

## Introduction to New Orleans Band Director's Performance and History

Wolff, Oscar	Weldon Alfred	Rosato, Joseph
Sporer, Frank	Phinney, Frederick	Mendelson, Harry
Moses, Benjamin	Rosenbecker, Adolph	Gargano, Ernesto
Borchert, William	Veazey, Armand	Cupero, Michael
Wunsch, John	Fischer, Charles	Feronni, Albert
D'Aquin, Gastave	Tosso, Emile	Schilling, Happy
Sontag, George	Mars, G.B.	Bayersdorffer, John
Paoletti, George	Stumpf, Charles	De la Fuente, Henrique
Bellstadt, Herman	Braun, William	O'Connell, George
Porte, Edward	Porte, Edward	Lombardo, G.B.
Perkins, Theron	Brooke, T.P.	Carollton*
		*Jaeger, Beyer, Gunther

New Orleans was a 'musical city.' Throughout its history music was an important cultural activity. The New Orleans Opera was national known and had the first operas troupe in the United States. Also, during the decades prior and into the 20th Century **band music** was the popular form of performed music-for parades, concerts and various activities. Bands were known as 'military bands,' or 'concert bands.' Concerts were presented in the various parks and playgrounds in New Orleans as well as in the resorts located around lake Pontchartrain, especially the resorts of West End and Spanish Fort. These bands were both local and visiting national bands. Many bandmasters were trained in Europe. The directors were great musicians and had national reputations. There were visiting bands and directors as: Sousa's, Brooks and the Mexican bands that played at these places.

These resorts catered to the more elite population of the city and poorer people and Negroes did not and could not attend the resorts.

There were Negro bands, of course, in New Orleans but they were not the big concert bands of the whites. Negro bands, such as the Onward, Excelsior, Pickwick and others. They mostly did funerals, parades and various small affairs. A parade in 1926 included: Imperial 'Brass Band, Ridgley's Original Tuxedo Novelty

**Jazz Band, Peerless Orchestra, Original Maple Leaf Orchestra, McCullum's Jazz Band and Kid Harris Jazz Band.**

When Spanish Fort closed a number of Negro bands played there for picnics and other affairs.

The repertoire of these bands played the band literature of the era - classical compositions and popular music and to keep up with the times also included some ragtime pieces. Some bands had 'opera nights,' and even 'ragtime nights.' They often had famous soloists nationally known. Also, the resorts, to foster attendance, had additional attractions such as Vaudeville acts (New Orleans was the end of vaudeville tours and acts were available at the resorts and in the Tango Belt.), and various activities such as roller coasters and other such attractions. In this era the public could swim in Lake Pontchartrain and the cool breezes were found refreshing during the hot summers of New Orleans.

Local conductors, including Tosso, Paoletti, Braun, Moses and many others, (30 in number) are given in this volume. Often the weather in the summer canceled the activities in these places and in some years even closed down the resorts, not only for a year but sometimes many years. The weather also damaged access as roads were damaged and the public from New Orleans could not get to the resorts. The railroads also had trouble at times.

### **Repertoire**

The repertoire of these concerts were often given in the local papers and one can observe the repertoire of the times in these lists.

All of these bands had similar repertoires. The conductor choose the selections and were excepted to please the crowds thus we find a very varied program. Many concerts began with 'America' and ended with the 'Star Spangled Banner.' The 'old war horses' were played such as 'William Tell Overture,' a waltz or selections from a current Broadway show, and of course a march or two, perhaps a galop or polka and some medleys of popular pieces of the day, a cakewalk/ragtime piece (but no jazz) and at times they

honored and played requests. Within my work there are dozens of programs given. This was also the era of transcriptions of classical music for bands.

A typical band program played by the Tosso Band in 1909 is seen below:

Professor Emile **Tosso**, director of the Tosso Military Band, has arranged the following pleasing programme in 1909:

"The Minute Man".....	Winburn
"Sweetheart Days".....	Dally
"Yankee Dude" .....	Lampe
"The Passing Regiment".....	Coverly
"Talk of New York".....	Cohan
"I Got the Blues".....	Maggio
"Brisas de Estro".....	Mazanaras
"The Prescher and the Bear".....	Sorensen
"The Jolly Musician".....	Muscat
Duet for flute and clarinet (selected), by Miss Meade and Mr. Alphonse Mejia.	
"William Tell" (overture).....	Rossini
"Picayune Frog Polka".....	Barra
"Seventh Army Corps".....	Weldon
"The Sunny South" (selections from Southern plantations songs).....	Lampe
"The Steel King March".....	St. Clair

New Orleans Item - May 30, 1909 - West End

*(Notice the song 'I Got the Blues' written by a New Orleanian. It was the first blues ever published. My band has played this song and it is very interesting. I have the complete score arranged for 'society band.')*

Many of these bands, mostly local, played for other activities such as parades, picnics, excursions, and special functions as lawn parties, furnished music for local clubs and fraternities, and for various activities that were called upon to have 'live' music.

