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DON MURRAY — THE EARLY YEARS (1904-1923)

by Warren K. Plath

This article is respectfully dedicated to the late Renee Murray Harris, Don's sister, and as nice a lady as I have ever met. WKP

Issue of the first jazz record in early 1917 opened the flood gates and the ensuing decade was probably the most productive in all of jazz history. The music proved itself to be a marketable commodity, which made it an interesting and occasionally profitable profession. Most of the musicians involved at this time were groping, trying out the new sounds and rhythms, and some of the styles that were set then have varied only slightly to this day.

Many of these stylists had only to play a few notes on record to be instantly recognized and the subject of our story came under the influence of two such pioneers, Leon Roppolo and Jack Pettis. While one can hear traces of their styles in Murray's later playing, it is obvious that he improved immeasurably on their respective techniques. His style was pure white, though Barney Bigard is quoted as preferring him to all other white reedmen, and Charles Delaunay recalls Coleman Hawkins mentioning that Don was his favourite clarinet player.

Don Murray's career was short and there will be an inevitable comparison with his close friend Bix Beiderbecke. Both were from upper-middle class Midwestern families, both were musically self-taught, both eventually played with the leading jazz bands of the period, somewhat to the chagrin of their families, and both died deaths attributable directly to excessive use of alcohol. Both of them left us at an early age, Bix at 28 and Don just two days short of 25, victims of occupational hazards. During their too-brief careers, many fine records resulted, quite a few of them as fellow sidemen with the great Jean Goldkette band and contingents therefrom. However, even before Don or Bix had heard of Goldkette, they found that their musical tastes were similar, and that they

were quite compatible personally.

The word most used to describe Don Murray by the nearly one hundred persons interviewed was 'likeable', but this article will concern itself mainly with his musical abilities.

Don's parents were both of Scottish descent, his father Roderick from the Highlands, his mother Margaret from the Lowlands. They met and were married in Toronto, Canada, where Roderick Murray was an unordained minister. When their son William, born in 1895, was six weeks old, Murray was called by a church recruiter to Annandale, Minnesota, a town which today has a population of slightly over 1,200. He left alone, commenced his preaching, and was followed soon after by his wife, son, and mother-in-law. The second child, Renee, was born in 1897.

Roderick became an American citizen and then attended Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois, graduating in 1902. He was ordained a minister and almost immediately moved to a parish in Joliet, Illinois, where the final child, Donald Leroy, was born on 7 June 1904.

The family at that time resided at 811 Irving Street, Joliet. Joliet's smog adversely affected Margaret's lungs and she insisted that another parish be found. While any discomfort caused by the bad air of Joliet is to be regretted, one can only rejoice that the search led them, via Seneca and Mendota, where Don was baptized in September 1907, to Chicago, soon after to become the undisputed capital of jazz music.

The first Murray church in Chicago was at Robey, now Damen, and Irving Park, but shortly afterwards Roderick was transferred to the Park Manor Methodist Church at the

south-east corner of 69th and South Park Boulevard, now Martin Luther King Drive. Don attended the Park Manor Elementary School, 7037 S. Rhodes Avenue, from 1914 to 1916, and then Reverend Murray was transferred to the Methodist Church at the corner of Garfield (55th Street) and Emerald Avenue. The family, as usual, lived in the parsonage, in this case at 717 W. Garfield Boulevard, and Don transferred to Holmes Elementary School, 919 W. Garfield Boulevard, attending from September 1916 to June 1917.

At this time an interest and a proficiency in music became manifest. Brother Bill was taking piano lessons, though not entirely successfully; he had trouble in mastering his exercises. However, Don, who had listened carefully to the music teacher who was instructing Bill, had no difficulty whatsoever in later executing perfectly the troublesome studies and generally entirely by ear. Don was soon picking out the tunes of the day. While continuing his interest in the piano, Don took up saxophone and trumpet in his early high-school years at Englewood High, 6201 S. Stewart Avenue. His period of attendance there was from September 1917 until graduation in June 1921.

