatre.

Allen's Minstrels Coming. A genuine old-fashioned southern cake-walk by real southern darkies. Allen's New Orleans Minstrels under canvas. This is the first Minstrel Company in the United States to appear under canvas. Mr. Allen is the originator of the idea. The interior of his tent is arranged with a mammoth stage and scenery the same as an opera house, but of course on a much larger scale. Owing to the large seating capacity of the tent, which is two thousand, the company is enabled to show for the extremely low price of 15 and 25 cents, thus guaranteeing the largest Minstrel production in the world at the lowest price of admission.

Other dates were Ocala, Florida, on 29 January 1903; Deland, Florida, on 16 February:

Allen's Minstrels didn't meet with much success in DeLand on Monday. The tent was put up and the band played on. Just as the crowd was following the band to the tent in the evening, the storm came up and the tent was blown down. Fortunately, there was no one in the tent at the time. The truck was loaded onto the cars and moved out of town at midnight.

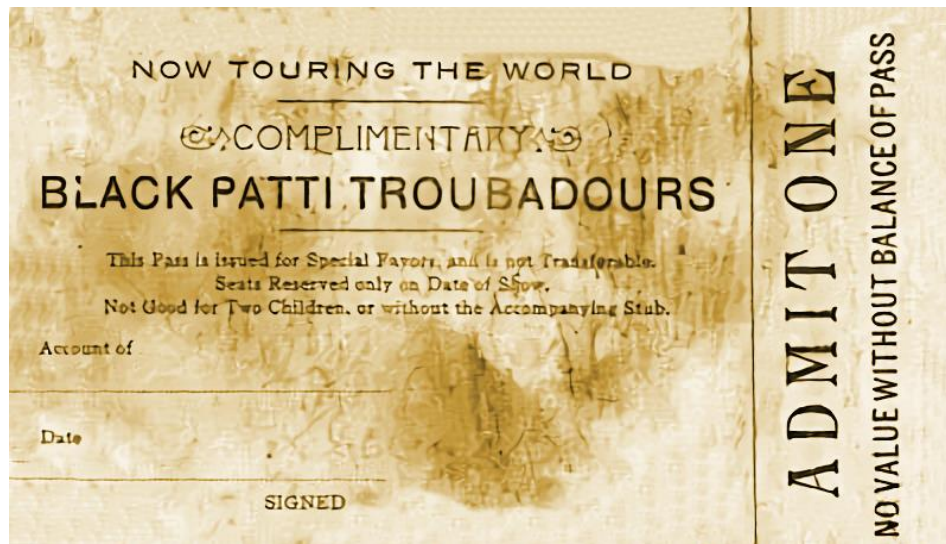
At a later date, with Allen's Minstrels in early summer 1903, it was noted that:

“Miss Nettie Goff, with her trombone solos, leaves them screaming nightly.”

hopefully in a good way!

Black Patti Troubadours

During 1903 Will Garland was playing the tuba with Richard & Pringle's Georgia Minstrels, possibly while Nettie was with Allen's Minstrels.



Ticket for a Black Patti show

By August 1903, Nettie had re-joined the Black Patti Troubadours. The new season – a “Grand Trans-American and European Tour” - started at the Star Theatre, Lexington Avenue & 107th, New York city, for a week from 8 August 1903 – with their new farce “Darktown's Circus Day.” Then on to the Lyceum Theatre, Elmira, New York, on 3 September:

“The personnel of this company includes, Black Patti (Mme. Sissieretta Jones), the greatest singer of her race; Bob A. Kelly, *The Real Coon*, the most comical colored singer in the world and the major-domo of the Black Patti fun folks; Allie Gillamn, *The Shinin' Light*; Mack Allen, the 20th century equipoise marvel, a slack wire phenomenon; Billy Ward, eccentric dancer and comedian; Ada E.