The leaders were 'rock stars' in their popularity. Many had other jobs and played music at night. They were also arrangers and composers of music. Most conductors were cornet soloist and often played a solo during the concert. All had good musical training and some, like Gustave D'Aquin, studied music in Europe, mostly Paris.

Rosenbecker had been the conductor of the Chicago Symphony. Some conducted the famous French Opera in New Orleans. Operas were booked at the resorts and at first were popular but eventually the bands became better attractions. Many band leaders had careers in other cities such as Bellstadt in Cincinnati and D'Aquin in New York.

These bands remained popular until the jazz age and the resorts closed down around the end of the 1920s due to a seawall built along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

Dancing was a popular form of activity and the resorts began to have dancing pavilions and had jazz bands playing such as Piron, Schilling, Bayersdoffer, Browning and others thus ending the glory years of the brass bands.

Some taught music and some were even High School and College music professors.

Many of these leaders were officers in Local 174 of the Musicians Union.

One cannot list and write about all of the bands and band leaders in New Orleans but those given were the most popular.

The history of their careers is not a complete history but only what one is able to discover from limited resources.

Prior to this study only a few names are found in the history of bands in New Orleans-mostly names like Tosso and Paoletti, but in the history of the resorts many new names are found that led bands in the various sites in New Orleans. (Note: *Being a band teacher in my career I played many of the compositions found in the programs listed, both classical and ragtime. Many of the popular songs are unknown to us today but were popular songs in this era that the public witnessing the concerts were familiar with. I played many of the ragtime songs listed in the programs with my 'Early Jazz Band.'* When I lived in New Orleans I often went to Pontchartrain Beach for a swim or ride the various rides there. The amusement parks eventually also closed down.)

The resorts had the final blow when the seawall was built in the early 1920s. This also was the end of the many 'camps' built

along the shores of Lake Pontchartrain where jazz bands often were hired.

The management of the resorts often hired bands other than local bands and the public often criticized the management for not hiring local talent-of which there were many local musicians of high caliber. Example: Bellstedt of Cincinnati.

Musicians from Europe came to New Orleans to seek a musical career and stayed in New Orleans as it was found that they could earn a living playing music. Many of these became band leaders.

While some concerts included ragtime no jazz is programmed. Even the local musicians union were against jazz, but as jazz became popular these military bands were less popular.

There was still work in parades, especially during Mardi Gras and other celebrations. Most activities of the era used 'live' music so there was available work. (Sic: As one knows there was no radio, TV or records in this early time)

During this era the Negroes of New Orleans had their brass bands and as segregation was in effect at this time, Negroes had their own concert halls and playgrounds in which their bands performed. They are noted for their funeral parades. Some of these bands, such as the Onward, Pickwick and others are included. Their history is well noted in jazz history books such as Richard Allen's and William Schafer's 'Brass Bands of New Orleans' and Al Roses' 'A Family Album.' Within these Negro brass bands, when a dance was scheduled, a small dance band immersed from within the larger band. These small bands were the ones that created jazz.

While the resorts faded the bands found opportunities playing concerts at the various playgrounds. Given in the manuscript is the St. Roch Playground as an example of the bands performing in these parks. City Park and Audubon Park as well as Southern, Athletic and other parks in New Orleans presented band concerts. These concerts by the 'brass/military' bands were given for many years after the close of the resorts. New Orleans was known nationally for their concert bands.

School and College bands began to develop and took the place of the professional bands. Many societies such as the Shiners still had bands. Capable band leaders were chosen to led these bands. One such band was the Laundry Service Band.

In the articles one can also see the instrumentation of these professional bands. While the papers refer to these bands as: concert bands, military bands and even orchestras most are what we know as a band such as Sousa's and Gilmore's Band. Perhaps the band names was due to the wearing of military uniforms for their performances, where today classical bands and orchestras wear tuxedos. There were various sizes of these bands, most were smaller bands in the resorts as these locations couldn't offered a large band. The sizes of these bands are given in the articles presented. It was the custom to show the respect the public and band members were given with the honor of presentations of medals and badges to their leader.