His first-year marks were adequate, though music gradually took over, resulting in his maintaining E's and S's in Band and Orchestra, while the remainder of his studies received G's and F's. The Year Book shows that Don was active in Interclass Basketball, that he was vice-president of his Junior Class in 1919 and 1920, and that he belonged to the orchestra (1918-21) and band (1919-20), becoming First Lieutenant in the latter organization in 1920.

Classmate Ferdinand Kleyensteuber recalled: "I knew Don all during high school and from attending his father's church. I was most familiar with him during our freshman year in band and orchestra, though in his second year Don started with another crowd. I mean nothing adversely by that; it was just another clique, one that seemed more interested in jazz music. Don appeared to be quite accomplished on saxophone and be-

came equally proficient on clarinet shortly afterward. He could improvise better than anyone else in the band and orchestra and never practised simply because he didn't have to. He was already a genius musically and extremely broad in his interests in other subjects. He was a fun-loving individual, always with a ready joke, loving people and very easy to get acquainted with. There was no evidence of drinking but there did appear to be a negative reaction to his deeply religious family. Don apparently took another route."

Jazz was definitely catching on at Englewood High. Ken Anderson, a student there from 1917 to 1919, playing trumpet in the band, and later a pianist with the Doc Cook Orchestra in Chicago, recalled Murray as being a fine improviser and remembers some jamming after orchestra practice. Another musician, Russell Crandall, later to record with the Art Kahn Orchestra on sax, clarinet and harp, said, "Don and I seldom saw each other outside of the school band and orchestra, as we travelled in different circles. Don was a swinger, very popular with everybody in school. Had a fine outgoing personality. In R.O.T.C. Band, Don was First Lieutenant and I was Second Lieutenant. You may not know that Don played trumpet in the band and orchestra. I don't think he took up sax and clarinet until his senior year, and then mostly outside of school."

This might be an appropriate spot to throw in Murray's name for consideration as the author of the ragged trumpet or cornet solo on Trumbauer's OKeh version of *Sugar*. The penultimate nominee, Bo Ashford, has denied his presence.

During his high school years, Don started playing semi-professionally and his father was not particularly happy with the results. He did however recognize that Don had 'a gift' of musical ability; and apparently it was a gift as no one could be located with any knowledge of Don's having had formal instruction other than that with the high-school band and orchestra. In fact, to the end of his days, Don is not recalled

as undertaking any formal studies, either on the several instruments he played or for the dance arrangements he wrote.

Don was not a religious person, but he was certainly not 'irreligious', and his father is known to have remarked, "If Don doesn't get to heaven, then I don't want to go." Apparently, however, their directly opposed interests occasionally 'got to' Reverend Murray and one Saturday morning during Don's high-school days the Reverend was hosing down the front lawn when Don returned from what may have been a late-night dance job followed by some after-hours jamming. The sight of his son coming home after not having reported his expected absence was too much to accept and by the time Don got inside the house he was drenched! Yet when Don later entered Northwestern University he often took the long train-ride from the northern suburb, or directly from a dance job, to the South Side of Chicago to play a solo at his father's church.

It would appear that the family was somewhat relieved at the prospect of Don entering Northwestern University. After all, he would join Sigma Chi, as did all members of his family, and would live on campus, a good distance away from his musical confreres in Chicago.

The 1921 summer vacation was spent at the family summer home, Happyland on Magician Lake, near Dowgiac, Michigan. Of course, Don's instruments went along and of course he played whenever the opportunity presented itself, sometimes with local professionals and sometimes with amateurs, though there is information that on at least three occasions he returned to Chicago to play professionally, two of these jobs being at White City, an amusement park located at 63rd and South Park.

Fall finally arrived and Don dutifully enrolled, in September 1921, at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, the first suburb to the north of Chicago as one travels along the lakeshore. He immediately joined the Omega Chapter of Sigma Chi and resided at the Fraternity House on campus. Tuition for

the full scholastic year was then two hundred dollars (today it is nearly nine thousand dollars!) and he became one of some 1,900 undergraduates with a faculty of over six hundred.