Sissieretta Jones

Robinson, the Louisiana lassie; Ward and Dobbs, champion specialty artists; Sisters Turner, the Tennessee thrushes; Emma Chacon, *The Dusky Lily*; J. Ed. Green, the Chesterfield comique; Ida B. Fercen, The Honolulu pickaninny buck dancer; Nettie Lewis, *The Unbleached Soubrette*; Olivette Williams, *The Southern Nightingale*; Bessie Gillam, *The Genuine Chal'ston Gal*"; Leslie Triplett, Policeman 7-11; William Nichols, the great mimic; Anthony Byrd, the black Edouard de Reszke; William Hallback, the accomplished Tyrolean Tenor; James P. Reed. the unrivaled basso-profunda; Will Cooke, as the funny monk; James Worles, the sweet-toned tenor; Nettie Goff, the only colored trombone virtuoso. The program to be rendered in the Lyceum includes: The renowned troubadours' quartette, the buck dancing brigade, the champion cake walkers, and the peerless Black Patti chorus, presenting a smart, snappy, up-to-date New York City success show. A continuous performance of song, dance, comedy, opera and high-class vaudeville, interspersed and embodied in *Darktown's Circus Day* introducing all the Black Patti fun folks in new specialties, comicalities and characteristic dances. Fifty minutes of fun and action amusing as it is refined. The most successful and pleasing first part ever presented by this company. Soldiers' Camp Glees, a happy revival of the sweet melodies of the camps and battlefield and reminiscences of the plantation, cotton fields and levees, rendered by the incomparable singing troubadours. The vaudeville olio, versatile and varied specialties by Black Patti, Kelly, Nichols, Goff, Ward & Dobbs, Allen, Robinson, Troubadours female quartette and others."



The Black Patti Troubadours, on stage

Staub's Theatre, Knoxville, Tennessee, saw the company on 15 September:

"The Black Patti Troubadours appeared at Staub's theatre yesterday, matinee and evening, in their absurdity, *Darktown's Circus Day*. Black Patti is not on her first trip and if she always meets with as good houses and as appreciative audiences as she has this time she will not make it her last. She is as strong and perfect in voice as she was when she first came to the city and has gathered about her some most excellent voices to support her, among whom are Sarah Green, contralto; Ada E.

Robinson, alto; James E, Worles, tenor; J. B. Green, baritone; Jas. P. Reed, basso, and a chorus of the best negro voices in the country. The first part of the play was taken up, as usual, in downright fun, being a day at the circus, with all its joys and excitements closing with a buck dancing contest by Ida Forcer' and chorus which brought down thunderous applause from the sombre regions of the upper balconies. As a comedian Robert A. Kelly is about the best Black Patti has ever had. His *original coon* was about the best Imitation of the negro a negro ever produced. Part second was filled with selections from comic and grand opera. It contained several clever specialties, among which was one by Billy Nichols, the comedian and mimic. He is one of the best imitators ever heard in the house. He is a native of the south and his humor and mimicry has a refreshing breath from the soil. He is the only one, perhaps, of the company from the south. He does not have to get his inspiration second-hand. He imitates most perfectly the ordinary sounds from the landing of a steamboat to the playing of a cornet or violin cello. Nettie Goff, the trombone soloist, was one of the popular specialties. Macks Allen, the slack wire equilibrist, was simply wonderful."

Then on to Greenville, South Carolina; the Academy, Richmond, Virginia, 6-7 October; the Academy of Music, Raleigh, North Carolina, 13 October:

"The Black Patti Troubadours scored a distinct hit and success at the Academy of Music last night. It was a performance full of rare amusement in the first part when *Dark Town Circus Day* was the feature. The specialties in the second part were all good and these were followed by selections from grand and comic operas in costumes which were rendered by Black Patti; Sarah Green, contralto; Ada E. Robinson, alto; James E. Worles, tenor; J. E. Green, baritone; James P. Reed, basso, and chorus selected from the best negro voices in the country. Sissieretta Jones, the famous Black Patti, fully sustained the reputation as a singer which she has won. The company, composed entirely of negroes, gave a performance that was enjoyed by a large audience of white people, while the galleries were packed with colored people, who were vigorous in their demonstrations of pleasure and delight."

The theatre, Savannah, Georgia, on 23 October:

"... the *Festival of Operatic Melody*, which occupies the final half hour of the performance, serves to introduce Black Patti and the singing forces. Another new feature is the *Soldiers Camp Glee*s – a vocal inspiration recalling bits of melody of ante bellum days sung by the entire company."

The Grand Opera House, Brunswick, Georgia, on 24 October; Glover's Opera House, Americus, Georgia, on 29 October;

The Opera House, Columbus, Mississippi, on 12 November:

"Those sweet singers and ebony colored fun-makers of Dixie land have been recognized for years as a high-class standard attraction and one that has scored a phenomenal popular success with theatre goers in all sections of the country. Among the forty in its ranks are to be found the most talented Afro-American singers, dancers and comedians in the world. Their happy revival of the sweet melodies of the South reminiscent of ante-bellum days, the plantation, the cotton field and the levee has been a musical revelation to millions. While sweet harmonies are woven all through a Troubadour's performance, yet there is an abundance of refined darkey fun contributed by Bob Kelly, *The Real Coon*; Allie Gilliam, as *Handy Andy*; Billy Ward, as *Simple Simon*; Ed Green; the *Troubadour Comedy Four*; Leslie Triplett, Will Cook, and a dozen other funny fellows, a number of remarkably clever specialty acts, smart dancing and a genuine cake walk."

