

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE CORNET OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: SOME LONG-LOST NAMES

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Purpose

The purpose of this article is to rediscover the contributions and careers of some of the lesser-known nineteenth-century African American cornet soloists. African American cornetists such as Charles Joseph “Buddy” Bolden (1877-1931), Joseph Oliver (1885-1938), Freddy Keppard (1889-1933), and William C. Handy (1873-1958) are well-known. Their biographies, therefore, will not be investigated in this article.

Background

A significant performing vehicle for African American cornetists in the mid-nineteenth-century was the African American regiment band during the Civil War. Although not permitted to enlist in the Union Army until the fall of 1862, African Americans were involved in many regimental bands of their own in the union, among the most important of which were those of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw’s Fifty-fourth Regiment, the First Regiment of the Kansas Colored Volunteers, the Fifty-fifth Regiment of Massachusetts, and the 107th United States Colored Infantry. At the end of the Civil War, many of these instrumentalists returned to civilian life to perform in various musical organizations, but some remained in the service of their country. On 28 July 1866 Congress passed an act establishing two African American cavalry and four African American infantry regiments in the Army. Military bands of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry became famous units and served for more than twenty years on America’s frontier.¹ Three cornetists in the Twenty-fourth Infantry Band were as follows: first cornet, W. A. Gage; second cornet, William Quarles; and third cornet, G. Simpson.² The band of the Twenty-fourth Infantry was an outstanding organization, performing many compositions at Regimental Headquarters on 10 December 1899. The program included the *Twenty-fourth U. S. Infantry March* by Thompson, *Zampa* [Overture] by L.J.F. Hérold, *The Skaters Waltz* by Emile Waldteufel, selections from *Cavaleria rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni, *The Star-Spangled Banner*, and many other lighter selections.³

The civilian African American brass band was also a popular performing medium for the cornet. The most famous of these bands was The Frank Johnson Concert Band of Philadelphia. Frank (Francis) Johnson (1792-1844) was a virtuoso keyed bugle player, but also performed on the violin, trumpet, flute, cornet, and sang. Johnson actually heard the “new” *cornet à pistons* for the first time during his tour to England between November 1837 and June 1838. Although Johnson is best known for his keyed bugle playing, he performed on the *cornet à pistons*, but perhaps only twice, i.e. 19 January 1838 and 30 March 1838.⁴ During his stay in England his performances for Queen Victoria were so outstanding

that she presented him with a silver bugle.⁵ This performance occurred probably in April or May 1838.⁶ Other outstanding civilian African American bands included Theodore Finney's Brass Band of Detroit, dating back to the 1840s and conducted by Theodore Finney (1837-1899); Pedro Tinsley's Colored Band, conducted by Pedro Tinsley (1856-1899); and the Monumental Cornet Band of Baltimore, conducted by C.A. Johnson.⁷ In Richmond, Virginia, there was the thirteen-member band attached to the Light Infantry Blues in 1841, and in Wilmington, North Carolina, Allen's Brass Band was active during the 1850s and 1860s.

The minstrel show was arguably the most significant performing vehicle for the African American cornet player in the nineteenth century. It offered steady work, financial security, and a means to further careers for some of the best talent in the entertainment business.⁸ It was a way of life for countless musicians. There were approximately 1500 Negro actors and showmen listed in the federal census of 1890. This large number does not even reflect part-time minstrels or the many minstrel entertainers who listed themselves only as musicians.⁹

Troupes of African American entertainers date back to the 1840s, but it was not until April 1865 that the white manager W.H. Lee organized the Georgia Minstrels in Macon, Georgia. This was the first permanent troupe consisting of all African American entertainers. Many so-called "Georgia Minstrels" followed Lee's group and attempted to capitalize on their efforts, but his group should perhaps be considered the original Georgia Minstrels. In 1866 Sam Hague became the second white manager of the group. He changed its name to Sam Hague's Slave Troupe of Georgia Minstrels and added more entertainers. Gradually the African Americans in his organization, many of them ex-slaves, were replaced with whites in blackface makeup.¹⁰

The first permanent troupe of African American minstrels managed by an African American was the Georgia Minstrels of Indianapolis. The troupe became one of the most famous of all minstrel groups. It was managed by Charles "Barney" Hicks (c.1840-1902). In 1872 Hicks sold the troupe to white manager Charles Callender, who changed the name to Callender's Original Georgia Minstrels. It had a long history of different managers, including the white businessman J. H. Haverly and the white manager Gustav Frohman. It was known at various times as Haverley's Genuine Colored Minstrels and Haverly's European Minstrels. In 1872 it was reorganized by Charles Frohman and was then known as Callender's Consolidated Minstrels. Three European tours established the group as one of the best-known minstrel groups in the world. Other African American-managed troupes were the Bohee Brothers' Minstrels, M.B. Curtis All-Stars Afro-American Minstrels, Henry Hart's Minstrels, Hicks-Sawyer's Colored Minstrels, Hicks-McIntosh Minstrels, Ernest Hogan's Minstrels, Billy Kersands' Minstrels, and McCabe and Young's Minstrels. Large troupes owned by white managers included Al G. Field's Negro Minstrels, Lew Dockstader's Minstrels, Mahara's Minstrels, Richards and Pringle's Minstrels, Sprague's Georgia Minstrels, and W.S. Cleveland's Big Colored Minstrels.¹¹

The daily life of the African American minstrel cornetist was an arduous one. The schedule usually began before noon with a parade through the main streets of the city. The parade typically began with the managers in their carriages and continued with the

rest of the company in parade dress. The band was usually the last in the parade, with at least ten feet between pairs of musicians. Company banners advertising specialty acts were carried by local young men.¹² Music for parades were standard marches of the time, e.g., those of William Paris Chambers, Charles Lloyd Barnhouse, Robert Browne Hall, or John Philip Sousa.¹³ The company paraded to an open square or other public area and the band gave a performance of standard band literature, transcriptions of orchestral music, and arrangements of popular melodies, such as those of Stephen Foster or even *Dixie*, if the band traveled south.¹⁴ The company would then proceed to the hall in which the evening show was to occur and then be free for the rest of the day. Shortly before showtime the band would give a presentation in front of the hall to attract a crowd.

Throughout the show, the band provided music for the performers in solos, ensembles, and specialty acts¹⁵ and was often featured in concert numbers (see below). Shows were often in three parts during the middle to late nineteenth century. The first part often comprised songs of a sentimental or romantic nature. The second part, or the “olio,” was the showpiece of the evening. It comprised solos, specialty acts (including comedy acts, dancers, acrobats, ventriloquists, and monologists), plays, and concert numbers for the band (below). The third and last section typically was an ensemble finale.¹⁶

Some popular songs of the time were *In the Evening by the Moonlight*, *In the Morning by the Bright Light*, *Oh, Dem Golden Slippers*, and *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny* by James Bland (1854-1911).¹⁷ Other popular songs were *We Sat Beneath the Maple on the Hill*, *The Fatal Wedding*, *Down in Poverty Row*, and *In the Baggage Coach Ahead* by Gussie Lord Davis (1863-1899).¹⁸ Two songs made popular by Sam Lucas were *Grandfather's Clock* and *Carve Dat Possum*.¹⁹ His wife, Carrie Melvin Lucas, was primarily known as a violinist, but also played mandolin, guitar, banjo, and cornet.²⁰

Minstrel bands were often featured in special performances during the olio. James Lacy's band with Richards and Pringle's and Rusco & Holland's Big Minstrel Festival was such an ensemble and was praised as one of the best minstrel bands of the time.²¹ The band, with Saint Elmore Dodd on E \flat cornet (see entry below), performed compositions such as selections from *Cavaleria rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni, overtures from the *Barber of Seville* by Gioacchino Rossini, *Pique Dame* by Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, *William Tell* by Rossini, *Poet and Peasant* by Franz von Suppé, and a composition entitled *Journey through Africa* by A. von Suppe. With the band, Saint Elmore Dodd also performed his own cornet solo entitled *Us All Polka*.²² This band continued to perform outstanding selections for many years. Compositions such as *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna* by F. von Suppé; selections from *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Gaetano Donizetti and *Il trovatore* by Giuseppe Verdi; overtures to *Pique Dame* by Tchaikovsky and *William Tell* by Rossini; *Grand Fantasia on Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep* by Joseph P. Knight; and unspecified pieces by Bellini, Gounod, Verdi, and Sousa were found on many of their programs.²³

Biographies

A major resource for the following biographies is *The (Indianapolis) Freeman* (see note 2). Of the many musicians mentioned in *The Freeman*, the names of the cornetists below occur

frequently, along with a significant amount of biographical information. The entries below have been compiled from various issues of *The Freeman*, as well as other sources, cited in connection with the appropriate entries.

