



- The late "**Mamie Smith**" Cincinnati's first true "Queen Of The Blues" of the late 1800's to the mid 1900's.
- Born May 26, 1883 in Cincinnati, Ohio (Hamilton County), died September 16, 1946 New York, NY.
- **Instrument:** Piano, Vocal, and Dancer.
- **Film Appearances:** 1936 "*Paradise In Harlem*", with Luckey Millinder Orch "*Mystery In Swing* 1939", "*Murder On Lenox Ave.*" 1940, "*Sunday Sinners*" 1941, "*Because I Live You*", in 1943.
- Entered Harlem Hospital in 1944 where she died after a lengthy illness. Buried at *Frederick Douglas - Memorial Park Cemetery* Staten Island NY.
- Billing Title
- "*Queen Of The Blues*"
- 
- *Mr. Keith Little*

## Mamie Smith "Queen Of The Blues"

**Mamie Smith 05/26/83 - 09/16/46**

Married William "Smitty" Smith, singer (c1912); Sam Gardner, comedian (1920) \_\_\_\_\_ Goldberg (c1929), she has no relations to Bessie Smith, Clara Smith/Trixie Smith.

**Awards/Honors:** Recognized as the first Negro to record a vocal blues ("*Crazy Blues*," OKeh 4169, August 10th, 1920).

Quotes: "It was her pioneering work that paved the way for every other artists of color, regardless of style" ---Derrick Steward-Baxter. *Ma Rainy the Classic Blues Singers*, Studio Vista LTD. 1970  
 "she was a very high class entertainer, as well as being one of the best looking women in the business . . .---Willie "The Lion" Smith, "*Music On My Mind*", Doubleday & Company, 1964

Harlem Blues 1935 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AN3pxrRzMM>

Murder On Lenox Ave. 1941 full movie  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_3pFtnQExGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3pFtnQExGQ)



**Mamie Smith** ([May 26, 1883](#) -<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AN3pxrRzMM> [September 16, 1946](#)) was a [vaudeville singer](#), [dancer](#), [pianist](#) and [actress](#), and appeared in several [motion pictures](#) late in her career. As a vaudeville singer she performed a number of styles including [jazz](#) and [blues](#). She entered blues history by being the first [African American](#) to make vocal blues recordings in [1920](#).

Smith was born as **Mamie Robinson** in [Cincinnati, Ohio](#). She toured with African-American vaudeville and [minstrel shows](#) until settling in [New York City](#) in [1913](#), where she worked as a [cabaret](#) singer. She appeared in [songwriter Perry Bradford's](#) musical "Made in Harlem" in [1918](#).

In early [1920](#), [Okeh Records](#) planned to record popular singer [Sophie Tucker](#) performing a pair of songs by Perry Bradford. Tucker was ill and could not make it to the session; Bradford persuaded Okeh to allow Mamie Smith to record in Tucker's place. Smith recorded two sides ("That Thing Called Love" and "You Can't Keep A Good Man Down") on [February 14](#), 1920, backed by a white studio band. Smith's record sold moderately well, so she and Bradford were invited back to make additional recordings. On [August 10](#) of 1920, Smith recorded the Bradford-penned "Crazy Blues" (which in 2005 was selected for permanent preservation in the [National Recording Registry](#) at the Library of Congress) and "It's Right Here For You, If You Don't Get It, 'Tain't No Fault of Mine". These were the first recordings of vocal blues by an African American singer, and the record became an explosive best seller, selling a million copies in one year. To the surprise of record companies, large numbers of the record were purchased by African-Americans, a market the record industry had hitherto neglected. "Crazy Blues" in particular was noted as a distinctively "colored" number performed by a "colored" performer. Although other African Americans had been recorded earlier (going back to [George W. Johnson](#) in the [1890s](#)), they were all black artists who had a substantial following with white audiences. The success of Smith's record prompted record companies to seek to record other female blues singers and started the era of what is now known as [classic female blues](#). It also opened up the record industry to recordings by and for African Americans in other genres.

Mamie Smith continued to make a series of popular recordings for Okeh throughout the [1920s](#). She also made some records for [Victor](#). She toured the [United States](#) and [Europe](#) with her band "Mamie Smith & Her Jazz Hounds" as part of "Mamie Smith's Struttin' Along Review". She was billed as "The Queen of the Blues". (Shortly later, this billing of Mamie Smith was one-upped by [Bessie Smith](#), who called herself "The Empress of the Blues".)

Mamie Smith appeared in an early soundie, [Jail House Blues](#), in [1929](#). She retired from recording and performing in [1931](#). She returned to performing in [1939](#) to appear in the motion picture [Paradise in Harlem](#). She appeared in further films, including [Mystery in Swing](#), [Sunday Sinners](#) ([1940](#)), [Stolen Paradise](#), [Murder on Lenox Avenue](#) ([1941](#)), and [Because I Love You](#) ([1943](#)).

