Mississippi Fred McDowell and Beulah "Sippie" Wallace are often mentioned when people discuss Bonnie Raitt’s influences. An example would be in this excerpt from the country blues.com.

Most people who have enjoyed Bonnie Raitt’s music since 1989 would call her predominately a bluesy pop-rock star and a great slide guitarist. Those of us who were her fans in 1971 thought of her mostly as an eclectic folk-blues artist. Actually, both are true: she’s a popular rockstar who sells out huge concert halls and regularly does an acoustic set during her concerts. Unsuspecting rock fans are then treated to the best imaginable country blues without knowing it’s coming.

Let any naysayers point to her and claim that she’s not a blues performer, and let them listen to Bonnie’s renditions of “Walking Blues”, “Love Me Like a Man”, “Give it Up or Let Me Go”, “Big Road” and many more, and they will soon fold. Bonnie is a blues woman if ever there was one. Mississippi Fred McDowell, Sippie Wallace and a long list of other would second that!

Who are Mississippi Fred McDowell and Sippie Wallace?

Here’s some information on Fred McDowell (courtesy of Mississippi blues Trail.org)

“Mississippi” Fred McDowell, as he was usually billed, was actually born and raised in Rossville, Tennessee. He never knew his birth date—January 12, 1904 is often cited, although census and Social Security documents point to 1906 or 1907. His music blended the sounds he heard from local guitarists in Tennessee with the pulsating juke joint grooves of the North Mississippi hills and the hard-edged blues he picked up during several years spent in the Delta. Spirituals were an important part of his repertoire, and one, “You Got to Move,” recorded by McDowell in 1965, gained widespread fame when the Rolling Stones recorded it on their 1971 album Sticky Fingers.

McDowell, who learned to fret his guitar strings with a bottleneck or metal slide after seeing his father’s cousin play with a steak bone, honed his skills under the tutelage of longtime friend and neighbor Eli Green. Green’s song “Write Me a Few Lines” became a McDowell signature piece and was later recorded by one of McDowell’s biggest admirers, Bonnie Raitt.
McDowell held a variety of jobs, including picking cotton, driving a tractor, and working for an oil mill, a dairy, and a logging company. In 1940, when he applied for a Social Security card, he was employed by the Hotel Peabody in Memphis. Fifty-one years later the Peabody was the site of McDowell’s posthumous induction into the Blues Hall of Fame. McDowell died at Baptist Hospital in Memphis on July 3, 1972. He is buried in the Hammond Hill M. B. Church cemetery north of Como.

Information on Sippie Wallace courtesy of red-hot Jazz.com

Beulah "Sippie" Thomas grew up in Houston, Texas where she sang and played the piano in her father's church. While still in her early teens she and her younger brother Hersal and older brother George began playing and singing the Blues in tent shows that travelled throughout Texas. Wallace was unique among the Classic Blues singers in that she wrote a great deal of her own material, often with her brothers supplying the music. The sidemen who played on her recording sessions were always excellent and included the cream of New Orleans Jazz musicians.

She found solace in religion and spent forty years as a singer and organ player at the Leland Baptist Church in Detroit. She occasionally performed over the years, but did little in the Blues until she launched a comeback in 1966. Wallace's next album was called "Sippie Wallace Sings the Blues" for the Storyville label. Wallace suffered a stroke in 1970 but managed to keep recording and performing. With the help of Bonnie Raitt she landed a recording deal with Atlantic Records and recorded the album, "Sippie", which featured Raitt, was nominated for a Grammy in 1983 and won a W.C. Handy Award for best blues album in 1984.