Evanston itself was a sedate, upper-middle to wealthy class predominantly residential suburb. There were no nightspots per se — this was of course the era of Prohibition — and amusement away from home was relegated to the several cinemas and vaudeville houses. The campus was a different matter though, and jazz music was very much in evidence. There were at least three dances on campus every week and Don was in his element.

Don promptly joined the three leading university music groups, Jimmy Caldwell's Varsity Five, Jimmy's Jazz Jesters, led by Jimmy Fallis, and Dellie Coon's Original Royal Purple Orchestra, purple being the Northwestern colour.

Caldwell's group alone had some eighty-five engagements between 30 September 1921 and 18 May 1922, the latter date just

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JIMMY CALDWELL'S JAZZ JESTERS, 1922. Sigma Chi House, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill. L to R: Chuck Cheney, Virgil Leech, Don Murray, Jimmy Caldwell, Jimmy Fallis. Photo from Jimmy Fallis

preceding Caldwell's leaving the campus. Some of these jobs used the leader on piano, Jimmy Fallis on alto and clarinet, Chuck Cheney on banjo, and Virgil Leach on drums. On many occasions the group was augmented to five, at that time adding Murray on trumpet, clarinet, and tenor sax, and we can gather from the schedule of engagements furnished by Mr. Caldwell that Don had nearly fifty gigs with this band alone during the 1921-22 semesters. The Fallis and Caldwell groups, which were largely interchangeable, accounted for approximately ninety per cent of the dance music on campus.

The third organized group including Don was Dellie Coon's Original Royal Purple

Orchestra, which consisted of: Wade 'Pete' Fetzer, tb; Don Murray, ts/cl/bsn; Harold Fair, p; Ralph Corville, bj; Brooks Whipple, d; Dellie Coon, vn/ldr; plus unknown, t; unknown, as; unknown, tu. The group was somewhat more sedate than the Fallis and Caldwell bands, which disdained the written arrangement.

The Fallis and Caldwell groups also used George Street on violin, and Bix Beiderbecke, then attending Lake Forest Academy some twenty miles further north, on piano and cornet. This was undoubtedly the first contact Don and Bix had, and Caldwell indicates that Bix was added to the groups for at least the following engagements: Three Arts Club, 23 November 1921; Senn High School Prom,

26 January 1922; Northwestern Senior Ball, 10 March 1922; and twice at the Black Cat Room, on 21 April and 18 May 1922. The latter spot was located in the magnificent Edgewater Beach Hotel, one of the finest of its kind north of the downtown Loop section of Chicago, and very popular with collegians throughout the city. Nearby, at Clark and Lawrence Avenues, one could find the Rainbow Gardens, with the swinging orchestra of Frank Westphal.

The Black Cat saw Caldwell's group a total of twelve times during the period and several times they crossed paths with Charley Horvath, who was drumming with another band in the Marine Dining Room of the Edgewater. Horvath was impressed with the musical abilities of the collegians and a few years later was instrumental in placing Murray with the Jean Goldkette Orchestra.

While interviewing for this article, it was noted that no mention was made by informants of the oft-reported almost ritualistic treks to the South Side where so many of the great black stars of the day held forth. While there were indeed some visits south of the Loop, another club had just opened up with a band that fascinated the youths. It was the Friar's Inn, located at the north-east corner of Wabash and Van Buren, and a new group, to be known later as the New Orleans Rhythm Kings (NORK), was astounding the locals. They were hired by Mike Fritzel, owner of the club, and had commenced an approximately eighteen-month residency, breaking up every June for the summer months.

The cabaret was located in the basement of the building and, once past the entrance, almost the first thing to be seen was the band, composed of: Paul Mares, c; George Brunies, tb; Leon Roppolo, as/cl; Jack Pettis, C-mel/ts; Mel Stitzel, p; Lou Black, bj; Steve Brown, sb; Frank Snyder, d; according to Virgil Leach's recollections.

