Jack 'Papa Laine & Alcide 'Yellow' Nunez'

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Jack 'Papa' Laine
1873-1966

Jack Laine, born in New Orleans in 1873 led a popular band in the city, playing for dances, picnics, parades and other social functions during his career. His fame has only grown through the years and the musicians in his bands were among the most famous in early jazz. Laine also had a number of bands using his name.

Interview of Laine's interview at Tulane Jazz Archive

Started playing drums at 8 years old during the time of the Cotton Exposition of 1884. He was taught music by Perkins and Will Meade.

While young he played with drums and whistles and soon organized a dance band that included accordion and guitar. Then he organized a brass band with Perkin's help. The band played for political parade. Laine belonged to a drum and major corps in 1895.
During the time of the Cotton Exposition at Audubon Park Laine's father brought a drum home for Jack. He got a bass drum from the Salvation Army both of his drums were 'rope bound.' Jack was around 12 or 14 he bought his first set of drums. His first band was during the Spanish American War consisted of 35 pieces. Dave Perkins was Jack's teacher. Jack was also involved with the first department.

Among the members of his first band were: Manuel & Leon Mello, Frank Christian, Zimmerman, Son & father Loyacano. Laine had 7 bands up until World War I. band names: Reliance, Tuxedo and Laine's Band. He said his first professional band consisted of: Achille Baquet, Laurence Vega, Bill Gallaty, Willy guitar. Laine played as high as 5 or 6 jobs.

He had a minstrel 'Laine's Greater Majestic Minstrels.' They began a tour as far as Bridgeport, where they stopped the tour because of small pox epidemic.

He first marched in a Mardi Gras parade in 1899 the year it snowed.

Laine's Band played a march called 'Crockett's March' composed by Manuel Mello.

One day's Activities and other activities

Played the advertising for Merry Widow's ball, then to St. Charles and Calliope and played the day parade; then to Frenchman and Decatur Streets: then played on the wagon and finished job played the adv. for Merry Widow's ball. Then to Calliope and St. Charles for the night parade and then to the Lusitania (Portuguese Hall) to play the Merry Widow's ball.

Pretty night on every night I had an engagement to fill out, and it got so that I organized 5 bands.(He mentioned the bands of Braun and Broekhaven.)
He didn't know any year he didn't play for Mardi Gras. He played balls, picnics, dances, weddings, etc. Played regular in Milneburg every Sunday—two three bands—I had engaged there. also at Suburban Park, Southern Park, Crescent Park. He would go from Milneburg and play at night. He played at Spanish fort, Bucktown (Bucktown had a lot of clubs), and West End. he never used pianos in those d;; Joe Banquet would compose a few members could read and help all the others learn the new song.

Played at Camp Beauregard during World War I at Alexander, La. Paid him $50 a week. He stayed there 7 weeks.

Laine couldn't fill all the engagements. I'd have so many of them. I was the one white band in the city. He played at Perfect Union Hall. His musicians mostly played be ear. Laine stopped playing during World War I.

He said two bands in city that played like his band. George Lewis and Paul Barbarin played the same style.

In 1904 he went to St. Louis to play for the Exposition and played at the Grand view Hotel. He also played jobs in Biloxi and for the Elks in Biloxi. At one time he had 3 bands working in Biloxi named the Reliance, Laine's Band and the Tuxedo Band.

He played in the Tango Belt at 'Phillips' and 'Denison' places.

Played in Slidell for 4th of July—They paid good money.

Played for the fights, balls, Advertising wagon for football played. He played many adv. wagons (One was for John Ruskin cigars on Canal St. Played all over town. Played adv. for Wild West show.

Played Sunday, Wednesday at the Lake. Played at Washington Gardens Hotel at Milneburg. They had two dancing pavilions at Bucktown.

Mardi Gras day he had 6 jobs beginning at 7 a.m. (7 to 9); then advertised the Merry widow Ball, 9 a.m. plays a carnival parade; 10 a.m. playing for a review of maskers; then played a night parade. finally for the Merry Widow ball. at 9 p.m.

Played many functions for Suburban Race Track in McDonoghville. Had a band at Crammer's lot in Algiers and one at
crescent Park in Gretna almost every Saturday and Sunday. Played at the picnic ground with open pavilion at the Elmira Pleasure Grounds every Sunday.

played for all kinds of parties and surprise parities, for picnics, weddings King cake cutting parties, ball, etc. Laine said he played every night some weeks. Played at Milenburg always on Sundays. When across the river he play at parks as late as 12, 1 or 2 am. Band leader Green said colored bands copied a lot of Laine's 'stuff.'

Laine's wife made their band uniforms.

Funerals

We used to play funeral marches and I got in that line and played funerals. Played for the Young Excelsior's funerals, Crockett's funeral and Workman Benevolent Assoc. funerals. On funerals he played 'Rock of Ages.'

Coming back from funerals he played all kinds of stuff - ragtime, etc. until the band got a block away, then just drums. playing the cadence- long, long short, short, long - 2 quarter notes, two 8th notes, one quarter note.). Then stopped at house, carry out corpse, then played marches; back home we played ragtime.

For funeral bands he used 10 to 12 pieces. His band played all 'dead' marches.

Funerals had music for only a short time after he began playing. White men first played for funerals. White bands had been playing for funerals long before he started playing at all. Broekhaven played most of the funeral. Broekhaven played only 'straight' military marches coming back from the burial places, not any ragtime. colored bands also played straight music coming back.

All funeral jobs were across the river on the Algiers, Gretna side. The bands of Broekhaven and Braun played the funerals on the New Orleans side. Bands on the East side of river were: Broekhaven, Braun, Christian and Boehler.

Bands
In his marching band he had between 12 to 14 musicians and sometimes 18. For dance jobs depending what the people wanted, beings 6 men, seven pieces (drummer counts 2). Laine considered the regular jazz band was 7 musicians.

Parade music: 'Under Arms.' Played 'Praline' (Tiger Rag), 'Little Bunch of Whiskers', 'Clarinet marmalade.

Quote from Happy Schilling

'Jack Laine's band was good. Each man depended on the other. all depended on ear. They played only jazz. Laine had most of the music business in New Orleans at one time. His band was call the 'Reliance.' Schilling played with Jack Laine almost every time Laine had parade work. Said Laine used to have a lot of parade jobs. The Laine band didn't play any regular marches, playing mostly jazz. Laine's house on Sunday morning looked like a club meeting because there were so many musicians there.

Anecdote: Jack Laine said one member had a tin ear, so Achille Baquet handed Laine a can opener to open the tin ear.

Later Articles

Times Picayune - November 19, 1939 - Lack Laine, 66, recalls days when Jazz was evolved here. a man who organized, owned many New Orleans Bands declares muse was good to him. Put his children through college, fixed him so he owes no one.

Jack Laine's snare drums have been silent these past 20 years, but the exciting syncopated rhythm they introduced as 'ragtime' at the turn of the century continues to dominate present-day 'swing.'

If 'Jazz' was fathered by Tom Brown's Band from Dixieland and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, who took New Orleans 'ragtime' North. Jack Laine is certainly its grandfather.

A great-grandfather now at 66, Jack 'Papa' Laine's ragtime career dates back to 1904 when he organized Laine's Ragtime Band-
a full decade before New Orleans musical aggregations stormed Chicago, New York and London to set tongues to wagging and feet to tapping with the full-throated cacophony of strident reeds and brasses.

His students went north

The bands which made such a hit with Northern dancers were composed almost entirely of musicians who had played here for 'Papa' Laine as he was known even in those early days. Many of them, in fact, owed their very introduction to music to his painstaking instruction and kindly encouragement.

In his day Laine had several brass bands and an equal number of ragtime units playing under his banner at the same time. The former participated in the street processions, the Carnival parades and the other outdoor appearances which were common in that day. The ragtime groups were available for picnics at Suburban Park, Southern Park, Crescent Park and Elmira Park in Algiers; for outings at the Milneburg camps, at house parties, in night life resorts, at the race track, at prize fights, and on the wagons which circled the streets bally-hooing fights, dances or commercial products.

Among the better-known musicians who played under the Laine banner and who later went on to fame with Brown's Band, the Dixieland Band and other groups, were Henry Ragas, Eddie Edwards, Tom Brown, Lawrence Vega, Leon Rapollo, Dave Perkins, Alcide 'Yellow' Nunez, Achille Baquet, Emile Christian, Willie guitar, Larry Shields, Tony Sbarbaro, Nick LaRocca, Alfred Laine (Jack's son), Ray Lopez, the Loyocano brothers-Arnold and Jack and the Brunies brothers-George, Merritt, Abbie and 'Henry.' At a later date Tony Parenti (now with Ted Lewis), Sharkey Bonnano, 'Happy' Schilling and a score of others came under the Laine influence.

Started when 12
In a reminiscent mood last week, Laine, who has for years remained aloof from the controversy which surrounds the origin of jazz, recalled that he started playing the drums at the age of 12, which would have been in 1885. In 1904 he organized 'a little string band' consisting of violin, guitar, bass, clarinet, trombone, saxophone and drums. Out of this beginning grew his 'Ragtime' Band, his 'Reliance' Band and others which go down in musical history as the real pioneers of syncopation.

'I had kids in those early bands, from 8 to 30 years old,' he recalls. 'In fact I soon separated them into two bands. One was my 'kids' band,' which took care of the youngster from 8 to about 22. The other band was composed of the more experienced musicians from 22 to 30. My earliest band was what we called a 'field band' and was about like a fife and drum corps. it included drums and piccolos.

'My Reliance Band had Lawrence Vega, cornet; Dave Perkins, trombone; Achille Baquet, clarinet; Willie guitar (who lived on Music Street) bass; martin Abraham, guitar; Richard' Chickee Hernandez, violin; a Mexican whose name I can't remember, playing alto sax, and myself on drums.

Only one read music

'Perkins was the only one who could read music, but he was a real 'professor,' We'd sit down and memorize a piece and then each of us would 'fill out' and add different parts until we had the whole number worked out in ragtime.

'It was from eight months to a year later before anyone else organized a ragtime band. I believe the second one was Johnny Fisher's outfit.

'We left New Orleans in 1905 to play in Baton Rouge, Biloxi, Mobile, Poplarville and other Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama towns at picnics, outings, conventions and hotels. We stayed a week in some spots and played at Biloxi every year for quite a while after that. The people everywhere went wild over this new type of music.
'I paid my musicians 50 cents an hour, which was the standard rate in those days with the leader getting double pay. Vega led my Reliance Band. Every band had a leader (usually the cornetist) and a manager.