Perry George Lowery (born Topeka, KS, 11 October c.1870; died Cleveland, OH, 15 December 1942)²⁴

One of the most influential and well-documented of the lesser-known African American cornetists of the nineteenth century was Perry G. Lowery. His musical talent was noticed early by his brothers and he was encouraged to play the drums and later the cornet in the family band.²⁵ Within five years Lowery was performing in a number of local bands. In 1895 George Bailey, a trombone soloist and manager, recognized Lowery's talent and hired him to perform cornet in the band for the show "Darkest America" with the Mallery Brothers Minstrels. In 1896 Bailey hired him again to perform with the Wallace Circus. One year later Lowery became a cornetist with the Original Nashville Students and P. T. Wright's Colored Comedy Company.²⁶ In the summer of 1897 he went to Boston to study cornet with Henry C. Brown²⁷ (1827-1912), "the best cornet teacher in the United States."²⁸ He won honors performing on his cornet at the Hutchinson Musical Jubilee in Hutchinson, Kansas in 1898.²⁹ Lowery was a highly respected musician, one who was "the world's greatest cornet soloist and band master. . . his triple-tongue and execution is equal to any of the leading white soloists of the country."³⁰ In 1898, he performed as cornet soloist at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska, with the Original Nashville Students.³¹

In 1899 Lowery formed his own P.G. Lowery's Band and Vaudeville Company, which appeared with the Forepaugh and Sells Circus at Madison Square Garden in the same year. This was an historic moment, since prior to this date African Americans had never been hired as conductors of bands, but only as performers. Lowery was the first African American to take his own vaudeville show to the Circus. By 1910, as a result of Lowery's efforts there were at least fourteen white-managed circuses employing large African American companies. Lowery's own company had between eighteen and twenty-two members.

Lowery conducted his band for the Forepaugh and Sells Circus for the 1899 through the 1904 seasons. He also led his band as it performed for the Great Wallace Circus during the 1905 and 1906 seasons, continuing in 1907, he conducted the band when the name changed to the Wallace and Hagenbeck Circus.³² He remained with Wallace and Hagenbeck until 1915.³³ In the off-seasons Lowery was always busy with other professional obligations. During the winter seasons of 1900³⁴ and 1901³⁵ he conducted the Original Nashville Students; in 1902 no extra work for him was listed in any winter issue of *The Freeman*³⁶; in 1903 he was again with the Original Nashville Students;³⁷ in 1904, conductor of the Commercial Concert Band of Pittsburgh;³⁸ in 1905 no extra work was listed for Lowery.³⁹ In 1906 he was again with the Original Nashville Students,⁴⁰ while in 1907 he conducted the band for the First Regiment of the Knights of Pythias.⁴¹

Beginning in April 1915 Lowery conducted his own band for Richards and Pringle's Minstrels for forty-eight weeks,⁴² returning to Wallace and Hagenbeck later in 1916.⁴³ In 1919 he was hired to conduct his own band for the Ringling Brothers & Barnum and



PROF. P. G. LOWERY.

Figure 1

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Bailey Circus. He remained with the organization until 1931. His responsibilities after 1931 included conducting the bands for the Gorman Brothers Circus in 1934, the Cole Brothers Circus from 1935 to 1937, the Robbins Brothers Circus in 1938, the Downie Brothers Circus in 1939, and the Cole Brothers again from 1940 until his death in 1942.⁴⁴

A very kind man, Lowery always encouraged his performers to play well and he never embarrassed them in front of their peers. He was a kind teacher on the podium and not a dictator, giving his musicians many chances in rehearsals to perfect a difficult passage.⁴⁵ He never became conceited with success, for a very late entry in *The Freeman* mentions his congenial nature.⁴⁶



PROF. P. G. LOWERY, WITH HAGIN-
HECK-WALLACE SHOWE.

Figure 2

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Lowery was so highly respected as a cornetist that in 1901 he was awarded a gold- and silver-plated Boston 3-Star Cornet from the Boston Musical Instrument Manufactory. The instrument was custom-built for Lowery with heavier construction than usual. He actually performed on and promoted the Boston 3-Star Cornet for some time prior to 1901.⁴⁷

In 1911, while Lowery was with the Wallace and Hagenbeck Shows, he received a highly engraved gold [-plated] cornet in a plush-lined case from the Holton Instrument Manufacturing Company. Beginning in 1906 he promoted Holton band instruments in many advertisements in *The Freeman*.⁴⁸ In addition to performing and conducting, Lowery published an article entitled “The Cornet and Cornetists of Today”⁴⁹ in *The Freeman*.

Perry George Lowery became a most significant cornetist and bandmaster of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. He opened a doorway for other African American musicians in circuses, vaudeville, jazz, and concert stage, and raised the level of the circus band to one of a highly respectable stature.⁵⁰

Laura Edwards Prampin and Harry Prampin

The husband and wife team “The Prampins” were indeed “high-class” entertainers. Harry’s first professional responsibility came in 1892, when he was appointed bandmaster of the Merritt University Students. He then directed the bands of the McCabe & Young’s Minstrels. From 1895 to 1897 he directed the bands for Davis’ Uncle Tom’s Cabin company. He then conducted the bands for Salter and Martin’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin company and J. Ed. George’s Georgia Graduates.⁵¹ In 1898 he was conductor and cornetist in the band with P. T. Wright’s Original Nashville Students.⁵² In 1899 he was listed as conductor and cornetist with the band for P. T. Wright’s Original Nashville Students and L. E. Gideon’s Grand Afro-American Mastodon Minstrels under the management of Rusco & Holland, opening on 15 August 1899. Harry’s business address at this time was 2800 State Street, Chicago.⁵³ This band was also advertised as an exceptional group, one which did not have just “one star and twenty hams, but . . . TWELVE FIRST-CLASS PLAYERS. . . Your disbelief will cause you great surprise.”⁵⁴ The band performed overtures such as those from *Faust* by Charles Gounod, *William Tell* by Rossini, and an overture by Calixa Lavallée entitled *Bridal Rose*.⁵⁵

Prampin’s wife, Laura, was found only in the role of cornetist, performing with the Georgia Up-to-Date Minstrels, Harry’s band for Howe’s Great London Circus, and “The Prampins” cornet duo. She was considered “the greatest colored lady cornet soloist.”⁵⁶ It is apparent from the costumes in a publicity ad, reproduced in Figure 3, that Laura was portrayed as the “legit” player of the duo.⁵⁷

In 1900 Harry was the band director for the Melroy-Chandler minstrel band. He left the group early that same year to arrange and compose music for bandmasters and comedians with the firm Clermont & Tucker.⁵⁸ In July 1900 Harry was listed as the director of the Georgia Up-to-Date Minstrels for the 1900 season.⁵⁹ In September 1900 Harry may have experienced some problems with the management of the Minstrels, as he resigned his post as conductor, giving the baton to his friend Fountain Woods.⁶⁰ “The Prampins” gradually separated themselves from the Rusco & Holland Minstrels and played for the George & Hart’s Minstrel Extravaganza in early 1901,⁶¹ traveling the minstrel circuit in the summer.⁶² Laura returned to playing in the spring of 1902 as a cornet soloist at Crystal Grotto, Madison, Wisconsin.⁶³ In early 1902 their address was listed as Kansas City.⁶⁴ They traveled with Howe’s Great London Circus in the summer of 1902.⁶⁵ During their

MAKING IN THE BEST OF HEART.

BARNEY - THE PRAMPING - LARK



High Class Musical Entertainers. THE LARK

Figure 3

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Figure 4

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stay with Howe's Great London Circus, Laura performed cornet solos as a special soloist "accompanied by the big white band."⁶⁶

After playing with the circus, they went on the minstrel circuit again until November 1902. When the management of the troupe changed from Shayne, Roberts, and Gillen to McCarver, Reed, and McCarver late in 1902,⁶⁷ "The Prampins" left the circuit.

In 1904 and 1905 "The Prampins" went on a tour to San Francisco;⁶⁸ Stockton, California;⁶⁹ Sacramento⁷⁰; Ogden, Utah⁷¹; and Akron, Ohio.⁷² The last time "The Prampins"

appeared as a duo in *The Freeman* was for a special performance at a luncheon given for Sam Lucas, a vaudeville entertainer, at the Theatrical Professional Club in New York on 7 December 1905.⁷³ There are no references to Harry or Laura in *The Freeman* through 1916. It is possible they retired from active playing after this engagement.

