

Josephine Baker

By Leilani McCallie and Rebeca Bor



MISS JOSEPHINE BAKER
AHEAD.

Miss Josephine Baker, who is one of the world's greatest colored stars, is at present in Berlin than in any other part of the Continent. She is intending to open a concert in the capital of Germany in the same time as she was also due to appear in Paris. These tempting offers of the French that led her to leave her native state of Illinois, near Berlin, where it is said she has many friends, with pleasure, besides being a world's success at high speed dancing. Miss Josephine Baker must be a marvelous star, if that is a compliment she has, and with which, naturally, she is dancing, such as she. Miss Josephine Baker has had no success in Vienna and Paris.

A GREAT
COLOURED STAR!



-DOLFINO-



-AND SHOOTING

Josephine Baker grew up on Gratiot street in St. Louis, Missouri. When Josephine was young her father left her home. Josephine's father was a drummer and Josephine liked to listen to him and his friends play. Josephine was with her mother one night and asked to dance up on stage to win the contest, at the club, but her mother said she was "too little." Josephine didn't care and yelled "I ain't too little," and got up on stage and danced along to the Rag music. Josephine won the contest and a silver dollar. After that Josephine told her mother she would never stop dancing, "I'll never stop dancin' nowl," and she didn't.

Josephine Baker didn't give up or lose her dream of being a dancer. She left home at age 13 and got a job as a waitress at "Old Chauffeurs Club." Josephine waited on tables and danced. Soon after she got married to Willie Wells, but the marriage ended in divorce. Josephine returned to waitressing. While working at the club she met the "Jones Family Band." Mr. Jones saw Josephine dance and heard her sing. He offered Josephine a job with the "Jones Family Band and Chestnut and Market Streets."

Around 1919 a company called the "Dixie Steppers" appeared in St. Louis. The "Dixie Steppers" group had fallen apart and was trying to keep it together. The group saw the "Jones

Family" and decided to sign them up. Josephine was instant success. Two weeks later the two groups left St. Louis to go on tour.

Josephine earned ten dollars a week and visited New Orleans, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York. In Philadelphia she met her second husband William Howard Baker. Also in Philadelphia Josephine met Nobel Sissle and Eubie Blake who had written the music for "Shuffle Along." The musical was holding auditions and so Josephine tried out. They rejected her because her skin was too dark and she was too young. The two men decided to make "Shuffle Along" a road production, so Josephine tried out again, but they rejected her. After several tries the stage manager hired her. Because Josephine was much darker than the other girls she became the star. Josephine became part of the cast and got paid twenty five dollars a week.

The show was reaching Brooklyn when Sissle and Blake were making a new show called "Chocolate Dandies," and they wanted Josephine to be in it. Sissle and Blake pulled Josephine off the road for a while.

Andre Daven went to New York in search for some black performers. She spotted Josephine and invited her to go to Paris with her. Josephine sailed to Paris as a member of "La Revue Negro." From Josephine's first appearance in Paris she was a hit. Josephine danced the "Charleston" and she performed the dance, "The dance of the Savages" with Joe Alex. Josephine

wore bright pink feathers. When Josephine performed in Berlin, her audiences were amazed by her near-nakedness.

In the 1920's and 1930's Josephine also starred the "Folies-Bergere" at the "Casino de Paris. Josephine toured Europe, recorded songs for Columbia records and starred in two films "Zuo-Zou and Princess Tam-Tam." "Folies-Bergere" was Josephine's most memorable dance. Josephine then moved into film and opera.

In 1935 Josephine returned to the U.S.A to find the same popularity she found in Paris. But American audiences weren't ready for her type of dancing. Josephine decided to return to Paris, but before she did she divorced her second husband, Wille Baker, who she had married in 1920. In 1937 Josephine became a French citizen. Also in 1937 Josephine married Jean Lion, a French sugar broker. But the marriage ended in 14 months.

During the second World War Josephine became an undercover worker, a spy for the French. Josephine also became an "honorable correspondent" and became "sub-lieutenant" in the "Women's Auxillary of the French Air Force.

In 1940 Josephine moved to Morocco. In 1942 she toured the region performing for the resistance. Josephine returned to Paris in 1944. She got married again in 1947 to Jo Bouillon, an orchestra leader. Josephine returned to the U.S.A in 1948 and became an activist for the Civil

Rights Movement. Josephine returned to Paris in 1954, hoping to raise a family. She did, from touring she collected all races of children and brought them to Paris with her and Jo. Josephine called them her "Rainbow Tribe."

Although Josephine struggled with financial and health problems she was a survivor, achiever, and a determined woman. She survived her childhood and survived the tough times in her life. As a young girl Josephine was determined to be a dancer. As a young adult she was determined to even get in a show. I think that Josephine achieved her dream and more.