Couldn't go North

'By 1912 I had had offers from Chicago and New York to bring my band up there but I couldn't get away on account of local engagements which tied us down for months ahead.'

Laine doesn't recall that the local Negro bands influence his band's style or technique, contrary to the common opinion that negro ragtime antedated white jazz by at least several years. On the contrary, he says that the negro bands who played 'opposite' his units at Milneburg and elsewhere were constantly trying to 'steal our stuff.'

'They'd listen to us and would go away whistling our tunes. The next thing we knew, they'd be trying them out on their own instruments at nearby camps.

These early bands consisted of six or seven pieces and Laine had three or four of them out nearly every week. They played for a few of the carnival balls but most of their engagements were to play for various 'associations' which at that time entertained members and their friends regularly at dances and other events where music seemed to be indispensable.

Often first in parades

'Laine's band was always first or second in line in the Carnival parades,' 'Papa' relates. 'We were so busy it wasn't at all unusual for people to postpone their parties until the band was available. We were actually booked eight and nine months ahead.'

One occasion that stands out in his memory, Laine says, was when his kids' band competed with the Marine Band at a Biloxi park. 'My kids were so popular with the Biloxi fire companies,' he
remembers, 'that they used to bid against one another for the band's services. On this particular occasion the marine Band was playing 'Any bones, any Rags, Any bottles Today?' I remember it as though it were yesterday when that big uniformed brass band finished that number my kids broke out like a four-alarm fire with 'Kentucky Days.' They really went to town. They ragged it and jazzed it and when they wound up, those marines lifted their hats to those youngsters and went over and shook each one of them by the hand.'

In that band were George Brunies, alto; Merritt Brunies, cornet; Abbie Brunies, cornet; Henry Brunies, baritone and trombone; Jules Cassard, trombone; Emile Christian (now in Europe and still playing music), cornet; 'Yellow' Nunez, clarinet; Joe Stevens, bass and drums; Tom Cachina, tuba; Young Lane, alto; Ernest Stevens, snare drums, and Frank Christian, clarinet-12 pieces in all.

'George Brunies and my boy were the real babies of the lot,' 'Papa' adds, 'and they were all youngsters.

Offers new version

Recalling a new version of the origin of the Dixieland Band, 'Papa' says: 'One night we were playing in a Carnival parade when a man jumped out of the crowd and asked for the leader. I was busy and sent him up to talk to Nick LaRocca. he offered the boys a Chicago job and Nick took Edwards, shields, Sbarbaro and Ragas and accepted the engagement. I wasn't long before they were getting as much as $1000 a night and were making records which remain jazz classics to this day.'

That was three or four years before the war, as Laine recalls it, but Tom Brown had left Laine even before that, 'Papa' says, and with a few of the other boys had formed another band which about a year previously had blazed the trail northward.

'In fact,' the granddaddy of jazz avers, 'I remember that four or five other New Orleans groups headed North even before Brown
did but they must have been too far ahead of the times because they dropped from sight.'

No time for sleep

His bands were so busy, Laine remarks, that they seldom had time to rehearse and during the Carnival season, when they played three and four jobs a day, they didn't even have time to let the boys go home to sleep. They'd hurry between jobs, reporting for duty again in an hour or two later.

Not having time to rehearse,' Laine says 'we'd work out the various parts of a new piece while we were on a job.' This was the way we composed several of our most popular numbers, too. Take 'Tiger Rag,' for instance. Achille Baquet was really responsible for that number. By the way, the last I heard of him he was still playing music out in California. he and the rest of the boys, including some of those I mentioned before, and Manuel Mello, who played trumpet; Leonce Mello, slide trombone, and Bill Gallaty, valve trombone, improvised chord and phrases and put them all together as they went along until they had whipped together a piece we called 'praline.'

'The Dixieland Band hit the North some of the song writers heard them playing this number, wrote it down in black and white, added a few extra runs, and published it under the name of 'Tiger Rag.'[1]

'Music was good to me,' this great-grandfather reminisces. 'It brought me plenty of good friends, gave my two children-a boy and a girl-college educations and fixed me financially so that today I don't owe anybody a dime.

Times Picayune - June 3, 1966 - 'Papa Jack's' death ends era in New Orleans Jazz history. worn drums long since claimed by Museum.
An era has ended in musical history.
With the death of George Vital 'Papa' Jack' Laine Wednesday in the emergency room of Charity Hospital, something went out of constantly changing melody that is New Orleans Jazz.

Not a beat was skipped Wednesday night on bourbon Street. Not one musician missed his break, or went off key. Not one minute of silence prevailed in the neon tinted din of the strip. Not one 'genuine authentic original' home of jazz music played to a smaller house. Not one tourist failed to scream 'Saints' and wriggle happily and clap on the wrong beat. Papa jack will be missed.

Father of white jazz

The New Orleans Jazz Club had named him officially 'The Father of white jazz' with accompanying ceremonies some 15 years ago. The Jazz Museum already had claimed his worn drums, But Papa Jack stayed on.

in September he would have been 93. His sight was going ;and his hearing had failed. for the past 11 months he had been living at the Poydras Manor home for the aged. a major operation in past weeks had also taken its toll on hi strength. And he was a strong man. He was a blacksmith, six feet tall with strong fingers and wide palms; a long. lanky muscular man even in his age.

It has been over 40 years since Papa Jack picked up a drum stick. it has been over 40 years since the musicians were calling the times 'The jack Laine Era' in New Orleans jazz.

Good organizer

Between 1890 and 1910 Jack Laine was the man in New Orleans. Known best for his organizing, Jack Laine had as many as five bands working under him at one time.

Every white musician of the day knew Jack Laine, knew that to be one of Jack's boys often meant the difference between having jobs and going without, knew that what Jack said meant something.
It was Jack Laine who took the first marching white jazz band out onto the streets of the Crescent City. It was jack Laine who had bookings for his boys as much as one year ahead. Milneburg, Bucktown, West end—all the hallowed places in jazz history rocked with the Laine beat.

Many jazz greats—including the first million copy record sellers, the Original Dixieland Jazz band—came out of Laine's organization. Larry Shields, Eddie Edward, Emile Christian, Henry; Ragas, Toy Sbarbaro, and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings—George Brunies, Paul Mares, Leon Rappolo, Charlie Cordilla—and on up to Happy Schilling and George fisher; were all in Laine's groups or heading bands under Laine's management.

Gave many start

Jack Laine, importance cannot be underestimated. Richard B. Allen, curator of the Archive of New Orleans Jazz at Tulane University, said of jack that 'he was a wonderful drummer, but even more important, he gave more young musicians a start than anyone else.'

Allen added that papa jack had been a guest lecturer at seminars on jazz at Tulane. 'He made a long forgotten era come to life,' Allen said.

papa Jack never really got back into music after World War I, when many of his boys were called into service. In the years since, in recent years when a 'jazz revival' has swept the country, Papa Jack was always humble when reminded of the major role he played in setting jazz on its cultural feet.

In his age, when illness and time were wearing him down, Papa Jack's memory often failed. Names and places shifted through the years and the past seemed very close.

But no matter how weak he was, Papa Jack had two things; a firm handshake and tapping toes whenever there was music around.

An era ended Wednesday for New Orleans music when jack Laine died.
It's too mixed up and I can't get to it. When we played, we did the real stuff.' -Jack 'Papa Laine on progressive jazz in 1961.

Decades before Papa Laine admitted is aversion to progressive jazz, he, along with son Alfred 'Baby' Laine and other musicians, was slapping 'the real stuff' on an audience of World War I troops in Alexandria, La.

The pictures, made in 1917, were provided through the courtesy of Mrs. Alfred Laine, widow of Baby, and Lisa Hingle of Metairie. when the pictures were taken, the band was on tour and had stopped in Alexandria for a concert in an open air theater.

In one photo, Papa Laine plays drums, Jules Reiner, piano and Herman Ragas bass. Baby is on cornet (with the attached tin can mute) George Brunies on trombone and Charlie Cordilla on clarinet.

The other photo shows the two Laine's on either side of the bench. On the bench, left to right, are Cordilla, Brunies and Reiner. Ragas is behind them.
Dr. Edmond Souchon, a musician and a member of the New Orleans jazz club, once said, 'Jack Laine is the man who was most influential in the careers of the early jazz musicians. Papa was kingpin in the early 1900s.'

Papa Laine was born in New Orleans on Sept. 21, 1873 and began playing an alto horn as soon as he could carry one around. It was every kid's ambition in those days to play a musical instrument well enough to march with the brass bands during Mardi Gras. Papa was no exception.

By age 15, he was an accomplished musician playing alto horn and drums. His band began entertaining New Orleanians at Milneburg, Lucy Tanner's resort, picnics at Kramer's lot across the wide curve of the Mississippi in Algiers, Carnival parades, prize fights, race tracks, even those houses in Storyville, and anywhere else that music was needed in those pre-radio days. The repertoire included such uptown rags as 'Tiger Rag,' 'Praline,' and 'Shadow Rag' and were spiced with each band member's musical ingenuity.

At the turn of the century, Papa had as many as five bands, all composed of white musicians playing six or seven engagements on the same night. Papa played with such jazz notables as Nick LaRocca, Tom Brown, Gus Mueller, Ray Lopez, Lawrence Vega, 'Happy' Schilling, Johnny Fischer, the Shields brothers (Harry and Larry) and all the Brunies-George, Abbie and Merritt.

Papa Laine was not even a full-time musician since he was employed as a blacksmith at a New Orleans transfer Company for many years. 'I paid my musicians 50 cents an hour, which was the standard rate in those days. Every band had a leader-usually he was the man on cornet-and a manager.' Papa said in a 1961 interview. 'We were so busy that it wasn't at all unusual for people to postpone their parties until a band was available. We actually were booked eight or nine months ahead of time.'

In 1904, Papa took his ragtime band to St. Louis for a 12-week engagement at a fair. Papa, sometimes called 'Old Man,' withdrew from the music scene at the start of World War I, when the success of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band had not yet reached; its
pinnacle. He never cut records, but before his death in 1966, Papa tape-recorded sessions under Johnny Wiggs.

Baby Laine, also called 'Pants,' was born in New Orleans on July 12, 1895. He started playing alto horn with Papa's Reliance band in 1908 and stuck mainly with Reliance groups or led his own dance bands until early Depression years. In the Alfred Laine Orchestra, a Dixieland band in the late 20s and early 30s, Baby played the trumpet and cornet.