Saint Elmore Dodd

Saint Elmore Dodd began his musical studies in 1893; he studied violin, piano, cello, string bass, and all the instruments of the brass family.⁷⁴ Saint Elmore was a composer, but his greatest fame was as an Eb cornet player and conductor. In 1898 and 1899 Dodd



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performed with the band for Richards and Pringle's and Rusco & Holland's Big Minstrel Festival under the direction of John Lacy.⁷⁵ By August 1899 he was publicized as the leader of Band No. 2 for the Festival.⁷⁶ Sometime shortly before 6 August 1898, the men in the band were invited to visit the C.G. Conn factory in Elkhart, Indiana. The famous Jules Levy (1838-1903) performed several selections for the band members, and Saint Elmore Dodd bought a gold [-plated?] cornet from the factory for \$100 during their visit.⁷⁷

During his tenure with the Richards and Pringle's and Rusco & Holland's Big Minstrel Festival, he performed his own E \flat cornet solo entitled, *Us All Polka*.⁷⁸ A multi-talented musician, Dodd also performed on the string bass with the Minstrel Festival.⁷⁹ He was considered to be one of "America's leading colored musicians."⁸⁰ A modest man, Dodd would admit only that he was competent on the string bass, but his talent was well-known "among people of all nationalities."⁸¹ In 1900 Dodd was hired by the Rusco & Holland agency⁸² and in 1901 he performed with the Original Nashville Students and Gideon's Minstrels.⁸³ He resigned his position as cornetist with the Minstrels in March 1901 and in the same month was performing with the Black Patti Company.⁸⁴ Later that year Dodd was hired as leader of the band and orchestra for the Harrison Brothers Minstrels,⁸⁵ considered to be one of the best on the circuit.⁸⁶ He was in such high demand that his salary with this group reportedly was \$500 per performance.⁸⁷ Dodd married Grace Jackson shortly before July 1901, and both performed with the Minstrels with great success.⁸⁸ They stayed with the Harrison Brothers Minstrels through April 1902.⁸⁹ By August 1902 Dodd was conducting the band for "A Rabbit's Foot" vaudeville show,⁹⁰ thrilling his audiences with his "five C's on the E \flat cornet."⁹¹ He also played the violin in the orchestra.⁹² The last entry for Dodd in *The Freeman* lists him on a band roster for the Shelbyville Fair in Shelby, Kentucky in September 1903.⁹³ The author of this article could find no more information about Dodd in *The Freeman* through 1916. The next two entries concerning him send regards to him, so it is possible that he retired from active playing shortly after the Fair.⁹⁴

Ulysses S[impson] Grant Patterson (born Franklin County, VA 1867; died Lynchburg, VA 11 April 1916)

U.S.G. Patterson was a significant African American cornet player and baritone singer. His family moved to the city of Salem in Roanoke County, Virginia, where Ulysses attended grade school.⁹⁵ According to his marriage record, he was born in Franklin County, Virginia in 1867 to Frank and Amelia Patterson.⁹⁶ On December 5, 1885, he entered the State Normal School of Tuskegee, Alabama, but stayed there only one semester. Two years later, in September 1888, he matriculated at the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute in Petersburg, Virginia.⁹⁷ His college career was a most interesting one, as his musical talents were noticed by the institution and he was hired to conduct the brass band while he was still a student.⁹⁸ He was the first bandleader and one of the first on the music faculty at the institution.⁹⁹ His talents were quite broad, as he was also asked in 1891 to teach voice and conduct the band.¹⁰⁰

After graduating from the Collegiate Institute in 1891, "he resigned his position in Petersburg, much to the regret of the Faculty, to accept a position at Spiller Academy,

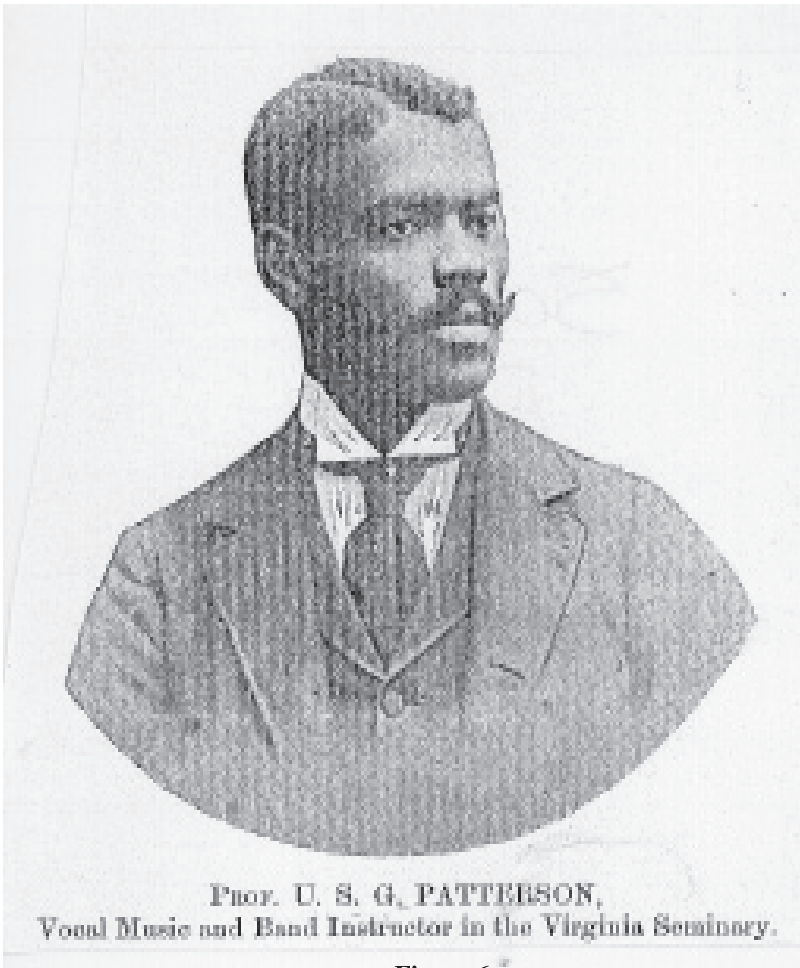


Figure 6

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Virginia State University)

Hampton, Virginia.”¹⁰¹ Being dissatisfied with his new job, he left Spiller after only two months to return to Salem, Virginia to teach music privately. The Virginia Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia asked him to teach voice and conduct the brass band, an offer which he accepted in 1891. He stayed in this position for four years. He was asked to teach at the State Normal School of Alabama, but he turned down the offer, preferring instead to remain in Virginia.¹⁰²

In 1896 Patterson left his position at the Seminary to play cornet and sing on the road. He was considered to be the “Finest Negro Cornetist in the State of Virginia, and

possibly the South.”¹⁰³ The fine quality of his voice was also recognized, as he toured the state of Virginia at least three times as the “Peerless Baritone.”¹⁰⁴ The biggest sensation of the Cleveland and Haverly’s Minstrels was his rendition of his own song, *I Never Loved Until I Met You*.¹⁰⁵ Two of his other favorite solos were *Let all Obey* and *Good Boy Uncle Sam*.¹⁰⁶ He performed on the cornet and sang baritone solos with Al. G. Field’s Colored Minstrels and conducted a male vocal quartet for the same organization.¹⁰⁷

In 1897 and 1898 Patterson is listed in the Lynchburg City Directory as the Principal of the Virginia Seminary. Below are his occupations and addresses as they appear in the Lynchburg City Directories from 1899 until his death.¹⁰⁸ On 27 April 1898 he married Gertrude Jones in Lynchburg, so his wife’s name accompanied his own in the directories from 1899 until 1915.

1899	teacher public schools	r 1820 Vine St.
1900	sub carrier	r 1820 Vine St
1902	carrier PO	1820 Vine St.
1904	carrier PO	1822 Vine St.
1905	carrier PO	1822 Vine St.
1906	letter carrier	r 512 7th St.
1907-1912	letter carrier	r 1308 Wise St.
1913-1915	carrier PO	h 1308 Wise St.
1916	Gertrude A. Patterson	h 1308 Wise St.

