ST. JOSEPH BRASS and STRING BAND & THE PEERLESS BRASS BAND of DONALDSONVILLE

ST. JOSEPH BRASS BAND - 1
ST. JOSEPH STRIKNG BAND - 21
PEERLESS BRASS BAND - 30

The two most popular aggregations of musical instruments in the latter decades of the 19th Century were the brass band and string band. Even the smallest of towns in America had a brass and string bands. In Louisiana we find evidence of this in the many newspaper accounts that mention their town's band with much pride and probably boast of their accomplishments.

A typical band activity was playing for the popular fairs given by the Catholic Church and other civic organizations. The St. Joseph Brass Band is very active in fund raising activity of the church.

Still another was the serenade. A brass band would congregate outside a leading citizen's house and play a serenade. A serenade was considered an honor for the one being serenaded, many times the editor of the town paper, who would always reciprocate with a mention in the next edition of the newspaper. The bands would also use the serenade to advertise its next public activity, usually an event to raise money to pay for new music, instruments or travel expenses to gratis jobs. Leading politicians were also in line for serenades; they in turn would hire the band for a political rally. The serenade was good advertisement:

> "The St. Joseph Brass Band was out on a serenading tour last Saturday night, and the boys seemed to enjoy themselves immensely. They visited the residences of Hon. Pierre Landry, Squire Wilkinson, H. O. Maher, Esq., and the editor of the *Chief*, and met with cordial receptions. Mr. Maher was absent from home Saturday evening, and when he learned upon his return of the compliment that had been paid him by the band, he indicted the follow note, which has been handed us for publication:
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> 'Donaldsonville, Nov. 8th, 1871. Frederick Cobb, esq., Pres. SJBB: Dear Sir - On my return from the sugarhouse last night I learned that your Band had been around and had honored me with a serenade. I am sorry that I was absent and did not know of your intended visit, as I would have been happy to show my high appreciation of the honor conferred by your excellent band to so humble an individual as myself. Hoping that you will continue to receive the good wishes and praise of the public in the future as in the past, and that in a short time I will be able to show my appreciation of the merits of the St. Joseph Band in a substantial manner. I am, respectfully, your Obdt. servant, H. C. Maher." (Nov. 14, 1871)

The town of Donaldsonville was no exception to the tradition of brass bands, having at least four brass bands at one time. Although not a large town there was an

atmosphere in Donaldsonville that fostered musical cultural activities. In 1872 there were four bands of which the town newspaper the "Chief" boasted. We read:

> "There was 'music in the air' Tuesday evening for the four bands of which our town boasts all held meetings for the purpose of practicing upon their 'toot horns'." (Nov. 9, 1872)

Three of these four bands mentioned in the above article are previously mentioned in earlier editions of the newspaper. On Feb. 3, 1872, the Donaldsonville Silver Cornet Brass Band is mentioned; August 10, 1872, the Ascension Brass Band; and on Nov. 9, 1872, the St. Joseph Brass Band. The fourth band's name doesn't appear before the Nov. 9th date. The earliest band that could be the fourth would be the St. Mary Brass Band, mentioned later in the August 2, 1873, issue of the "Chief." The Donaldsonville Silver Cornet Brass Band and the Ascension Brass Bands are white bands; the St. Joseph Brass Band and the St. Mary Brass Band are colored/Creole Bands. The organizing of these early brass bands probably took place in the years after the Civil War, between 1865 and 1872 - so, in reality their history was in its early stages when we read about them in the 1872 newspapers.

We first hear of the St. Joseph Brass Band in the same Nov. 9, 1872, issue of the 'Chief' when it and the Ascension Brass Band play for a political barbecue, one of the typical activities of a brass band in the latter part of the 19th Century:

> "THE BARBECUE - The mass meeting and barbecue at 81 mile point last Saturday is reported by persons who attended to have been quite a success. A goodly number of people, belonging to both political parties, were present, and manifested great interest in the proceedings throughout. The ascension and St. Joseph Brass Bands went from Donaldsonville accompanied by speakers of liberal Republican persuasion, and a joint discussion of political questions took place between those which is said to have been well worth listening to. General Allen Thomas delivered one of the stirring addresses for which he is justly noted." (Nov. 9, 1872)

The St. Joseph Brass Band was a very active band, playing music for many fairs as well as giving their own pleasure excursions for the benefit of their band fund. These excursions would be either by boat, train or hay wagon. The May 17th issue wrote that "We have been compelled to defer an account of a pleasure/excursion of the St. Joseph Brass Band until next week which in consequence of precedence of other matters."

In May, July and August the band played for two church fairs:

> "The Catholic Fair - Notwithstanding unfavorable weather the fair given last Saturday and Sunday and Monday for the benefit of the Catholic Church building fund was well attended, and proved a very successful entertainment. Father Cuppens and Weltke, assisted by a number of ladies and gentlemen who are always foremost upon such occasions, managed the affair admirably and contributed by every means in their power to the enjoyment of the guests. The Independent and St. Joseph Bands of Donaldsonville, and the St. Mary Jefferson College Band from St. James

> furnished excellent music, the good natured rivalry existing between the organizations causing each to put its best foot forward." (July 6, 1973)

The excursion was a way of realizing some profit for the benefit of a musical organization. We read that the St. Joseph Band had given a pleasure/excursion. The paper writes: "We have been compelled to defer an account of a pleasure/excursion of the St. Joseph Brass Band until next week which in consequence of precedence of other matters." (May 17, 1893)

> "Successful Fair - St. Mary Benevolent Association. The St. Joseph Brass Band in attendance during the whole time and the fair goers were highly pleased with their music," (May 31, 1873)

> The band is active playing for the annual fairs, although the two listed are summer fairs, not fall ones:

> "M. E. church fair: The Silver Cornet and St. Joseph Brass Band." (August 16, 1873)

In a very interesting article, the band combines an excursion and serenades in what is called a 'Frolic':

> "A FROLIC - Saturday evening, two weeks since, the members of the St. Joseph Brass Band, having secured the fine large wagon of the Ascension Band for the purpose, visited the residence of Hon. C. N. Lewis, in the first ward, where they partook of a bountiful supper prepared for the occasion. On the way to their place of destination, the boys awoke the echoes of the surrounding country and brought the inhabitants to the roadside in gaping wonder, by playing several selections from their musical repertoire. Arriving at Mr. Lewis' they found that gentleman ready to receive them with his usual pleasant smile, and after a preliminary serenade they attacked the edibles with appetite sharpened by the long ride and of course enjoyed the repast hugely. Several hours were spent with their host in a most agreeable manner and then the members of the band again mounted the red wagon and returned home filled with a pleasant recollection of their frolic." (May 24, 1873)

Again in July the band plays for a church fair:

> "The Catholic Fair - Notwithstanding unfavorable weather the fair given last Saturday, Sunday and Monday for the benefit of the Catholic church building fund was well attended. The Independent and St. Joseph Bands of Donaldsonville and the St. Mary Jefferson College Band from St. James furnished excellent music, the good natured rivalry existing between the organizations causing each to put its best foot forward." (July 6, 1873)

Bands of the 19th Century were sponsored many times by either the firemen of the town or the Catholic Church. Many times there was a close relationship between the firemen, who were mostly Catholic and the Catholic Church. Research has brought to light the role of the Catholic Church in sponsoring brass bands for its many church-related activities as well as for its many official functions. Such is the case when the Archbishop came to Donaldsonville:

"Archbishop Perche in Donaldsonville
The Services in Ascension Church
A Large Number of Confirmations and Communionists
The Departure of the Archbishop

> The services at the Catholic Church last Sunday conducted by the Rev. Archbishop Perche, were interesting and imposing, and drew together the largest congregation that has assembled in the spacious sanctuary for a long while. So great was the crowd that there was only standing room left for those who came late, and but very little of that. A procession was formed in the church yard just before the hour fixed for the opening of the services, which made a circuit of the ground and then conducted his grace the Bishop into the church. This procession was headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band, followed by the candidates for confirmation and communion (numbering about sixty), the inmates of the St. Vincent Orphan Asylum under the care of the Sisters of Charity, a considerable number of children and adults, the Bishop under a canopy borne by four gentlemen, and the St. Cecile Band bringing up the rear. The bands alternately filled the air with harmonious sounds, and as the procession marched slowly unto the church, with banners waving and bands playing, the scene was in spiriting in the extreme." (July 19, 1873)

The St. Joseph Band was a proud and capable organization, with its pride sometimes turning into cockiness. This attitude was publicity criticized by other musicians:

> "Advertisement: Mr. Editor,
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> As we have heard some of the members of the St. Joseph Brass Band state in public that there could not be any other band organized in this town unless it would join with them, because the money could not be raised to do so, we can assure you that if it had not been for Mr. Charles F. Smith, who was kind enough to lend them the necessary funds, which they have not been able to return, they could not now be in a position to slander others in public as they have done. Mr. Smith grew tired of waiting for the return of his money, and made them a present of the sum of $200.
>
> Very respectfully,
>
> St. Mary Brass Band Boys." (August 2, 1873)

A write-up about the previously mentioned fair for the benefit of the M. E. Church appears in the August 16th paper:

> "HO! FOR THE FAIR Let everybody attend - A grand concert to be given to-night in the Donaldsonville Silver Cornet Band Hall.
>
> The fair for the benefit of the M. E. Church is in full blast at the public square, and is succeeding beyond the expectation of the projectors. Despite the copious rain, the attendance has been large, and the visitors purchase of the good things offered for sale with commendable liberality. The fair opened Wednesday afternoon and will continue until Sunday evening. The Silver Cornet Band discoursed some of their splendid music at the opening, and the members were invited to a bounteous supper, which they partook of with great gusto. Thursday and yesterday (Friday) evening music was furnished by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (August 16, 1873)

1874

One of the occasions for a celebration for the colored people of Donaldsonville was the 11th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation:

> "Emancipation,
>
> Celebration of the 11th Anniversary of President Lincoln's famous Proclamation - Mass-Meeting at the courthouse - Addresses by Judge Cheevers, Hons. Pierre Landry, G. H. Hill...The St. Joseph Band in Attendance - A Serenade. Introductory
>
> Early in the forenoon of New Year's Day, the booming of a little cannon in the vicinity of the Court-House reminded us that the colored people were to have a meeting for the purpose of celebrating in appropriate manner the 11th anniversary of their freedom. About half past ten o'clock the St. Joseph Brass Band appeared on the gallery of the Court-House and struck up a lively tune, and from this time until the opening of the meeting they filled the air with melody at frequent intervals.")

One of the leading Negro politicians, P. B. S. Pinchback, made a visit to Donaldsonville and the St. Joseph Brass Band welcomed him:

> "Republican mass meeting. P. B. S. Pinchback arrival on Steamer Natchez. The St. Joseph Brass Band was at the wharf when the steamer landed (Saturday night). Sunday morning the band embarked upon the Henry Tete for the old Marchand Plantation. The St. St. Joseph Brass Band played a prominent part in the proceedings, their patriotic music serving to interest the spectator 'between speeches'."

1875

As has been noted, a fair was one of the principle methods of fund-raising in the small towns of Louisiana. Brass band benefited from this tradition, often giving fairs in their own behalf to raise money. This was necessary since they frequently played gratis for public functions. The fair during this era had a benefit for the band that played as it always guaranteed copious free publicity for the sponsor in the newspaper.