In 1951 Papa Laine was dubbed the 'Father of White Jazz' by the New Orleans Jazz Club. On that occasion, Papa, who never received formal music training or an education beyond the third grade, voiced this attitude toward aspiring young jazz players: 'I wish them luck and tell them to listen to the old records of jazz.'

_Times Picayune_ - March 4, 1968 - New Orleans Jazz said post-Civil War.

Taped interviews with old musicians indicate that jazz was played in New Orleans shortly after the Civil War, Richard B. Allen, curator of the Archive of New Orleans Jazz at Tulane university, said Saturday at Birmingham.

Speaking before a Tulane-sponsored continuing education conference at the guest House Motor Inn, Allen noted that popular theory attributes the origin of jazz to musicians working in the honkey tonks of Storyville—the long-defunct red light district of New Orleans—during the early years of World War I.

But an interview with the late jazz drummer Jack Laine, who was born eight years after the close of the Civil War had heard jazz played when he was a schoolboy by a trombonist and band leader named Professor' Dave Perkins.

Laine told Allen: 'Dave Perkins mixed the stuff up real good. He taught me and my older brothers how to play it. We called it ragtime, but it was good jazz. The only real difference was we played it a little slower.'

The unanswered question, Allen observed, is: 'who taught Dave Perkins to play jazz? We may never know. but it appears
certain something like jazz was being played in New Orleans long before Perkins' time.'

1909

**St. Tammany Farmer** - Sept. 4, 1909
Dancing added to the enjoyment of everyone and all were pleased with the music furnished by the Reliance Band of New Orleans.

1910

**January 20** - Masquerade party for Mt. Oliver Episcopal Church. The Reliance Band being hired for the dancing occasion.

**June 2** - Picnic by Drifters Social & Pleasure club. Music by the Reliance Band.

**June 7** - Riverside Pleasure Club spaghetti supper/dance. Laine's famous orchestra with George Laine, leader, furnished the music.

**July 30, 1910**

**Abita Springs**
GRAND BALL AND Entertainment
To-night July 30, 1910
Music by Reliance Band, New Orleans

**August 11** - Drifters social club annual picnic at Belleville Pleasure Grounds, Saturday, Sept. 10th. Music will be furnished by the Reliance Band.
Second Picnic of the Drifter's Pleasure Club at Belleville Park. Music will be furnished by the reliance Band.

October 6 - Benefit-Mt. Oliver Episcopal Church, Oct. 7th. The Reliance Band, so well known here, has been engaged to furnish music for the dancing.

Item - November 13, 1910 - Merry dance by the Magnolia Pleasure Club.

The Reliance Orchestra furnished the music.

November 17 - Mite party for school fund - Reliance Band will furnish music.

December 15 - South Pacific benevolent Association masquerade ball relief fund - Reliance orchestra.

1911

January 26 - Belleville Pleasure club fancy dress and masquerade soiree, Pythian hall, Fab.25th., Saturday. The Reliance will furnish the music.

February 2 - masquerade dance, Pythian Hall, Friday, March 17th. The reliance Band will furnish the music.

Times Picayune - February 4, 1911 - Masquerade dance

The Reliance Band has been engaged.

February 9 - February 17th dance, Mt. Oliver Episcopal Church, Pythian Hall. The Reliance Band has been engaged.
February 23 - April 25th - Pythian Hall soiree-Belleville Social club. The Reliance Band has been hired for the occasion.

March 30 - Pleasure Seekers Social club entertainment at Masonic hall, McLellanville. Music will be furnished by the Reliance Band

March 30 - Drifter's Pleasure Club fish fry. Music was furnished by the Reliance orchestra.

June 22 - Lawn festival at Masonic hall, McLellanville, Saturday, June 24th. The music for the dance will be furnished by the Reliance band which needs no introduction in Algiers.

April 20 - Belleville Dark-Drifter's Pleasure club. Music was furnished by the Reliance Orchestra.

Item - July 15, 1911 - Picnic at Suburban Park by Div. 9, Hibernians
There will be a concert by the Reliance Band and dancing will be enjoyed.

Item - July 16, 1911 - Ancient Order of Hibernians picnic
The Reliance Band has been engaged.

Item - July 24, 1911 - parade and banquet at Pythian
Music at the banquet was furnished by the Reliance Band.

Item - July 30, 1911 - Easter Lily Club entertain.
The Reliance Band will furnish music.

St. Tammany Farmer - September 9, 1911
Dance at Abita pavilion Saturday night. The Reliance band of New Orleans has been engaged.
Herald - September 16, 1911

They will parade through the principal streets of our town to the tune of Jack Laine's Original Reliance Band, after which they will retire to the park. Laine's band will also furnish music at the picnic, and with such good music, anyone who is a lover of the terpsichorean art cannot help but enjoy himself.

1912

Herald - February 8, 1912

Valentine masquerade Pythian hall. Music will be furnished by the famous Reliance Band.

May 23 - Alhambra Club holds first stag. Reliance band furnished music on the occasion.

June 22 - Lawn festival, at Manson's Hall, McLellanville, Saturday, June 2nd. The music for the dance will be furnished by the Reliance band, which needs no introduction in Algiers.

Time Picayune - November 1, 1912 - 2nd stag by the Security Brewery Co. in Algiers.

The members and their guests will meet at the club house, at 535 Seguin Street and march to the brewery with the Reliance Band at the lead.

November 21 - 20th anniversary - Calhoun birth of son John. Reliance band and selections from guests.

1913

Item - February 9, 1913 A wooden wedding-5th anniversary of marriage
The crowd, headed by Reliance Band met at the residence and proceeded to the home of the happy couple.

**Item** - June 29, 1913 - Jefferson Democratic picnic
The Reliance band will furnish music for the dancers and dancing will begin at 7 p.m.

**July 24** - Lawn party at Manson's hall, McLellanville, Saturday night for improvement fund of St. Anthony Chapel, music being furnished by the Reliance Band.

**July 31** - Well known friends of Algiers picnic at Suburban Park. Music was furnished by the Reliance Band.

**August 7** - Picnic-Elmira Pleasure Grounds, Holy Name Gym Club. The original Reliance Band will furnish the music for all who care to dance.

**September 16** - Good Time Outing club picnic at Clement's bungalow at Milneburg Music for the occasion was furnished by the Reliance band and dancing was the principle amusement.

**Item** - October 12, 1913
Laine's band plays for basketball game.

**Times Democrat** - October 19, 1913
The five Well-known Friends have arranged to give their second dance at the firemen's Hall at Harvey Sunday night, with music by Laine's Reliance Band.

**October 30** - Surprise party for Miss Bernadette Fabares-large crowd assembled at home of Miss Mabel McGuire and proceeded to make the surprise. Headed by the Reliance Band.
November 6 - At Contessa Hall surprise party. Oct. 31st, Friday for Emmett Hotard. Music was furnished by the Reliance orchestra.

November 20 - house warming and birthday-Benj. A. Hinty-gathered at Vegien's Cafe where Laine's Reliance band met them and they proceeded to the Hintz residence in military formation.

November 27 - 21st anniversary/birthday of Walter Durand at Masonic hall. The well known Reliance orchestra's strings could be heard until the wee small hours of the morning.

December 25 - Happy 8 Social Club dance, Lee's hall, Gretna. music by the Reliance Band.

1914

February 5 - Drifter's Pleasure Blub, Saturday, Feb. 14th-benefit of William J. Dalton. Music will be furnished by ;the reliance Band.

February 12 - Alhambra gym club reception . The ball room on the 1t floor was beautifully decorated. At one end of the ball room the Laine Orchestra.

Times Picayune - May 31, 1914 - Parade and picnic -Natchitoches Tribe.

Headed by Laine's Reliance Band the 'braves' marched through Gretna, McDonoghville and Algiers, leading a large crowd to Suburban Park where dancing and other amusements were enjoyed.

July 16 - Royal Pleasure club-suburban Park picnic, Saturday night. Music was furnished by Laine's Reliance Band.
July 23 - Good Time Club reception for Miss Lillian nelson, July 14th. Music furnished by the Reliance orchestra.

Gretna - September 7, 1914 - Celebration-Reliance Band # 2.
September 10 - Dr. M. O. Carey's home - 13th birthday-entered house accompanied by Laine's Band.

September 10 - Holy Name gym club gold euchre, Sept. 25th. Laine's Reliance Band will probably furnish the music.

September 24 - gold euchre - Jack Laine's Reliance Band has been engaged to dispense the harmony for which he is famous among the lover's of the one-step. and hesitation waltz. this, in itself, is sure to bring the crowd.

October 8 - The above dance a success. Laine's Band provided the music.

Times Picayune - November 23, 1914 Dance and euchre with music furnished by Laines' Reliance Band.

December 17 - West side Pleasure club dance, owl's hall, Gretna. Reliance Orchestra will furnish the music.

1915

Times Picayune - February 28, 1915 - Royal Pleasure Club
       Suburban Park picnic. Music will be furnished by Laine's Reliance Band.

March 4 - Picnic on opening day of Southern Park by Royal Pleasure Club. Music will be furnished by Laine's Reliance Band.
March 11 - Junior members of Alhambra gym club hop, March 19th, Pythian Hall. Laine's Band has been engaged for the night and dancing will be from 8-10.

March 25 - Holy Name gym Club shirt-waist dance in hall at Verret & Eliza, Friday, April 30th. Dancing will start promptly at 8:00 and a contract has been drawn up with Jack Laine, manager of the original Reliance orchestra to furnish music for the occasion. 25 cents admission.

**Times Picayune** - April 23, 1915 - Gretna honors memory of young hero of Vera Cruz (Louis Oscar Fried).

The other numbers on the program were the selections 'Flee to the Birds' and 'Nearer My God to Thee' by Laine's Reliance Band.

April 29 - Holy name gym club place of amusement, April 30th, Friday. Laine's Band assures lively stepping and of the right kind. first entertainment since lent.

**Herald** - May 13, 1915 N. N. g. c. 2nd spring reception

Laine's Reliance band has been engaged to furnish the music.


Music will be provided by Laine's Reliance Band.

May 27 - Picnic-workingman's Union and Benevolent Association, July 17th. Music was furnished by the original Reliance Band.

**Herald** - June 10, 1915 - 5th District Carnival Ball

Music will be furnished by Jack Laine's Original Reliance Band.

**Herald** - June 10, 1915 - Woodmen Memorial Day

Music was provided by Jack Laine's Reliance Band.
**Times Picayune** - June 13, 1915 - 5th district carnival club picnic  
Music by Laine's Band.

