

THE TIMES AS REFLECTED IN THE VICTOR BLACK LABEL
MILITARY BAND RECORDINGS FROM 1900 TO 1927*

by

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Part 2. A Period of Dance, Show, Educational and Foreign Offerings

The DSEF Period, which extended from 1909 to 1917, was a time of intense productivity of dance music, musical comedy tunes (show), educational recordings (primarily of folk music) and foreign (also domestic ethnic) market selections.

At the beginning of 1909 the Victor Company took pride in being considered the largest phonograph record company in the world. The Company made more records than anyone else, the quality of the product was excellent and the bulk of the recording artists, worldwide, were under Victor contracts. It was therefore understandable that the Company would be the last of the 'name' companies to offer the double-faced record for sale.

Readers of Part 1. "A Period of Imaginative Offerings" which appeared in the ARSC Journal, 1972, Vol. IV, no. 1/2/3, pp. 33-46, may remember that the Pryor Band, the first 'in house' band, was formed during 1903. From 1903 to 1907 black label record sales increased from 1,561,422 to 6,104,770. The Pryor Band, by its ever-increasing number of recordings, participated significantly in this volume. By 1908 most of the military band recordings produced by the Victor Company were made by Arthur Pryor's Band. Thus it is no surprise to read in the March, 1909 catalogue that three of the first four double-sided releases in the newly-assigned 16000 series were Pryor's: 16000—"Strains from Stern's Medley Overture"/"Centennial March" (Bolan), 16001—

*This is the second part of a three-part series.

"Teddy Bears' Picnic" (Bratton)/"Happy Days March" (Levi) and 16003—"Virginia—Two-step" (Ringleben). Of the first 200 10" released 34 carried the Pryor Band name. Some that enjoyed brisk sales were "Army Bugle Calls" (Cornets and Trumpets), "National Airs of Great Britain"/"National Hymn of Austria", "Happy Heine" (Lampe), "Forest Whispers" (Losey)/"Battleship Connecticut March" (Fulton), "American Patriotic Airs" and "A Southern Belle" (Eugene)/"By the Swanee River" (Myddleton).

18 of the first 54 of the 12" double-faced 35000 series, also listed in the March 1909 catalogue, had the Pryor imprint. Popular sellers included "Gloworm" (Lincke)/"Mill On The Cliff Overture" (Reissinger), "My Maryland—Fantasia"/"Death of Custer" (Wagner) and "Celeste Aida from 'Aida'" (Verdi)—Arthur Pryor, trombone solo/"Il Guarany Overture" (Gomez). The honor of having the first went to Sousa's Band: 35000—"Carmen Selection" (Bizet)/"Der Freischutz Overture" (Weber).

New single-sided recordings continued until 1911. The last commercial 10" number was 5856—"Prelude in C# minor" (Rachmaninoff) by the Pryor Band, recorded on 5-12-11, announced in the August catalogue. The last single-sided 12" record was listed in the September supplement: 31839—"Fourth Symphony—Finale" (Tschaikowsky), again, by Pryor's Band.

With the vast accumulation of master recordings in the vaults it was logical to reissue as many selections as possible on double-sided discs. This practice continued as late as May, 1913, with the listing of 17302—"Washington Post March" (Sousa)/"El Capitan March" (Sousa) by the Sousa Band.

Pryor's Band recorded on consecutive days from 2-8-09 to 2-12-09. To what types of musical tastes was Victor catering? Marches: "Yankee Dude" (Lampe), "The Yankee Prince" (Cohan-Redfield), "The Bronco Buster" (Sweet), "Soldiers and Sweethearts" (Hall), "Boston Commandery" (Carter) and "Spirit Invincible" (Brand); orchestral classics:

"Robespierre Overture--Finale" (Litolff), "Bohemian Girl Overture" (Balfe) and "William Tell Overture" (Rossini); medleys of popular songs: "Cuddle Up A Little Closer"--"Starlight Maid"--"When You Steal A Kiss or Two" and "It Looks Like A Big Night Tonight"--"Hoo Hoo Ain't You Coming Out Tonight"--"Roses Bring Dreams Of You"--"Garden Of Dreams"--"Just Some One" and "Sullivan"--"Are You The Girl I Met At Sherry's"--"Are You Sincere"--"Meet Me In Rose Time Rose"; rhythmical dances: "Dill Pickles Two-Step" (Johnson), "Frozen Bill Cake Walk" (Pryor), "Autumn Leaves Barn Dance" (DeVilleville), "Morning Cy! Barn Dance" (Peters), "Canoeing" (Pryor) and "Darkies Spring Song" (Van Alstyne); and foreign selections: "Over The Waves Waltz--for dancing (Rosas), "Amina Serenade" (Lincke), "Chimes Of Normandy" (Planquette), "Serenade--Les Millions d'Arlequin" (Drigo), "La Czarine--Mazurka Russe" (Ganne) and "Rule Britannia--God Save The King".