Virgil Leach well remembers the Fallis group playing an engagement at the University of Chicago, even further south than the black jazz spots, and having the entire band sit in with the NORK on the way

back home. Murray came completely under the spell of the band and is quoted by author George Beall in a 1935 article in *Swing Music*: "I used to get a terrific sock out of Rappolo riding high on his clarinet, with one foot braced high up on a pillar alongside the stand and so full of marijuana he could scarcely move out of his chair at the finish of a set." [Ed's note: This article is reprinted in Ralph De Toledano (ed), 'Frontiers of Jazz'. Unfortunately, Beall does not state where he obtained his verbatim quotation from the long-dead Murray.] Jack Pettis's flowing 'never-stop' style of sax playing made an impression on Murray and his more technical, speedier style in later years still contained evidences of Pettis's influence. Probably more than any other of the Northwesterners, Don could now be found sitting in with the NORK and gaining experience that would have been impossible to find elsewhere.

Virgil Leach remembered that Don at this time was well versed on almost any instrument, probably playing more trumpet than saxophone. Once Caldwell appeared with a 'Chinese Oboe', a stick of bamboo with holes drilled in it. He gave it to Murray, who came back to the room approximately thirty minutes later playing *Canadian Capers* perfectly. Don's interest in his studies was nil. Once he asked one of the professors for his mark on a test. "Well, Mr. Murray," replied the professor, "you answered one question as 'God only knows', so I gave the mark to him."

Kenneth King helped initiate Murray into the Omega Chapter of Sigma Chi and remembered him originally as naive, affable, well-mannered, and disciplined. However, he started associating with the 'music crowd' of the college — he was once seen playing two clarinets at once — to the detriment of his studies.

In spite of these many extra-curricular activities, Murray managed to continue in college and ended up with a total of sixteen credits for the first semester and ten credits for the second semester of the 1921-22 academic year. It was noted on the grade



A posed 'action' shot of JIMMY CALDWELL'S JAZZ JESTERS taken at the same time as that on page 54, this time with Don Murray 'playing' trumpet and Jimmy Fallis 'playing' clarinet. Photo from Jimmy Fallis sheet though that three hours were deducted for "excessive absenteeism". He was able to maintain a 'Gentleman's C' average for the first semester and while he improved his Spanish and Military Science marks from C's to B's, he kept his C in English and received an F and a D in Mathematics and Geology respectively. It will certainly have been a relief for him to see summer vacation arrive!

While packing up to return home for the free months, Don noticed a sharp tuxedo owned by classmate Kenneth King. Don asked if he might borrow it for a job that night and King is still waiting for its return!

Some of the summer was spent with the family at Happyland, though an interesting riverboat-type musical job was secured by

Murray through a fellow member of the Sigma Chi Omega Chapter, William 'Bill' Grimm. Grimm, described specifically by Benny Goodman in his book *Kingdom of Swing* as a *good* pianist, was part of the family that owned the Grimm-Morton Steamship Lines. One of the boats in the fleet made a passenger run from Chicago to Michigan City, Indiana, leaving Chicago at 10.00 a.m., arriving at Michigan City at 2.00 p.m., and then making the return trip from 4.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. Drummer Harry Gale, then in high school, met Murray about this time and remembers that George Brunies and occasionally Paul Mares would sit in with the Grimm group on Sundays. A collective personnel for the band during the

summer of 1922 would include drummers Harry Gale and Ray Landis, banjoists Bob Gillette and Frankie Lehman, reedmen Jimmy Hartwell and Benny Goodman, Grimm on piano, and, of course, Don and Bix, among others.