The Ensley Opera House, Birmingham, Alabama, on 14 November; the Jefferson Theatre, Birmingham, Alabama, on 16 November:

"Black Patti's troubadours played to two packed houses at the Jefferson yesterday and last night and presented a very creditable performance. Sissieretta Jones, the famous negro soprano, notwithstanding her age, has retained her powerful voice. In the cast was Billy Nichols, a Birmingham negro, who was formerly well known here as a mimic. His work was excellent and his imitation of the sounds issued by an A.G.S. mail train and a steamboat, called forth several encores. Billy comes from a respectable negro family and was regarded as a good citizen by the white people who remember him."

The company were conveyed out of Birmingham on the "Newsboy" railway train, to Decatur, Alabama, on 17 November. Thereafter the company played at St John's Church, Nashville, Tennessee, on 19 November; the Crawford Theatre, St Louis, Missouri, on 22 November for a week; the Kentucky Theatre, Paducah, Kentucky, on 7 December; the Walnut Street Theatre, Vicksburg, Mississippi, on 17 December:

"There were several notable features in the performances: among the best was the instrumental (cornet and trombone) playing by Alice Grey and Nettie Goff; and the wonderful slack-wire act of Mack Allen, equilibrist, which we believe has never been equaled here. The scenery and stage effects added to the interest of the entertainments, and altogether they were most enjoyable and satisfactory."

GRAND OPERA HOUSE
Saturday,
October 24

THE WORLD FAMOUS

Black Patti Troubadours

ALL NEW FEATURES.

40 REFINED SINGERS 40
DANCERS
COMEDIANS

Black Patti

Presenting
DARTOWN'S CIRCUS DAY
and the smartest and swellest
VARIETY MINSTREL

and
OPERATIC SPECIALTIES
Ever produced by this—the
Greatest Colord Show on Earth.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 23

The World Famous

BLACK PATTI TROUBADOURS.

ALL NEW FEATURES.

40 REFINED SINGERS 40
DANCERS
COMEDIANS



BLACK PATTI

(Mrs. Sissieretta Jones)

The Greatest Singer of her race. Presenting an Entirely New Show
of the Merry Musical Farce

DARTOWN'S CIRCUS DAY

And the Smartest and Swellest

VARIETY, MINSTREL, OPERATIC SPECIALTIES

Then the Managers Opera House, Port Gibson, Mississippi, on 18 December; the Vendome Opera House, New Iberia, Louisiana, on 23 December; Opera House, Lake Charles, Louisiana, 25 December; Greenwall's Opera House, Fort Worth, Texas, on 6 January 1904; the Grand Opera House, Fort Smith, Arkansas, on 18 January; Brooks Theatre, Guthrie, Oklahoma, on 23 January; the Crawford Theatre, Wichita, Kansas, on 26 January; the New Crawford Theatre, Topeka, Kansas, on 27 January; the Auditorium, Kansas City, Missouri, on 31 January for one week.



BLACK PATTI TROUBADOURS

At the Auditorium January 31, one week, Matinee Sunday.

Black Patti Troubadours

VOELCKEL & NOLAN, Proprietors and Managers.

In their Farceical Aburdity, entitled

"DARKTOWN'S CIRCUS DAY."

(Second Edition)

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Josiah Johnson, the Poo-Bah of Darktown	.....	Roll A. Kelley
Mariah Johnson, his wife, with an eye on Josiah	.....	A. D. Byrd
Primus, his son	.....	Will A. Cook
Reuben, his son	.....	Mack Allen
With a love for a circus.		
Little Willie, his youngest	.....	Billy Ward
Prof. Slapenback, with a circus on his hands	.....	Al F. Watts
Handy Andy, true to his profession	.....	Allie Gillam
Policeman 7-11, a guardian of the "piece"	.....	Leslie Triplett
M'mselle Hoplightly, the queen of the arena	.....	Ida Forem
Bill Barker, circus spiler with the dope	.....	J. P. Reed
Henri Tenori, from the opera	.....	Jas. E. Worles
Percy Hamfat, an actor	.....	John Jones
Sammy Charcoal	.....	Chas. S. Bougia

BELLES OF DARKTOWN.