Today Arthur Pryor is virtually unknown as a prolific composer. The reader can observe his keen interest in contemporary events through titles such as "Teddy In Africa"--3-30-09, "The Arcade Girl"--4-13-10, "Goody Two Shoes Caprice"--6-14-10, "Mr. Black Man Cake March"--5-8-11 and "That Flying Rag"--11-15-11.

The production of rag time tunes accelerated rapidly from 1909 to 1912 with "Sweetmeats" (Wenrich)--5-7-09, "Tabasco" (Johnson)--12-8-09, "The Cubanola Glide" (Harry Von Tilzer)--2-18-10, "Wild Cherries" (Snyder)--4-21-10, "Temptation" (Lodge and O'Hare)--6-7-10, "Yankiana"--9-22-10, "A Rhinewine" (Hennelberg)--1-5-11, "Canhanibalmo" (Pryor)--5-8-11, "Ramschackle" (Snyder)--11-15-11, "A Cyclone In Darktown" (Barnard)--11-16-11, "Ragtime Violin"--4-10-12, "Ragtime Drummer" (Lent)--4-11-12, "The Red Rose" (Wenrich)--4-12-12, "Miss Trombone" (Filmore)--9-4-12 and "Ragtime Soldier Man"--9-10-12. The rage for two-step dancing erupted during 1913 and the interest in ragtime gradually receded, eventually giving way to jazz. By 1917 few rags

were being played and composed and they were no longer part of the mainstream of the popular music scene.

The broad current of the Pryor Band recorded output included marches; transcriptions of orchestral works; operatic excerpts, overtures, suites, reminiscences, scenes, gems and potpourris; national anthems of foreign lands; sacred music; occasional pieces such as intermezzi, reveries, fantasies, novelties and romanzas; medleys of popular tunes; southern novelties; popular songs; show tunes; selections from operettas; various types of foreign market records for export (particularly to South and Central America); and dance types such as jigs, two-steps, three-steps, turkey trots, quick-steps, waltzes, polkas, tangos and schottisches. Comprehension of the magnitude of the Pryor Band's recording activities can be gained from the fact that 982 takes were recorded during 1909 through 1912.

For those who have an interest in America's popular song writers of the day some names appear frequently: Egbert Van Alstyne, Percy Wenrich, Victor Herbert, S.R. Henry, Harry Von Tilzer, Frank R. Seltzer, Ted Snyder, Neil Moret, Thomas S. Allen, Irving Berlin, Fred W. Hager and Theodore Morse.

If any part of the musical mainstream can be said to reflect these years it can be seen most readily in the chauvinistic titles of the marches: "Salute The Flag" (Pierson)—5-3-09, "Pride Of The Nation" (E.H. Droop)—5-7-09, "The Standard Bearers" (Fahrbach)—1-4-11 and "National Spirit" (Hager)—9-5-12.

Walter B. Rogers directed the Sousa Band from 12-27-09 to 12-31-09 in a variety of marches and selections from light opera and orchestral and operatic works. From 12-11-11 to 12-14-11 Edwin H. Clarke handled the conducting. Similar types of selections were recorded. Arthur Pryor led a combination of Sousa Band men and Victor Orchestra

'house' members from 5-13-12 to 5-17-12. The 5-14-12 session was unusual in that the entire day was spent recording 'Educational Department' selections for the burgeoning school music trade. During 1909 Philadelphia Public School music teachers Elizabeth Burchenal and C. Ward Crampton published 'Folk Dance Music' and 'Folk Dances and Singing Games'. With Cecil Sharp, an authority on English folk music, the three were frequent on-the-spot advisors for the next six years to the various recording personnel.

5-14-12 folk song recordings included 17103-A-"Hansel and Gretel" (German Folk Dance) (Humperdinck)/-B-"In The Spring" (French Child's Song) and 17104-A-1)"London Bridge" (English) 2) "Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush" (American)/-B-"Round and Round The Village". The trend had been set on 9-27-11 when a 'Special Band' (this name appears in the Entry Book but the Victor (Military) Band is on the discs) made seven well known marches for the schools. On 10-11-11 the Victor Military Band recorded 17001-A-"Highland Fling" (Scotch Folk Dance)/-B-"Kamarinskaiia" (Russian Folk Dance), 17002-A-"St. Patrick's Day" (Irish Jig)/-B-"Reap The Flax" (Swedish Folk Dance) and 17003-A-"Csardas" (Hungarian Folk Dance)/-B-"Oxdansen" (Swedish Folk Dance). All were from Burchenal and Crampton publications.