> "Another fair on the 25 & 26 days of April. A fair will be held in this town for the benefit of that worthy association of young colored men, the St. Joseph Brass Band. Tickets of admission will soon be ready for sale at 50 cents each, and we recommend everybody to purchase one. Donaldsonville has a deal of musical talent and it should be encouraged. The band have the best wishes of the Chief for the success of their coming Fair." (March 14, 1875)

Again, on the 18th of April there appears another item about the St. JBB Fair:

> "There will be a grand fair given for the benefit of the St. Joseph Brass Band in this town on the 25 & 26 insts. The members of the organization deserve to be encouraged, and as this is the only time they have called upon the public for assistance we trust their entertainment will be literally patronized." (April 18, 1875)

The St. JBB Fair is postponed the first time because of heavy rains that had a devastating effect on the town of Donaldsonville:

> "The fair which the St. JBB proposed giving for their benefit on the 25 & 26 insts. has been postponed by them to June 6 and 7, owing to the scarcity of money in the neighborhood and the general desperation among the merchants and planters caused by the recent heavy rains, high water and numerous over flows." (April 25, 1875)

Again on June 6th, the item about the St. JBB fair appears in the paper:

> "Saturday and Sunday the 6 & 7 insts. the St. JBB will give a fair for their benefit. The band first intended holding their fair on the 25 & 26 of April, but postponed it until the present time owing to the high water and danger of overflow then existing. We trust their efforts will meet with the pechiary success anticipated." (June 6, 1875)

The St. Joseph Brass Band had an excellent reputation outside of Donaldsonville and Ascension Parish. It was often asked to play in surrounding parishes. On one such trip they traveled to St. James Parish and played for a 4th of July affair:

> "The St. JBB accompanied by Hon. Pierre Landry, the Republican nominee for State Senator from this district, left for St. James at an early

> hour this morning to attend a 4th of July celebration to be held in that parish. We fear they will have a uneuable trip through the mud and rain, but we hope the celebration will be a success and that our Republican band may make a favorable impression upon the St. James people." (July 4, 1875)

A follow-up story on the above trip explained the problems of travel when the weather was inclement:

> "The St. JBB which had started for St. James early in the morning, to be present at a large meeting there, returned by the train at 12:30, preferring that mode of travel to riding in a wagon exposed to the weather."

The St. Joseph Band plays for a fair for the St. Mary Benevolent Assoc. The paper states that "The St. Joseph Brass Band was in attendance and dispensed good music to add to the enjoyment of visitors." (August 7, 1875)

In the August 1st issue of the paper we see that there is "a fair for the benefit of the 6th ward church. The St. JBB has been solicited to attend and will probably do so."

While it has often been thought that the custom of having bands at funerals was a New Orleans function, there were similar funeral processions in the country towns surrounding New Orleans and frequently in Donaldsonville. The St. JBB plays for such an affair:

> "The death of Mr. Desire Fernander, a popular and estimable young colored man, has caused a deep feeling of sorrow among his numerous friends and relatives, as attested by the large concourse that followed his remains to the tomb Thursday evening. The St. JBB was in the procession and played dirges as the mournful cavalcade moved toward the Catholic cemetery, where the deceased was interred. Peace to his ashes." (Sept. 5, 1875)

1876

Brass bands in the 19th Century were utilized by the politicians at their rallies and speeches. Visiting politicians were met at the train or steamer depot and usually marched to the beat of the band to the place of gathering. At times, this arrival was at night and torch light processions were held. This type of activity was written about in the Sept. 23, 1876, paper:

> "The campaign committee having secured from the State committee several hundred lamps, or torches, arrangements were made for a torch light procession Sunday night. As was anticipated, this event drew a large and expectant crowd. The procession formed on Crescent Place and moved on all the principal streets, there being about 200 torches in line and a large number of people following the pageant. The St. Joseph Brass

Band led the column and just behind them was a vehicle bearing a large, transparency inscribed as follows: 'Give us peace, with Hayes & Wheeler, Packard and Antoine.' "

In Oct. the band plays for another political rally:

"Local Republican campaign - In yard of Landry school house, 1st ward. After a long march, enlivened by hearty cheering and inspiring music from the St. Joseph Band, the crowd dispersed." (Oct. 7, 1876)

When State political figures visited Donaldsonville the Band was again on hand:

"Kellogg, Packard Visit - Torch light procession at night. Horsemen were in the lead, followed by the St. Joseph Brass Band in their large wagon, a long line of footmen, with and without torches, followed the Conway Field Band occupying a position near the middle." (Nov. 11, 1876

1877

Most brass bands of the 19th Century also had under their wing a group of juvenile musicians who was aspiring future band members. Also, most small towns or settlements organized their own brass bands and would enlist the help of members of well-established brass band musicians to become their musical instructors. Thus the leader of the St. Joseph Brass Band, Albert Vives, is enlisted to train some young band musicians of nearby settlements:

"A musical spirit pervades the colored youth of this parish. A brass band was recently organized at Crevasac Settlement and another in Smoke Bend, while still another is spoken of in Donaldsonville. The organization first named has purchased instruments and Albert Vives, leader of the St. Joseph Brass Band is giving the members elementary instructions in the art of horn blowing." (April 7, 1877)

Brass bands in the 19th Century were the most popular source of music for both entertainment and other traditional activities. The St. Joseph Brass Band was called on many times to play funeral music and as earlier stated they did so on occasion, such as the funeral for Arnmand Degriuse:

"One of the largest funeral processions we have ever witnessed in this section passed through town, from the bayou ferry landing to the Catholic Church and cemetery, on Sunday last. The deceased was a much respected colored man, scarcely 21 years of age, named Arnmand Degriuse, resident of the 3rd ward, from where the cortege started. The St. Joseph Brass Band and a field band followed the hearse, alternately discoursing

mournful airs. Many members of some benevolent society were in the procession, and the neat uniform dresses of the women presented a pleasing appearance' (April 28, 1877)

Needing financial help for expenses, the St. Joseph Brass Band gives a ball:

"The members of the St. Joseph Brass Band and their friends will amuse themselves at a ball to be given under the auspices of the band at Donaldsonville Silver Cornet Band's Hall on July 7." (June 23, 1877)

1878

The St. Joseph Brass Band was considered one of the best brass bands in the State of Louisiana, this fact written about in the 'Chief:'

"Donaldsonville has two of the best colored bands in the State - The Crescent and the St. Joseph. Both these organizations were out serenading their friends last week and included the editor of the Chief among the category. Many thanks." (April 20, 1878)

It was earlier stated that both the Catholic Church and the local fire department were sponsors of brass bands in many of the towns in Louisiana. Each year the town fire department would have a special day and the activities always included a fair and parade in which many brass bands participated. Such a day was held in Donaldsonville by the local firemen and it was addressed in the paper:

"Firemen's Holiday! Anniversary Celebration of the Phoenix Fire and Ascension Hook and Ladder Companies. An imposing Parade - Subsequent Festivities - A delightful day.

If our firemen could have had their weather made to order, it would have been difficult to have obtained a much finer day for their celebration than last Sunday proved to be. The sun was partially obscured and its heat modified by light clouds, and the only drawback to the parade was the dust that lay deep upon the streets.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the bands employed for the occasion arrived at the public square with their instruments in full blasts, and as the firemen and populace congregated, a scene of inspiring animation was presented to the view such as can be witnessed here only on very rare occasions.

Ascension Hook and Ladder Company, followed by the Junior Hooks, first emerged upon the square in line, and soon Phoenix and Junior Phoenix followed suit. The assistant marshals rode off in a group, and shortly returned escorting the Grand Marshal, under whose direction the procession at once formed in the following order:

"Grand Marshal Elphege Glaudin attended by Aid Joseph Ferrier and Camille Mulere.

Phoenix Fire Co. No. a, led by the Independent Brass Band.

Ascension Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1 led by the Crescent Band.

Ascension Junior and Phoenix Junior companies, led by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (May 18, 1878)

The St. Joseph Brass Band continued its activity by playing for a fair for the St. Mary Benevolent Association. The St. Joseph Brass Band "was in attendance and dispensed good music to add to the enjoyment of visitors." (August 7, 1878)

The St. Joseph Brass Band probably continued playing in the year 1889 but there is no mention in the Chief, although there is mention of other brass bands' activities. They probably didn't disband as they are mentioned frequently in the 1880 newspaper.

1880

It was customary to acknowledge gratuitous services that the St. Joseph Band and other bands usually performed. Thus the Fair committee sent a card of thanks to the Ascension Hook and Ladder:

"Card of Thanks - Hall of Ascension Hook and Ladder Company No. 1. Jan. 3, 1880.

The undersigned committee, charged with the management of the recent fair and ball given under the auspices of and for the benefit of Ascension Hook and Ladder Co., beg leave to express, on behalf of the entire company, their sincere thanks and deep sense of obligation to the kind friends, one and all, who contributed in any way toward the advancement and conduct of the entertainments. To the St. Joseph, Crescent and Silver Cornet Bands, whose valuable indispensable adjunct to our entertainment.

Respectfully,
Committee on Fair and Ball."
(Jan. 24, 1880)

The band again plays for the annual firemen's parade on May 9 and the following write-up appears in the May 22 paper:

"Firemen's Anniversary - The Annual Parade of May 9, 1880 - The Donaldsonville firemen in line, reinforced by Friends from Algiers.

The annual parade of Phoenix Fire Co. No. 1 and Ascension Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1 of Donaldsonville took place on the 9th insts., and was a display that reflected much credit upon those organization.

The procession formed on the public square at a few minutes before 5 o'clock in the evening, a later start than usual being made by reason of waiting for the excursionists from Algiers, who were due at 2 p.m., but did

not arrive according to appointment. When all was in readiness the signal to march was given and the column moved off in the following order:

> Grand Marshall and aids.
> Donaldsonville Independent Brass Band
> Phoenix Fire Co. Phoenix Juniors
> St. Joseph Brass Band." (May 22, 1880

Bands in the area all seemed to have plenty of work and often overdoes their energy playing for parades and fairs that are played in a row:

> "Fair - Catholic Church grounds, May 9. The Independent and St. Joseph Brass Band, contributed to the interest of the festival by supplying good music, though there was a lack of this element Sunday and Monday nights, the bands having tired themselves out playing for the Firemen's Parade on Sunday." (May 22, 1880)

The Negro association of the Ascension Hook and Ladder Company give a benefit using the St. Joseph Brass Band as entertainment:

> "Ascension's entertainment - The Fair & Ball of Ascension Hook and Ladder Co.
>
> Last Saturday evening, the 27th the fair advertised to be given at Ascension Hook and Ladder Co's hall, under the auspices and for the benefit of that association, was opened by music from the Crescent Brass Band, and continued in operation until 10 o'clock tonight. The usual attractions were offered. In the main hall of the truck-house were the cake table, fancy table, punch table and a number of side tables, which in the smaller apartment on the right, where the hook and ladder truck is generally kept, stood the restaurant table from which the others were supplied. All were attended by polite and charming ladies, who exerted themselves with flattering success to supply the wants and contribute to the enjoyment of guests. Gumbo and coffee were prepared in the hall-yard, and the bar was located under an awning on the lot adjoining the hall on the lower side.
>
> The attendance of visitors Saturday evening was very slim and the prospect for a successful fair was dubious. Sunday afternoon and evening, however, matters brightened up considerably, although there was nothing like the number of guests the firemen and their friends had reason to expect. The St. Joseph Brass Band rendered handsome service by playing all afternoon and until a late hour in the evening, and the Silver Cornet Band kindly volunteered similar assistance, giving several tunes from the stage inside the hall." ((June 3, 1880)

The Blue Bucket Fire Co. was a colored organization. The fire department was also a social organization in the 19th Century and held regular meetings and elected

officers. They also sponsored brass bands and gave social activities to raise funds for fire trucks, hoses, etc. The St. Joseph participated in a number of activities of the Blue Bucket Co."