The visiting Mexican Band was well received and was respected by the local musicians but bands and band music was well developed prior to their visit. Being in the same city band directors knew each other and had respect for each other. Prior to their ascending as leaders many were musicians in other concert bands, in the French Opera Orchestra and in local theater bands and orchestras. Tosso was orchestra leader at the Orpheum Theater as well as leading a band at the resorts. One leader, Veazey, a excellent cornet soloist traveled with the Mexican Band on tour as a cornet soloist.

During this era most cities, both small and large, had town bands. It has been said that a town must have a brass band and a baseball team. Most larger affairs had music furnished by these local bands.

*A more in depth coverage is given in my books on various cities and their bands. Note the coverage of the Plaquemine Parish and the bands of Robert Hingle (white) and Professor James Humphrey (Negro), as well as all the Parishes surrounding New Orleans and their town bands.*

## **Band Instrumentation**

**The instruments and the size of these bands depended upon: the musicians available, the fee of the employ as to number of musicians. and the desire of the conductor.**

**These bands varied is size. The literature demanded a certain instrumentation. A standard makeup would be flutes, clarinets, cornets, trombones, baritones, tubas, saxophones and percussion. In the early days one might find both Cornet & trumpet parts, a euphonium, and if available and affordable an oboe and bassoon. Also the alto horn (Now obsolete) known as 'peck horns.' Perhaps an Eb clarinet could be added. But, it all depended on money with the professional bands. Saxophone was later used but not as a full section of alto, tenor and baritone.**

**The bands from fraternal groups would have the standard instruments and additional players depended on the availability of musicians and these bands would have more clarinets, etc.**

**The size of various bands playing around New Orleans; Example: In 1891 & 1894 Paoletti's Band at West End numbered 40. As the crowds grew the band grew and in 1899 it numbered 45. When Paoletti played in 1921 he had 60 musician in his band, and as they attracted enlarged crowds the establishment could afford more musicians.**

**This is the in instrumentation of Professor Sporer's Band in 1900:**

The Louisiana Field Band is composed of thirty-five pieces, and is entirely of local talent. Following are the names of the musicians and their respective instruments.

Joseph Sporer, bandmaster; Frank Sporer, business manager; L. Vizcarra, oboe; A. Lonom, bassoon, E. Tosso, alto saxophone; F. Ramos, tenor saxophone; J. L. Segar, piccolo; A. Meija, flute; F. Froeba, E flat clarinet; Wm. Mische, S. Hernandez, solo B flat clarinet; R. Rahn, J. Carvers, first B flat clarinet; J. Young, third B flat clarinet, P Fabian, J. Wangler, solo B flat cornet; V. Fischer, J. Lambert, first B flat cornet; J. Robinson, second B flat cornet; H. Wulff, third b flat cornet V. Einborn, G. Froeba, barytone; A. Dinkel, first alto' R. A. Eckert, second alto; F. Eckert, third alto; A. Barra, first trombone; M. Guerre, second trombone; H. Chappel, third trombone; F. Sporer, B flat bass; J. Wortman, J. Bauvinet, J. Alvarez, tuba; P. Corvers, G. Peterson, C. Klein, drum.

Thus the bands and resorts faded into the past and New Orleans was never the same, (My opinion) and the memories of the past still linger in my mind.

### Photos of some leaders



**Bellstedt**



**Phinney**



**Sontag**



**Tosso**

**Wolff**

**Mendelson**



**Veazey**

**Christen**

**Rosato**



**Paoletti**

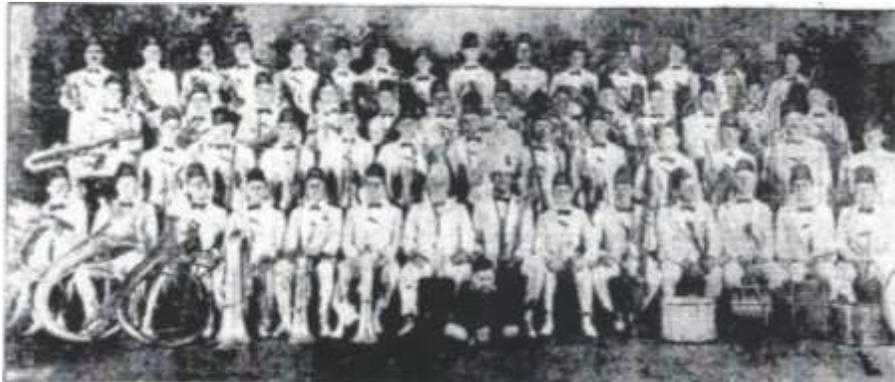
**Rosenbecker**



**Encarnacion Payen  
Leader- Mexican Band**



**Mexican Band-1884- 80 musicians**



**Shrine Band - Paoletti-Conductor - 1922  
(total-over 55 musicians)**