

NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

Sousa's Legacy to New Orleans

Brass bands in New Orleans date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries and are an integral and lasting part of the city's culture. Jazz funerals, second line parading, the HBO television drama *Treme* and the resurgence of contemporary brass bands are images that immediately come to mind. Drawing their essence from European performance traditions, as well as the rhythms of Congo Square, New Orleans brass bands have also been greatly influenced by military bands – two in particular.



The late "Uncle Lionel" Batiste

Second liner with Sousaphone

of the Tremé Brass Band

playing over her shoulder

The 1884 World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans offered grand showcases and superb entertainment for the thousands of visitors who came to the Fair. The Mexican Exhibit was the largest (covering an area of 16,000 square feet), and its Eighth Cavalry Regimental Band (under the direction of Encarnación Payen) played through the spring of 1885 to enthusiastic crowds.

A captivating waltz composed by band member Juventino Rosas, an Otomi Indian violinist from Guanajuato, was "*Sobre Las Olas*" (Over the Waves). It has been an enduring favorite at New Orleans Carnival balls, as well as a familiar soundtrack at parks, fairs and whenever trapeze artists glide gracefully through the air within circus big tops.



When the 1884 World's Fair was over, many Mexican band members stayed in the Crescent City, taught their craft or sought employment in regional bands. Their influence on jazz and the city's brass bands was significant. Saxophonist Florencio Ramos, for example, is credited with introducing the saxophone to New Orleans. And, prior to the 1884 Exposition, most marching bands did not include woodwinds. What would jazz be without the clarinet?

The accomplished Creole clarinetist Louis “Papa” Tío (1862 – 1922), raised in Mexico, “taught us all how to play clarinet,” related pivotal jazz figure “Jelly Roll” Morton. And son Lorenzo Tío instructed Sidney Bechet, famous jazz saxophonist, clarinetist and composer.

In addition to the Mexican military band influence, New Orleans brass bands owe much to the talented and creative John Philip Sousa, his noteworthy compositions, the United States Marine Band he conducted and his specially designed marching-style tuba – the Sousaphone. No New Orleans brass band would be the same without it.



*“March King” John Philip Sousa
(November 6, 1854 – March 6, 1932)*

Military brass bands like the “March King” Sousa’s were born amidst the military conflicts of the 19th century in Europe, when units employed drummers and buglers to communicate troop orders and movements. Soon other instruments were added, and the bands became more sophisticated. They created spirited marches and a musical style that influenced other European nations, as well as a musical tradition that crossed the ocean to America.

John Philip Sousa was born in 1854 in Washington, D.C., to John Antonio Sousa, (born in Seville, Spain, of an old Portuguese family) and Maria Elisabeth Trinkhaus, who was of Bavarian ancestry. Sousa was taught music at an early age, studying violin and music theory. He was apprenticed to the United States Marine Band from 1868 to 1875, after which he learned to conduct.

Sousa rejoined the Marine Band in 1880 and, from then on, his primary focus was on conducting and the writing of patriotic marches. His best-known are "The Washington Post," "The Liberty Bell" (the first segment of which is Monty Python's theme song), "The Thunderer," "Semper Fidelis" (U.S Marine Corps' official march), "King Cotton" and "The Stars and Stripes Forever" (National March of the United States of America). He served as director of the Marine Band (uniquely known as "The President's Own") for twelve years through five presidents until 1892.



Sousa's bio in the New Orleans *Daily Item* of March 3, 1901, stated, "As a composer his immense popularity is readily accounted for, his martial and operatic strains being familiar throughout the land to millions." He appeared in New Orleans numerous times, including performances at the Athenaeum in 1922 and the Jerusalem Temple in 1925. His three-act operetta "El Capitan" was presented at the Crescent Theater in 1897 and 1914. Upon leaving the Marine Band, Sousa organized his own band and toured Europe and Australia. At the outbreak of World War I, Sousa was commissioned as a Lieutenant Commander and put in charge of the Naval Reserve Band in Illinois. He returned after this service to conduct the Sousa Band until his death in 1932.

AMUSEMENTS.

TULANE TO NIGHT

Matinees Wednesday and Saturday at 1.

FLORODORA

THE MERRY MUSICAL COMEDY SUCCESS,
From the New York Casino.
F10-8t

Sunday Matinee at 2—Sunday Night at 8.
DIRECT FROM TRIUMPHAL TOUR OF
GREAT BRITAIN.

SOUSA and His Band.

SEATS NOW ON SALE.
F18-3t

Ad in the Picayune, February 14, 1902

The first Sousaphone was created by a Philadelphia instrument maker in 1893 from Sousa's instructions (and re-created in 1898). Designed to fit around the musician's body and supported by the left shoulder, the Sousaphone may be readily played while being carried. It also has a wider conical bore for a warmer sound and a forward-facing bell for superior projection. This portable version of the tuba takes the place of a seated orchestra's bass violin while the other horns play the harmonies loosely over the Sousaphone's bass-line. This allowed the black musicians of New Orleans to break free of formal halls and ballrooms and take the music to the streets – creating a sound unique to the Crescent City.