> "Blue Bucket Excursion, accompanied by the St. Joseph Brass Band bound for Napoleonville to a grand 4th of July Celebration. Had a pleasant trip down, listening and dancing to the band's inspiring music." and:
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> "Blue Bucket elections - St. Joseph Brass Band was present and serenaded the Company and the officers elected." (August 14, 1880)

The Blue Bucket Fire Co. took another excursion, this time to Gretna:

> "Blue Bucket Fire Co's Excursion to Gretna
>
> On Saturday the 21st., insts., the Blue Bucket Fire Co. of this town left here on a special excursion train bound for Gretna, accompanied by a considerable number of friends and pleasure seekers. The party reached Gretna safely, were cordially received by Good Intent Fire Co. No. 2 and other residents of the thriving town, and escorted to Good Intent's engine-house when an elegant lunch had been prepared, of which the excursionists partook with great relish.
>
> A procession was then formed by the two fire companies, headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band of Donaldsonville and the Creole Field Band of New Orleans, with Scott Ellison, esq;, as Grand Marshall. After parading on the principle streets of Gretna, the procession returned to Good Intent Hall and disbanded, and soon a grand ball was in progress in the hall which lasted through the night and afforded enjoyment to the participants." (August 21, 1880)

The St. Joseph and the Crescent Brass Band were both colored bands and at times were mistaken for each other. On one such occasion an article in the paper corrected the mistake:

> "Correction Donaldsonville, Sept. 20, 1880 Editor Chief
>
> I noticed in the published proceedings of the reception tendered the Hon. C. B. Darrall on the 13th insts., mention that the music for the occasion was furnished by the Crescent Brass Band of this place. In justice to the members of the St. Joseph Brass Band of Donaldsonville, I beg to state that they furnished the music for the day.
>
> Chas. Shallowhorne,
> Chairman Committee on Music."
>
> (Oct. 8, 1880)

October being the time prior to elections, there was an active political campaign going on which meant jobs for brass bands. Each political rally usually had a brass band playing to draw the crowd:

"Grand Republican Rally - Republican Mass-Meeting will be held in the parish of Ascension. The St. Joseph Brass Band of Donaldsonville will be in attendance." (Oct. 16, 1880)

1881

The Band plays for three funerals, which were noted in the July 23rd and Nov. 5th issues of the Chief in 1881.

"Death of R. J. Duhe - Funeral which takes place at 5:00 this evening and the St. Joseph Brass Band will also attend." (July 23, 1881)

"Death of Solomon Weinschench - funeral - Headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band."(Nov. 5, 1881)
(Sic: This was a Hebrew rite)

"Joseph Armand funeral - music furnished by St. Joseph and Crescent Brass Bands combined." (Nov. 5, 1181)

We find a notation in the Sept. 10th issue of the chief that tells of the band playing for another fair:

"An enjoyable fair or collation was given in Donaldsonville on Saturday, Sunday and Monday last, under the auspices of the St. Joseph Benevolent Society, one of the oldest associations of its class in our town, comprising in its membership some of the best colored people of the community. This was the first entertainment the society had ever given, and in view of the dullness of the times and other unfortunate circumstances, the ladies who projected the affair have every reason to feel satisfied with its results. Music was furnished by the St. Joseph and Crescent Bands, and the efforts of these proficient organizations formed one of the leading attractions of the festival." (Sept. 10, 1881)

1882

Each year the band usually is hired or asked to participate in annual affairs such as the firemen's parade (May 20th) and the political convention or rally:

"Convention - Republican 3rd congressional district - Senator Kellogg arrived at Donaldsonville Wednesday at train and escorted to the hotel, headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (August 16,1882)

"Kellogg and party at Lee Hotel - They were serenaded by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (Sept. 23, 1882

Both the St. Joseph and Crescent Brass Bands performed at social and community activities and always were available for Benevolent Societies:

> "The collation given by the ladies of the St. Joseph Benevolent Society. Music was furnished by the St. Joseph and Crescent Brass Bands and the guests were all pleasantly entertained." (Sept. 23, 1882)

The band plays again for the firemen, this time a picnic that was preceded by a procession to the picnic grounds:

> "Picnic - Perseverance Fire Co. #2 - The firemen will march to the grounds, accompanied by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (Sept. 23, 1882)

1883

The band frequently was called on to play for affairs outside of Donaldsonville, frequently playing in Baton Rouge. (Claiborne Williams' son eventually moved to the Capital city and continued his father's band under his father's name).One such occasion was noted in the March 24th paper:

> "We have persistently omitted to mention the visit of the St. Joseph Brass Band to Baton Rouge on the 3 inst. where it furnished music for the annual parade and celebration of Mizpah Lodge #2045, GVO of Odd Fellows. The celebration was a gratifying success, and the Baton Rouge papers all mentioned Donaldsonville's excellent colored band in complimentary terms." (March 24, 1883)

We also read in the Baton Rouge paper of March 5 that "Mispah Lodge #2045, GVO of Odd Fellows celebrate 3rd anniversary. Headed by the excellent colored Band from Donaldsonville, the members paraded the main streets."

The band is mentioned as playing for: "The Republican meeting at Blue Bucket Hall. The St. Joseph Brass Band was in attendance and furnished an excellent substitute for chin music."(March 29)

Another funeral is mentioned in the June 5th paper:

> "Henry Langues, a young colored man residing in Chetimaches Street died Thursday and was buried last evening in the Catholic Cemetery. The funeral concourse was quite a large one, including delegations from Perseverance and Blue Bucket Fire Co's headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band. Deceased was an efficient member of Perseverance." (June 9, 1883)

In the July 21st paper there is mention of a "Parade and fair for Odd Fellows Lodge - music furnished by the St. Joseph Brass Band."

Finally we find an entry about a picnic played for by the Band in the St. Charles Herald:

"The picnic of the Camelia Lodge No. 13, was a grand success. There was a large attendance of people, notwithstanding the bad weather. Among whom was the Donaldsonville St. Joseph Brass Band, who serenaded the Herald and also treated Hahnville and the vicinity to some good music." (Sept., 1, 1883)

1884

In the 1880's the traditional activities continued with the customary pomp and circumstance. One such occasion was the installation of the Odd Fellow Lodge officers:

"Odd fellows Festival

The public installation and incidental entertainment given at Blue Bucket Hall last Saturday and Sunday evenings, under the auspices of Alphonse Lodge No. 2444, GVO of Odd Fellows, attracted a usually large attendance and was one of the most agreeable and successful affairs ever conducted by a colored organization in our town. The members of the lodge, in full regalia, marched from their meeting place of Railroad Avenue to the Blue Bucket Hall at 7 o'clock Saturday evening, headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (Feb. 9, 1884)

The band plays for another "Republican meeting at Blue Bucket Hall, the St. Joseph Brass Band was in attendance and furnished an excellent substitute for chin music." (March 29) The band accompanies the firemen to New Orleans for the parade and frolic:

"Firemen's Frolic - Parade of four in New Orleans. They were accompanied by the St. Joseph Brass Band marched to the depot to the aspiring music of that organization." (March 8, 1884)

While the next article does not mention the band by name it does state that a colored band from Donaldsonville was in attendance at a festival, which means either the St. Joseph or the Crescent. The St. Joseph had played many times for the Smoke Bend Community so most likely it would have continued the relationship. The article states:

"The Pape Vert Brass Band of St. James, numbering 15 members passed upon the tug Nellie this afternoon on their way to take part in the Catholic Fair at the Smoke Bend Chapel. One of the Donaldsonville Colored Bands is also in Attendance at the festival." (June 14, 1884))

The Band plays for the Blue Bucket Fire Co. for an excursion on August 31st:

"The Blue Bucket Fire Co. leaves on the 30th, on its excursion for College Point, St. James, on the steamer Nellie, and will return the night of the 31st inst. The trip and entertainment is given in celebration of the anniversary of the organization. The St. Joseph Brass Band will

accompany the excursionists to and from their destination, and the Dugas String Band will furnish music for balls to be given on both nights on the grounds at the Point." (August 23, 1884)

1885

The Band is contracted to play for the annual Firemen's Parade and it is interesting that in the article the band is compared with the New Orleans colored bands:

"The St. Joseph Brass Band of Donaldsonville has made a contract to furnish music for the Lafayette Hook and Ladder Co. of New Orleans on March 1, and the boys are practicing some new pieces in order to be in proper musical trim for the important occasion. The St. Joseph is probably the best colored band in the state, outside of New Orleans and we have no doubt their music will give entire satisfaction to the members of Lafayette." (Feb. 7, 1885)

The Band plays for the annual Firemen's Parade as witnessed by a mention in the paper and also plays for a funeral for John O'Malley:

"John O'Malley - Funeral was very largely attended. Phoenix Fire Co. of which the deceased was a member and secretary led the procession headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (July 11, 1885)

The band plays for a Fair at the Blue Bucket Hall:

"Fair - Blue Bucket Hall. The celebrated St. Joseph Brass Band will be in attendance and will enliven the proceedings with its fine music." (Dec. 19, 1885)

There is another mention of the Band's trip to New Orleans and it again lauds the ability of the band:

"The St. Joseph Brass Band of Donaldsonville, undoubtedly the best colored musical organization in the State, outside of New Orleans, advertises for an engagement to furnish music for some Fire Co. on the 4th of March." (Dec. 19, 1885)

1886

After inserting an advertisement in the chief for sponsorship in the upcoming Firemen's Parade, the band is hired by the Lafayette Firemen:

"Responsive to the adv. inserted in the Chief, the St. Joseph Brass Band of this town has received and accepted a satisfactory proposition from Lafayette Hook and Ladder Co. of New Orleans to furnish music for that well-known organization on the occasion of the firemen's annual parade, March 4th. The St. Joseph was employed by the same company

last year and its music gave the firemen such perfect satisfaction that they have made haste to secure the services of Donaldsonville celebrated colored musicians for another parade - The members of the band are now handsomely uniformed and present a much improved appearance besides supplying its first class music." (Jan. 9, 1886)

Interestingly the Chief prints an item stating:

"The White Fire Co's and Napoleonville have invited the colored company to parade with them on the occasion of their annual celebration May 13th. The St. Joseph Brass Band of Donaldsonville will probably be engaged to furnish music for the colored Firemen." (April 24, 1886)

The brass band participated in most of the social activities of the era. Sporting events usually warranted the use of brass band music. During the baseball season most games included a band and usually were followed by a dance on the ever present wooden pavilion either underneath the grandstand or on the parks grounds:

"Baseball - Lee Baseball team of Donaldsonville go to Plaquemine on the steamer Letcher to play with Viguets of that place, and a highly enjoyable trip on Capt. Maurin's staunch and pretty little boat is anticipated. The St. Joseph Brass Band will go along also, and their fine music will add considerable interest to the excursion." (May 15, 1986)

After the excursion, the paper wrote of the trip:

"Baseball excursion.

The Lees down the Viguets again - The excursion of the Lee Baseball Club to Plaquemine last Sunday on the steamer Lutcher was a very agreeable affair. The boat got away at 9:30 A. M. with about 40 passengers, and arrived at Plaquemine at half past three, landing at several points en route and facing a heavy head wind nearly all the way. Marching to the South End Park, led by the St. Joseph Brass Band, the Lees played an exciting match with the Viguets, winning the bout by the close score of 11 to 1

The players formed in line behind the band and marched to the court-house exchange, kept by the popular Gary Brothers, where they were invited by the proprietors to partake of cooling liquid refreshments that proved very acceptable after the violent exercise of the game." (May 22, 1886)

The band again plays for the yearly Firemen's celebration in Donaldsonville:

"Firemen's celebration. 12th annual parade of Ascension Hook and Ladder. The St. Joseph Brass Band in parade. The fine appearance of the handsome marshals, the pleasing contrast produced by the bright uniforms

> of the band, all combined to produce a spirited and pleasing spectacle as the procession moved." (May 15, 1886)

In 1886 the brass band was the medium for rendering dance music dances still being the traditional ones of the 19th Century such as gavottes, minuets, polkas, waltzes and the march movements:

> "Quite a successful and enjoyable ball was given at Mr. Solozano's new hall, on Railroad Avenue last Thursday evening, the first of a series which it is proposed to continue during the summer. Music was furnished by the St. Joseph Brass Band and dancing was kept up until 3:00. Mr. Solozano has christened his new building St. Patrick's Hall. The 2nd ball next Thursday." (June 5, 1886)

In the July 8th of the Chief comes the first mention of Claiborne Williams as the leader of the St. Joseph Brass Band. Williams was 18 years old on this date:

> "Claiborne Williams, the well-known leader of the St. Joseph Brass Band and Williams' Orchestra, went down to St. James last Sunday to participate in the parade and celebration of the Bee Hive Benevolent Association No. 1, a worthy colored organization of our sister parish. Music for the parade was furnished by the association's own band, which is being coached by Williams, and considering the short time the organization had been practicing its effort of last Sunday was extremely satisfactory and creditable." (July 8, 1886)

The copies of the Chief are lacking between 1887 and 1896. There is an item in the Napoleonville paper. We read: "Firemen's parade - Thursday, May 12, 1887 - procession, headed by the Pelican Brass Band and the St. Joseph Brass Band presenting a handsome spectacle in their blue uniforms." (May 14, 1887)

Again the St. Joseph Band plays for the annual Firemen's Parade as read in the May 19th, 1888 Napoleonville paper.