Several of those contacted for information on the summer 1922 period spoke of Murray recording with the NORK. At the time, it was felt that there was possibly some confusion with the confirmed Murray/NORK date of the following summer, as no one had ever listed more than one sax for the NORK sessions of 29 and 30 August 1922. However, collector Jim Gordon, after listening carefully to the entire recorded output of those two days, advised that there is a trace of a second saxophone on *Discontented Blues/Bugle Call Blues* recorded on 29 August 1922. Several other collectors agreed with Jim and an exhaustive study was made by John R.T. Davies, who writes, "...I think there are two altos and a clarinet on *Discontented* and alto, C-melody and clarinet on *Bugle*....although I cannot point to any moment at which three reeds can definitely be heard simultaneously....I feel there are indeed three reed players. I cannot help but feel, though, that two would have been able to cover most of this music." John goes on to identify the breaks on *Bugle Call Blues* as being taken by cornet, trombone, alto sax, cornet, C-melody sax, clarinet, cornet, clarinet/cornet C-melody sax, banjo, in that order. Therefore, Murray's first, possible, recording session should be shown as 29 August 1922.

The fall semester opened in September 1922 and Don returned to his room at Sigma Chi. By this time a seasoned performer, he was considered the leading jazz man of the campus. Around this time he made connection with the Benson Music Entertainment Company, located in the Garrick Building, 64 W. Randolph Street, Chicago. It was one of the foremost legitimate orchestral booking offices in the area and used Murray as a jobbing musician several nights weekly. This was of course in addition to whatever campus jobs were avail-

able, though one source recalled Don playing off campus with the orchestra of pianist Herbie Mintz.

Obviously Don's studies were affected and during Christmas week 1922 he was called upon to explain his low grades. In response, Don wrote, "During the first semester 1922-23 I was forced to depend on my own resources to defray my expenses. My work, that of a musician, kept me out at hours that were detrimental to studies. Having put by sufficient money to carry me over the current semester, I shall not be forced to resume playing and consequently can devote my entire time to study. I can (*underlined*) carry my work successfully, shown by my performance last year; I will (*underlined*) do it if I am reinstated for another semester."

Don's application for reinstatement bears the stark notation, "DENIED - D.T. HOWARD". He received a total of six hours credit, minus "three hours deducted for excessive absences."

Don was apparently sincere about wishing to continue his education. However, the majority of colleges had already started the second semester. At this point Reverend Murray stepped in. He was acquainted with Reverend William J. Davidson, President of Illinois Wesleyan College in Bloomington, Illinois, and this location seemed ideal. Some one hundred and fifty miles away from Chicago, Bloomington and its twin city Normal had a combined population of around 34,000. The school was Methodist Episcopal controlled and, from one man of the cloth to another, there was no problem in allowing Don to start a week or so later than the scheduled 8 February 1923 start of the second semester. Wesleyan had a student enrollment of less than a thousand and Illinois State University in Normal had an enrollment of less than six hundred.

By the end of February, Don had signed up for Spanish, English Literature, American History, Social Pathology, and Public Speaking. Living in one of the dorms, Don almost immediately became acquainted with Harold Ragland, also a saxophone player and

a devotee of jazz. Ragland was happy to get the latest news from the Windy City and insisted that Don join up with the 'Pete' Lowry "Shuffle Along" Band. At this point, all of Don's potentials for regaining his scholastic standing took a back seat again to music.

Frank 'Pete' Lowry was a good pianist and quite a colourful character. He graduated from law school, passed the Missouri Bar, and later became Assistant States Attorney at Cape Girardeau. At the time of our story, he had the leading dance band in the area, generally featuring Larry Lonnie on trumpet, Harold 'Rags' Ragland on tenor sax, Bo Ellis on clarinet, Alan Millikan on piano, Lowry on banjo, Fred Kellog on bass sax, and Cleatus Clobes on drums. The band was a 'class act', wearing tuxedos, with the leader sporting full dress. Incidentally, Lowry had a penchant for peanuts and Ragland recalls the pockets of the tails of Lowry's full-dress coat filled to overflowing with peanuts!