The Sousa Band, with all Sousa men, returned to make records, again under the directorship of Arthur Pryor, from 10-10-12 to 12-13-12. Medleys of popular and show tunes appeared with increasing frequency beginning in 1909. By 1912 all of the bands were recording medleys. 17249--12-10-12, by the Sousa Band, is an example: -A-"On The Mississippi Medley" consisting of "On The Mississippi"--"Oh What A Beautiful Dream You Seem"--"Good-Bye Rose"--"The Wedding Glide"--"My Marguerite"--"My Sum Sumurun Girl" (all that in three minutes!) and -B-"You're My Baby Medley" which has "Be My Little Baby Bumble Bee"--"My Little Persian Rose"--"When I Waltz With You"--"When You're Away"--"You're My Baby".

Although the Sousa and Pryor Bands recorded all types of music during these years their appearances in the recording studios after 1912 steadily diminished. It was left to a newly formed 'house' band, the Victor Band, directed by several leaders, to introduce the majority of the dance and show music. The Band consisted of about a dozen artists, many of whom were occasional recording soloists. The well known were Clement Barone—flute, Louis Christie—clarinet, Emil Keneke—cornet, Herman Conrad—tuba and William Reitz—xylophone and bells.

The Victor Band began its career by making "Public School Educational Records" on 10-11-11. An early 'hit' disc was "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (Irving Berlin)—10-17-11. Walter B. Rogers, formerly a Sousa cornet soloist and recording artist of the previous decade, directed the Band on 1-24-12 in marches, rags and a variety of medleys. By 1913 E.T. King became an alternate conductor and scored a success with his first record: 12" 35277-A—"Waiting For The Robert E. Lee" (subtitled in the style of the time 'Medley Turkey-Trot—Two-Step').

During 1913 the dance craze became a musical overflow with the one-step, two-step, rag, march, tango, trot, turkey-trot, glide, waltz, hesitation, Boston hesitation and others with various foreign types such as paso-doble, rumba, paso-redoblado, maxixe, etc., frequently strung together under the umbrella of the medley. The 'hey-day' of the military band as a medium of the expression of popular music reached its climax between 1913 and 1917. Of necessity only a few examples of the Victor Band can readily be cited: "Sands Of The Desert Medley Waltz" (Ernest R. Ball)—3-11-13, "Trail Of The Lonesome Pine Medley Turkey Trot"—4-29-13, "Pullman Porters On Parade One Step and Turkey Trot" (Maurice Abrahams)—10-9-13, "The Junk Man Rag One Step or Two Step" (C. Luckyth Roberts)—11-6-13, "San-Fran-Pan-American March and Two Step" (Joel P. Cronin)—12-2-13, "Leg Of Mutton One Step, Two Step and Turkey Trot (Sigmund Romberg)—12-18-13, "A Little Love, A Little Kiss Waltz Hesitation" (Leo

Silesu)—1-29-14, "High Jinks One Step or Trot" (Rudolf Friml)—3-3-14, "Half and Half, A 'Castle' Creation" (Arthur N. Green)—4-14-14 (promoted by the famous dancing partnership of Irene and Vernon Castle), "The Memphis Blues One Step" (W.C. Handy)—7-15-14 (the first Victor recording of the blues), "Sweetie Dear Fox Trot" (Jordan Edwards)—8-6-14 (first mention of the fox trot), "Pryor Fox Trot" (Arthur Pryor)—10-5-14, "When You Wore A Tulip and I Wore A Big Red Rose Medley One Step"—10-29-14, "The Girl From Utah Medley Fox Trot (Jerome Kern)—11-24-14, "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier Medley One Step" (Al Piantadosi)—3-4-15, "The Harry Von Tilzer Popular Medley One Step"—5-6-15, "Those Charlie Chaplin Feet Medley One Step" (H. Abrahams)—5-25-15, "Hip Hip Hooray One Step" (Raymond Hubbell)—12-7-15, "Very Good Eddie Medley One Step" (Jerome Kern)—2-2-16, "Walkin' The Dog Fox Trot" (Shelton Brooks)—4-28-16, "Pretty Baby Medley Fox Trot" (Egbert Van Alstyne—Richard Whiting)—9-15-16, "Joe Turner Blues Medley Fox Trot (Introducing 'St. Louis Blues')" (W.C. Handy)—10-19-16, "Brown Skin Fox Trot" (Rudolf Friml)—11-28-16, "Century Girl Medley Fox Trot" (Irving Berlin)—12-12-16, "Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag and Smile, Smile, Smile" (Felix Powell)—12-26-16, "Honolulu, America Loves You One Step"—1-18-17, "America, Here's My Boy Medley One Step"—4-26-17 and "When It's Circus Day Back Home Medley One Step"—4-26-17.