The same Napoleonville paper mentioned the band in the May 23rd, 1891 paper. We read:

> "The Pioneer inadvertently omitted to mention that the St. Joseph Brass Band of Donaldsonville, under the leadership of the highly respected Joseph Thompson, gave it a very complimentary and highly appreciated serenade on the day of the parade." (May 23, 1891)

We find the band mentioned again on May 1, 1896. In this small quotation it sounds as if the band had discontinued for a while and is in the process of reorganizing and improving - this process is not unfamiliar to a number of brass bands during this period:

"The St. Joseph Brass Band has shown wonderful improvement in the playing of late. Its music at the convention last evening was excellent." (May 1, 1896)

Whatever the case may be, the band becomes active and in the proceeding years regains its popularity. The band, on June 6th and 7th play for the French Settlement Fair:

"The St. Joseph Brass Band - French Settlement will give a fair at that place on Saturday and Sunday, June 6 & 7." (May 20,1986)

The band, again in need of financial help give a picnic:

"The St. Joseph Brass Band gave a successful picnic at Tropet Place last evening. The attendance was quite large." (July 27, 1896)

1887

In the latter decade of the 19th Century the need for brass bands in parades continued. The St. Joseph plays for two such parades in early March:

"True Friends Mutual Benevolent Association annual parade (colored). The St. Joseph Brass Band will furnish music." (March 8, 1887)

"The St. Joseph Brass Band will celebrate its patron Saint's Day with a parade this evening by the band and its honorary members, to be followed by a ball tonight at True Friends Hall." (March 19, 1887)

Along with the Pelican Band of Napoleonville the brass band plays for the annual Firemen's parade:

"Firemen's parade - Thursday, May 12th. procession, headed by the Pelican Brass Band, and the St. Joseph Brass Band presenting a handsome spectacle in their blue uniforms." (May 14, 1887) Nap. Pioneer

The Brass Band besides playing for numerous parades and dances, plays for another funeral. We read of the funeral of Judge Dupaty:

"JUDGE FRANCIS DUPATY FUNERAL.

It was with surprise and regret that the many friends of Dupaty learn of his death, which sad event occurred on Thursday, the 20th inst., after a brief illness, only having been confined to the room two days. The deceased was only 32 years and 7 months of age and was a native of this town. Although so young he had held a number of public positions, among which were town marshal, mayor and at the time of his demise was one of the justices of peace of this (seventh) ward. The deceased was a true and warm friend, generous to a fault, and had surrounded himself with a

number of friends by his many good qualities of mind and heart. The deceased was a brother of Hon. Max Dupaty, our present Mayor and of Mrs. John Gouaux, wife of our oldest and prominent druggist. To these and his many friends of the Pioneer extend its deepest sympathies.

The funeral took place yesterday at St. Napoleon Church, and was attended by a large concourse of friends and acquaintances. The funeral was conducted under the Auspices of the Napoleon Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1 of which he was an honorary member. The funeral cortege was headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (Nov. 22, 1890) Pioneer

The Pioneer failed to mention that the band played a serenade the day of the parade and corrects this oversight in the next issue of the 'Pioneer.'

"The Pioneer inadvertently omitted to mention that the St. Joseph Brass Band of Donaldsonville, under the leadership of the highly respected Joseph Thompson, gave it a very complimentary and highly appreciated serenade on the day of the parade." (May 23, 1891) Pioneer

The band continues playing serenades for special people. We read:

"On Wednesday evening the Hook and Ladder Company accompanied by the St. Joseph Brass Band tendered a serenade to their Godmother, Mrs. W. L. Phelps." (May 28, 1887)

1896

In the Donaldsonville Daily Times we find a number of articles on the Band. The first mention is a parade:

"McKinley Club (Republican) parade through city - headed by St. Joseph Brass Band." (July 6)

"10th annual commencement of St. Augustine School - overture - St. Joseph Brass Band." (July 14)

"The St. Joseph Brass Band gave a successful picnic at Tropet place last evening. The attendance was quite large." (July 27)

St Joseph String Band

While outdoor activities such as parades and picnics still required a brass band, the string band is emerging as the preference for dances. It was a common practice among brass bands to have within their membership musicians who would play for dances with the instrumentation of a string band. For a number of dances the St. Joseph Brass Band presented its 'String Band':

"THE BAZAAR CLOSED. The Receipts Were Between Three and Four Hundred Dollars.

The bazaar for the benefit of the Episcopal church closed last night in a blaze of glory. The attendance was very large and by 10 o'clock every thing on the tables, excepting a few cakes was sold and these will be deposed of today. During the early part of the evening the Independent Brass and Reed Band gave a fine concert and later on the St. Joseph String Band played for the dancing which was kept up until after 2 o'clock this morning." (April 10, 1896)

The String Band plays for a 'Leap Year' dance by the young ladies of the town:

"THE LEAP YEAR DANCE - The Novel Society Function on Last Evening a Grand Success. Social Ethics Reversed. Our beautiful ladies give a glimpse of how the "New Women" would act.

The Leap Year ball given by the young ladies of this city at Hook & Ladder Hall last evening, was by all odds the social event of the season and its many respects the most novel and unique function ever given here.

The ladies from the inception of the affair reversed the unusual ethics and played the masculine role. They issued the tickets, invited their escorts and paid all of the expenses. The novelty was at first a little odd to our young men, but it soon wore off and they entered into the spirit of the affair with a zest and earnestness that made it extremely enjoyable and amusing.

Last evening upon arriving at the hall they poised as wall flowers and sat demure and modestly about walling for the young ladies to ask them to dance and to take them for refreshments. For once they were robbed of the privilege of leaving the hall room for a social glass or a whiff of a cigarette as had been their custom at other halls in which they regard as lord.

The ball opened shortly after nine o'clock with a grand march led by Miss Jeanne Landry, who escorted Mr. Henry Comstock. About forty couples were in the march and it presented with it handsome ladies richly attired, and the manly beaux, a very pretty picture. Following this came a long list of dances, with an intermission after the twelfth for the purpose was the dancing order declared, to give the young ladies an opportunity to make proposals of marriage. Whether this advantage was taken by any of the ladies must remain a secret with the ardent lassies and the blushing swains.

Dancing was resumed again about midnight and it was not until 2 o'clock this morning that the ball was over.

The music which was excellent, was given by the St. Joseph String Band." (April 20, 1896)

The St. Joseph continues to play dances using the Brass Band or String Band probably depending on the budget of the client, a brass band possessing more musicians than the smaller string band:

> "Impromptu dance - Hook & Ladder - Music - which was most excellent was furnished by the crack St. Joseph Brass Band's String Band." (June 11, 1896)

The concept of a dance in our day is different from the old days. The olden dances were more structured and considered activities of the complete participation of those attending. A good description is given in an article of June 25, 1896:

> 'THE MASONIC BALL The Even Last Evening a Most Brilliant Affair. THE PRETTY DECORATIONS. Beautiful Belles and Manly Beaux Make a Handsome Scene.
>
> The grand ball of the F. and A. m. lodges of this city, White Castle and Plaquemine, at Hook and Ladder Hall last evening, was the great social event of the season. The attendance was very large and embraced the beauty and chivalry of this, Assumption Iberville Parishes. The costumes of the ladies were particularly handsome, and elegant, and the scene presented during the height of the ball was a kaleidescope of handsome ladies and noble men, and one that will not soon be forgotten by those who were present.
>
> The decorations of the hall were unusually handsome and artistic, and the effect created was exquisite. The music stand was hidden beneath a cloud of foliage and plants interspersed with palms and flowers. From each corner of the room rose garlands of ferns that met in the center from which was suspended the fraternity's mystic symbol "G" worked in bright, colored flowers. On the walls were decorations of plants and flowers and the initials of the order "F" and "A. M." in flowers, that almost covered the wood work from view. The scene under the shadow of the mellowed light was one of fairyland or a glimpse of Arcadia, and elicited exclamations of surprise and pleasure upon all sides.
>
> The ball was opened at 9 o'clock with the grand march, led by Mr. William A. Terrio and beautiful Miss Irene Landry of this city, who guided the thirty couples in the march through some very pretty figures. At the termination of the march dancing began and was kept up until an early hour this morning. Music was furnished by the St. Joseph String Band." (June 25, 1896)

We find other mentioning of the String Band playing for affairs:

> "Open air dance on lawn of Mr. Albert Esneault It was 10:00 when, the St. Joseph String Band struck up a spirited march." (July 1, 1896)

The String Band probably plays for many more private parties than we read about in the paper. We do read about three of these in the August 8, 12, & 29 issues of the Napoleonville Pioneer:

> "Brilliant party - dance given by Miss Felicie Esneault. The dance music was furnished by the St. Joseph String Band." (August 8, 1896)

> "Grand social affair - residence of Mr. & Mrs. M. Goldstein on B. Lemann & Co. Perseverance Plantation. Dancing began almost immediately upon the arrival of the guests and was kept up until near 3:00 o'clock this morning, the music, which was excellent being furnished by the St. Joseph String Band of this city." (August 12, 1896)

The St. Joseph Brass Band serenades some of Donaldsonville' s citizens:

> "Moonlight social (Bayou Goula) residence of Mrs. J. L. Viallon. The dance music was furnished by the St. Joseph String Band of Donaldsonville." (August 29, 1896)

> "The St. Joseph Brass Band was out last evening serenading some of our prominent citizens. (August 19, D. T.)

The band next plays for a leap year dance and in the next few days, a dansante:

> "Leap year dance given by young ladies of Donaldsonville Hook and Ladder Hall Friday evening. At 9:30 the grand march was begun, led by Mr. William Terrio and Miss Loulie Israel followed by about 25 couples through the novel intricacies of the march. The music being furnished by the St. Joseph String Band." (Dec. 6, D.T.)

> "Last nights dance - The soiree dansante given at Hook & Ladder Hall last night, by several of our popular young gentlemen did not attract a very large attendance of our fair sex on account of the inclemency of the weather. There were only 5 or 6 young ladies present and they had a most enjoyable time. The affair broke up at a late hour. The St. Joseph String Band furnished excellent music for the occasion." (Dec. 9 1896)

Still popular were the old time minstrel shows. While most minstrel troupes usually had their own bands, at times they would seek help from the band of the town in which they were playing:

> "Kier, Adams and Gueday's Clipper Minstrels will parade Sunday noon, headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band. The performance will take place at night at 8"00 sharp, admission 24 cents, special seats for white people." (Dec. 17, 1896)

This last quotation, while interesting in its contents about the St. Joseph, is interesting also for its last sentence. Most activities of a similar nature were open to both black and white people, as the French Opera in New Orleans. While they did sit in separate sections, both races did share these traveling shows.

1897

There is little in the 'Chief' in 1897 but we do read of the band in the Napoleonville Pioneer and the Donaldsonville Daily Times (D. T.).

> "Farewell to bachelor hood - complimentary ball given at Hook and Ladder Hall last evening (Friday Jan. 8). Dr. J. T. Bringier - Music was furnished by the St. Joseph String Band. (Jan. 9)

The band plays for Claiborne Williams' Benevolent Society:

> "True Friends Mutual Benevolent Association, a colored organization - parade and ball Monday April 11. The St. Joseph Brass Band will furnish music." (March 9,1897)D. T.

The Williams' band has close ties to the Catholic Church and the True Friends Association and play for many of their functions:

> "The St. Joseph Brass Band will celebrate its patron saint's day with a parade this evening by the band and its honorary members to be followed by a ball tonight at True Friends Hall." (March 19, 1897)D.T.

In the paper the next issue there is an item that expressed the results of the above mentioned activity:

> "The ball of the St. Joseph Brass Band at True Friends Hall last night was quite a success." (March 20, 1897)D.T.

The St. Joseph Brass Band was respected for its artistic ability and while it was hailed as one of the best in the South after its trip to Marshall, Texas, it becomes one of the best period:

> "The tournament of colored bands that was held at Marshall, Texas, resulted in the St. Joseph Band of this city winning first prize. This is quite a feather in the cap of this excellent band." (June 22, 1897) D. T.