With the addition of Murray on tenor sax and clarinet, Ragland switched to alto sax. The band played from stocks, though was well able to improvise when and if necessary. The group worked consistently in the Bloomington/Normal area and made many side trips to Lincoln, Illinois, to play at The Dreamland, 400 N. Park Avenue. This ballroom was located over the Annex Theatre, just across from City Hall. Lucille Howell remembers the impressive large mirrored rotating ball in the ceiling. When the weather became milder, the band played open-air dances at O'Neils in Bloomington, and Sundays at Shady Rest in Normal.

As expected, the off-campus activity took its toll on Don's studies and at the end of the semester he was awarded a total of three semester hours. He had failed in Spanish, received an 'Incomplete' in American History, and had four hours deducted for "excessive absenteeism" (again).

Even at this point, it was Murray's desire to continue his studies and he left for Chicago in early June, promising to return in July in order to play some already

scheduled dates with various bands in the area. It is known that he spent the Fourth of July at the family cabin in Michigan and shortly thereafter Ragland received a significant telephone call from Don in Chicago.

Don advised that he was planning to return to campus for the afore-mentioned musical dates. However, he was intending first to participate in a recording session in Richmond, Indiana, with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Don specifically asked if some work might be found with bands in the campus area for his travelling companion, Bix Beiderbecke. Ragland recalls having already heard of Bix and was delighted to have him with the boys together with Don.

How Don and Bix arrived at Richmond is not known at this time. However, it is very striking that, at this early stage of his career, Don, who had just turned 19, was about to record with the finest white hot-jazz band of the day and in the company of one of the best-known figures in all of jazz history, Jelly Roll Morton.

Apparently, at least two full days, 17 and 18 July 1923, were spent in Richmond, and some stellar sides were made. While most discographies show a minimum of three saxes for these sessions, and one LP mentions four saxes, actually half of the tunes recorded have only one audible saxophone. The issued sides, as shown in Rust's *Jazz Records 1897-1942*, appear to have saxophones present, Pettis and/or Murray, unless otherwise noted, as follows:

17 July 1923

11535-A *Sobbin' Blues*: a two-sax arrangement, Pettis playing lead.

11536-A *Marguerite*: a three-sax arrangement, including Roppolo doubling alto.

11539-- *Angry*: one sax, Jack Pettis.

11539-A *Angry*: one sax, Jack Pettis.

11540-- *Clarinet Marmalade*: one sax, Don Murray.

11540-A *Clarinet Marmalade*: one sax, Don Murray.

11541-A *Mr. Jelly Lord*: one sax.

11541-C *Mr. Jelly Lord*: one sax.

One knowledgeable collector suggests Murray as the low-register clarinet soloist on *Mr. Jelly Lord* (both takes).

18 July 1923

11550-- *London Blues*: a two-sax arrangement.

11551-- *Milenberg Joys*: one sax, ?Murray.

11551-A *Milenberg Joys*: not available.

11551-C *Milenberg Joys*: one sax, ?Murray.

11552-- *Mad*: an orchestral arrangement with one sax, Don Murray.

The murky recording quality of these Gennett records makes it quite difficult to separate the saxes, but the breakdown given above is the general consensus of several collectors' views. At this period, Murray's guiding light on saxophone was Pettis; he had been under this influence for over a year and there is obviously a great similarity of styles here.

Don and Bix arrived from Richmond quite excited about the recording session, though there is no indication that Bix participated, other than as a very interested spectator. Ragland recalls his raving about "that coloured piano player".

Needless to say, the boys were welcomed at the campus and were promptly put to work. Cleatus Clobes remembers a novelty act that the boys developed for dance intermissions. The act would start with Don sitting at the piano on a bench that was placed at right angles to the piano. With Bix sitting with his cornet at the other end of the bench, a duet of one of the popular songs of the day would be played. At the end of the first chorus, Bix would set down his horn, sidle up to and replace Don at the piano, and pick up where Don had left off. Don, in the meantime, would pick up his sax from the top of the piano, sit down on the bench where Bix had been previously, and another chorus would be started. Several choruses would be played, Don and Bix alternating at the piano and on their respective instruments, with the band joining in on the final chorus and providing a real 'showboat' finish.