**Herald** - June 17, 1915 - Dance and picnic  
Working Men's Union & benevolent Assoc. of Algiers.  
Laine's 'Original' Reliance Band has been engaged.

June 17 - June 29th, Tuesday-Organ Grove #9 at Jefferson Democratic club. Music will be furnished by Laine's Reliance Band.

**Herald** - July 8, 1915 - 5th District Carnival club - Suburban Park  
Jack Laine's Reliance Band will be on hand from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and dancing will be the principal amusement.

July 15 - WOW picnic suburban park, McDonoghville. Music for the dancing will be furnished by the Reliance Band.


July 29 - HNG Club August 4th dance. Laine's Band will furnish the music.

**Times Picayune** - August 8, 1915 - Woodmen of the world picnic  
Music by the Reliance Band.

**August 12** - Picnic-Suburban Park, Sept. 18th. Music will be furnished by Laine's Original Reliance Band.

September 2 - 5th District C. C. picnic-suburban Park, Sept. 18th. Music for the occasion will be furnished by Laine's Original Reliance Band.
September 16 - Benefit for WOW for Charity Hospital fair. Jack Laine's Band will furnish music for the dancing.

November 11 - Orange Day dance-November 19th-ladies Alhambra. Laine's Band will furnish music for the dancers.

November 18 - 5th District C.C. fancy dress I& masquerade ball, Lee Hall, Nov. 27th. Music for the occasion will be furnished by Jack Laine's original Reliance Band.

Herald - November 18, 1915
Music for the occasion will be furnished by Jack Laine's original Reliance Band.

November 25 - Wednesday Nov. 17th - Surprise party at Pythian Hall for Mrs. Schroeder and Mr. McGivney. Laine's orchestra furnished music for the dancing.

November 25 - 5th district C. C., Nov. 27th. As usual, Jack Laine's original Reliance Band will furnish the music for the occasion.

Herald - November 25, 1915 - Surprise party
Pythian hall was engaged for the occasion and the merry crowd had a most enjoyable time. Laine's Orchestra furnished music for the dancing, which was enjoyed until the wee small hours.

Times Picayune - November 28, 1915 - Lucky One hall dance
`Music will be furnished by the Reliance Band.

1916

Herald - March 25, 1916 - Holy Name Gymnastic Club - Shirtwaist dance
Dancing will start promptly at 8o o'clock, and a contract has been drawn up with Jack Laine's manager of the Original Reliance Orchestra to furnish music for the occasion.

**May 11** - Orange Blossom Social & Benevolent Association (employees of the new Orleans S. & Grand Isle railroad) picnic at hero Park (on the railroad line of NOS&GI). Laine's orchestra will furnish the music for the dancing platform.

**June 15** - 5th district C. C. 4th picnic, Suburban Park. Jack Laine's and his famous Reliance Band will be on hand to furnish music for the occasion.

**July 13** - Grand picnic for SJSC, Suburban Park, July 29th. Jack Laine's original Reliance Band will furnish the music.

**Herald - July 27, 1916 - St. John Social Club picnic.**

Jack Laine's Original Reliance Band will be on the job with the kind of music that the dancers like.

**July 27** - SJSC picnic -Suburban park. Jack Laine's original Reliance Band will be on the job with the kind of music that the dancers like.

**July 27** - Southern Pacific celebrates 25th anniversary Sunday. Manager Jack Laine will have charge of the music.

**Herald - August 3, 1916 - Southern Pacific Benevolent Assoc. of Algiers.**

Music was provided by Laine's band, patriotic airs being rendered after each toast.

**August 17** - Royal Pleasure Club picnic-Suburban Park. Music for dancing will be furnished by the original Reliance Band.

November 16 - Nov 18th, Original Social Club dance, music by Laine's Band

November 23 - Saturday night dance at Pythian Hall by Forget me Not social club. Music by the Reliance Band.

1917


April 5 - St. John social club shirt-waist add barn dance, Masonic Hall, April 19th. Laine's Band will furnish the music.

May 31 - Dance at Pythian Hall, June 1st. Laine's Band has been engaged for you to dance.

August 16 - Welfare Association dance, Sept 1st, Avenue Academy. for the enjoyment of those who attend the dance, the Laine orchestra will be there to furnish the latest music.

1917

Herald - July 19, 1917 - Picnic at Suburban Park
   Jack Laine's Band was in attendance to add to the merriment.

1918

Algiers & Gretna Daily News - February 5, 1918
   A dance will be given Sunday night at the Jefferson democratic Club. Laine's Reliance Band will furnish music.

June 6 - Navy Yard smoker, new York Benevolent Association- Nemo Hall-Congress & Burgundy Streets. Music was furnished by Pansy Laine's Band. (Sic: Pansy Laine was Jack Laine's son.)
Alexander's Daily Town Talk - July 15, 1918 - At 'Airdome- a play 'Woman in the Black Mask.'

Laine's Original Dixieland Jazz Band entertained between the cast and before the performance making good the slogan 'no waits and no dull moments.'

Rex Parade - 1915
Jack 'Papa' Laine
in THE MAGAZINE 'Mississippi Rag'
March, 1894

"Papa" Jack Laine is called the father of white jazz by some writers and historians. There is no doubt of his importance in the early history of brass band and jazz in New Orleans.

One looks at a teacher and judges him by his pupils. One looks at a school of musicians and evaluates and analyzes their style from a major influence. This article will approach "Papa" Laine as to his activities and influence on the New Orleans music scene, the success of his alumni and the opinions of him voiced by his compatriots.

Much as the parish bands around New Orleans were a microcosm of New Orleans musical life, Laine's life is a microcosm of how an early white jazz musician began his career and how he lived his life.

Some have taken credit for inventing jazz. Most people will tell you the black musicians around New Orleans started jazz — early black musicians credit their fellow musicians with the development of jazz. There are a few that say it was the early "Spasm" bands of some young white musicians. The early beginnings of jazz can only be theorized, never proven as to its origins or the exact facts surrounding jazz's birth.

Black and white musicians did not usually play in the same band when marching in New Orleans parades and other musical activities. There were "crossovers" — those very light-skinned blacks who were taken as being white. Laine had a few of these as regular members of his bands. Included were Dave Perkins, Achilles and George Baquet, Baptiste Aucoin and Gil Rouge. The importance of these crossovers playing in Laine's bands cannot be overlooked. They also performed with the leading black bands in New Orleans. The importance? Laine's white musicians were exposed to the black band experience through association with these men. Also, these men brought the black band experience to the black community. While Laine stated he didn't hear many black bands, he had, within his group, the influence produced by black musicians. This "bi-band" experience bridged the gap between Laine's white band and the black band tradition, putting Laine in
a very influential and important position in the evolvement of New Orleans brass bands that developed into the early jazz bands. Laine said there were bands around that were "mixed up": "They had some bands... were pretty good mixed up... Gil Rouge was no white man. Baptiste Aucoin neither." In his autobiography, Pops Foster addressed the practice of colored musicians playing with white bands. Pops stated, "The whites had a musician’s union and my cousin Dave Perkins was President. They didn’t know he was colored. He played tuba and trombone, taught music and lent out instruments. He played with all the white bands. The white union would book colored bands on a job with a white band if someone wanted one... Many times the Brunies Band would have a job for another band and they would call us. The Dixieland band in those days was a mixed band and nobody paid any attention. The leader was Larry Shields and you had Achilles Baquet, George Baquet’s brother playing with them."

Thus there was contact indirectly between the white and black bands of
“wasn’t idle no time at all. Pretty nigh on every night I had an engagement to fill out and it got so that I organized five bands.” Laine also mentions that a Prof. Meade would come and teach the band members how to read music.

As there were plentiful jobs in New Orleans in the late 19th century, Laine remembered playing as many as five jobs in one day. He started out playing for Dr. Capdau (an advertising job for antiseptic tablets), then the band got on a furniture wagon and played for the advertising of the Merry Widow Ball they were going to play for that night. Arriving at Calliope and St. Charles, they climbed down from the wagon and marched in a parade. They got onto the wagon again to Decatur and Frenchman and viewed the masker and then advertised the ball again. That night, of course, they played dance music for the Merry Widow Ball.

The Laine band continued to be active until the First World War - “the war took my boys away from me.” The band did the Mardi Gras parades for years - also played for balls, picnics, dances, political rallies, weddings, etc. At Milneberg, Laine had three bands most every Sunday.

Most of the time Laine’s band would play Sunday at Milneberg during the day and proceed to either Crescent, Southern or Suburban Park and play a night job there. Laine stated; “Come from Milneberg, go right on these other jobs and play, and finish out my contract.”

While the number and instrumentation of a typical brass band is known, Laine used musicians according to the demands of the job, the availability of the musicians that could be acquired and the type of job it was. He stated that on parades he used two trombones, baritone, tuba, alto horn, two cornets, two clarinets and two drums - a total of 11. In two pictures of Laine bands there were two drums, four cornets, baritone, clarinet, trombone and tuba - a total of 10.

Laine’s reputation was such that during World War I he was asked to organize a band for the Army at New Orleans.

Dave Perkins, a very fair-skinned man, played trombone, tuba and alto horn with Jack Laine’s band. He was a very well-schooled musician who taught Laine and the members of his band to read music (along with Prof. Meade). Perkins was considered by law to be a black, but was a regular member of the Laine band and a good friend of Laine.

Just as today’s young people reenact a presentation by their favorite rock bands by pretending to be playing imaginative guitars, thus did the young boys of the 1880s Spasm bands imitate the activities of the most popular ensemble of music in their day, the brass band. This form of musical ensemble was extremely evident in the festive city of New Orleans. Music was ever present in almost every social activity in the city.

Laine described how he became involved in music: “I started in music when I was right a young kid. I used to play on tin cans until the Cotton & Sugar Exposition were here. (World’s Industrial & Cotton Centennial Exposition opened Dec. 6, 1884, closed June 1, 1885.) That’s been 70 odd years now, and I was about 8 years old (Note: 11 yrs. old) when they bought me a drum up there, a field drum, after they had finished and left from here, see, they closed here, and they sold out everything they had... I managed to get a field drum, ever since that I’ve been playing music.”

Laine stated that he soon organized a band and that: “there were no bands in this town then, no white band at all.” (Research has discovered there were many white bands in New Orleans in the year 1885. Some names include - Fischers, Bockhavens, Yeagers, Froebas, Wolfs, Bauers, Braun and others.) Once Laine organized a band he found there was a real need for more brass bands and
This is one of the earliest photos of a tailgate wagon ever taken (circa 1898/1900). Laine identified himself as the driver of the wagon. He did not remember who was in the band, and, due to bilateral cataracts, he was not able to identify those in the photo. The band was advertising a dance at Jackson Hall that night. The clarinetist and trombonist are standing below Laine.
Camp Bearegord in Alexandria, La. He was about 45 years old, probably too old to be active, so he volunteered when asked.