Tuba on the left

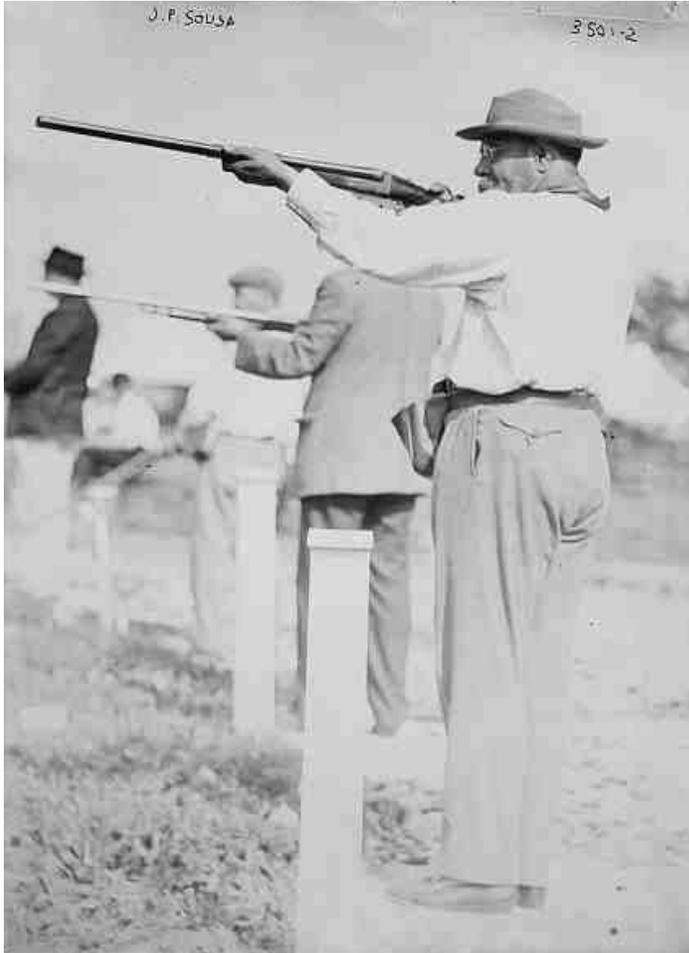
Sousaphone on the right

In 1952, the *New Orleans States* carried an interesting piece of information on the Tally-Ho Club of New Orleans.

The Tally Ho Club has been a gathering place for sportsmen from everywhere. Its register contains the names of many prominent local and visiting gun and rod men. The club was famous for its trapshoots in which Theodore Roosevelt and John Philip Sousa once participated.

Teddy Roosevelt and John Philip Sousa were both participants in trapshoots at the Tally-Ho, sporting events often hosted there in the early part of the twentieth century. Trapshooting targets are launched from a single housed machine, which is located downrange from the shooters' firing positions. Band Director Sousa, many readers may be surprised to know, began shooting trap seriously in 1906, competing at the invitation of some prestigious eastern gun clubs. When asked by a Chicago newspaper reporter while attending the *Grand National Handicap* in Vandalia, Ohio, what he considered life's best gifts, Sousa replied:

"A Horse, A Dog, A Gun, and A Girl - with Music on the Side."



Sousa the Trapshooter

Sousa is enshrined in the Trapshooting Hall of Fame, ranking as one of the all-time greats. He won medals and trophies in numerous national competitions, and it wasn't out of the ordinary for him to shoot in excess of 15,000 targets in a single season - with an average accuracy of between 75 and 98 percent. He was elected president of the American Amateur Trapshooters Association (ATA) in 1916. The following year, he became chairman of the National Association of Shotgun Owners.

Sousa regularly competed against the U.S. Army while representing the U.S. Navy in trapshooting competitions, and he wrote numerous articles about the sport.

Sousa once said, "Let me say that just about the sweetest music to me is when I call, 'pull,' the old gun barks, and the referee in perfect key announces, 'dead'."

He was clearly master of both the baton and the shotgun.

In addition to the many talented New Orleans brass band musicians, from the older groups (such as the Eureka, the Olympia, the Onward, the Tuxedo and the Excelsior) to the new (such as the Dirty Dozen, the Rebirth, Trombone Shorty and the rest of the Andrews family, Lil Rascals, Stooges, Soul Rebels and Hot 8), New Orleans also has its very own modern-day John Philip Sousa.

Colonel John R. Bourgeois, USMC (Ret.), served as the 25th Director of "The President's Own" United States Marine Band. Born in Gibson, Louisiana, in 1934, he attended Jesuit High School (studying music under Salvatore Castigliola) and Loyola University of New Orleans. Joining the Marine Corps in 1956, he entered the Marine Band two years later as a french hornist and arranger. Director from 1979 to 1996, his acclaimed tenure spanned nine presidential administrations and four Presidential inaugurations, from Presidents Eisenhower to Clinton. Although retired from active duty since July 11, 1996, Colonel Bourgeois stays active as a guest conductor-clinician, visiting professor at Loyola University in a chair endowed in his name, and continues to produce band arrangements for wind instruments.



Colonel John R. Bourgeois, USMC (Ret.)

Hailed as a “national treasure,” Colonel Bourgeois is the recipient of numerous accolades and honors, including the Navy Distinguished Service Medal.

In addition to nineteen national tours, under the leadership of Colonel Bourgeois, the Marine Band presented its first overseas performances in history: the Netherlands in 1985. He also led the Band on an historic 18-day concert tour of the former Soviet Union in 1990.

“When he retired, Colonel Bourgeois literally passed the baton - a baton that had been given to another director of the Marine Band, John Philip Sousa, over a century ago,” said Senator Sam Nunn. “When he was appointed to his present grade, he became the first musician in the Marine Corps to serve in every rank from private to colonel.”

Marine Corps Commandant General C. Krulak also compared Colonel Bourgeois to the Band’s 17th Director, John Philip Sousa, saying, “Our Corps has not only had John Philip Sousa, we have also had a John Bourgeois. His legacy will never be forgotten by the Marine Corps or our nation.”

Nor will Sousa’s. Here’s what “March King” Sousa had to say about the music born in New Orleans:

“Jazz will endure just as long people hear it through their feet instead of their brains.”



NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Sousa's Legacy to New Orleans"
Ned Hémard
Copyright 2014