Alice Grey, Amie Smith, Georgia Dobus, Lavina Henderson, Ada E. Robinson, Aline Cassels, Henrietta Hicks, Nettie Goff, Sarah Green, Georgia Hooper.

SYNOPSIS.

cene 1—Exterior of Darktown Circus. Scene 2—Interior of Darktown Circus. Scene 3—Interior of Theatre. Time—Present.

During the action of the sketch the following musical numbers will be introduced:
 "Coonville Jamboree," selection..... by Prof. Slapenback's Band
 "Prancing"..... Chorus



ADA ROBINSON.



BOB LELLY.



BLACK PATTI.

"Trouble" Billy Ward and Company
 "I've Something to Say to You," octette
 Messrs. Watts, Worles, Reed and Bougia; Misses Smith, Henderson, Dobbs
 and Green.
 The Human "Calliope" Messrs. Triplett, Bougia, Gilliam and Watts
 "Shine On, My Evening Star" Ida Foreen and Chorus
 "Bedelia" Leslie T. Triplett, A. Byrd and Chorus
 Animals' Conversation Robt. A. Kelley and Company
 Congo Love Song—"You for me, me for me." Ada E. Robinson, Al F. Watts
 Finale—Buck Dancing Contest, introducing "Barney," the Terrier Mascot

INTERMISSION.

PART II.

ALICE GRAY and NETTIE GOFF, Instrumentalists.
 MADAME SISSIERETTA JONES, Black Patti.
 WARD and DOBBS, Sketch Artists.
AROUND THE CAMP FIRES IN THE PHILIPPINES
 Introducing the Troubadours' Lady Quartette.
 MACK ALLEN, Slack Wire Equilibrist.
 ROBERT A. KELLEY, the "Original Coon."

Messrs. Voelkel and Nolan present selections from the Grand and Comic
 Operas, in costume, including Black Patti (Mme. Sissieretta Jones), Sarah
 Green, contralto; Ada E. Robinson, Alto; James E. Worles, Tenor; Al F.
 Watts, Baritone; Jas. P. Reed, Basso, and a chorus selected from the best
 Negro voices in this country.

Conspirators' Chorus (Mme. Angot) Company
 "Miserere" (Trovatore) BLACK PATTI, J. E. Worles and Chorus
 "King of the Winds" James P. Reed
 March from Tannhauser BLACK PATTI and Company
 Sextette (Lucia de Lammermoor)
 BLACK PATTI, Sarah Green, James Worles, A. D. Bryd, Will A. Cooke,
 James P. Reed and entire Company.

STAFF.

VOELKEEL & NOLAN Proprietors and Managers
 R. Voelkel Manager with Company
 John J. Nolan Manager in Advance
 H. D. Collins Assistant Manager
 S. A. Raynes Musical Director
 Al F. Watts Stage Manager
 Sarah Green Wardrobe Mistress

The True Reformers' Hall, Richmond, Virginia, on 29 February; the Messenger Opera House, Goldsboro, North Carolina, on 2 March; the Academy, Wilmington, North Carolina, on 3 March; the Academy of Music, Charlotte, North Carolina, on 10 March; Fry's Opera House, Palatka, Florida, on 16 March.

In early April the company travelled to Havana, Cuba, to perform at the Teatro Tacon for a limited engagement, and returned to the USA to play return engagements in nearly all the southern cities – starting with the Jefferson Theatre, Birmingham, Alabama, on 13 April:

"The show presented by negroes at the Jefferson last night consisted in part of horse-play, but it pleased the white folks in the orchestra, and delighted the black folks who packed the balcony and the gallery. The singing of Black Patti left little to be desired. She sings easily and well. Her enunciation and manner were pleasing even to those who know good music when they hear it. But there was a wide gap between Black Patti and the rest of the singers, and there is no reason why this should be the case, for the company attracts both races, making money every season and among the African negroes there are many rare voices that even a little cultivation would render pleasing. James P. Reed had a deep rich basso voice, and the chorus sang reasonably well. But if the entire company were brought up to the standard set by Black Patti herself it would be a great credit to the race and it would never sing to empty seats. The management should pull the troubadours up to a higher standard. Black Patti was recalled twice, and she sang at last *Way Down on the Sewanee River* with excellent effect, and in the scene from *Lucia de Lammermoor* her soprano voice rang out true. Ward and Triplett and Kelly are the comedians of the company. Of these Kelly was practically fun-provoking. The company needs reinforcement, however, before a goes through the country again, and the managers will be short-sighted if they do not make it as good a company as the race can furnish."