The use of "double drums" seems to have begun during Laine's career. Large dances were held in large ballrooms, usually calling for two drummers and a musical group of around 10 men. If it was a smaller place and they only wanted so many men, Laine would use the "double drum" i.e., one man playing both the bass drum and snare drum at the same time. Included would be the cymbal, wood block, etc. For most outdoor activities they used two drummers (West End picnics, parades and open air pavilions). Laine is said to have developed the bass drum pedal and was one of the first to use wire brushes. Laine stated, "When I started I had two cymbals, then I started using ..."

It has been said by many that in New Orleans music the most important drum is the bass drum. Cie Frazier mentioned this and Laine also talked about the importance of a good bass drummer, saying, "All my men, you know, the minute I'd be off the bass drum, they could feel it. They'd eat the head off me to get back on that bass drum, wouldn't let me play snare drum in the streets, I had to play that bass drum." Laine further stated that he used cowbells and sleigh bells, bouncing them on his knees. He used a ratchet and an assortment of whistles. One of Laine's regular band members, Manuel Mello, describes Laine's drum set this way: "His traps (foot pedal) consisted of one bar with a nickel baseball on the end. And a shade spring with an additional shade spring on the side, in case the first one let go. The pedal was homemade (Note: Laine's trade in the early days was as a blacksmith).

Laine stopped playing after or during the First World War. Mello remembered the last job he played with Laine, who probably had gotten rid of much of his equipment. Mello described this last job of Laine's: "Job was over the river. We had to kick rungs out of the chair to make drum sticks. He had nothing. A snare drum with two batter heads on it, instead of a snare head and a batter head. He would use the batter head on the snare drum. When he sat down to play a job, they had to tie the bass drum to a chair so it wouldn't get away from him.

Laine's bands, until Prof. Meade began working with them, were "head bands," not reading bands. "A good deal of the boys picked up notes (reading) wonderfully, some of them couldn't, but you could play a tune, let them hear it just once, and the next time you go over it, they gonna play it the same as you got it on spots," Laine remarked. Laine was about 17 or 18 years old when he began reading music. (c. 1890)

The fact that Laine and many of his fellow musicians were at first real players has its parallel in that many black bands learned and performed music in the same way. Each band seemed to contain, most of the time, both types of musicians — those that read and those that played by ear.

From the list of Laine's band alumni, it can be seen that white band music did evolve around Laine during his heyday in New Orleans (1890-1917). This time has been called the "Laine Era," and it is during this time that jazz historians believe that jazz was born.

Most, if not all, of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band were musicians who had played in Laine's bands, and the music that was played in the Laine band eventually became the early repertoire of the early Chicago jazz bands of Tom Brown, the ODJB and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. There was a court trial as to the authorship of a number of these tunes. Laine stated, "This LaRocca changed it. 'The Livery Stable Blues' and all the likes of that sort of stuff, he changed all of that stuff see, had different names for them. 'Clarinet Marmalade,' 'Tiger Rag,' etc. That's all our stuff."

Tom Brown was the musician who brought the first white New Orleans band to Chicago in 1915. He was a Laine alumni. Laine had been asked to bring his band to Chicago, but didn't. If he had, it is highly possible that Laine's name would have been the one noted in the history of jazz as the first jazz band to record. Laine should be remembered as the leader and the influence of the many famous early jazz musicians who migrated to the large northern cities, bringing New Orleans-style music and creating the "Jazz Age."

When Laine was asked about the style of music his band played, he said, "All that stuff which we played we called it ragtime until they changed it to jazz. They began to call it jazz; it's really ragtime stuff. There's only two bands of this known (New Orleans-
Jack Laine is at the drums in this 1919 photo, taken at the "Open Air Theatre" in Alexandria, La. Other band members were Alfred "Pansy" Laine, cornet; Charlie Cordilla, clarinet; George Brunies, trombone; Jules Reiner, piano; and Herman Ragas, bass.
down and listen to them play music you can say right away, I heard Jack Laine's band play that in the same style, same way." While it did not receive the publicity of the Chicago band exodus, one of the first New Orleans bands to play north was a Jack Laine band. In 1904 they played at the St. Louis Exposition.

The advertising wagons were popular in those early days of jazz. Bands rode and played on these wagons to advertise picnics, balls, fights, etc. Laine stated, "I've played lots of advertising wagons. Plenty of them. I'll never forget the day that I played for the John Ruskin Cigar advertisement on Canal Street... Advertising wagons for fights, balls and stuff like that, advertising wagons for football players too, games. The wagon would move all through the town."

Perhaps one way early jazz evolved was from the musicians "ragging" the parade marches they played. Laine said, "If you syncopate a march you have a rag. There were straight numbers that were ragged. We'd tear it up, we'd rag it up."

Laine believed he was the first to ever have a ragtime band on the streets. It is said that ragtime music was why Laine got Dave Perkins in his band. Laine remarked, "Dave Perkins used to be pretty good friends. Dave used to go see a lady in the same block that I lived on (2405 Chartes, near Maddeville St.) Dave was always coming by the house. He could take a sheet of music and read it just like nobody's business."

In a time line we would see that Laine played for money quite a while before Buddy Bolden became well-known. "A Jack Laine band," remarked "Papa," "was the first one he remembers coming out on the streets and playing that stuff (jazz)."

"I never knew the names of many of the tunes the band played. They did it entirely out of their heads, they made up the stuff. We'd make up that stuff. Just like if we were playing it for years. We'd make it up and we'd fight it out until we got some kind of time out of it."

One band Laine talked about was the band of Prof. Braun — a band that

### Musician's remarks about Jack Laine

There are a number of interviews at Tulane Univ. by Laine's old musician friends that talk about Laine's career and his personality. Their information strengthens previously stated facts.

Steve Brown talked of Laine's bands and the fact that he usually gave orchestra jobs to his friends: "Jack Laine, more or less, had brass bands. He didn't fool around with orchestras. (Note: Perhaps at first Laine did not take as many orchestra jobs, but Laine is mentioned playing
Reliance No. 1 in action, c. 1914-1918. Musicians are: Jack Laine, bass drum (1); Manuel Mello, cornet (2); Martin Kirsch (or Tony Giardina), clarinet (3); Merritt Brunies, cornet (4); Chink Martin, tuba (5); hidden kettle drum (6); Gus Zimmerman, cornet (7); Henry Brunies, trombone (8); Emile Christian, cornet (9); alto (10).
dance jobs in other interviews.) Laine had a big brass band. He was the bass drummer himself and whenever he had orchestra jobs he’d give us a lot of orchestra jobs. I’d play with Jack Laine in his band and he’d want me to play tuba for him. Many times the personnel of the band would change.

Eventually Steve Brown and his friends found enough work to keep busy and did not take as many Laine jobs. Brown played tuba for Jack Laine quite a number of times across the river and he remembers many different affairs. Brown added further proof that brass bands were the dance bands of this era. He stated: “We used to employ brass bands for dances too, great big dances. Now they use to have dances out in all the large pavilions. They’d have a great big brass band in order to be heard. But later on, at the lake in Milneberg and West End, they had certain pavilions out there that it all depended upon the chairman of the committee. If he wanted an orchestra he’d specify an orchestra, or if he wanted to hire a brass band, he’d hire a brass band. But as a special rule they (the orchestra) used to sound better to the dancers than a brass band, so they could dance much better than they could with a brass band. A brass band couldn’t get in the groove like the orchestra could.”

Johnny Lala was in a Laine band while still in shorts pants, having his start with Jack Laine. “During this time Laine had so much work that he had to organize other bands,” said Lala. “Some say as many as five bands bearing Laine’s name were playing jobs,” he added. Lala believed that Laine bands were hired because he was the only man who could get “hot men,” a style that became known as ragtime and later jazz. Lala continued: “the year was around 1910, the bands of Jack Laine were hot, what we called ‘ragtime bands’. They played for everything – including funerals over in Gretna. This band had three trumpets... and a colored fellow on baritone.” (Note: probably Dave Perkins.)

Lala also backed up many statements in other interviews about staying at the Laine house: “Jack would take all of us, and bring us home to his house. He lived on Port St. Go to sleep, in the morning we get up... his wife have breakfast ready and we have to catch that 9:00 train and go to Milneberg. Play all day for picnics for $2.50 - from 9:00 to 6:00 in the evenin’. Then from there, jump over the ferry, go to Algiers, play the Elmira Pleasure Grounds. We even played funeral over in Gretna, a regular brass band. They cut it out because soon as we’d leave the cemetery we start playin’ the ragtime music and the families would see that, cryin’ and everything. Didn’t like it. We didn’t know what we’d be with Jack Laine.” One cannot help wondering if the black bands, bearing the early Laine bands playing this happy ragtime music after a funeral, attempted to imitate the band thus starting the tradition of the playing of “hot” music after a funeral.

Lala emphasized how Jack Laine always could and did have jobs. “Jack used to get jobs. I swear, I don’t know where he got ’em at. We didn’t know where we – all right nothin’ tomorrow or the next day. Very few people had telephones in them days, know. He’d come around and get us. Be there tonight 8:00, always you know,” stated Lala. “The Laine Bands wore uniforms,” Lala said, “because many people would try to get in the dance free by carrying a band member’s musical instrument, saying they played in the band.” Johnny Lala played in what was called the #3 band made up of younger kids than #1. The leader was Jack’s son “Pansy” Laine. “We was hotter than all of them – me, Pansy, Yellow (Nunez), Paul Vinelle, bass; Jules Cassard, trombone,” remarked Lala.

Bud Loyacano played in the Laine Reliance #2. When asked about the band, Bud stated: “You mentioned the Reliance Band. Number one was Jack Laine. Number two was under Jack Laine’s name and I played in number 2. In that band there was Leonce Mello, Yellow Nunez on clarinet. Most of the time I used tuba, clarinet, cornet, trombone, tuba and Cuto Tulla on drums. The Reliance number one had Jack Laine on drums, Manuel Mello, Charlie Christian, trombone. The bass player was Chink Martin. I also remember that Jack Laine would work as many as four bands at once,” Loyacano recalled. “When he wouldn’t need them he wouldn’t have them. We played parades, dances, I played 13 years in Mardi Gras parades with Laine.”