Through these years Rogers and King alternated in directing the Band. Rogers left the Company after the 3-21-16 session and Joseph Pasternack assumed the directorship on 1-16-17. Much has to be left unsaid about the gathering war clouds and our entry into the War on April 6, 1917. Reference through titles can be found to such diverse topics as the Panama Canal, Alaska, the movies, the automobile, the airplane, trains, boats, romance (spooning, moon, apple blossom time, honeymoon, orange blossoms, roses, dreams) the states (California, Kentucky, Michigan, Virginia, Alabama, Florida, Maryland, Wisconsin, Carolina, Tennessee), the golden west,

rivers (Mississippi, Shannon, Swanee), girls (Marguerite, Molly, Daisy, June, Nell, Nanette, Cecelia, Susie, Annie, Henrietta, Eve, Rebecca, Millicent, Thelma, Peggy, Marie, Ruth), boys (Johnny, Freddy, Reuben, Tommy, Jack, Bill, Joe), the Irish, Hungarian tunes, Constantinople, Tokyo, Bagdad, Mexico, the chestnut tree, The Hippodrome, dreams of childhood, the Fall River Line, the front porch, a table at Rector's, stradivari, the sea, the Alamo, Chinatown, soldiers, President Wilson, Dixieland, San Francisco, New Orleans, Monterey, Broadway, apples, Egypt, Zanzibar, Japan, Shanghai and points and subjects beyond. Music types of later eras can be found in tunes such as "Society Swing" (Frantzen)—1-15-11 and "Syncopated Boogie Boo" (George W. Meyer)—7-13-13.

192 titles of educational selections, primarily for use in the elementary schools, were made during 52 sessions from 9-27-11 to 3-20-17. 40 of these sessions involved the Victor Band. The Sousa Band was called upon on four occasions, the Pryor Band three times and the Conway Band assisted on five days.

Patrick Conway came from Ithaca, New York and by the time of his first Victor recording date on 7-19-12 he was known nationally through his touring Band. During each summer from 1912 to 1916 the Conway Band held recording sessions, usually lasting a week or, on occasion, two. Conway immediately entered the mainstream of the recorded musical scene by emphasizing dance music. Diverse offerings, usually built into medleys, included popular songs, show tunes, rags, marches, waltzes, operatic selections, nostalgic melodies, serenades, caprices, two-steps, overtures and the like. He was especially fond of parodies.

Random choices of the Conway Band selections include "Morse Medley Overture"—7-3-13, "Uncle Tom's Cabin, A Dream Picture Of The South" (J. Bodewalt Lampe)—7-7-13, "I Love Her Oh, Oh, Oh

Medley"—7-7-13, "The Wedding Of The Rose Intermezzo" (Leon Jessel)—7-9-13, "La Vraie Polka Bresilienne" (P.J. de O. Pinto)—8-3-14, "Patrol Of The Scouts" (E. Boccalari)—8-6-14, "The Heavens Are Telling from 'The Creation'" (Joseph Haydn)—8-2-15, "Ragging The Scale Fox Trot" (Edward Claypool)—8-2-15, "In Alabama, Dear, With You Medley Fox Trot"—9-20-15, "Memories Of The War—1860-63" (arr. L. P. Laurendeau)—9-21-15, "Childrens Games"/"Childrens Songs"—9-23-15, "They Made It Twice As Nice As Paradise And They Called It Dixieland Medley Fox Trot"—7-5-16, "Radetzky March" (J. Strauss, Op. 228)—7-7-16, "Slidus Trombonus—A Trombone Comedy" (Mayhew L. Lake)—7-10-16 and "Siss-Boom Ah! One Step Trot" (Chester W. Smith)—7-11-16.