In the list above, r = residence and h = home. There are no listings for him in 1901 and 1903. His name disappears from the city directory in 1916, the year of his death.¹⁰⁹

When U.S.G. Patterson came to Lynchburg in 1897, he remained active as the choir director of the Court Street Baptist Church, still located today on the west corner of Court and Sixth Street. He was a member of the Colored Knights of the Knights of Pythias and highly respected by the Lynchburg community. At his funeral, members of both the white and African American communities were present. More than two thousand people attended, many of whom lined the streets leading to his final resting place in the Methodist Cemetery in Lynchburg.¹¹⁰

Frank Clermont (born New Orleans, LA 16 August 1869; died New York, NY 21 March 1913) and **Etta Minor Clermont**

Frank Clermont was an African American cornetist from New Orleans, Louisiana. As a young child he studied bass drum, tuba, and cornet. In 1899, after having attended Straight University in New Orleans, he began performing his cornet in local bands of Houma, Louisiana.¹¹¹ In 1890 he formed the Alliance Brass Band, which was considered the “Cream of the Crescent City.”¹¹² He was extremely active as a conductor and cornetist for many years, being associated with many brass bands in the New Orleans area, including



Figure 7

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La Boutee Brass Band, Fulling Brass Band, God Chaux Brass Band of Raceland, Cary Brass Band of Ariel, the Gibson Brass Band of Gibson, and the Ory Brass Band of St. Charles.¹¹³ In 1892 he made his debut on the minstrel circuit with M.F. Beasley's Colored Minstrels. For the next eight years he was associated with many shows, including the Crawford Brothers Big Minstrel Shows, Great Wallace Shows, Melroy Chandler Minstrels, and the Georgia Up-to-Date Minstrels. During the 1900-01 season he conducted both bands for the show "A Rabbit's Foot," produced by Chappelle's Musical Farce Comedy, touring Illinois, Kansas, and New York.¹¹⁴ In January 1900 he closed in Oklahoma with the Melroy-Chandler Minstrels.

As a co-owner of the firm of Clermont & Tucker, Frank Clermont's interests turned to music publishing after 1900. A famous song published by the firm was *Dat Gal Got to Give Me Back My Home*.¹¹⁵ Later that same year he became the bandmaster of Band No. 2 with Rusco & Holland's Nashville Students,¹¹⁶ remaining with them for at least one more season as cornetist, performing under the baton of Saint Elmore Dodd in February 1901.¹¹⁷

In the summer Frank closed with the group.¹¹⁸ In October 1901, Frank was employed by King Bush's Minstrels¹¹⁹ He was employed again by Rusco & Holland in February 1902.¹²⁰ Simultaneous with this employment he was an "attaché" for the Douglass Club and Moore's Amusement and Booking Bureau.¹²¹ In November 1902 Frank was cornetist and conductor of the band for Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels.¹²² During the winter of 1902 he made plans to appear as solo cornetist at the "New York Recreation Pier" during the following summer.¹²³ It is not known if these plans materialized, but by the fall of 1903 he was back with Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels.¹²⁴ He left the Minstrels in August 1904 due to illness.¹²⁵ Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels were quite active for many years, as 1904 was the group's twenty-ninth year.¹²⁶ In 1905 Frank and his wife, Etta Minor Clermonto (her stage name) toured the United States as the "Clermonts" cornet duo.¹²⁷ They soon joined the "14 Black Husars" vaudeville act, directed by Henderson Smith, and in December 1906 Etta gave an "egg-nog supper" in honor of her birthday for the members of the troupe.¹²⁸ In 1912 the "Clermonto and Minor" act appeared at the Pekin and Monogram Theatres in Chicago, but on their return trip to New York, Frank became ill.¹²⁹ He retired from theatrical work at this point to be the Secretary of the Colored Vaudeville Benevolent Association. His funeral was held at St. Mark's Catholic Church in New York City and he was interred at Cavalry Cemetery.¹³⁰ Etta may have retired from the theatre after Frank's death, as the author of this article could find no more information about Etta in *The Freeman* through 1914.

Golds W. Houseley (born Grandguff, MS 9 Jan 1877; died Philadelphia, PA 9 Jan 1906)

Obituaries were infrequent in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century newspapers; they were particularly rare in *The Freeman*. Golds W. Houseley was one of only three cornetists for whom this author could find an obituary in any issue of *The Freeman* from 1886 to 1912.¹³¹ At an early age Houseley's family moved to Natchez, Mississippi. Apparently his parents realized his special musical talents and decided to move to the larger community of Cincinnati, Ohio in 1890. Golds was described as "a cornetist of wide berth and promises to do much in the world of music."¹³² In 1898 he became solo cornetist for both the band and orchestra with John W. Vogel's Concert Company, considered "the greatest band of colored musicians in America,"¹³³ and he was said to possess "a natural inspiration."¹³⁴ In 1894 he was the band and orchestra leader for W.S. Cleveland's Minstrels and the "Old Kentucky Show."¹³⁵ For the next two years he performed in the show "Darkest America" under John W. Vogel's management.¹³⁶ Henderson Smith conducted the band while Oscar Lindsay led the orchestra. In 1897 Houseley became conductor of the orchestra, replacing Lindsay.¹³⁷ In 1898 he became the bandmaster and orchestra leader of Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels, staying with that organization until 1903.

During the off-seasons, Golds and three of his brothers, Angelo, Matt, and Beverly, played cornet with John W. Vogel's Operatic Extravaganza Company, doubling on the violin in the orchestra as well.¹³⁸ In 1899 he directed the orchestra for Richards and Pringle's George Minstrels, while F.T. Patrick directed its twenty-five-member concert band.¹³⁹ In the same year W. A. Rusco, manager of Rusco & Holland's Big Minstrel Festival, visited



G. W. HOUSELEY.

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the members of the show in Waukegan, Illinois and was impressed by the professional manner in which things were handled. They accomplished “in five days what here-to-fore has taken two weeks to do.”¹⁴⁰ The show was well equipped, with enough transportation to move special scenery and the stage settings for the entire show.

Houseley’s four brothers (including Sylvester) performed under him in Prof. G.W. Houseley’s Grand Concert Band with the Richards and Pringle’s Georgia Minstrels. Golds played the cornet,¹⁴¹ Beverly the drums,¹⁴² Angelo the trombone¹⁴³ and euphonium,¹⁴⁴ Matt the alto saxophone¹⁴⁵ and cornet,¹⁴⁶ while Sylvester played flute and piccolo.¹⁴⁷ Angelo was known as a virtuoso on the euphonium and was “probably the greatest euphonium player in the business.”¹⁴⁸ In 1900 Golds, Matt, Beverly, and Angelo collaborated in a musical act known as the “Four Houseley Brothers.”¹⁴⁹ In 1902 Golds purchased and performed on a gold [-plated] Henry Distin cornet manufactured in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, which cost \$125.¹⁵⁰ The brothers remained with the Georgia Minstrels until 1904, when the “Four Houseley Brothers” were hired by Billy Kersand’s Minstrels.¹⁵¹ After Golds’ death in 1906, Matt, Beverly, and Angelo comprised “The Houseley Brothers” musical act. They

performed for Earnest Hogan's Rufus Rastus Company. Multi-talented, the three brothers performed on many instruments, including saxophone, cornet, and trombone. Their show always maintained a very high professional standard.¹⁵²

Irene Howard

A place must be reserved for Irene Howard in this article. She is extremely significant, as the author of this document found her name in one of only two photographic features on African American women cornetists in *The Freeman* from 20 December 1890¹⁵³ through



Figure 9

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20 July 1912, the other being Laura Prampin (see above). Irene may well have begun her career in the nineteenth century, as it is difficult to establish her age either from the photograph or the information in *The Freeman*.

In July 1912 Irene performed several selections on the cornet and sang as well at the New Crown Garden Theatre in Indianapolis.¹⁵⁴ Her first cornet selection was a triple-tongued composition on a gold [-plated] cornet. The title of the composition, however, was not specified. She then sang a ballad in a “deep, rich baritone [!] voice.” Her second selection, on a silver cornet, began as a serious rendition of a “classic ballad.” At some point during the piece she pretended the instrument was not functioning properly and continued in the style of a rag. After the initial surprise, she continued to please the audience with a few more ragtime tunes. *The Freeman* does not specify whether it was her performance or that of another artist that held the audience for an additional half-hour on the evening of her performance.

Robert N. Thompson (born Nashville, TN 1861)

Although information on Thompson was sparse, he should be mentioned, for beginning in 1898 he was responsible for conducting one of the largest African American Minstrel bands on the circuit, the Big Military Band with Oliver Scott’s Refined Negro Minstrels.¹⁵⁵ This was quite a prestigious position, as the band had twenty-two musicians. Minstrel bands usually had eight to twelve performers—two to three cornets, two alto saxophones, one to two trombones, one bass, and one to two drums (sometimes the group was supplemented by one to two clarinets or a violin). This must have been a well-financed group, since it also had an orchestra of fourteen men, a drum corps of six members, a corps of eight mounted buglers, and a Hawaiian “Mirambo” band of six young men.