The Mello brothers are mentioned as playing with the early Jack Laine bands. Leonce died prior to Manuel and was not available for the oral interviews but Manuel was. Manuel
Mello was in Jack Laine’s Reliance Band number one. Manuel remembers when they played for funerals he would stand behind the tombstone and play “taps.” “They would play “Nearer My God To Thee,” just the first part, taking the body from the house to the hearse, and from the hearse to the church, from the church to the hearse, and from the hearse to the burying.”

Manuel recalls some of the musicians that played for Jack Laine. In one funeral band was: “Wire Faced Dago Alessandro on tuba, his son ‘Little Wire Face’ on alto, with rotary valves. Dago Horn Brock on baritone, Joe Castro on alto, and Leonce Mello on trombone. They tore them up going to where the fellow was laid out. Played ‘Nearer My God To Thee’ when he was brought out.”

Mello was one of the leaders of a Jack Laine band when Laine reorganized. In the new band were Alex Bagita, Chink Martin, Yellow Nunez, Leonce Mello, Jack Laine, drums; and Manuel. Laine and Mello, it is mentioned in the interview, used to split the leader fee, usually double what a musician would receive.

One of the earliest musicians to play with Jack Laine was Frank Christian. Christian remarked that he played with Jack Laine when Laine first started playing and remembers that the personnel of Laine’s bands changed often. He even took people who had never played into his bands. Also if Laine needed a player on any other instrument, he (Christian) would play it. “Laine used 10 men when he played parades, such as carnival,” recalled Christian.

Merritt Brunies and all the Brunies brothers played for Jack Laine. Al Brunies called Laine, “One of the greatest band organizers in New Orleans and organized ragtime bands.” In his interview Al mentioned that Laine used 10-piece parade bands and they played the same kind of music which today is called Dixieland. He remembers that the same band which played for parades also played for dances, serenades, etc.

Brother George Brunies, like Johnny Lala, remembered staying at the Laine house. “Papa Laine used to pick me up, see, I’d play with his Reliance Band and he picked me up and we played a dance. We got 50¢ an hour. Crescent Park, Owls Hall, Suburban Park and Alverro Park in Algiers and we play the parades, but
Here's Papa Jack Laine at his last set of drums. He was pictured Nov. 19, 1939, for the Times-Picayune.
Jack Laine, the Musician

What was Jack Laine, the musician, like? Was he a good drummer? What did his fellow musicians think about his playing? A number of them did voice an opinion as to his playing ability and his creative nature.

Manuel Mello, when asked to pick musicians for an “all star” band said he would choose Jack Laine on trap drums. Bud Loyacano was asked to name who he thought were the best drummers he had heard. He gave the names of Didi Stevens, Ragbaby Stevens and Jack Laine.

Emphasizing the fact that the bass drum was the most important drum in early New Orleans music, Johnny Lala expressed the fact that Jack Laine was a great bass drummer. He related, “Jack Laine would play bass drum on the parades. He was good. In a dance he played trap drums. On parades he always played bass drum.” Laine said he carried a 36-inch bass drum for parades.

Laine says he played “off beat” bass drum. “When a drummer began playing all the drums, the style of drumming changed,” remarked Laine.

“They got a certain beat right now if you notice - one steady beat, right now, the drum player, a steady beat, there’s no changes, no changes in the drum players, a steady beat, one beat just steady. You notice that after this you pay attention to it. You’ll see it’s steady beat. Not me, I’d make rolls, in mine you know, lots of rolls, lots of plumping (Note: Laine probably meant rudimental sticking), one thing and another and all sorts of that where it would fill out the proper place. That’s how I played.” Laine’s approach to drumming was very creative from his approach. It was closer to the modern style of “Be-bop” drumming than it was to the old style drumming of early New Orleans music.

Laine was heard to gently lay claim to the invention of a foot pedal to strike the bass drum - which freed a drummer’s hands for use on the snare drum (called the kettle drum in the early days by some). This combining of the marching band bass drum and snare drum into one was achieved by attaching a foot pedal of Laine’s own devising - a 5e baseball on a stick attached to a rocker arm. This enabled the drummer to sit and easily operate the foot pedal while letting him use his hands to play cymbals, snare and the many other percussive instruments used in Laine’s era. Laine used all the extras on his trap set.
the picture was being crucified. The management didn't approve and threw them out. They were replaced by Prof. Rosato's Band.

In Alfred Laine's interview he speaks of a black musician named Green. Green told him, "You better play good music (Green speaking to his own band), the Reliance Band is out here today." He was talking about being at Milneberg when he made the statement to his band. Green also stated that the colored bands copied a lot of Laine's stuff.

LaRocca said Alfred Laine, "Never wrote those tunes, he learned all those tunes while playing in Laine bands."

Laine was asked what the band played coming back from the funeral. He answered, "All kinds of stuff, ragtime stuff and any kind of stuff - until we'd get a block away from the corpse's house - we'd just play certain beats on the drum - pum, pum pum, pum, pum, pum, pum. When we get to the corpse's house, then we'd stop and as they carried out the corpse, we'd play different marches carryin' out the corpse. Then coming back, after we left the cemetery, we'd play the ragtime stuff."

Laine was asked what kind of music he played when he first started playing for money. He said, "The songs we played were all their own compositions. They had Lawrence Veca and Baquet. These and the rest would be whistling all kinds of funny stuff. When they got together, they would try to see if they could play that stuff over again. 'Livery Stable Blues' was one of their numbers. Achille Baquet and Alcide 'Yellow' Nunez composed it. They used to call the tunes different funny names like 'Pralines' and 'Meatball'. The band played 'Praline', 'Livery Stable Blues', 'Midnight (Moonlight on the Shovel)')."

"Dave Perkins, who was a first-class note-reader, came down one
night with a copy of 'Under Arms'. Perkins would hum it to the rest of the bunch. Everyone of those kids had an ear for music. Pretty soon the boys would be trying to play it, and Perkins would be trying to teach them," Laine remarked.

Laine recalled another march, "something about the American Flag." He was asked about the "Stars and Stripes Forever" and remarked "They played that one, too. These were all straight numbers that they ragged. We'd tear it up... We'd rag it up... I mean as far as we could go.

The first titled song Papa remembered his band playing was "Praline." Papa and the boys made up names for their numbers. Papa remembered "A Little Bunch of Whiskers on a Young Man Grew." His own favorite number was "Kentucky Days."

When asked about what music they played at carnival balls, Laine said, "There was no particular song they liked most, they liked everything. They didn't care what we played. I don't care how we played it or what we played, we got a big hand. They must have liked the music or otherwise they wouldn't have made such a racket. We clapped and hollered and whistled and clapped on the floor and all that sort of stuff. Play it over, play it again. They danced the two-step, the Schottische, etc. to the ragtime music. They couldn't dance a waltz to the stuff, a waltz is a different time."

Richard Allen, present acting curator of the Tulane Jazz Archives, conducted many of the oral interviews at the Archives, including Jack Laine's. He expressed the following opinion:

"Laine was a very nice man, soft spoken and intelligent. He loved music. New Orleans and the Fire Dept. When I asked him about what he thought his importance in New Orleans music was, he said, without hesitation: 'My influence on other musicians - the younger ones that played with me - the many that went on and made a name for themselves in music.'

"I believe that is where his importance lies; in the many musicians he gave the opportunity to play."

A list of the alumni of Jack Laine's bands reads like a who's who of New Orleans white jazz musicians, a list too long to print in an article on Jack Laine's life and activities, already shortened compared to the material available. This list includes: The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, Tom Brown's Band, The New Orleans Rhythm Kings, The Halfway House Orchestra, The Louisiana Five, and John Stein's Band (the band that included Jimmy Durante on piano).

On June 1, 1966, quietly and without fanfare, while under observation at Charity Hospital after being admitted for shortness of breath) Jack Laine's heart beat its final cadence, marking the end of a legend and an era.
Papa Jack Laine is seated in front of the rest of his Reliance Band in this 1910 photo. Standing, from left, are Manuel Mello, Alcide Nunez, Leonce Mello, Alfred Laine, Chink Martin, and Mike Stevens.
Alcide 'Yellow' Nunez

1892-1933

Alcide “Yellow” Nunez was born in New Orleans on March 17, 1884 and died on Sept. 2, 1934. The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz states:

“Nunez began playing professionally as a guitarist, but from about 1902 began playing clarinet. He played in numerous groups around New Orleans including Papa Jack Laine’s Reliance Band and Tom Brown’s Band. He played at the 101 Ranch with a trio near Storyville. He went to Chicago in 1916 with Johnny Stein’s Band. Nunez, with LaRocca, Ragas and Edwards formed the ODJB. Disagreements with LaRocca had Nunez joining a vaudeville tour and then joined Anton Lada’s Louisiana Five (1918-1919). He formed his own group in the mid 1920s and after 1927 he played with various groups around New Orleans.

Nunez played with a number of groups in New Orleans grouping up. One such group was the Stalebread Lacoume’s Band around 1906.
Stalebread’s Band- 1906. Nunex is playing guitar and 2nd on right.

Nunez was also a member of the New Orleans Police Band when he returned to New Orleans around 1927.
A very unusual musical ensemble was established in January of 1919. Unusual not because it was a jazz band, but that it’s instrumentation featured, not a cornet as lead, but a clarinet. The band consisted of: clarinet, trombone, piano, banjo and drums. The group was not to have a long live together but in its short time it was able to make a number of outstanding recordings. The musical influence of this group has been questioned but with its clarinet lead broke new ground in jazz ensemble instrumentation. Perhaps not having the influence of the ODJB (which the clarinetist of the La. 5 had been one of the original members of the ODJB) or the NORK, as we look back on his history, we can understand its importance in the framework of jazz history.

Often written history gives credit to the person who receives the most publicity or ‘blows his horn the loudest.’ Such is the case of this musically gifted clarinetist, Alcide “Yellow” Nunez. Among his peers he was thought of as one of the best early jazz clarinetist in New Orleans, only rivaled by Picou and the Bechet brothers. He was a generation before the more famous clarinetists: Bechet and Dodds, Shields, and the Mandeville clarinetist Isidore Fritz. In fact, Nunez may have been the first great early jazz clarinetist and should be remembered as such. He is only now being thought of as such.

