Creating an Aural History:
The Detroit Concert Band’s *Sousa American Bicentennial Collection*

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Abstract

The name Leonard B. Smith has permeated the wind band world for many years. Known primarily as conductor of the Detroit Concert Band, the extent of Smith’s musical heritage and legacy have been largely forgotten over the years. Smith was a workhorse who felt it his purpose in life to continue and preserve the legacy of his boyhood idol, John Philip Sousa. In no way is this more evident than in the band’s ten-album series titled the *Sousa American Bicentennial Collection*.

Considered by his contemporaries to be the foremost interpreter of Sousa’s works, Smith set out to record all one hundred sixteen known Sousa marches. This series, created by Leonard B. Smith and the members of the Detroit Concert Band, acts as an aural history of Sousa’s legacy. In addition to preserving Smith’s musical interpretation of Sousa’s works, the collaboration with several former Sousa band members and Sousa’s biographer, Paul Bierley, elevate the significance of the recordings. Smith believed that the repertoire of the professional band movement was important and deserved the same respect as other major facets of music history. Because of his belief and undying reverence for John Philip Sousa, we have a musical record that future generations are able to consult.
Acknowledgments

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I would like to dedicate this work to my father, Salvatore Messina, and my mother, Catherine Messina. Mom and dad, your love does not go unnoticed and it means more to me than you can possibly know.
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Leonard B. Smith – Life Until 1946

Leonard Bingley Smith was a hard-nosed taskmaster who had a deep passion for the music and spirit of Edwin Franko Goldman and his childhood hero, John Philip Sousa. Evidence of Smith’s love for this music and drive to be a successful musician was evident in the early days of his career and would continue throughout his life. Smith displayed impressive musical skills. Whether he was playing his cornet at the Ernest Williams School of Music, with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, or soloing with the Goldman Band, his virtuosity was second to none. On the podium with the Detroit Concert Band and Cleveland Blossom Band, Smith shared a level of musicianship and musical leadership that made those groups some of the finest in the world.

As a businessman, Smith never let a challenge get in the way of a great opportunity. When he saw the need for ensembles to learn fundamentals in new, creative ways, he set to work composing them and then created the companies necessary to distribute his products. When he saw an opportunity to corner a market with a unique product that had not been sold before, he dove in. Smith was constantly busy with aspects of recording, publishing, managing, guest conducting, directing the Detroit Concert Band and Cleveland Blossom Band, and marketing. Leonard B. Smith was a Renaissance man in the music industry.

Like many great musicians of the era, Smith came from humble beginnings. The son of Frank and Ethel May Schubert Smith, Leonard was born on 5 September 1915 in Poughkeepsie, New York. Music was an important part of Smith family. His father was a professional pianist with his own orchestra and his mother was a soprano soloist who also served as the choir director at their local church. Because of his parent’s deep musical convictions, Leonard and his older brother Schubert received a high-quality musical education from an early age.
Born at the height of great professional bands, it is no surprise that young Leonard’s first instrument was the cornet he received as a gift for Christmas in 1923. Smith recalled,

I can still remember that morning. I got up and went to the tree and found the cornet. I picked it up and blew. I played a big blast. I am sure it didn’t sound good, but my father thought I had real talent because I formed an embouchure and actually got a sound. He just knew I was going to be a wonderful player. All I knew was that I was really excited and wanted to do this.¹

Smith began studying cornet shortly thereafter with Robert Coon who charged $0.50 per lesson. In addition to teaching him the cornet, sessions with Coon also included scales, harmony, and theory. A gifted student, Smith progressed quickly and after two years of study, Coon suggested that Leonard had learned all he could from him and was ready for a new teacher.