Known as “Eb Bob,” Thompson began his musical career as a young man, becoming the leader of the Sells Brothers’ Circus Band.¹⁵⁶ Joining the minstrel circuit, he later became the leader of W. A. Mahara’s Mammoth Minstrels. In 1897 he was the bandleader for Al. G. Field’s Colored Minstrels¹⁵⁷ and in 1898 he became the bandleader for Oliver Scott’s Minstrels and a member of Professor F. M. Hailstock’s Concert Orchestra.¹⁵⁸ It is likely that his instrument here was the violin, since “as a violinist he has but few equals in the colored profession.”¹⁵⁹

Conclusion

This author hopes that the article above has provided valuable information dealing with African American cornetists of the nineteenth century, their lives, and significant contributions to the culture of the time. He also hopes that it will stimulate interest among other researchers and provide a resource for further study.

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PROF. R. N. THOMPSON,

Band and Orchestra Leader with Oliver Scott's Refined Negro Minstrels.

Figure 10

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NOTES

¹Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), pp. 207-08, 258.

²*The (Indianapolis) Freeman*, 24 February 1900, p. 5, col. 2. The 24th Infantry Band had forty to fifty members and a library of music worth \$5000. It was considered to be far superior to any other musical organization in the United States Army (see "The 24th Infantry and its Famous Band, Stationed near

Montana's Capital," *The Freeman*, 31 October 1903, p. 6, cols. 1-3). *The Freeman* was an African American newspaper published weekly from 1884 to 1927. Issues of *The Freeman* from 2 December 1886 to 30 December 1916 were microfilmed by the Library of Congress for the Committee on Negro Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies in 1947. Today it is available from Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company (formerly UMI Company). The newspaper began as a political forum for the African American community and gradually became one of the largest and most extensive documents of the many aspects of the African American experience. The first reference to a cornetist did not appear until more than six years after the newspaper's inception in a publicity advertisement on 20 December 1890, p. 16, cols. 1-2. The featured cornetist was Miss Scotia Hill. She was billed as "The Lady Cornetist" at Ninth Presbyterian Church on 22 December 1890. The event was "A Grand Musical and Dramatic Entertainment" provided by White's Star Concert Company. The admission was 15 cents for adults and 10 cents for children.

³ *The Freeman*, 24 February 1900, p. 5, col. 2.

⁴ Eileen Southern, "Frank Johnson of Philadelphia and his Promenade Concerts," *The Black Perspective in Music* 5 (Spring 1977): 13-14.

⁵ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 109.

⁶ Southern, "Frank Johnson of Philadelphia and his Promenade Concerts," p. 9.

⁷ James M. Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People: Containing Brief Chapters on I. A Description of Music. II. The Music of Nature. III. A Glance at the History of Music. IV. The Power, Beauty, and Uses of Music. Following which are Given Sketches of the Lives of Remarkable Musicians of the Colored Race. With Portraits, and an Appendix Containing Copies of Music Composed by Colored Men* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1881; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), p. 329.

⁸ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 237; Ike Simond, *Old Slack's Reminiscence and Pocket History of the Colored Profession from 1865 to 1891* (Chicago: n.p., [1891]; reprint with preface by Francis Lee Utley and Introduction by Robert C. Toll. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1974), pp. xix, xxvi.

⁹ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 237.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; and Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Washington D. C.: The Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), p. 45.

¹² Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 234.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 235-36.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 237.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237. Southern mentions that on one occasion, W. C. Handy featured a cornet soloist accompanied by a saxophone quartet in a rendition of *The Holy City*.

¹⁶ Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 234; Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 235.

¹⁷ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 238; Toll, *Blacking Up*, p. 216; Simond, *Old Slack's Reminiscence and Pocket History of the Colored Profession from 1865 to 1891*, p. xx; Locke, *The Negro and His Music*, p. 49. Called "The World's Greatest Minstrel Man" (see Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*), James Bland wrote some 700 songs, which were very popular with both the African American and white communities. According to Simond, of all the many songs he wrote, he copyrighted only thirty-eight of them.

¹⁸ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 242.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 240; Toll, *Blacking Up*, p. 238.

²⁰ Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1981), p. 122; Simond, *Old Slack's Reminiscence*, p. 24; *Biographical Dictionary of*

Afro-American and African Musicians (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), s.v. "Lucas, Carrie Melvin," by Eileen Southern.

²¹ *The Freeman*, 30 December 1899, p. 12, col. 1.

²² *Ibid.* Other soloists featured with the band were C.P. Jones, performing *Fantasia on American Airs* (no instrument specified), Joe Dobbins [on cornet] performing *Crystal Beach* by L[ouis] F. Boos, and George Bailey, a trombonist and manager of many talented African American musicians of the time, in a rendition of the concert polka entitled *Les Folies Bergères* by F[rederick] N[eil] Innes.

A. von Suppe is in fact the name of a cornetist who performed at least one recital on the minstrel circuit during this time. See *The Freeman*, 11 October 1897, p. 8, cols. 1-2. In this recital he was to assist violinist Clarence C. White at Bethel A.M.E. Church at the Christmas Fair on 27 December 1897.

²³ *The Freeman*, 2 September 1899, p. 5, col. 3; 14 October 1899, p. 5, col. 3; 3 November 1906, p. 6, col. 2; and 27 August 1910, p. 6, col. 1.

²⁴ His birthday was listed as 11 October in *The Freeman*, 20 October 1906, p. 5, col. 1, and the year of birth, c.1870, agrees with the fact that in December 1897, Perry was listed as twenty-seven years of age (see "P. G. Lowery: Band Leader, Wright's Nashville Students," *The Freeman*, 25 December 1897, [Part 1], p. 3, col. 5). Two sources list Topeka as his birthplace. The first is "P. G. Lowery: Band Leader, Wright's Nashville Students," *The Freeman*, 25 December 1897, [Part 1], p. 3, col. 5, which also mentions that his family moved to Eureka when Perry was still "at an early age." The second source is information obtained from the Greenwood County Historical Society located in Eureka, Kansas (correspondence to the author, 16 March 2000). The Society's records indicate that Perry was born in Topeka, he was eight months old during the 1870 census (placing his year of birth in 1869 or even 1870), his family moved to a farm near Reece (nine miles west of Eureka in Greenwood County) when he was very young, and Perry died at his home in Cleveland on 15 December 1942. Norman E. Smith in *March Music Notes* (Lake Charles: Program Note Press, 1991, p. 279) mentions that the Kansas State Census of 1885 identifies Perry's mother as a laundress and the birthplace of her three sons as Kentucky. At the time, Perry was fourteen, Robert was eighteen, and Dallas, twelve; and the family was living on First Street in Topeka. This information may not truly reflect their ages or places of birth, but may have been given by their mother just for the sake of clarity. The information may also not have been questioned by the census taker, as many ex-slaves made a mass exodus from plantation states to the west and north shortly after the Civil War in search of freedom and land.

²⁵ "P. G. Lowery: Band Leader, Nashville Students," *The Freeman*, 25 December 1897, [Part 1], p. 3, col. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.* and *The Freeman*, 23 January 1897, p. 5, col. 1.

²⁷ "P. G. Lowery: Band Leader, Nashville Students," *The Freeman*, "25 December 1897, [Part 1], p. 3, col. 5; "P. G. Lowery," *The Freeman*, 24 December 1898, Part 2, p. 4, col. 6.

²⁸ "P. G. Lowery: Band Leader, Nashville Students," *The Freeman*, "25 December 1897, [Part 1], p. 3, col. 5.

²⁹ "P. G. Lowery," *The Freeman*, 24 December 1898, Part 2, p. 4, col. 6. According to *The Freeman*, 22 January 1898, p. 5, col. 2, Lowery was chosen "again" to be a contestant in this event and that after his instruction from Henry C. Brown, he would have been very disappointed had he scored any less than twelve points more than any other performer in the state. His scores were not specified. It is likely that he had competed in this event for at least four years prior to 1898, since according to *Afro Americans Enrich Greenwood County History* (Eureka, Kansas: Greenwood County Historical Society, 1997, p. 2), Lowery had won honors in this contest as early as 1894.

³⁰ "P. G. Lowery," *The Freeman*, 24 December 1898, Part 2, p. 4, col. 6.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See "P. G. Lowery, Originator: Circus, Minstrel and Vaudeville – A Recent Phase of the Show Business," *The Freeman Supplement*, 9 July 1910, p. 1, cols. 3-4. See also *The Freeman*, 27 April 1907, p. 5, col. 1. It was also during this period that Lowery wrote the galop *Prince of Decorah* (Decorah, Iowa: Marsh Music House, 1905), dedicated to B. O. Marsh, founder of Marsh Music House in 1892 (see Smith, *March Music Notes*, p. 280).