> "Open Air Dance, lawn of Mr. Albert Esneault, at Foubourg La., Pipe by Jolly Crowd. It was 10 o'clock when, the St. Joseph String Band struck up with a spirited march. 50 couples." (July 1) D. T.

The band plays for the St. Augustine commencement and the paper states that the "St. Joseph Brass Band plays a well-executed overture." (July 6)

Again there is a call for the smaller musical group of the band, the string band to play for a small private get-together:

> "A pleasant surprise was given Miss Alvine Von Lotten last night when about 30 of her friends took possession of her home and proceeded at once to have a most merry time. The surprises were accompanied by the Claiborne Williams String Band and dancing was indulged in until an early hour this morning." (Sept. 2, 1897)

The string band using Claiborne's name instead of the St. Joseph String Band plays again for a private party for Miss Poche:

> "A pretty dance - In honor of Miss Maria Poche at Hook and Ladder Hall. The music was furnished by the Claiborne Williams String band and the dancing was kept up until an early hour this morning." (Sept. 10, 1897) D. T.

> "Last nights dance - The soiree dansante given at Hook and Ladder Hall last night, but several of our popular young gentlemen, did not attract a very large attendance of our fair sex on account of the inclemency of the weather. There were only 5 or 6 ladies present, and they had a most enjoyable time. The affair broke up at a late hour. The St. Joseph String Band furnished excellent music for the occasion." (Dec. 11)

The band plays a serenade and gets a nice write-up in the newspaper about the band and its progress:

> "Serenaded the Daily Times;
> The St. Joseph Band, the best brass band that we have in this city today, during its parade in honor of its patron saint's day, last evening serenaded our office, its excellent music attracting a large crowd about the vicinity. This band shows constant improvement and its music last evening could hardly be improved on in either execution or time. The band during its parade serenaded Major Leche and other prominent citizens. In the lead of the band were its honorary members, composed of some of Donaldsonville's most highly respected colored men." (March 20, 1897)

One of the most popular card games was called 'progressive euchre' and parties were given on a much larger scale than a bridge game party as there was a dance following the Euchre party. While the complete brass band did not play (the situation did not call for a large musical group) a smaller group, the St. Joseph String Band, furnished the music:

"Progressive Euchre - during the same music was furnished by Claiborne Williams String Band that also played for the dancing at the conclusion of the games." (August 6, 1897) D. T.

The string band continues to play for smaller dances - next for a soiree dansante:

"Last nights dance - The soiree dansante given at Hook and Ladder Hall last night, by several of our popular young gentlemen, did not attract a very large attendance of our fair sex on account of the inclemency of the weather. There were only 5 or 6 ladies present, and they had a most enjoyable time. The affair broke up at a late hour. The St. Joseph String Band furnished excellent music for the occasion." (Dec. 11, 1897) D. T.

Finally the Dec. 15th paper has an announcement of the traveling minstrel show using the Brass Band:

"Kier, Adams and Guedry's Clipper Minstrels will parade Sunday noon, headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band and the performance will take place at night at 8 o'clock sharp in True Friends Hall. Admission is 25 cents. Special seats for white. people." (Dec. 15, 1897) D. T.

1898

The band was not mentioned in the 'Chief' during 1898 except for three items, both in April:

"The famous St. Joseph will furnish music at tonight's meeting. Mass meeting of qualified voters of Donaldsonville nominating candidates for municipal officers." (April 5, 1898)

"Mass meeting - Mr. Kline nominated, the committee headed by the St. Joseph Brass Band, proceeded to the depot where they met and advised him." (Sic: He refused the nomination.) (April 6, 1898)

"The Brass Band plays for the annual Firemen's Parade with the Quezere's Field Band." (May 9, 1898)

We find no mentioning of the band from 1899 to 1905. I believe that some of this time Claiborne Williams was with the Billy Kersand Minstrel show and was traveling the country as musical director.

1905

The String Band plays for a dance at the Mohawk Club:

"Enjoyable impromptu dance at Mohawk Club Monday night. Sweet music was furnished by a portion of the Claiborne Williams String Band." (March 11, 1905)

The May 13 paper states that an "enjoyable subscription dance at Ascension Hall. Music was furnished by Williams Orchestra." (May 13) and "Fireman's parade - 2 brass bands the crack St. Joseph Brass Band furnished music for marching." (May 13)

We next read in the May 6, 1905, paper that the band plays for a political meeting at the Phoenix Opera House - its presence assuring a big turnout:

"Meeting - About bond issue at Phoenix Opera House. After music by the St. Joseph Brass Band the Chairman introduced the next speaker. The band was heard from again." (May 6 1905)

The band next plays for the unveiling of a public monument:

"Monument unveiled by Woodmen of the World; meeting at Masonic Temple and preceded by the St. Joseph Brass Band, marched to the cemetery." (May 13, 1905)

"Firemen's parade - 4 bands, 2 white, 2 colored. The St. Joseph Brass Band. (Sic: the St. Joseph Brass Band is the only one that is mentioned by name.)" (May 13, 1905)

The band performs for the "Smoke Bend Fair, benefit St. Francis of Ascension Catholic Church. Music will be furnished by the St. Joseph Brass Band." (June 17, 1905) The band plays for a dance of Terpsichorean Club that is mentioned in the same issue of the paper.

The final mention in 1905 is in the July 8th paper when the band plays in a parade on what was called "Flower Party - St. Joseph Brass Band - decorated vehicle." (July 8, 1905)

There is no mention of the band in the year 1906 but in 1907 they are mentioned quite a few times.

1907

The colored community in Donaldsonville was a socially active one and it was the colored citizens who instigated a Mardi Gras celebration. In the forefront of this activity were the St. Joseph Brass Band and its leader, Claiborne Williams:

"The St. Joseph Brass Band has asked permission from Mayor Chas. Martin to hold a Mardi Gras celebration in Donaldsonville and members are busy making arrangements for the affair which will be in the form of a

> parade of floats depicting different themes. The local businessmen are invited to enter in the procession any advertising device they may desire, and contributions to defray the expenses of the celebration will be greatly received by those having it in charge." (Jan. 12, 1907)

This first attempt at having a Mardi Gras is not successful (it will be in later years) and two articles appear in the next few issues of the 'Chief:'

> "The committee of the St. Joseph Brass Band having in charge of arrangements for a Mardi Gras celebration in Donaldsonville has abandoned the idea and request the Chief to announce for the benefit of subscribers to the fund that they will not be called upon for the amounts of their subscriptions. While there will be no organized attempt at a parade on Mardi Gras, the committee states that the band would assemble and traverse the principle streets, and anyone wishing to join in the procession may do so." (Jan. 19, 1907)

Not having any kind of Mardi Gras celebration disappointed many of the townspeople and this is mentioned in the paper:

> "Dull Mardi Gras - Not even a parade by the St. Joseph Brass Band which had been expected." (Feb. 16, 1907)

There were certain activities that the band always took part in such as the Firemen's Parade and traditional town functions. One such annual performance was their parading on their Patron Saints Day, St. Joseph's Day:

> "Tuesday being St. Joseph Day, the St. Joseph Brass Band, fittingly celebrated the occasion with a parade through the principal streets of the town and a banquet at the True Friends Hall at night. During the course of the parade the band serenaded the newspaper office and a number of well-known citizens and businessmen." (March 23, 1907)

The band again plays for a town function was the dedication of the new high school that was sponsored "jointly by the parish of Ascension and the Town of Donaldsonville. At the appointed hour the procession formed in order. The St. Joseph Brass Band preceded to school and for the program." (May 18, 1907)

The stature of the leader of the St. Joseph Brass Band Claiborne Williams, often overshadowed the band. He not only led the band, but also smaller groups made up of personnel from the band; in addition he was the number one person in town when music was needed for any occasion. In a few years, the band would appear in print as the Claiborne Williams Band, as foreseen in the following item:

> "Afros Bazaar at Ascension Hall. Claiborne Williams inimitable Band has been engaged for the occasion and will discourse sweet music throughout the evening." (April 17, 1907)

His career is intertwined with the St. Joseph Brass Band and whether it is a smaller group or the entire Brass Band is sometimes difficult to ascertain by the description in the paper.

On May 18 there are two items about the band in the chief - they play for the above mentioned school dedication and for the annual Firemen's Parade:

> "Firemen's Parade - Bands - The Eureka Brass Band supplying martial music and the crack St. Joseph Brass Band furnished fine marching music." (May 18, 1907)

Being connected to the Catholic Church they are asked to play for the visiting hierarchy of the church:

> "Visit of Archbishop J. H. Blenk. The St. Joseph Brass Band in procession." (June 1, 1907)

Finally the band plays for another political rally:

> "Lambremont rally (Sic: State Senator) An enjoyable feature of the occasion was the stirring music rendered before, during and after the rally by the well-known St. Joseph Brass Band." (Oct. 5, 1907)

1908

The band continues to perform in parades and fairs during the ensuing year. When a man by the name of Hanson was a victor in his election, there was a celebration and parade in which the band participated:

> "Victory celebration of Hanson ticket - The St. Joseph Brass Band furnished music at the meeting and for the parade with which the celebration was terminated." (Feb. 1, 1908)

The various social associations were an important part of the social scene - i.e., Woodmen of the World, Masons, etc. Thus an election of officers for the WOW was an important occasion and warranted celebration:

> "WOW initiation Formed a parade and marched through the principle streets of the town, with the crack St. Joseph Brass Band in the lead." (Feb. 22, 1908)

The band also plays for the annual Firemen's Parade in 1908 and is still referred to as the 'crack St. Joseph Brass Band.'

> "Firemen's Parade - White Castle Boys Band, the St. Joseph Brass Band, the People's Brass Band of Napoleonville, the Eureka Brass Band and the Napoleonville Brass Band." (May 161908)

The next entry of August 22nd is an important one. This is one of the last entry listing the St. Joseph Brass Band. The entry:

> "Fair - benefit of the Societa Italiana di N. B. Conte de Toreno - leading Italian citizens of Donaldsonville entertainment, preceded by parades as mounted marshals and the crack St. Joseph Brass Band furnished music." (August 22, 1908)

1909

The band continues to play for functions of the Catholic church and meets the train and Archbishop Blenk:

> "When the noon train came in with his Grace Archbishop J. H. Blenk, the very Rev. Cannon B. Branch met him at the station with all pomp and circumstances of his church. The banner with the St. Joseph Brass Band, following his grace carriage." (March 20, 1909) D. T.

Peeress Brass Band

1910

There is no mention in the paper about the St. Joseph Brass Band during the year 1909, and in the August 13th issue we read that Claiborne Williams and the Peerless Brass Band play for the Elks Fair and Parade, This is the first mention of this band and of the fact that Williams is the leader. The band continues to be active for many years. Many times the band is simply called the Claiborne Williams Brass Band as most people knew of Williams, the most famous musician in the town and in other areas of Southern Louisiana.

More and more the brass band is used only for parades and outdoor activities, seldom for dancing for which the string band and smaller groups, now called orchestras, are hired. The Elks Fair and Parade's first 1910 entry is the Claiborne Williams Brass Band. (August 13, 1910)

While Williams and other bands are mentioned, in 1911, there are no items about the Peerless or Williams Brass Band, but in 1910, there are more items about the Peerless Band then any other year and the articles, are longer and have more substance. The first mention in the paper is an important one as it is the first to tell about a series of concerts by the Peerless Brass Band that are to be given in the park, Louisiana Square:

> "Band Stand for Louisiana Square - The Woman's Civic League is having a band stand constructed in the southeast corner of Louisiana Square at East Houma and Opelousas Streets. The structure is being erected by contractor Joseph Oubre of this city, who drew the plans, and will be octagonal in shape, with a seating capacity of 50 persons. It will have a corrugated iron roof and a brick enclosed basement 6 feet in height.

Musical concerts will be given in the Square once a week throughout the summer by the Claiborne Williams Brass Band, under the auspices of the Woman's Civic League." (April 6 1910)

Peerless Brass Band
(Cl.Williams Brass Band)

On August 13, 1910, appears the first reference to Claiborne Williams' Peerless Band. In an article dated February 10, 1911, there is mention of a new band, the Homer Brass Band, made up of members of the Peerless Band, but following that article, little is heard of them. Finally, the Peerless Band becomes the Claiborne Williams Brass Band.