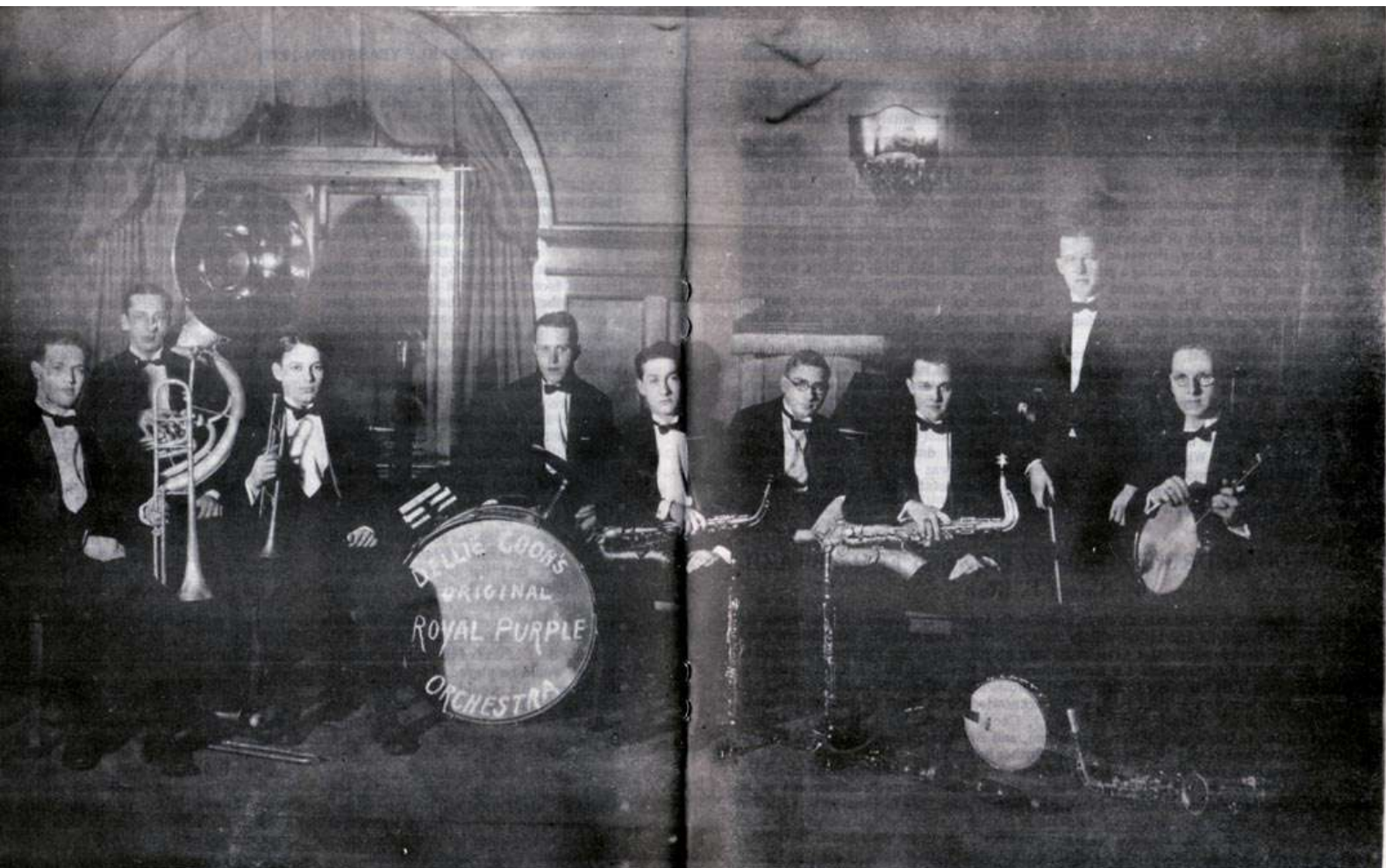
A week-end job was obtained by Lowry at Cagles Park, a large dance-hall located on Route 13 between Marion and Herrin,