³³ "P. G. Lowery returns to the Circus Field," *The Freeman*, 25 March 1916, p. 5, col. 2. The parade of his minstrels was always a well-attended event and "was to the city [of Indianapolis] what Barnum & Bailey's parade is to the largest city in the west" (see *The Freeman*, 26 March 1910, p. 7, cols. 3-4). According to Smith, Lowery also performed as solo cornet/conductor with his own band for the Norris & Rowe Circus in 1909 and the Sparks Circus in 1913 (Smith, *March Music Notes*, p. 280). Lowery also performed in 1908 for King Edward VII of England, who presented him with a gold [-plated?] cornet as a token of his appreciation for his virtuoso cornet playing (*Afro Americans Enrich Greenwood County History*, p. 5).

³⁴ *The Freeman*, 26 January 1901, p. 5, col. 2.

³⁵ *The Freeman*, 21 December 1901, p. 5, cols. 1-2; *The Freeman*, 30 November 1901, p. 5, col. 2.

³⁶ It is during this winter season that P. G. Lowery planned on launching his Progressive Musical Enterprise, consisting of two companies. The first was his own band for the Forepaugh and Sells Circus. The second was the band with the Luella Forepaugh Wild West Company, conducted by H. Qualli Clark (*The Freeman*, 14 February 1903, p. 5, col. 2). The second company apparently survived only one season, as the author of this article could find no reference to it in *The Freeman* after 8 August 1903 (p. 5, col. 2). Also see Clifford Edward Williams, "P. G. Lowery and His Musical Enterprises: The Formative Years" in *Feel The Spirit: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Music*, ed. George R. Keck and Sherrill V. Martin (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 71.

³⁷ *The Freeman*, 5 December 1903, p. 5, col. 1; *The Freeman*, 14 December 1904, p. 5, col. 1.

³⁸ *The Freeman*, 24 December 1904, p. 5, col. 1. The thirty-five-piece band gave its premiere performance in Turner's Hall, Pittsburgh on 27 February 1905 (see "Commercial Concert Band," *The Freeman*, 18 February 1905, p. 5, cols. 1-2) and its second performance on 6 April 1905 (see *The Freeman*, 8 April 1905, p. 5, cols. 1-2).

³⁹ *The Freeman*, 4 November 1905, p. 5, col. 1. Here he lists his winter address as 59 East Longstreet, Columbus, Ohio. See n. 33.

⁴⁰ *The Freeman*, 16 February 1907, p. 5, col. 4.

⁴¹ "Pittsburgh, PA." *The Freeman*, 29 February 1908, p. 5, cols. 4-5. On the concert of 23 February 1908, the compositions included [The Overture to the] *Poet and Peasant*; *Trombone Smiles* with B. B. Mitchell on trombone; a cornet solo by Lowery, and *Yours Truly*, a march. A comical piece by James Reese Europe (1881-1919) was performed as well. P. G. Lowery's responsibilities varied during his seasons off from the circus after 1907. During the winters of 1908 and 1909, he conducted the Lowery & Morgan's Minstrels band, but during the winter of 1910 he apparently took a vacation, for *The Freeman*, 10 December, 1910, p. 5, col. 1 mentions that he and other members of his Musical Enterprise were to be in Columbus, Ohio "indefinitely." In the winter of 1911, he conducted the Lowery & Morgan Minstrels band again and during the winters of 1912 and 1913, he directed the Fashion Plate Minstrels. During the winter of 1914, no mention was made of Lowery's professional responsibilities in *The Freeman*. One article entitled, "Famous Bandmaster, P. G. Lowery, receives many good offers," 3 April 1915, p. 6, col. 5, indicates that he was undecided about returning to Wallace and Hagenbeck at this time.

⁴² "P. G. Lowery returns to the Circus Field," *The Freeman*, 25 March 1916, p. 5, col. 2.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Smith, *March Music Notes*, p. 280.

⁴⁵ "P. G. Lowery," *The Freeman*, 27 July 1907, p. 2, col. 2.

⁴⁶ "P. G. Lowery, Great Cornet Virtuoso in Indianapolis," *The Freeman*, 12 September 1914, p. 6, col. 3. According to Norman E. Smith in *March Music Notes* ([Lake Charles: Program Note Press, 1991], pp. 230, 280), Lowery was such a virtuoso cornetist and fine conductor that Fred Jewell (1875-1936) dedicated his circus march *High and Mighty* (Cincinnati: Fillmore Music House, 1917) to Lowery. Fred Jewell conducted the Wallace and Hagenbeck Circus band for the 1916-1917 season, so it is possible that he met Lowery during this time. Apparently both Fred Jewell and Merle Evans, conductor of the large Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus band from 1919 to 1969, tried to have Lowery transferred as cornetist to this band, but due to racial segregation, the management declined the request (see Smith, *March Music Notes*, pp. 128, 230, 280).

⁴⁷ *The Freeman*, 29 June 1901, p. 5, col. 2. The instrument was thoroughly tested by his teacher (Henry C. Brown) two weeks prior to Lowery's arrival in Boston with his own P. G. Lowery's Band and Vaudeville Company performing with the Forepaugh and Sells Circus.

⁴⁸ At least twenty identical advertisements for Holton instruments appeared in various weekly issues in *The Freeman* between 5 May 1906 and 6 June 1908. Each advertisement begins by praising Lowery's abilities on the cornet and continues with a letter from Lowery which praises Holton's "New Proportion" cornet as "THE cornet."

⁴⁹ "The Cornet and Cornetists of To-Day," *The Freeman*, 13 January 1900, p. 5, cols. 1-2. Southern *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 300) mentions that Lowery wrote a column for years, but the author of this article could find only the one in January. Perhaps some of the entries about other cornet players or information dealing with P. G. Lowery's Progressive Musical Enterprise were in fact part of that series, but they were unsigned and untitled. Lowery's two-column article was well-written and contained many interesting opinions about cornetists and insights about teaching the instrument. He stressed importance of discipline and developing a trained ear when learning the cornet. He believed that tone, body position, breath control, and tonguing could be taught, but not correct phrasing, which was an innate ability. Having a good tone was the most important aspect of playing. One cornetist that he praised in his article was Harry Prampin (see entry above). He had a large tone and could play pedal tones very easily and well. Saint Elmore Dodd (see entry above) was also mentioned in the article as a cornetist who had an incredible upper range on the E \flat cornet. His tone on the instrument was full, unlike the tone produced by other performers on the instrument. William C. Handy was praised for his modesty and kindness, and his playing was assertive but not overpowering. Other cornetists were mentioned in the article, but with little or no additional information. Among them were Joe Dobbins (see note 131) of Chicago, N. R. Walker of Boston, A. H. Montgomery of New York, Eugene McDonald of St. Louis, and Buddie Robinson of Chicago. The younger generation of promising cornetists included George Bryant of Prampin's Concert Band; J. J. Smith, Lowery's student; and James Wilson of the Nashville Students Band No. 2. He praised "Boquett's thirty-six studies." This was certainly a typographical error, as N. Bousquet's *Thirty-Six Celebrated Studies* makes sense in this context. Three leading bandmasters in Lowery's opinion were Henderson Smith, James Lacy, and R[obert] N. Thompson (see entry above). He discussed the responsibilities of the bandmaster as well, especially the importance of the leader being a positive and encouraging influence on the players. He believed that it was essential for aspiring musicians to take private lessons in order to show real progress, and encouraged anyone to write him concerning the instrument.

⁵⁰ In 1996 The Windjammers, a national organization of retired circus musicians, located in Sarasota, Florida, honored P. G. Lowery by inducting him into the Circus Hall of Fame, and in 1997 a festival honoring the Lowery family and other African Americans of the area was held in Eureka, Kansas from 4 to 6 July 1997 and was sponsored by the Greenwood County Historical Society. On 5 July

1997, as a part of this festival, a marker was dedicated at the site of the Lowery family cemetery and homestead in Eureka, Kansas (see *Afro Americans Enrich Greenwood County History*, p. 7). Although there is no record to indicate who is buried at this cemetery, as many as thirty people may be interred here, as it served as the burial site of the African American community for many years.

⁵¹ "Harry Prampin," *The Freeman*, 30 December 1899, p. 12, col 3.

⁵² *The Freeman*, 1 October 1898, p. 5, cols. 3-4.