"New Brass Band Organized

A new brass band has been organized by a number of well-known colored musicians of this city, many of who have previously been included in the personnel of the locally famous Claiborne Williams Peerless Band. The new organization, which begins its career with a membership of 16, has been named the Homer Brass Band, after Harrison Homer, formerly the expert slide trombone player in the Williams Band, its leader is Morris Victor. The first public appearance of the band will be on Sunday Feb. 18, when a grand fair and masquerade ball will be given under its auspices at the hall of the Protective Brothers Benevolent Association. The entertainment will open at 12:30 o'clock p.m., and will be proceeded by a street parade. Music for the ball will be furnished by the Bolo Orchestra, under the Leadership of Ray Percy Gibson." (Feb. 10, 1911)

Prior to a series of concerts that are given beginning in April of 1912, Claiborne Williams sends to the chief's editor a copy of the "Logical Point Waltz" that was published out of New Orleans:

"With the compliments of Claiborne Williams, a well-known colored musician of this city, and leader of the crack St. Joseph Brass Band and Peerless Orchestra, the Chief has received a copy of 'Logical Point Waltz' a tuneful melody composed by Claiborne's brother, George Williams. The latter is himself a musician of much ability and promise. For the past several months he has resided in Denver, Colorado, where he is meeting with success as a music teacher. The 'Logical Point Waltz' is dedicated to the city of New Orleans, and is published by a music house of that place." (March 16, 1912

The bandstand is indeed built and is used for the first time at a Sunday afternoon concert. The paper mentions the dedication:

"New bandstand dedicated - The artistic bandstand erected in Louisiana Square by the Woman's Civic League was used for the first time last Sunday afternoon, when a concert was given by the crack Williams

> Brass Band of this city under the leadership of Claiborne Williams. A large crowd was present, and the program was greatly enjoyed. Concerts will be given by the Williams Band one evening each week throughout the summer, and the entertainments promise to prove very popular. Louisiana Square with its closely trimmed lawns, paved walks, comfortable iron benches and flowing fountain, is a pleasant spot in the afternoons and is frequented by many ladies and children, the latter especially finding the big playground an ideal resort after school hours." (May 11, 1912)
>
> Each week there is an article in the paper announcing the concerts in the park:
>
> "Band concert tomorrow (Sunday). The Peerless Brass Band, under the leadership of Claiborne Williams will give a concert from the bandstand in Louisiana Square at 5:00 tomorrow afternoon." (May 18, 1912)
>
> "Weather permitting, Claiborne Williams Peerless Brass Band will give a concert in Louisiana Square at 5:00 tomorrow afternoon." (June 23, 1912)

These concerts at the park by the Peerless Brass Band were gratis but it was thought that the band should get some numeration and a benefit was arranged for this purpose:

> "Band benefit - Arrangements are being made for an entertainment to be given at the Gondran Theatre Friday evening of next week, July 5, under the auspices of the Woman's Civic League, the proceeds of which will be turned over to Claiborne Williams Peerless Brass Bands, in partial payment to the delightful music rendered by the well-known organization at the several band concerts given in Louisiana Square during the past 2 weeks, and which are to be continued throughout the summer. So far the band has furnished its services free of charge, and no demand has been made for any monetary recompense by the musicians or their leader, but it is not right nor reasonable to expect the band to continue to give concerts for the entire summer without remuneration, and in order to raise an amount that will in some measure recompense the members for their services, the Woman's Civic League, who have been instrumental in presenting the concerts, have hit upon the idea of giving an entertainment at the Opera House, which will afford everybody an opportunity to contribute to the worthy fund at small cost. The program will comprise moving pictures, songs by Mesdames Ferinard and Walter Lemann and G. P. Putman and Vaudeville specialties by little misses Anna & Clara Cobb, Agnes Landry and other talented amateurs. The performance will begin at 8:00 and the price of admission will be only 5 cents for children, and 10 cents for adults." (June 29, 1912)

As was custom, the next week's paper ran an account of the benefit:

> "The entertainment given at the Gondran Theatre Friday night of last night of last week under the auspices of the Women's Civic League, for the purpose of raising funds to be presented to Claiborne Williams Brass Band in recognition of its gratuitous services in giving concerts in Louisiana Square throughout the summer months, was attended by a large audience, despite the inclement weather and proved a gratifying social and financial success. The receipts would no doubt have been considerably larger had the weather been more favorable, but under the circumstances the result achieved may be considered altogether satisfactory, and the ladies of the Civic League and all who assisted them in staging the entertainment have every reason to feel satisfied with the degree of success that crowned their efforts. The League's share of the net receipts totaled $428.73 and this was supplemented by contributions aggregating $6,27 from members of the League, making a total of #35 that was turned over to Claiborne Williams, leader of the band, for distribution among the members of the organization. It is desired to further recompense the band for their services, and in order to raise a fund for this purpose the ladies of the Civic League will sell refreshments tomorrow at Elmer's Sanitary Pharmacy, serving all the beverages and confections ordinarily obtainable at that establishment. The usual schedule of prices will prevail." (July 13, 1912)

Five bands, including the Claiborne Williams Brass Band provide the music for the annual Fireman's Parade:

> "Firemen's Parade - Napoleonville Brass Band, Homer Brass Band of this city (Donaldsonville), furnished music, with the St. James Brass Band and the crack Claiborne Williams Brass Band and the Smoke Bend Brass Band." (July 13, 1912)

The write-up in the August 10th paper again tells of the park concert and it is at this week's concert that the famous 'Logical Point Waltz' is premiered:

> "Band concert Wednesday evening - weather permitting, Claiborne Williams Peerless Brass Band will give a concert in Louisiana Square at 7:00 Wednesday evening. enjoyable band concert.
>
> The crack Peerless Brass Band under the leadership of Claiborne Williams, gave one of its delightful concerts in Louisiana Square last Monday night in the presence of a large and appreciative audience. A program of rag-time selections, was rendered in the faultless manner for which this excellent organization is noted, but by far the most enjoyable feature of the entertainment was the playing of the 'Logical Point Waltz,' composed by George Williams, a brother of Claiborne Williams in which a trombone solo by the former was introduced. This exquisite selection

was rendered no less than three times, and so beautiful was the melody and so skillful its interpretation by the band, that each rendition was enthusiastically encored, the composer responding by playing 'Annie Laurie' and 'Swanne River,' both without accompaniment. He is a musician of exceptional ability and a composer of much promise, and the haunting strains of his beautiful 'Logical Point Waltz' are already being whistled and hummed all over the city. Williams has been living in Memphis and Colorado for the past several years, but expects to reside in Donaldsonville permanently hereafter, and will prove a notable acquisition to his brother's well-trained organization of colored musicians." (August 10, 1912)

As usual, the above concert was featured in the paper the next week:

"The band concert in Louisiana Square Wednesday night attracted the usual large audience and was greatly enjoyed. As on the occasion of last week's entertainment, the 'Logical Point Waltz' composed by George Williams made a hit with the big crowd and was enthusiastically encored. These weekly concerts are a source of much pleasure to our music-loving people, and constitutes a summertime attraction which few cities the size of Donaldsonville can boast." (August 17, 1912)

The Peerless Band next plays for two political meetings:

"Jones meeting a rousing success - The meeting was enlivened with music by Claiborne Williams Peerless Brass Band." (August 24, 1912)

"Morgan rally next Tuesday night - The meeting will be preceded by a concert by Claiborne Williams Brass Band and the speech making will be interspersed with musical selections by this crack organization." (August 24, 1912)

The concerts in the park proved to be very successful and they continued during the winter:

"During the winter, concerts will be given in City Park every Sunday afternoon by Claiborne Williams Brass Band. Of course, when the weather conditions are not propitious for each outdoor entertainments the concerts will be permitted." (Nov. 2, 1912

1913

The park concerts continue in 1913 having been a success the previous year and continue under the auspices of the Woman's Civic League:

"Band Concert Tomorrow - The weekly concerts given in City Park (sic: La. Square) last summer by Claiborne Williams Peerless Brass Band, under the auspices of the Woman's Civic League of Donaldsonville will be repeated this year, arrangements to this end having just been completed by the League. The first musicale of the season will take place tomorrow evening, from 5:30 to 7:30, and there will be a concert in the park one evening each week thereafter.

In order to raise funds to recompense the band for its services, the Civic League will give a subscription dance at Ascension Hall on May 22, and preparations for this function are under way. The amount to be subscribed by the gentlemen has been fixed at $2.00, which will entitle the subscriber to be accompanied by a female companion. Only gentlemen who have been invited by the league to attend, and who have remitted the subscription fee, will be admitted to the hall, and the attendance of girls is limited to those who may have been invited by some eligible gentlemen or by the league." (May 17, 1913)

The next issue of the paper contains an article on selling refreshments at the concerts by the Woman's Civic League for the benefit of the concert fund and on August 9th we read about a 'Tom Thumb wedding for benefit of the Woman's Civic League band fund a success.' (August 9, 1913)

In the next weekly concert there was an "extra large crowd. The Thursday night concert netted $25.00 for the Woman's Civic League." (August 16, 1913)

The weekly concert causes a controversy as to whether dancing would be allowed during the concerts. The paper prints the answer:

"Dancing in the park not prohibited - It having been currently reported that the children and young folk will not hereafter be permitted to dance in City Park on the occasion of the band concerts. The Chief is authorized by the Woman's Civic League to state that this report is erroneous. No edict has been issued against the terpsichorean pastime and the young people will not be interfered with as long as their frolics are conducted in an orderly manner. They are welcome to avail themselves of the facilities of the park at all times for innocent pleasure and amusement, says the league." (August 23, 1913)

1914

The band is very active in 1914 and one performance is for the benefit of the Lock Association. As the item in the paper says "music will be rendered throughout the entertainment by the famous Peerless Orchestra under the leadership of Claiborne Williams." (Jan. 31, 1914

The summer concerts continue and begin on Easter Sunday:

"The summer series of open-air band concerts in City Park, under the auspices of the Woman's Civic League, will be inaugurated Easter Sunday

> afternoon, when Claiborne Williams crack Peerless Brass Band will render a program of popular selections. Ice cream, cake, lemonade and other refreshments will be sold throughout the afternoon by the ladies of the league, for the benefit of the concert fund." (April 4, 1914)

The paper announces the "first band concert in City Park - Easter Sunday afternoon with Claiborne Williams Band" (March 21) and continues in each issue to publicize these concerts:

> "Band concert May 17, first band concert of season. When a program of popular selections will be rendered by the crack Peerless Brass Band under the leadership of Claiborne Williams." (May 2, 1914)

> "Band concert tomorrow - Everybody in Donaldsonville and all visitors to the city, are cordially invited to assemble in City Park at 5:00 tomorrow afternoon and enjoy the concert to be given by the crack Peerless Brass Band under the leadership of Claiborne Williams. The program will include many new and popular selections, and a pleasant afternoon can be spent listening to the music and strolling about the pretty park." (May 9, 1914)

The Peerless Brass Band must have been a very versatile band and their leader, Claiborne Williams, an open-minded musician willing to program the newest of popular music. In the next issue of the paper we read where his band will be playing "ragtime" music:

> "Band concert in City Park. The summer series of open-air band concerts in City Park under the auspices of the Woman's Civic League was inaugurated with a delightful musicale last Sunday afternoon, when the Peerless Brass Band rendered a program of rag-time selections in the presence of a large gathering." (May 23, 1914)

The paper continues to publicize the band concerts in very positive fashion, encouraging participation:

> "Band concert next Wednesday. A musical treat is in store for the public next Wednesday evening, when the crack Peerless Brass Band will give a concert in City Park between the hours of 6 and 8 o'clock. The program will include the newest popular selections." (August 1, 1914)

The band also plays for a number of fairs:

> "Catholic Fair, May 30-31. Each evening a concert will be given outside the building by the Peerless Brass Band while the crack St. Joseph Commercial Institute Orchestra will discourse music inside the structure as the big Vega building at the head of Railroad Avenue." (May 23, 1914)

> "South Louisiana Fair - Grand Parade - 9:30 a.m., Oct. 9th to Oct. 12th with the Peerless Brass Band of Donaldsonville and the Gonzales Silver Cornet Band." Oct. 3, 1914**)**

The following week's paper announces the opening of the fair - "South Louisiana Fair opening, Gonzales Silver Cornet Band and the Peerless Brass Band." (Oct. 10,1914) In the next few years there is a lack of mention about brass bands. In 1915 the band concerts continue but it does not mention that they are scheduled on a regular basis and only one mention is in the July 24th issue stating "Weather permitting, there will be a concert in City Park by the Peerless Brass Band from 5 to 7:30 tomorrow evening, Sunday." (July 24, 1915)

In 1916 there are only a few mentioning's of the band in the local papers. One is on June 24th - "Vigilant Fair program - Hose Co. big four day fair - music will be furnished by the Silver Bell Orchestra and Claiborne Williams Peerless Brass Band."