Then to the Opera House, Maysville, Kentucky, on 16 April; the Empire Theatre, Washington DC, on 2 May for a week.

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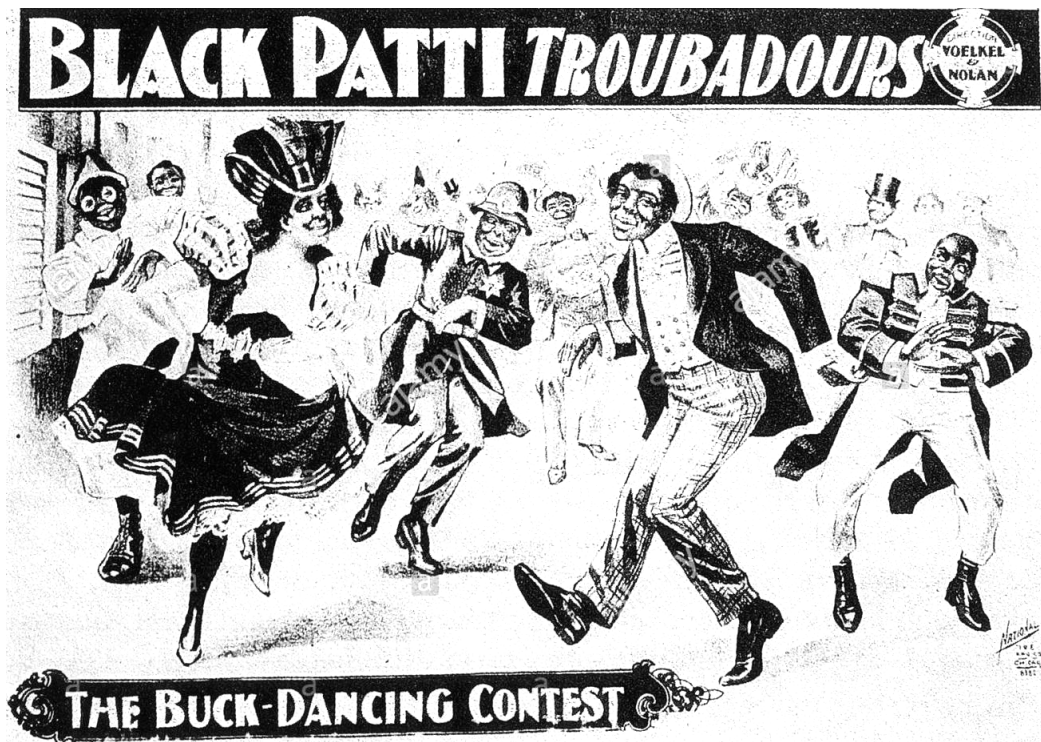
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SPECIAL — SATURDAY NIGHT MAY 7,
GRAND COMPETITIVE CAKE WALK, open to local walkers in competition
with the Black Patti Experts for a gold prize.

Next Attraction..... A RABBIT'S FOOT.

On 7 May, the troupe announced a grand competitive cake walk between members of the Black Patti Company and local artists. A solid gold prize, emblematic of the Washington championship was awarded to the winner. They repeated this contest during their subsequent week's engagement at the Columbia Theatre, Brooklyn, New York, from 16 May.



In Dahomey

In Dahomey had been a successful touring show in Europe during 1903/4 and its producers returned to the USA to work on a revised version, *Dahomey No. 2*. They discovered that their tenor singer, Will Garland, was married, and that his wife (Nettie) was planning to join him:

“She seemed to know all about our activities. He had never told us anything about her. There were twelve people to stay over from the old company. We would bring all the replacements with us. Garland wanted to hear all about his wife, who was a trombonist. And he wanted to know if Pete could book him. They [Garland and Douglas] didn't seem to be interested in the quartette bookings, so they were riot disappointed that there were no bookings. We found out both Garland and Douglas each were trying to get an act of his own. Garland's wife got busy and organized four girls into an act. All were light brown, about the same height, and about the same proportion. They sang, danced, and did acrobatics. Nettie, Garland's wife, said it was her act and that she would be the manager. She didn't want Garland to have anything to do with it.”