⁵³ Advertisement, *The Freeman*, 10 June 1899, p. 5, cols. 2-3.

⁵⁴ *The Freeman*, 18 February 1899, p. 5, cols. 5-6. This is the first time the Harry was advertised with his "Nashville Students" band.

⁵⁵ *The Freeman*, 9 September 1899, p. 5, col. 5. The information in this issue of the newspaper mentions also that the band's repertoire included an unidentified overture, "Wang." [perhaps an abbreviated misprint for Wagner?].

⁵⁶ *The Freeman*, 10 May 1902, p. 5, col. 2. In October 1898, Harry arranged to have his wife, Laura, take a course of cornet lessons at the "Chicago Conservatory" (see *The Freeman*, 8 October 1898, p. 5, col. 2). From the entry it is not clear if she played the instrument before this date.

⁵⁷ Publicity advertisement, *The Freeman*, 29 December 1900, p. 3, cols 1-4. Apparently Laura was also the only African American lady trap drummer, as she performed drums with Dan Desdunes' "peerless orchestra" in January 1900 (see *The Freeman*, 20 January 1900, p. 5, col. 1).

⁵⁸ *The Freeman*, 20 January 1900, p. 5, col. 2.

⁵⁹ *The Freeman*, 28 July 1900, p. 5, col. 1.

⁶⁰ *The Freeman*, 8 September 1900, p. 5, col. 3. According to this article, "The Prampins" were no longer the main attraction of the show. They were replaced by "The Gillams," another husband and wife team with the same names, Harry and Laura. This may perhaps be another reason for Harry's resignation as conductor of the band and the couple's subsequent departure from the show early in 1901.

⁶¹ *The Freeman*, 9 February 1901, p. 5, col. 2.

⁶² *The Freeman*, 4 May 1901, p. 5, col. 2.

⁶³ *The Freeman*, 14 March 1903, p. 5, col. 1.

⁶⁴ *The Freeman*, 22 March 1902, p. 5, col. 1.

⁶⁵ *The Freeman*, 10 May 1902, p. 5, col. 2.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *The Freeman*, 8 November 1902, p. 5, col. 2. Their address here is 2731 Armour Ave., Chicago, Illinois.

⁶⁸ *The Freeman*, 2 January 1904, p. 6, col. 1.

⁶⁹ *The Freeman*, 22 October 1904, p. 5, col. 1.

⁷⁰ *The Freeman*, 29 October 1904, p. 5 col. 1.

⁷¹ *The Freeman*, 11 March 1905, p. 5, col. 1.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *The Freeman*, 30 December 1905, p. 5, col. 3.

⁷⁴ "Gideon's Minstrel Carnival: Prof. S. E. Dodd," *The Freeman*, 29 December 1900, p. 18, col. 1.

With a range of "6 C's" [the exact range was specified], Dodd was praised here as a wonder on the Eb cornet, "the instrument that has always been invincible to man."

⁷⁵ *The Freeman*, 6 August 1898, p. 5, col. 1; 17 December 1898, p. 5, col. 3; 12 August 1899, p. 5, col. 2.

⁷⁶ *The Freeman*, 12 August 1899, p. 5, col. 2.

⁷⁷ *The Freeman*, 6 August 1898, p. 5, col. 1. According to *The Freeman*, 26 February 1898, p. 5, col. 1, Jules Levy also played for members of Al. G. Field's Negro Minstrels. While in Elkhart, Indiana,

the band for the troupe gave a concert at the C. G. Conn factory. They were greeted “with open hands and mouths.” Fred Simpson, trombonist with the group performed *Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep* during the concert. Some of the men in the group visited the Conn Conservatory of Music and were entertained by Jules Levy, “the matchless cornet soloist.”

⁷⁸“Jas. S. Lacy,” *The Freeman*, 30 December 1899, p. 12, col. 1. Other soloists for the season included C. P. Jones [instrument not specified], who played *Fantasia on American Airs*, Joe Dobbins, who played *Crystal Beach* by Louis F. Boos (1858-1935) on his cornet, and George Bailey, who played the concert polka [on his trombone] entitled *Les Folies Bergères* by Frederick N. Innes (1854-1926). Dodd performed his cornet polka, the *Us All Polka*, on other occasions as well (see *The Freeman*, 25 March 1899, p. 5, col. 3). The cadenza in the piece apparently had a range of “5 C’s.”

⁷⁹ *The Freeman*, 10 September 1898, p. 5, col. 3.

⁸⁰“Gideon’s Minstrel Carnival,” *The Freeman*, 29 December 1900, p. 18, col. 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *The Freeman*, 9 June 1900, p. 5, col. 3.

⁸³ *The Freeman*, 9 March 1901, p. 5, col. 3. He also informed his readers here that he was leaving the show and that he was available for a new contract.

⁸⁴ *The Freeman*, 23 March 1901, p. 5, col. 3. Black Patti, or Madame Matilda Sissieretta Jones (1869-1933), was the most celebrated of the African American soprano prima donnas. She was born in Portsmouth, Virginia and moved to Providence, Rhode Island with their family in c. 1876. After having studied voice privately at the Providence Academy of Music and the New England Conservatory of Music, she gave her premiere performance in April 1888 at a Flora Batson (1864-1906) concert in New York City promoted by the Bergen Star Concert Company. For eight more years she astounded audiences in the United States and Europe. For more information see Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, pp. 246, 300, 301-303, 418.

⁸⁵ *The Freeman*, 15 June 1901, p. 5, col. 2; 20 July 1901, p. 5, col. 2.

⁸⁶ *The Freeman*, 8 June 1901, p. 5, col. 1. Here it is known that his responsibilities included solo cornet, as well.

⁸⁷ *The Freeman*, 15 June 1901, p. 5, col. 2.

⁸⁸ *The Freeman*, 6 July 1901, p. 5, col. 1. Grace was never listed as an instrumentalist at any time.

⁸⁹ *The Freeman*, 19 April 1902, p. 5, col. 2. Here the minstrels played at the Buckingham Theatre in Tampa, Florida.

⁹⁰ *The Freeman*, 6 August 1902, p. 5, col. 2.

⁹¹ *The Freeman*, 30 August 1902, p. 5, col. 3. He may have had the range of six (see n. 58) or even seven C’s (see *The Freeman*, 6 October 1900, p. 5, col. 3)! On 6 October 1900, he mentioned that he added the *Triumphal Bay State* and *Gabriella* polkas to his repertoire. No composers are listed.

⁹² *The Freeman*, 17 January 1903, p. 5, col. 3.

⁹³ *The Freeman*, 19 September 1903, p. 5, col. 2.

⁹⁴ *The Freeman*, 24 October 1903, p. 5, col. 2; *The Freeman*, 9 April 1904, p. 5, col. 3.

⁹⁵ Robert Chissell, ed., “Normal Department, 1891,” *The Alumni Journal of the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute* (Ninth year, April 1896), p. 12.

⁹⁶ John Long, 6 January 2000. E-mail communication to the author. John Long is the director of the Salem Historical Museum, Salem, Virginia. He found Patterson’s marriage record, which indicates that he married Gertrude Jones in Lynchburg on 27 April 1898. According to the 1910 census, he was married to Gertude, thirty-three years old at the time, with four children; Dorothy, age ten; Mamie, age eight; Ulysses Jr., age seven; and Ferdinand, age five. Gertrude’s mother was living with them at the time. His race was listed as mulatto.

⁹⁷ Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, Petersburg, Virginia, *Register of Names of Students: V.*

N. & C. I. (1888).

⁹⁸ *Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, Petersburg, Virginia: Catalogue, 1888-89*, p. [6]. The author of this article is presently teaching at the same institution as Patterson did over 100 years ago. The institution was founded on 6 March 1882 as the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute. Its formation was the result of a bill introduced to the Virginia House of Delegates by Representative Alfred W. Harris of Dinwiddie County, Virginia. An African American attorney in Petersburg, Virginia, Harris served as a Delegate from 1881 to 1888. The institution was the first state supported “historically black” college in Virginia. It began with 126 students, seven faculty members, one building, and thirty-three acres of land. Today it has more than 4,000 students, majors in nearly forty undergraduate and graduate programs, five schools, and a total of 652 acres of land (*Virginia State University: Founder’s Day Observance* [Program], 5 March 2000, p. [5]).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, Petersburg, Virginia: Catalogue, 1891-92*, p. [4].

¹⁰¹ Robert G. Chissell, ed., “Normal Department, 1891,” p. 12.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ “Prof. U. S. G. Patterson: Solo Cornetist and Vocal Director of Al. G. Fields Negro Minstrels,” *The Freeman*, 25 December 1897, [Part 1], p. 2, cols. 5-6.