One of the earliest bands to visit Chicago was the band lead by drummer Johnny Stein, this band being a predecessor of the ODJB.
Nunez was an individualist and was an influence on the music of the ODJB as it was becoming the most popular jazz band in the Chicago era of jazz history. His individual personality and talent was seen in the development of the ODJB but the individual attitudes of the cornetist Nick LaRocca and Nunez clashed and before the first jazz recording was made, Nunez was replaced by Larry Shields, a younger man. The first group that were represented when the ODJB first traveled to Chicago would undergo changes in personnel before the first recording was made, with members of the first group joining other jazz bands in Chicago or forming their own ensembles. Alcide “Yellow” Nunez
Billed as “World’s Greatest Jazz Clarinetist” Alcide was born on March 17th in the year 1884 making him one of the earliest born jazz musicians. (Bolden born in 1877, Bechet in 1897) Alcide was of Spanish/French decent, (the original Creole mixture) their descendants arriving in southern Louisiana from the Canary Islands. They established a residence in St. Bernard’s Parish. (By a young age Alcide was living in the Marigny district of New Orleans, the area that also was the residence of the famous New Orleans musician called the “Father of White Jazz” Jack “Papa” Laine.

Laine had known of the young Nunez who played a tin-whistle and eventually changed to guitar, the instrument he began on when he first played with an organized group led by John Spriccio, an early music teacher and violinist from New Orleans, possibly the first teacher of ‘jazz.’ (As stated in an article in the New York Dramatic Mirror of Dec. 14, 1918)

Nunez was playing guitar in one of his earliest band experiences along with Gus Shinder on piano, a cornet player and Stale Bread Lacoumbe. With the addition of Frank Christian on guitar, Nunez promptly decided to purchase and learn the clarinet. After a few weeks of practice Nunez had found ‘his’ instrument. Almost from the beginning (thought to be around 1902) Nunez seemed to adapt to playing in a ‘jazzy’ style and is said to “have these blue notes arranged as cadenzas.” This band became known as the “Right at ‘Em’s Razz Band.” (This information in included in a letter by Harry Huguenot that was published in the Feb. 8th, 1919 issue of “Vaudeville Volleys.”) It was said that one of their ‘big’ band numbers was “Bill Bailey,” a song that became a big hit when published in 1900. Nunez, after meeting Jack Laine played in one of Laine’s Reliance Bands from 1912 to 1916, getting the musical training offered by Laine and meeting a large number of Laine’s band members who were to be his co-patriots for years of performances. One account gives Nunez playing with Laine as early as 1905.
Like many of Laine’s band musicians Nunez was a ‘faker’ and could not read music. He had an exceptional ear and could pick up a song after just one hearing. Many of the early jazz musicians were ‘fakers.’ A list of these early jazz musicians that Nunez was associated with is like a who’s who in early jazz history. They include: John Stein, The Christian brothers, the Mello brothers, Chink Martin, Tom Brown, the Cassard brothers, Joe “Ragbaby” Stevens, LaRocca, Ed Edwards, Henry Ragas, Johnny Stein, Anton Lada, Ray Lopez and so many others.

Having the experience and the reputation as being one of the top early jazz clarinetists by his peers Nunez. While with the Reliance Band Nunez was a contributor to the repertoire of the band with new tunes, strains, and variations and novel effects on his clarinet. It is hard to know the number of early jazz clarinetist that were influenced by Nunez but among them are Pee Wee Russell and Tony Parenti. (Parenti remarked that “the best clarinetists when he was little were the Baquet brothers and Yellow Nunez. They played nice jazz and were known to all. At that time Larry Shields was just one of the boys coming up.”

In early jazz history fate took a hand in various musician’s careers. Notably early jazz musicians such as Buddy Petit, the great cornetist. He was first asked to go to Chicago to join King Oliver but turned him down. Oliver then sent for Louis Armstrong after first asking “Kid” Rena to join him after Petit’s refusal. Would the history of jazz have to been re-written if either Petit or Rena had gone to Chicago to play with Oliver? Surely the career of Armstrong with his great talent would have come to pass but perhaps not with Oliver. Such is the
fate of Nunez. While considered one of the top clarinetists around New Orleans, it was his exposure to national fame that was realized in Chicago.


In March of 1916 Nunez traveled to Chicago with a band that included: Johnny Stein as the leader/drummer, Nick LaRocca-cornet, Eddie Edwards-trombone, Henry Ragas-pianist. This is the band that evolved into the ODJB with Stein being replaced by Tony Sbarbaro. Early in October of the same year (1916) Nunez had a dispute with LaRocca and left the band, being replaced by Harry Shields. Thus destiny stepped in and Nunez was not the clarinetist on the first jazz recording. It is ironic as Nunez was said to be the originator of the ‘barnyard’ effects that were used on this first jazz recording of “Livery Stable Blues.” The authorship of this tune is still in controversy as the judge throughout a lawsuit about the tune’s authorship stating that the authorship of the tune was impossible to establish. With both LaRocca and Nunez (and others) claiming authorship.
ODJB-Sbarbaro, Edwards, LaRocca, Nunez & Ragas

Three unnamed Chicago Bands with Nunez

Nunez – 2<sup>nd</sup> on Left

Unnamed Chicago Band-Nunez in center
Both LaRocca and Nunez played in the Laine Reliance Band. Interviews with other Laine musicians remarked that all the band members would collectively compose or add to the band’s repertoire. Any musicians who had something to add could add it. Nunez was remembered as a musician with lots of ideas to add. New tunes were considered to be beneficial to the band. In these days these additions or tunes were not seen as having commercial value or potential to have them written down and copyrighted. Many of the early jazz tunes still are in doubt as to who and when a tune was first composed.

When Nunez left the LaRocca lead ODJB he joined Tom Brown’s Band and what was described as a switch, Larry Shields left Brown’s Band and joined LaRocca’s band. After a month or two Nunez then joined a band lead by Arnold Loyocano at Tommy Thomas’s Café. He stayed less than two months. It is also said that promoter Harry James had hired Nunez to go to New Orleans and form a new band which was to play at the Vernon Inn. In January of 1917 Bert Kelly hired bands that included Nunez to play clubs around Chicago. WE have a reference from a musical advertising flyer from around this time promoting a band that included: Nunez, Emil Christian-trombone, Ragbaby Stevens-drums, Kelly on banjo, and pianist Harry Foster.
Kelly, having gone to New York formed a new band and in August of 1918 a band consisting of: Kelly, Tom Brown, Ragbaby Stevens, Nunez and probably Cawley on piano began a stay at Reisenweber's Restaurant in New York. This band did not include a cornet, a traditional instrument in early New Orleans jazz. When the ODJB returned from a brief stay in New Orleans for rehearsals (they needed to replace Edwards who was drafted – Emile Christian took his place). These early jazz bands, being ‘faking’ bands, could not just hire a replacement as there was no music and the new member had to learn
the ‘tight’ tunes as the ODJB played. Stevens soon left the band and was replaced by Anton “Tony” Lada. (Lada and Nunez had worked together in New Orleans at the Grunwald Hotel.) Staying at Weisenwebers through December they began playing in theaters around New York City. It was during this period that Nunez met and married Hilda Emma Bagdahn on Dec. 14th, 1918.

It was in January of 1918 that the Louisiana Five was formed with: Nunez, Lada, Cawley, banjoist Carl Berger and trombonist Charlie Panelli. Nunez was its star performer and was listed as “World’s Greatest Jazz clarinetist.”

La. 5 – Lada, Panelli, Nunez, Berger & Cawley

It was first thought that the La. 5 was just a recording band but they did play a number of jobs for both dances and vaudeville, the band making a trip to Oklahoma to play for a rich oil millionaire. This is the time that Pee Wee Russell first heard and was influenced by Nunez.
But first, it was to make some memorable jazz recordings in the year 1919. Many of the songs recorded were co-authored by Nunez and Lada. During this time Nunez did play with other groups and probably this was the reason that many thought that the La 5 was just a recording band.

In November of 1921 Nunez returned to Chicago to play for Kelly at “Kelly’s Stable.” That job lasted about 2 years. Nunez continued to work around Chicago for a couple of years.

Having trouble with his teeth (finally getting a set of false teeth) and having been diagnosed with diabetes, Nunez decided to return to New Orleans. Finding out he could still lay clarinet Nunez began playing with the New Orleans Police Band (he was a driver of the patrol wagon now) and also it was at this time that Nunez learned to read music. He also began playing with a band called “The Moonlight Serenaders” over radio station WCBE in New Orleans. This station eventually changed its call letters to WDSU, a station that is still broadcasting.
Moonlight Serenaders (c.1927) l. to r. Nunez, Satter, Chappetta, Malloy.
others unknown

Nunez and Family

Alcide & Hilda
Nunez Family: Alicde, wife Hilda, children: Alcide, Robert & Eugene
At Little Woods, cc 1930

Nunez continued to play with various bands around New Orleans until he suffered a sudden massive heart attack on Sept. 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 1934, happening while he was driving the Police Wagon. He was 50 years old.

Anton Lada

Anton Lada was born in New Orleans around 1893 and died in Chicago in 1967. He played around New Orleans in his early teens and
led a group called the Five Southern Jazzers. He migrated to Chicago in December of 1914 with LaRocca, Nunez, Ragas and Edwards playing for two weeks at the Casino Gardens located at Clark and Kinzie Streets. After a quarrel the group broke up and LaRocca acquired Johnny Stein to play drums and Larry shields to play clarinet. This group became known as the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

Lada, with Nunez formed a new band consisting of: Lada, Nunez, Charlie Pannelli on trombone, Joe Calway, piano and Karl Kalberger on banjo. This group became known as the La. 5. The La 5 may have been the first New Orleans member band to reach New York City. The La 5 was playing at Bus Stanabies Restaurant at 39th and Broadway in New York as early as July, 1915. The ODJB is said to have arrived in the city in December of 1917, playing at Reisenweber's Restaurant.

After the La 5 broke up in 1924 Lada traveled to Hollywood and became musical director of KFWB and KFI.

The Recordings

Making a number of early jazz recordings solidified the band’s place in jazz history. The band recorded for Emerson, Columbia Edison and for Victor (the recordings were never released from Victor) Most of
the tunes recorded were listed as original numbers by the band. Unfortunately the recording company must have decided to add a cornet on the recordings (New Orleans cornetist Bernard “Doc” Berhendson) so we have no recordings with just Nunez playing clarinet without a cornet. (You can hear some of these recordings on the Internet at <redhotjazz.com>.)

Groves Dictionary of Jazz states: “The group took part in 18 recording sessions (mostly for Emerson) during which it recorded more than 50 tracks, including “Church St. Sobbin Blues” and “Slow & Easy.”