The band plays for two other engagements, one in Feb. and one in July:

> "There will be a grand ball at Klotzville tomorrow, in celebration of the opening of the new hall. Claiborne's Band will furnish the music." (Feb. 26,1916)

> "A grand fair will be held at the Tip Top Hall, Saturday and Sunday, July 15, & 15 for the benefit of a Catholic Church. Everything usually found at first-class fairs will be in evidence; and everybody is promised a good time. Music by Claiborne Williams Band." (July 8th, 1916) Nap. Pioneer

We do find an item in the Thibodaux Comet of May 25th:

> "Clicquot Club grand dance - Woodmen Hall. The Claiborne Band of Donaldsonville has been engaged to furnish music." (May 25, 1916) Comet

The 'Comet' on Sept. 14 writes" Third dance given by Clicquot Club. Claiborne's Band furnished exceptionally sweet music and entranced the participants." (Sept. 14, 1916)

In 1917 there are two items in the local paper:

> "Grand fair benefit of Catholic Church in Tip-Top Hall June 23 and 24. The crack Claiborne Williams Band of Donaldsonville will furnish music for the occasion." (June 16, 1917)

> "Italian Society celebration - benefit of Red Cross. A grand parade started at the hall at 3 p.m., led by Claiborne's Band." (July 21,1917)

The Thibodaux Comet again mentioned the Claiborne Band in two items:

> "Dance at Hall of Doilien Guillot, three miles above Thibodaux. Music will be furnished by Claiborne Williams Orchestra of Donaldsonville." (May 17, 1917)

> "Dance, old Woodmen Hall. Music furnished by Claiborne's Orchestra after show at Grand Theater." (Dec. 13, 1917)

The lack of activity is most probably due to the First World War. During the war the bands in many Louisiana towns became inactive. In 1918 there is but two items in the paper:

> "Colored citizens patriotic meeting. Stirring music was furnished by Claiborne Williams Band." (Feb. 2, 1918)

> "Liberty Loan relic exhibition train - Promptly at 1:00 the Liberty Special left for Plaquemine. The Claiborne Williams Brass Band, which had furnished music during the stay of the train here, went along to enliven the trip to the next stopping place." (April 27, 1918)

1919

In 1919, once the war is over, the band is seen playing for dances and parades and the traditional affairs. We read the band plays for a "dance given last evening by the young folks of our town (Nap.) was a most successful affair. Claiborne's popular orchestra furnished the music," (April 26) and, the initiation for the Knights of Columbus Parade:

> "K of C parade - Claiborne Williams Brass Band. To the tune of patriotic music the Knights and candidates marched down to the Catholic Church. After leaving church to the strains of music furnished by the Claiborne Williams Brass Band, marched to Ascension Hall." (June 21, 1919)

The colored citizens of Donaldsonville were very active in celebrating Mardi Gras and National holidays. Thus the 4th of July was observed with a parade:

> "Fourth of July celebrated by colored people of Donaldsonville. A parade, headed by Claiborne Williams Brass Band marched up Railroad Avenue to Mississippi Street." (July 5, 1919)

The local papers do not have any mention of Williams' Band but we do read of his orchestra in the Thibodaux 'Comet':

"There'll be a dance tomorrow night in the Woodmen Hall under the auspices of the Midnight Club. Claiborne's Orchestra will furnish the music." (April 29, 1920)

"The Midnight club of Thibodaux will have a dance tonight in the Woodmen Hall in Thibodaux when an enjoyable time is expected by the young people. Claiborne Williams Orchestra will furnish the music which means something up to date." (July 14, 1920)

"The next dance of the Midnight Club will take place Thursday, July 29. Music by Claiborne Williams Orchestra." July 22, 1920)

"The Midnight Club will give its next dance tonight even if the weather man is not giving what we consider a 'square' deal. Claiborne's Jazz Band will 'drive dull cares away." (August 12, 1920)

The band travels to St. Tammany Parish and play for their fair and a number of items mention this in the local paper, the 'St. Tammany Farmer.':

"Parish Fair - Professor Claiborne Williams and his 10 real musicians will be at the fair. This colored band is said to be with out an equal." (Sept 10, 1921) St. Tammany Farmer

"Fair, St. Tammany - you will hear all the time the harmony of the Claiborne Williams Band." (Oct. 1, 1921)

There is only one mentioning of the brass band in 1921

"Elks have a big day - parade - procession headed by Claiborne Williams Brass Band." (Feb. 12, 1921)

1922

The Peerless Brass Band again plays for the initiation of officers of the Knights of Columbus (April 29) and the Catholic Fair on Sept. 9-10 with music by "the Claiborne Williams Brass Band and orchestra." (August 26). More and more the Williams Orchestra is quoted in the paper as it plays for numerous music activities, and the brass band plays for parades and fairs:

"Big South Louisiana Fair open Oct. 8th. Concerts by the Claiborne Williams Brass Band and Orchestra." (Oct. 7, 1922

1923

In 1923 the Williams Brass Band is mentioned frequently playing for a number of parades:

"Carnival Events - parade of King Progios - Two famous bands will be in the parade - the Jefferson College Band and the Claiborne Williams Band." (Jan. 6,1923)

"Carnival parade includes LSU Band as well as Jefferson and Claiborne Williams Band." (Feb. 3, 1923)

The following week, another item appears about the carnival parade and, having completed the program for a 'great Mardi Gras celebration planned for next Tuesday,' the order and names of the bands are given:

"Three splendid bands, the LSU, Jefferson College and Claiborne Williams, will dispense music all along the line of March ." (Feb. 10, 1923)

In the Feb. 17th, issue there is a review of the activities of Mardi Gras:

"25,000 people crowd city to see big Mardi Gras Parade - Chief of Police Dill and Officer e. A. Lawless on horseback leading to clear the streets, the mounted marshals following. Then came the LSU Band, cars carrying the carnival committee, the Jefferson College Band, the king in his car followed by his dukes on horseback, who were followed by Claiborne Williams Band.

The outstanding feature of the grand event was staged at the opening of the festivities, the coronation of the queen. At 8 o'clock Claiborne Williams melodious orchestra struck up the melody, 'In the Springtime' to the sweet strains of which the king and his court entered the beautiful court room which was brilliant with hundreds of electric lights." (Feb. 17, 1923)

"Grand parade for Red Men Fair - One of the striking features of the parade will be a jazz band and a concourse of clowns. At the head of the parade will be Claiborne Williams Band." (April 14, 1923)

"Firemen's Parade in Donaldsonville. The parade will be headed by the Peerless Brass Band that will distill music along the entire way. At night there will be dancing at the pavilion and Claiborne Williams Orchestra will furnish the music." (May 12, 1923)

The band continues to play for parades and fairs:

"Big celebration in planned for 4th of July. Claiborne Williams celebrated band and orchestra will furnish music for the occasion and it is planned to have dancing at night." (May 19, 1923)

"Italian Society Fair - at Fair Grounds - parade headed by Claiborne Williams Band." (August 11, 1923)

"Italian Fair and parade - Headed by Claiborne Williams Peerless Band." (August 18, 1923)

"South Louisiana Fair - During the week there will be dancing. Claiborne William will furnish the music." (Oct. 6, 1923)

While the above item doesn't mention the brass band, in previous years Williams' Brass Band and Orchestra played for the parade, concerts and for dancing at the fair.

1924

In the Feb. 2nd issue they mention a colored band from Donaldsonville that plays for St. Joseph's Church. This is probably the Peerless Brass Band:

"St. Joseph's Choir, led by Miss Clothilde Chol, provided music for the mass and a colored brass band from Donaldsonville, the Corpus Christi uniformed rank of K of C Claver, escorted the archbishop and also provided music during the fair held in the afternoon. Blessing of new edifice." (Feb. 2 1923)

Politics and politicians are ever present - the band plays for a candidate for Governor:

"H. Bouanchand, candidate for Governor speaks at the courthouse. Music for the occasion will be furnished by Claiborne Williams Peerless Brass Band." (Feb. 9, 1923)

Yearly the band has played for the town Mardi Gras celebration:

"King arrives - Mardi Gras - LSU Band, next came Claiborne Williams Peerless Brass Band, followed immediately in the rear of the last float then came business floats, etc." (March 8, 1923)

Again this year the band plays for the Firemen's Parade:

"Firemen's Parade May 11 - Engaged the Claiborne Williams Brass Band for the parade and his orchestra for the dance." (May 3, 1923)

This parade is mentioned in the May 10th issue that states that the "Claiborne Williams Brass Band and the Italian Brass Band from Baton Rouge will be playing." (May 10, 1923)

In the follow-up issue of the paper they list the names of the bands that marched in the parade:

"Firemen's Parade: Three band furnished music for the parade: A band composed of white musicians from Baton Rouge, Germania of upper Ascension and Claiborne Williams' Brass Band of this City." (May 24, 1923)

1925

The paper lists the bands that will participate in the annual Firemen's Parade:

"Among the bands engaged for the big Firemen's Parade on May 10 are the LSU Brass Band of Baton Rouge, under the leadership of Professor Guilbeau, and Prof. Perrino's Italian Band, also of the Capital City, Ferra's Band of New Orleans, and Claiborne Williams Band of this place. Negotiations are pending for the engagement of another band." (May 2, 1925)

The Italian Political Association sponsors a fair and dance and hires the band:

"Big Fair and dance at Fair Grounds. The procession was headed by the Peerless Brass Band. Music for the parade and festival on both days will be furnished by Claiborne Williams Band and Orchestra." (July 4, 1925)

1926

The band plays for the dedication of St. Catherine's Church, a new Catholic Church for the colored citizens of Donaldsonville.

"St. Catherine dedication - Solemn procession from Ascension Catholic Church to St. Catherine. The cross and the American flag, borne aloft, will lead the procession followed by Claiborne Williams Band at St. Patrick and Claiborne Streets." (Jan. 23, 1926)

"St. Catherine of Sienna church - Initiation and parade...next in line came Claiborne's Band." (May 1, 1926)

One of the big occasions, especially for the young in Donaldsonville was the opening of a swimming pool. The band plays in the parade, from a local hotel, to the pool:

"Redmen open swimming pool with bathing revue; after lunch, will form in front of hotel and preceded by Claiborne Williams' Band marched to pool." (June 5, 1926)

The band again plays for the annual Firemen's Parade:

"Great Firemen's Parade - bands: Mexican Band - Petroleum Band, New Orleans Band, New Orleans Band, Baton Rouge Band and Claiborne Williams Band." (Sept. 18, 1926)

As usual the band again plays for the South Louisiana Fair:

"14th annual South Louisiana Fair - Band concerts by Merle's famous concert band and Claiborne Williams famous Band and cornet solo by Prof. Michael Cupero." (Oct. 2, 1926)

1927

There are three items about the band in 1927: two parades one in which the band marches and the other the band rides in the truck, the way of the future in some parades:

Later that year in Sept. the Firemen give a big anniversary parade in which the Williams Band takes part:

"Thousands cheer Firemen in big anniversary parade last Sunday. Visiting fire chiefs and many ladies from other cities in line. Six bands furnish music - the affair was a magnificent spectacle. The Claiborne Williams Brass Band lead Protective Hose Co. No. 4 in parade.