Three other bands deserve recognition for their activities. Two catered to specialized musical tastes: Oreste Vessella's Italian Band and Bohumir Kryl's Bohemian Band. Vessella had established a reputation in the Philadelphia--Atlantic City area during the 1890's. He carried on the fine tradition of Feruccio Giannini and The Royal Italian Marine Band of earlier years with selections such as "O Sole Mio" (E. DiCapua) with cornet solo by Michele Rinaldi—3-28-11, "Inglesina March" (Delle Cese)—3-30-11, "Fra Diavolo Selection" (Auber) with cornet solo by Rinaldi and trombone solo by P. Rosano—3-31-11, "Blushing Maiden March" (Oreste Vessella)—4-7-11, "Moonlight Sonata—First Movement" (Beethoven)—4-7-11, "The Rosary" (Nevin) with cornet solo by Rinaldi—4-21-11, "Pasadena Day March" (Marco Vessella)—11-5-12, "Mefistofele Selection" (A. Boito)—11-5-12, "Morning, Noon and Night In Vienna Overture" (Von Suppe)—11-7-12, "Masked Ball Finale" (Verdi)—11-8-12, "Jewels Of The Madonna Intermezzo" (Wolf-Ferrari)—12-10-13 and "La Boheme Selection" (Puccini)—1-15-14. Michele Rinaldi performed twelve solos between 1911 and 1914.

Bohumir Kryl, a man possessed with one of the most phenomenal cornet techniques ever recorded, cut masters from 5-15-11 to 5-19-11. Most of his titles were for the Bohemian foreign (domestic) market. "Turner's Triumphant March" (Dvoracek)—5-15-11, "Love

and Life In Vienna Waltz" (Komzak)—5-15-11, "Sakuntala Overture" (Goldmark)—5-16-11 and "Carnival Of Venice" with solo by Kryl—5-17-11 reflect his heritage.

The third band, The United States Marine Band, under the direction of William H. Santleman, recorded on two occasions. Readers might be quite surprised to know that this Band made the first domestic recording of "The Maple Leaf Rag" (Scott Joplin) on 10-15-06 both in 8" and 10" sizes. The records of 2-16-09 to 2-18-09 include 9 marches, 4 waltzes, a serenade, a polka and another take of "The Maple Leaf Rag"—2-18-09, which was issued on a double-faced disc. During a period in which gradual hostility towards the German government was building in this country it is strange to read that 6 of 8 selections released from sessions of 3-20-14 to 3-22-14 were German marches. Only the "National Emblem March" (E.E. Bagley)—3-21-14 and "Crazy Bone Rag One Step, Two Step or Trot (58 bars per minute) (C.L. Johnson) —3-22-14 were exceptions. The 'bars min.' reference appears on the majority of the recordings classified as 'for dancing' both in the catalogues and entry books as well as on the labels of the records.

The Sousa Band made one additional appearance in the Victor Company New York City recording studios. Herbert L. Clarke directed "The Lambs March" (Sousa) —11-9-15 and "The Gliding Girl Tango" (Sousa), "Chinese Blues Fox Trot" (Redman and Gardner), "The New York Hippodrome March" (Sousa) and "The Pathfinder Of Panama March (Sousa) on 11-19-15.

Solos by band members were far less frequent during these years compared to the output of The Imaginative Offerings Period (IOP) from 1895 to 1908. William H. Reitz, xylophonist and tubular bells performer, recorded gavottes, rags, marches, medleys, folk music and virtually all other types. Between 6-25-09 and 2-15-17 he performed at sessions on 79 different days. An interesting cross section of the popular music scene can be heard through these discs. Like the Kendall Band of the prior decade he suffers the fate of almost total obscurity.

The Victor Foreign—Domestic market catered to American ethnic groups. Some of these records were exported to Central and South America. Few were made for European consumption. Those released there were in conjunction with the Gramophone and Typewriter Company of England. Latin American market recordings can be traced as far back as Berliner discs. The first special military band 'export' occurred on 12-14-11. 98 titles were made on 24 days through 4-26-17. Nationalities with the largest number made include Spanish, Polish and Bohemian. In the years ahead this part of the business would increase dramatically. Many of the recordings targeted for foreign consumption were not listed in the 'export' or 'foreign' categories and it is reasonable to assume that the titles distributed in this fashion were considerably in excess of those listed.

The Original Dixieland 'Jass' Band made its first disc on 2-26-17: 18255-A-Dixieland Jass Band One Step/-B-"Livery Stable Blues". This milestone recording in American popular music symbolizes the beginning of the end of the great popularity of the military band. Within two years the dance music of the day was no longer exploited by military bands. Soon the POOP Period (Phasing Out Of Professionals) was to begin. It was to be the period of birth of the college and highschool bands. They would then have the recorded legacy of bygone days as the only tangible reminder of those stirring bands.

The threads of dance music of the 1890's became strands during the first decade of the twentieth century. All categories of musical selections from 1908-1917 were entwined in the rope of popular music. Dance music, show music, educational tunes and foreign market selections became inextricably bound together. They were frequently impossible to classify separately. Such was the DSEF Period, an exciting, productive and rhythmical time.