Illinois. An announcement in the *Herrin Journal* of 25 July 1923 (a Wednesday) of Pete Lowry's "Shuffle Along" Band says that it "is noted throughout the state as a real dance-music furnisher and the management is very proud to secure them." As if this were not enough in itself, the article goes on to announce that a beauty contest will be held on Saturday, 28 July, and the most beautiful girl selected "will be awarded a big floor lamp"(!!!). A photo of the band, unfortunately not reproducible, does not show either Bix or Don as it was taken several months earlier at another location. It was recalled that the establishment, owned by the Cagles brothers, was a large rectangular hall with an excellent dancing surface. The establishment operated 'open-air', though panels could be placed on all four sides in the event of a sudden downpour. Clobes was replaced on drums by Bill Armstrong and the engagement was a huge success. After the last dance, the musicians gathered in a nearby field and played jazz until dawn. Then everybody piled into two automobiles and returned to Normal, the city, that is!

There were probably no further engagements played by Bix and Don in the area, and shortly thereafter — within a matter of days — both departed for Chicago via the C & A Railroad. Don again saw the family at the summer cottage and it was at this time that the decision was made to take up music as a career. It was obvious to all concerned that jazz was Don's foremost interest.

In early September of 1923, Don made a twenty-five dollars deposit toward the one hundred dollars membership fee in the Chicago Chapter of the American Federation of Musicians. However, shortly thereafter, he received word from Charley Horvath that a chair was being held open for him in the newly-formed Jean Goldkette Band in Detroit. No further payments were made to the Chicago Local and he was finally dropped in January 1924.

Cleatus Clobes recalls next seeing Don in Chicago early in the fall of 1923. The meeting took place at a Wabash Avenue



DELLIE COON'S ORIGINAL ROYAL PURPLE ORCHESTRA, c. 1922-23, Evanston, Illinois
Left to right: Wade "Pete" Fetzer, tb; -, bb; -, t; Brooks Whipple, d; -, as; Harold Fair, p; Don Murray, ts/cl/bsn; Dellie Coon, vn/ldr; Ralph Colville, bj.
(photo courtesy Warren K. Plath, from Renee Murray Harris)

music store, probably Wurlitzer's, and Clobes remembers that Don, with all his instruments and personal baggage, was making a last-minute purchase of necessary supplies just before taking the train for Detroit. A new era in jazz was about to begin.

Epilogue. Bix's whereabouts immediately following the return to Chicago, which was probably at the end of July or the beginning of August 1923, are hazy. However, Jim Gordon was instrumental in locating a gentleman who could very well be referred to as 'The Last Wolverine'. His name is Abe Cholden and, just prior to his death, Gordon interviewed him with startling results.

Cholden recalled that, in addition to playing with other musicians during the evening, he rehearsed with a band on the second floor of a multi-storied building at the north-east corner of State and Randolph Streets in Chicago. The band consisted of Bix Beiderbecke and Wingy Manone on cornets, Cholden on tenor sax, and Dick Voynow, Bob Gillette, and Bob Conselman on piano, banjo, and drums respectively.

There were also a clarinettist and a tuba player, whose names Cholden could not recall. He stated definitely that there was no trombonist.

After rehearsing for some four to six weeks, the group secured a booking at the Stockton Club in Hamilton, Ohio, and Wingy and the tuba player stayed in Chicago. In Hamilton, they picked up Jimmy Hartwell on clarinet and Ole Vangsness on tuba, and played at the Stockton during October and November, at which time Cholden, who was then living at the Hamilton YMCA, decided to return to Chicago. He enjoyed playing with the band but felt he was missing out on too many opportunities in the Windy City.

There are differences between this and other published accounts of The Wolverines' activities during this period and unfortunately Mr. Cholden passed away before he could be re-interviewed. He was an articulate and sincere individual and the above information was obtained during a relaxed, informal evening and was only a small part of the many anecdotes that Mr. Cholden related.