The celebration closed with a grand ball at the pavilion at the Fair Grounds that was largely attended by local people, as well as visiting firemen and visiting city officials. Music was furnished by Claiborne Williams crack jazz band, and the dancers tripped the light fantastic toe until an early hour the following morning. The ball was a grand affair and all those who attended had a most delightful time." (Sept. 25, 1927)

The yearly procession of the Feast of St. Amico engages the Claiborne Williams Band:

"Feast of St. Amico to be observed Sunday, April 24.

The Feast of St. Amico will be observed with the usual ceremony this year by the Italians of A Bend and this city on Sunday, April 24th. There will be a grand procession in which the statue of St. Amico will be borne, leaving the chapel in A Bend at 9:30 A. M., and marching up the river to Donaldsonville, to the strains of appropriate music furnished by Claiborne Williams Band." (April 16, 1927)

The band takes part in the Elks Initiation and Festival on July 3rd and 4th:

"Local Lodge of Elks to stage big initiation and festival on July 3-4 parade - Headed by Boy Scouts and Claiborne Williams Band." (June 25, 1927)

Riding a band wagon was not a new experience for bands of the 19th Century - it was usually pulled by a horse. To ride in a truck in a parade was a new experience one that was to be repeated many times in the future:

> "Elks July 4th festival and fair - Parade - Claiborne Williams Band in one of Montero and Beonde's big trucks." (July 9, 1927)

The only mention in 1928 was of the procession for the celebration of the Feast of St. Amico that used a brass band for the occasion. While the paper calls the musical group an orchestra, in reality there probably were not orchestral instruments played but member of Claiborne Williams aggregation who played in all types of groups regardless of what a particular happened to be"

> "Celebration of Feast of St. Amico tomorrow - Claiborne Williams Orchestra furnished music for procession and dance." (April 14, 1928

1929

In 1929 the colored people of Donaldsonville again give a Mardi Gras celebration with Claiborne Williams one of the driving forces behind this activity. The band is included in the parade:

> "Colored people to stage Mardi Gras Festival - parade headed by Claiborne Williams Brass Band." (Jan. 26, 1929

1930

The band plays for the minstrel show as it has before. Whether the same instrumentation plays for the show and dance is not given but probably the size was lessened for the dance:

> "Minstrel performance and dance - True Friends Society at True Friends Hall, Feb. 10, Claiborne Williams Brass Band." (Feb. 8 1930)

Mardi Gras is celebrated again by the colored citizens in 1930:

> "Colored citizens to have Mardi Gras Parade, Claiborne Williams Brass Band in parade, Claiborne Williams is general manager." (Feb. 22, 1930)

The band didn't march, they rode in a big truck:

> "Mardi Gras colored parade Then followed, in a big truck, Claiborne Williams Brass Band." (March 8, 1930)

The band plays in another parade later in March:

"Colored Knights and Ladies celebration and parade. The Pythians in street parade headed by Claiborne Williams Band, marched from their hall to the church and returned to Castle Hall." (March 29, 1930)

1931

The band plays for the carnival celebration in the town of Plaquemine:

"Plaquemine carnival season opened by Knights of Columbus - King Casey and royal subjects arrive - parade - Music for the occasion will be furnished by Claiborne Williams Brass Band and Orchestra of this city." (Jan. 10, 1931)

In the Feb. 16th issue, the following week, the paper reviews the Mardi Gras activities:

"King Zulu hailed by his subjects on visit here.

The annual visit of King Zulu to Donaldsonville, his favorite city, on Mardi Gras day, staged by the colored people of this and neighboring communities under the leadership of Claiborne Williams, was made the occasion of a great and joyous demonstration on the part of his loyal subjects from this place and all parts of the surrounding country. Shortly after the hour of 12 o'clock noon, and his majesty, in an automobile, was driven ashore amid the cheers of the assembled multitude and taken to his chariot that was in waiting nearby parade formed in the following order:

Mounted dukes and couriers

Claiborne Williams, director of the parade, in automobile, with Paul

Comes, W. E. Sullivan and Leon Charles

Claiborne Williams Brass Band in one of Elroy Kocke's big trucks"

(Feb. 16, 1929)

The band again plays for the St. Amico Feast Day celebrations:

"Feast of St. Amico to be observed April 7.

The Feast of St. Amico will be observed by local Italians, headed by Tony Musco of A Bend, on Sunday, April 7th. In pursuance of the annual custom that has been in vogue, the statue of the saint will be borne in solemn procession, headed by Claiborne Williams' Band from the chapel on the property of Tony Musco, in A Bend, to the Ascension Catholic Church in this city, where high mass will be celebrated at 11 o'clock a.m. At night there will be a dance in A Bend, beginning at 7 o'clock, music for which will be furnished by Claiborne Williams' Band." (March 30, 1929)

1930

The feast of St. Amico is celebrated on April 27th in 1930 and the procession is enlarged to contain two marching bands:

"Feast of St. Amico to be celebrated April 27

A procession will from at the chapel at 9:30 o'clock in the morning of April 27th and will march slowly to Donaldsonville, carrying the statue of the saint to the Ascension Catholic church of this city, where a solemn High Mass will be said at 11 o'clock. The procession will be followed by two bands, Claiborne Williams Orchestra and Heim's Orchestra of this city. A big dance will be given at the St. Amico Hall at A Bend Sunday night, commencing at 7 o'clock and lasting until midnight. Music will be furnished by Claiborne Williams' Orchestra of this city." (April 19, 1930)

The Williams Band plays for the South Louisiana State Fair beginning Sept. 28th:

"Opening day program of the South Louisiana State Fair, Sunday, Sept. 28th 10:00 A. M. Band concert by Claiborne Williams' Band." (Sept. 27, 1930)

The band again plays for the colored people's Mardi Gras celebration in Donaldsonville:

"Colored people again have Mardi Gras, Feb. 17, parade streets, martial music to be furnished by Claiborne Williams Band - Claiborne Williams as general manager." (Jan. 17, 1930

1931

In 1931 the procession for St. Amico contains two bands:

"Feast of St. Amico to be observed April 12th Music will be furnished by two brass bands - Claiborne Williams' and Heim's - both of this city." (April 5, 1931)

The band again plays for their annual 'gig', the South La. State Fair:

"Two Bands to furnish music at South Louisiana State Fair

Two of the bands that will be seen at the South La. State Fair, Donaldsonville, Sept. 27 to Oct. 4, will be heard over the radio next week in concerts broadcast from New Orleans.

Claiborne Williams' Band will go on the air from the WWL (Loyola) Broadcasting Station at 10 P.M., Thursday, Sept. 17, with a program that will last an hour." (Sept. 12, 1931)

1932

We must remember that while the brass band jobs are scarce and are of a specific nature, the Claiborne Williams Orchestra is getting a lot of work. About this time in the early thirties, the college and high school bands are beginning to organize and the town band is on the way out of popularity. So these future years of the Peerless Brass Band are less busy. In 1932 the band still participates in the local celebration of Mardi Gras:

> "Mardi Gras - Claiborne Williams rides on float - Claiborne Williams Brass Band under the direction of Lawrence Hall and George A. Williams in a truck." (Feb. 13, 1932

A strange celebration happens during the middle of May. It is called a "Beer Parade" with the coming of beer legally again to Donaldsonville and marks the end of prohibition.

> "Big Beer Parade - Bands: Harmony Kings, J. M. H. Shot Band (Sic. Joseph Mistrettas' Band), the Claiborne Williams Band, the Black Devils, all of Donaldsonville and the Victory Band of Baton Rouge" (May 14, 1932)

The band again plays for the South Louisiana State Fair:

> "Fair entertainment program completed - South La. Fair - Claiborne Williams Brass Band will furnish music." (August 20, 1932)

1933

The only item in 1933 about the band concerns its playing for the South La. Fair again:

> "Fair parade - South Louisiana State Fair. Claiborne Williams Band occupied one of the trucks and also dispensed music along the route." (Oct. 14, 1933)

1934

A Mardi Gras celebration is again held in 1934 with the colored people still participating in this activity along with the band:

> "Colored people to stage Mardi Gras celebration. Carnival parade, headed by Claiborne William Brass Band. Claiborne Williams will be general manager of the celebration." (Feb. 10, 1934)

In the next week's write-up in the paper, the band is called an orchestra and rides in a decorated truck. It gets hard to define the instrumentation of the group:

"Colored parade Mardi Gras - Claiborne Williams, local orchestra leader under whose management the celebration was staged (in a decorated car), another decorated truck with Claiborne Williams orchestra furnishing music." (Feb. 17, 1934

1935

With Lent approaching the band plays for the arrival of Rex to Donaldsonville for Mardi Gras:

"Lent next Wednesday. King Rex visit Tuesday 1:30 - parade - Claiborne Williams Brass Band. Claiborne Williams in car, his band in truck next in line." (March 9, 1935)

The South La. State Fair begins on Oct. 23rd and the band plays a number of days for it. The paper gives a complete list of bands playing and times of performance. Claiborne Williams Band plays at 11:00 with the brass band and 9:00 p.m. for dancing, and throughout the week there is much music at the fair:

"Grand opening set for 23rd - South La. St. Fair - Claiborne
Williams will furnish music. Dancing every night.
11:00 am - Claiborne Brass Band -
1:00 dancing in Pavilion - Joe Mistretta's Orchestra.
9:00 pm - dancing in Pavilion- Claiborne Williams Orchestra.
Monday - Oct. 7
11:00 am - Claiborne Williams Brass Band
Oct. 8
11:30 Claiborne Brass Band
8:30 - Dancing Pavilion - Claiborne Williams
Oct. 9
11:00 am - music in front of grandstand by Claiborne Williams
Oct. 10 - 11:30 - Claiborne Williams
Oct. 11 - 12:00 Claiborne Williams Brass Band
9:00 - dance, Claiborne Williams
Oct. 12 - 11:30 - Claiborne Brass Band
Oct. 13 - 11:30 - Claiborne Brass Band
7:00 pm - dance - Claiborne Williams Orchestra." (Oct. 5, 1937)

1936

In 1936 the band has only two items in the paper:

"Annual ball of King Jolly Good Fellow. Claiborne Williams' Band will furnish music for the procession and play later for the dance." (Feb. 8 1936

"Knights of Columbus stage big initiation - marched to Claiborne Williams Brass Band to Ascension Catholic Church." (May 2, 1936)

1937

The band continues to play for many religious services, this time for the St. Joseph Italian society:

"Mass for Christ the King. members of the St. Joseph Italian Society march from hall to church, headed by Claiborne Williams Brass Band. After mass, march back to hall." (May 8, 1937

"King Jolly due Feb. 6. Claiborne Williams' Band will furnish music for the procession and his orchestra will dispense music for the dance." (Jan. 30, 1937)

The State Fair again hires the Williams Band in 1937:

"South La State Fair - Claiborne Williams Band will furnish music from the grandstand." (May 29, 1937)

"New Orleans Police Band, Fortier High School Band of New Orleans, Drum & Bugle Corps, Sons of American Legion of Baton Rouge and Claiborne Williams Band of Donaldsonville." (Oct. 9 1937)

1938

The band again plays for the South Louisiana State Fair along with "Joseph Mistretta's Hot Shot Orchestra, Anthony Sotile Band and LSU Band and of course the Claiborne Williams Band." (Oct. 8, 1938

The band next plays for the Donaldsonville High School Alumni Association affair. There is a "Thanksgiving Day Parade with the Claiborne Williams Brass Band and the C (Nov. 19, 1938) Claiborne Williams Orchestra plays for the dance after the football game.'"

1939

The band continues playing for the Mardi Gras celebration in Donaldsonville.

"King Jolly Feb. 3rd. Parade with Claiborne Williams Band." (Jan. 27,1939)

A new movie theater opens for the colored people and the band is on hand for the dedicatory ceremonies:

> "New Theatre for Colored people opens. Harlem Theatre. Claiborne Williams Brass band furnishes music for dedicatory ceremonies." (July 13, 1939)

The above item is the last mention of a brass band with Claiborne Williams as its leader; from the St. Joseph, to the Peerless, to the Claiborne Williams Brass Band - a long lineage of brass band music for the people of Donaldsonville.