Will Garland and Nettie Goff crossed the Atlantic in summer 1904 to Europe, touring with the show *In Dahomey* from August 1904 to March 1905. Two of their engagements were at the Theatre Royal, Belfast, in the week commencing 7 November 1904, and the Aquarium, Yarmouth, on 9 January 1905.

“The most successful musical comedy, *In Dahomey*, by the celebrated negro composer, Will Marion Cook, was presented last night at the Theatre Royal by a most capable company. The piece has, at any rate, the merit of novelty, and that it has much to attract attention was manifested by the large audience which had assembled, and the individual members of which apparently relished the play immensely, judging by the hearty and long-continued applause. The staging of the comedy leaves nothing to be desired, while the handsome dresses and the costumes have been designed in a manner beyond all cavil. The magnificent scenery used is entirely in harmony with the requirements, and while the prologue is spoken in *a Dahomian swamp*, the spectator is afterwards transplanted to the public square of Boston, and to a typical Florida home, that of Hamilton Lightfoot, at Gatorville. Spectacular effects are introduced by a cake walk, in which prizes are offered to those members of the general public adventurous enough to take part in this particular form of gyratic exercise. Altogether it may be said that novelty is the keynote of the attractiveness of the play, and as for those responsible for its presentation, they one and air evince decided talent and ability in their several roles. The prologue is given by Norris Smith, Fanny Wise, Pete Washington, and Chas. White, while the full cast is as follows: Rareback Pinkerton, Dan Avery; Shylock Homestead, Chas. Hart; Hamilton Lightfoot, Pete Hampton; Dr. Straight, Fred Douglas; Bustling Charlie, Walter Dixon; George Reader, Leon Williams; Henry Stanfield, Walter Richardson; Mose Lightfoot, Pete Washington; Harry, Norris Smith; Leather, Theo. Wilson; Officer Still, Dan Washington; Messenger Rush, Jack Brown; a waiter, Chas. White; Clarence, William Garland; Flossie, Lizzie Avery; Lucille, Tiny Jones; Pansy, Fanny Wise; Lieut. Martha, Nettie Goff; Cecilia, Laura Bowman; Mrs. Stringer, Stella Hart; and Rosetta Lightfoot, Pauline Freeman.”

In 1905, Nettie took the opportunity to endorse a Nottingham hamper manufacturer – perhaps she got a good discount, or even a free hamper?

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The four members of the "4 Black Mexican Girls", that Nettie put together, were Pauline Freeman, Nettie Glenn, Lizzie Avery and Nettie Goff-Garland. They started a second European tour in September 1905, also touring the English provinces, having already appeared at the Nouveau Cirque in Paris in March 1905. They were billed as "singers, dancers, and instrumentalists".

On August Bank Holiday, 6 August 1906, Nettie was appearing in a stage show at the Kilburn Empire, London, by the sketch producer and actor Brien McCullough. The principal item in the show was a condensed playlet version of "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Among the musical numbers, Nettie Goff's performance was noted:

"... the trombone solo of Nettie Goff was appreciated at its true worth."

After this, Nettie Goff no longer appears in the vaudeville press, though she does make at least three further trips to Europe to meet up with and support Will Garland in his various shows.



Members of Will Garland's Negro Operetta Troupe in Germany

Nettie's passport application for 1909, from the American Embassy in Berlin, stated that she was born on 2 June 1875, in Rochester, New York; she was domiciled in Chicago, where her occupation was 'artist'; she had left the USA on 25 June 1908 and was temporarily living in Berlin, Germany; and she intended to return to the USA within one year. She spelled, and signed, her name as Nettie Gough. Her description was given as aged 33, height 4' 9", forehead: low, eyes: brown, nose: broad, mouth: full, chin: full, hair: black, complexion: colored, face: round.

Nettie Gough

23 April 1914 – Nettie & Will Garland visited his mother, Mary Garland, in Keokuk, Iowa. They had a company of colored artists in London who are putting on a musical comedy there. The company is making a big hit with the Englishmen, and proving a successful venture.

Her passport application, in March 1915, gives her birth date as 2 June 1877, and her name as Nettie Goff-Garland, being domiciled at Keokuk, Iowa (where Will Garland came from). She intended to join her husband in England, France, Russia, and Germany.

Nettie Goff Garland
(Signature of applicant.)

In January 1917, another passport application was made, this time under the name Nettie Garland, with her domicile being New York City, purpose being to visit her husband.



Nettie Goff in 1917

Nettie's future beyond this point is unknown. Will Garland married his second wife, Rose Schumann, in 1923. It is not known if Will and Nettie divorced, or Nettie had died.