Arrangements of a number of the recorded tunes can be bought from Basin Street Press at <www.basinstreet.com> on the web for $7.50 each. The tunes available are:

- Be-Hap-E- Blues
- Foot Warmer
- Golden Rod Blues
- Klondyke Blues
- Laughing Blues
- Orange Blossom Blues
- Summer Days
- Thunderbolt Blues
- Yelping Hound Blues
- White Way Blues
- Blue Flame
Nunez’s tone was described as harsh and brittle and he was skilled in the production of ‘barnyard effects. It is also said that his vaudevillian approach to his music sometimes detracted from his performance. These barnyard effects were probably first heard in
“Tiger Rag.’ Jack Laine gives credit for these additions of ‘tiger’ roars to Nunez, Bacquet and Perkins, all members of Laine’s Reliance Band.

The barnyard effects on Livery Stable Blues was said to have been first developed as a style for the band when the band was playing one night and a certain woman began to cut indiscreet capers on the dance floor. One of the members of the band (Nunez) began ripping out the shrill neigh of a horse on his clarinet.

One of the songs “Yelping Hound Blues” contains some light ‘hokum dog imitations’ (these barnyard effects were popular with jazz audiences and were in a number of jazz novelties and jazz numbers of the time) but Nunez never seemed to let these imitations get in the way of his music.

With the cornet not in the instrumentation of the original La 5 the clarinet of Nunez was breaking new ground. As the trombonist Panelli filled in portamenti and sustained tones while Nunez created his part that is at once became the lead line and solo line, not like the traditional New Orleans clarinet part in a 5 or 6 piece New Orleans jazz ensemble. Nunez lays out the melody firmly on the beat and then reaching into the clarinet’s higher register with what was called the “swooping elegance of the ODJB’s Larry Shields. On the tune “Orange Blossom Rag” Nunez is as punchy as a cornet without losing the clarinet’s suppleness. Nunez’s playing was said to have been the first ‘jazz’ effects in a jazz orchestra.

Bat Streckler (of the Streckler Boat Lines) remarked that “Nunez was the first fellow I ever heard play jazz. He played at Beter’s place on Music and Claiborne Streets. He couldn’t read, but the minute he heard anything he could play it well.” Streckler had hired Armstrong for his boat for the Fate Marable Orchestra and Armstrong could not read either at the time he was hired.

Johnny Lala said about Nunez; “Very good, a wonderful faker.

While some state that Nunez’s playing was ‘crony’ it should be kept in mind that Nunez was a decade older than Larry Shields and Johnny Dodds Nunez dating from the formative years of jazz history. Along with Alphonse Picou, Nunez is one of the earliest New Orleans jazz clarinetists that we have a substantial number of recordings. It was said that Nunez had a similar style to George and Achille Baquet. One reissue of a Nunez recording stated that Nunez wasn’t an improviser. I believe this not to be true and Nunez was a very good improviser and faker. Raymond burke, the legendary New Orleans Clarinetist stated
that Nunez “had some good ideas.” Nunez, in his Laine band days was known for rearranging the context in which a strain appears.

In the recording of “Weary Blues” Nunez gives the tune a gentle swing and is said to have ‘variated the melody.’ The performance seems rather raggy and archaic. Nunez probably was playing that way from the early days when the tune first came out in 1912. Nunez, as we stated earlier, was an early performer and his style of playing was not as ‘modern’ as Johnny Dodds and other younger clarinetists when the recordings were made in 1919. Musicians like Beiderbecke, Armstrong, Roppolo and others were then taking this new music of the earlier generation in bolder and more expression and experimental directions. Nunez was truly one of the first early jazz musicians to develop the then new jazz styles.

Pee Wee Russell said of Nunez’s playing: “Nunez played the melody and then he got hot and played jazz. That was something.”

It is no doubt that Nunez’s playing was not as ‘modern’ as others that followed but jazz is not just improvising. It is a way of playing a given song in what is called a “jazz” style. Whether Nunez’s style is best described as playing musical variations it is still jazz. Jazz started out as dance music and not free improvisations of the performer. In early New Orleans jazz there was not solo improvised choruses as later appeared in the Chicago era of jazz. It was collective improvising or variation. As jazz developed into its unique style of playing dance music, the dances and the public could tell the different between a dance tune and a tune that was given a jazz interpretation. The tunes co-written by Nunez are jazz tunes being used and played as dance music. The arrangements available from Basin Street Press are dance arrangements and they do not contain choruses for free improvising. They were used as dance music and most of the time all the instruments are playing throughout the arrangement as was the style of published jazz music of the era. It was these arrangements that helped jazz acquire a national audience with local bands being able to play in the jazz style for their dancing public. With the release of the recordings and the music of the La 5 numerous locals bands could now play jazz. Actually the whole world could now play jazz music. How ignorant of writers to think that jazz could not be played by ‘legit’ musicians of the era. While they might have been ‘square’ they were still playing jazz tunes and in a jazz style that the dances could dance the newly invented jazz dances. This fact, then, is the important part that the La 5, their recordings and published
music led the charge for the world to be able to play jazz music for the dance.

**Thunderbolt Blues**

We will use the “Thunderbolt Blues” as an example of Nunez’s compositions. This is a Nunez original and credit is given on the music to: Nunez, Lada and Cawley. It was arranged by Leroy Walker and published in 1919 by Leo Feist, Inc, New York. The instrumentation – piano, piccolo, violin, clarinet in Bb, Cornet1 & 2 in Bb, trombone, cello, bass and drums.

There is a 4 bar introduction with the 3rd bar syncopated with a cakewalk rhythm. The first Section “A” is 16 bars, divided into two 8 bar sections, each with 4 bar phrases. The use of the cakewalk rhythm (a syncopated one) appears in bars 5,6,9 and 10 and repeated with the same theme in bars 13,14 and 19.

The harmonies are rather normal ones in the key of F major, the section also ending in F major with only a few altered chords (G7th and E 7th).

The second section “B” is also 16 bars in length. And modulates into Bb major. This section uses only two chords, Bb and F7th. No syncopation appears in this section.

In bar 37 the music marks the beginning of the trio but from bars 37 to 48 it is more like a transition in march tempo that leads to bar 49, which I think is the beginning of the real trio. This transition contains jazz like breaks for the trombone of two bars, followed by the full band. This is repeated in the next two bars (bars 41 to 44). The remaining 4 bars is a march like section that will sound very familiar to march compositions heard in many familiar marches. The section begins in “A” minor and ends in a half cadence leading to “D” the real trio.

Section “D” begins in C major but the introduction of an E7th is the positioning it in its relative minor “A” half way through in bar 57. It returns to the key of “C” in bar 65. Bars 71 to the last 10 bars there appears a cycle of 5th from E7, A7, G7 to its original key of “C” major.

We must point out at this time that there is a D.S. after the ”B” section, returning to “A” for a repeat of both “A” and “B” and then goes to section “C”.

Section “D” (the real trio) begins with the cakewalk rhythm, this time using the 16th,8th & 16th rhythmic version of the cakewalk rhythm, found in hundreds of early cakewalks. The trio is divided into phrases
two 8 bar phrases that are repeated material until ending bars. Without the repeats the piece is 80 bars long.

It is arranged with a full ensemble playing with no rest of any of the instruments. This style of arranging appears in almost all of the arrangements of the day. There are no openings for instrumental solos.

Free improvising was not found in early jazz arrangements and it would not be in use until around the time that Armstrong traveled to Chicago in 1922. We must remember that these early jazz bands were in reality dance bands. Their music was in the jazz style but not in regard to improvising. Yes they did have an interpretation of the melody and did add their own parts against the melody but did not have choruses for jazz solos. When playing for dancing there was very little solos work. It was ensemble playing that the musician was free to make up his own part to fit with the harmony and not get in the way of the melody. The melody, like its accompanying parts was more like embellishments and made up harmony parts. There are many interviews with the early jazz musicians that state that improvising was not a part of their music while playing around New Orleans. The early musicians perhaps did improvise at jam sessions or other jobs that were not dance jobs. When one transcribes a jazz record like one from the ODJB one finds no solo sections - only ensemble work.

This process of collective improvising is described by Jack Weber in the book “Hear me Talkin’ To Ya.” Weber states:

“Because he (sic: the leader) the band played it differently from the original. Other bandleaders stole it in turn, and, because they couldn’t read either, the tune was played with many variations. After the leader had shown the trumpet man the melody (or what he thought was the melody), the trumpeter would play it for the band, and the men would come in, making a complete arrangement. It was “every man for himself,” with the trumpeter taking the lead and everyone else filling in the best he could.”

He also states about how the parts changed as they would repeat it the next time it was played: “They couldn’t repeat - because they didn’t remember how they had played it.”

Thus the importance of a chord instrument. Many early jazz bands used women pianists. Most often they could read and would play the correct harmonies and chords, thus making it easier for the wind instruments to improvise or make up their parts. Their parts were not solo improvising but they made up parts that would fit the harmony and support the lead instrument.
Richard Jones spoke about how improvising was developed: “I would play over the new pieces because I could read. Then some other pianist would get up and try to play it; perhaps he could play it a little better. But they would forget it before they got through and would have to fill in with a break and other stuff. That’s where the improvisation came from.”

This then is the school that Nunez grew up with. It was his style, his training, and a way of playing music when a musician could not read and knew little about the elements of music. There is no way to discover when true improvising solos started. It seems to have been in the Chicago era. All the New Orleans musicians were playing collective improvisation, the lead embellishing the melody and the other musicians fitting their part to his and the harmony of the guitar or piano. Most played by ear and were fakers. Sometime between the time that the early jazzmen were trying to establish an ensemble sound and the Chicago era solo improvising began.

By forming a cornet-less ensemble it gave Nunez a chance to embellish the melody and not just play the clarinet in the traditional way of early New Orleans jazz. When given the chance Nunez could improvise with the best but until free improvising established it, he would continue to play in his usual style.

Remember, making up a part that fits the melody might not be called free improvising, as later was the case. Probably all the early New Orleans musicians began showing that they could improvise once it became the established element of jazz.

The ensemble work of the La. 5 was one of the best examples of an early jazz band playing a tune in a jazz orientated style leading from the cakewalk/rag to a true jazz sound and then to using the element of free improvising.
Thunderbolt Blues
Ringside Cafe, 1928. From left, Freddie Naumann, Chink Martin, Sharkey Bonano, Augie Shellange, Sidney Ardin, and Joe Capraro. Joe Mares Collection) Mares remembers that many white musicians like these played the fights.

Henry Allen's Brass Band from Algiers was typical of the era. Many of the musicians who played at sporting events also played with Allen, including Papa Celestin, standing second from the right.