¹⁰⁶ *The Freeman*, 8 October 1898, p. 5, col. 2.

¹⁰⁷ *The Freeman*, 6 November 1897, p. 5, col. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Susan Pillow, letter to author, 7 January 2000. Pillow is the research assistant for the Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia and provided information about the directory listings. She provided also information about three lots of land bought by Patterson. One lot was purchased on 11 September 1902 from Mary F. Jones (his mother-in-law) on Vine Street near Locust (listed in *Index of Lynchburg Deeds of Grantees/Grantors*, Book 65, p. 284). Another was purchased on 10 April 1906 from Frank McCaron on Wise between 13th and 14th Streets (listed in the *Index of Lynchburg Deeds of Grantees/Grantors*, Book 74, p. 171), and the third was purchased from Annie Minor on the corner of 6th Street and Park Avenue (listed in the *Index of Lynchburg Deeds of Grantees/Grantors*, Book 90, p. 276; no date given by Pillow).

¹⁰⁹ Susan Pillow, letter to author. In 1916, Gertrude’s mother, Mary, a nurse, moved into their home. Both Patterson and his mother-in-law were listed as “white” in the Streets Section of the City Directory for 1916. Gertrude was listed as “colored.”

¹¹⁰ According to Pillow, his burial records indicate that Patterson died at his residence (1308 Wise Street, Lynchburg, Virginia) of Lobar pneumonia influenza. According to his burial records, he was forty-six years, three months, and seven days old. This information may be erroneous, as it would indicate that his birthday was either 4 [or 5] January 1870 and this would have made him only fifteen years old when he attended the State Normal School in Tuskegee, Alabama. Patterson’s obituary (“Largely Attended Funeral,” *Lynchburg News*, 12 April 1916, p. 6, col. 4) is most revealing about the respect that the city of Lynchburg had for him. “The church, which is said to hold over 2,000 people, was thronged and fully as many were in the street outside, whilst others lined the route to the Methodist cemetery where the remains were later laid to rest.” The church columns, Patterson’s music stand, and the choir (on the left) were draped in black. Reverend L. R. W. Johnson presided, as well as Dr. R. C. Wood, president of Virginia Seminary and College, and other ministers. John Mitchell, The Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias, gave the funeral rites. There were other officers of the Grand Lodge and representatives of many others present.

¹¹¹ *The Freeman*, 11 August 1900, p. 5, col. 1.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ *The Freeman*, 20 January 1900, p. 5, col. 2.

¹¹⁶ *The Freeman*, 8 September 1900, p. 5, col. 1.

¹¹⁷ *The Freeman*, 23 February 1901, p. 5, col. 3.

¹¹⁸ *The Freeman*, 6 July 1901, p. 5, col. 1.

¹¹⁹ *The Freeman*, 12 October 1901, p. 5, col. 1.

¹²⁰ *The Freeman*, 1 February 1902, p. 5, col. 2.

¹²¹ *The Freeman*, 28 June 1902, p. 5, col. 2. The address for the agency was 114 W. 31st Street, New York, NY. His wife, at this time, was a member of the Joe Moore's Gotham Girls Company, touring Canada and New York State.

¹²² *The Freeman*, 8 November 1902, p. 5, cols. 1-2.

¹²³ *The Freeman*, 6 December 1902, p. 5, col. 2.

¹²⁴ *The Freeman*, 5 September 1903, p. 5, col. 3.

¹²⁵ *The Freeman*, 30 August 1904, p. 5, col. 2.

¹²⁶ *The Freeman*, 14 May 1904, p. 5, cols. 1-2.

¹²⁷ *The Freeman*, 19 August 1905, p. 5, col. 3; *The Freeman*, 2 September 1905, p. 5, col. 1; *The Freeman*, 21 October 1905, p. 5, col. 1; *The Freeman*, 10 March 1906, p. 5, col. 2; *The Freeman*, 31 March 1906, p. 5, col. 1; *The Freeman*, 7 April 1906

¹²⁸ "Fourteen Black Husars," *The Freeman*, 26 January 1907, p. 6, col. 2-3. The party was given on "New Year's night," but the place was not specified. The twelve speakers for the affair included the director of the troupe, Henderson Smith, discussing his past experiences with musicians, the origin of the "Fourteen Black Husars," and the first news reports he received from America while the troupe was recently touring Europe; and Frank Clermont, speaking about "The Bandmaster."

¹²⁹ "Death of Frank Clermont," *The Freeman*, 12 April 1913, p. 5, col. 2.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ *The Freeman*, "Obituary," 27 January 1906, p. 5, col. 2. The other cornetists for whom an obituary could be found were Frank Clermont (see above) and Joe Dobbins (see *The Freeman*, 23 February 1901, p. 5, col. 3). Dobbins' obituary carries no title and gives no birth date. It does mention that he died on 27 January 1901 and left two sisters and a brother. He started the musical profession at the age of fifteen and by 1886 he was the bandleader of the Young Men's Brass Band of Memphis, Tennessee. He left that organization on 3 January 1889 to join McCabe & Young's Minstrels [occupation not specified]. In 1897, he was associated with Taylor's Big Black Boom, Stetson's Uncle Tom's Cabin, and led the Ninth Battalion Band of Chicago. In 1898, he joined Oliver Scott's Minstrels (see *The Freeman*, 10 September 1898, p. 5, col.2) and in 1899, he was with the Georgia Minstrels. The obituary does not mention his instrument, but his name is associated with the cornet many times in *The Freeman* including 10 September 1898, p. 5, col.2; 30 December 1899, p. 13, cols. 3-4; and 13 January 1900, p. 5, cols. 1-2 (see n. 49 above).

¹³² *The Freeman*, 26 February 1898, p. 5, cols. 2-3.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ *The Freeman*, "Obituary," 27 January 1906, p. 5, col. 2.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ *The Freeman*, 26 February 1898, p. 5, col. 2-3.

¹³⁹ *The Freeman*, 19 August 1899, p. 5, col. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. At this time, Rusco & Holland's Minstrels had already merged with Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels. The official name of this merger was "Richards and Pringle's and Rusco & Holland's Big Minstrel Festival." Although the date of the merger can not be determined precisely from issues of *The Freeman*, their names appear together for the first time on 11 June 1898, p. 5, col. 1.

¹⁴¹ *The Freeman*, 2 September 1899, p. 5, col. 3; advertisement, *The Freeman*, 29 December 1900, p. 21, cols. 1-4.

¹⁴² *The Freeman*, 16 September 1899, p. 5, col. 2.; advertisement, *The Freeman*, 29 December 1900, p. 21, cols. 1-4.

¹⁴³ *The Freeman*, 16 September 1899, p. 5, col. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *The Freeman*, 2 September 1899, p. 5, col. 3; advertisement, *The Freeman*, 29 December 1900, p. 21, cols. 1-4.

¹⁴⁵ *The Freeman*, 2 September 1899, p. 5, cols. 2-3.

¹⁴⁶ Advertisement, *The Freeman*, 29 December 1900, p. 21, cols. 1-5.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Sylvester died on 8 July 1901 (see "Sylvester Houseley," *The Freeman*, 27 July 1901, p. 5, col. 3).

¹⁴⁸ *The Freeman*, 26 February 1898, p. 5, cols. 1-3.

¹⁴⁹ *The Freeman*, 9 June 1900, p. 5, col. 3.

¹⁵⁰ *The Freeman*, 20 December 1902, p. 5, col. 3. The specific model of the cornet was not mentioned.

¹⁵¹ "Obituary," *The Freeman*, 27 January 1906, p. 5, col. 2.

¹⁵² "The Housley [*sic*] Brothers," *The Freeman*, 14 April 1906, p. 5, cols. 4-5.

¹⁵³ See n. 2 above.

¹⁵⁴ "The New Crown Garden: Irene Howard Gossip of the Stage," *The Freeman*, 20 July 1912, p. 5, col. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *The Freeman*, 3 February 1900, p. 5, cols. 2-3.

¹⁵⁶ *The Freeman*, 24 December 1898, Part 2, p. 7, cols. 1-2.

¹⁵⁷ *The Freeman*, 6 November 1897, p. 5, col. 2. He purchased a new silver E♭ cornet for \$75 while he was with the show. The manufacturer was not specified.

¹⁵⁸ *The Freeman*, 24 December 1898, Part 2, p. 7, cols. 1-2.

¹⁵⁹ *The Freeman*, 3 February 1900, p. 5, cols. 2-3.