Through various family connections, Smith was placed with Ernest Williams in Brooklyn, New York, the head of the famed Ernest Williams School of Music. Ten-year-old Leonard and his father would travel by train once every three weeks for cornet lessons. In conversations with John Vincent Polce, Smith remembered these lessons vividly. “This was the big time for me! Going to Brooklyn to study with the great Ernest Williams was very exciting. Sometimes my lessons would last four or five hours! Of course, we didn’t play all that time, but we would talk about theory, harmony, and other musical things.”² Smith remained a diligent student with Williams, who would give him a copious amount of material to prepare for the next lesson.

At the age of eleven, Smith encountered his first band experience with his peers. The band played for minor functions at their town school under the direction of Frank Scofield. Scofield also directed the 21st Regiment Band of Poughkeepsie, a Civil War band that was no

² Polce, 14.
longer associated with the military but retained the name. Upon the recommendation of Ernest Williams, a close friend of Scofield’s, Leonard became a member of this group and sat last chair in the cornet section. Playing in this ensemble was a wonderful experience for young Leonard, one that he would recall fondly for the rest of his life. “We’d play everywhere—in parks, local celebrations, big regional Grange meetings for the farmers. Once the band played at a major bridge dedication on the Hudson River and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the governor, was there listening to us.”

In 1930, Leonard auditioned for and received a full scholarship to attend the New York Military Academy in Cornwall. While at the Academy, Smith received an excellent education and also gained other experiences that widened the scope of his musical knowledge, such as performing in the dance band with fellow student, Les Brown. In addition to the dance band, Smith was a member of the Academy band and would occasionally solo with the West Point Band.

Despite his success, his father convinced him that a career in music would not provide enough money to make a living and upon his graduation from the Academy in 1933, Smith planned to pursue study as an architecture major. Fortunately for Smith, he had attended the Williams Summer Camp growing up, run by his cornet teacher, and decided to attend one last time following his graduation. That summer, the bands at the Williams Summer Camp had two guest conductors, Edwin Franko Goldman and Arthur Pryor. A post-concert conversation between Pryor and Smith’s father would change his future.

I can remember us drawing straws to see who would play with which band. I drew Pryor, [Frank] Elsass drew Goldman. I played *Bride of the Waves*, and I recall Pryor discussing my dilemma with my father. He explained to Pryor that he wanted me to study architecture and not music. Pryor convinced him that he

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3 Polce, 17.
should send me down to the Ernest Williams School for at least one year. My father could then decide about my future as either a musician or an architect. My father then told me of his conversation with Pryor and I was enrolled in the Williams School of Music.\textsuperscript{5}

Smith excelled at the Ernest Williams School of Music. While there, he was surrounded by other talented and future star-performers and guided by teachers such as Mayhew Lake and Erik Leidzen for composition, Arthur Pryor for arranging, Colonel George Howard of the Air Force for conducting, and Williams on cornet. Smith graduated from the Williams School of Music in 1936 and was immediately hired by Edwin Franko Goldman to serve as first chair and solo cornetist with the Goldman band, a position he would hold until 1942. During his time with the Goldman Band, Smith became widely known for his solo cornet playing and was often referred to as “America’s premiere cornet soloist.”\textsuperscript{6}

Smith received ample opportunities to solo with the Goldman Band and his display of virtuosic skill made him a crowd favorite. An article in the \textit{Detroit Free Press} dated 17 June 1979 highlights Smith’s popularity.

So popular with audiences was Edwin Franko Goldman’s budding virtuoso that Leonard B. Smith was soon on his way to setting a melodic endurance record never since equaled. He was called upon to render 500 cornet solos in a period of 175 days, from the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco through the close of the summer season in Central Park, New York City. Goldman is said to have considered Smith “the greatest cornet talent I have ever known.”\textsuperscript{7}

After Smith’s first year playing summer concerts with the Goldman band, he was hired as principal trumpet of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. The appointment was beneficial to Smith in a few ways. First, while his performance obligations with the Goldman band consumed his summer schedule, his position with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra allowed for a steady income.

\textsuperscript{5} Polce, 27.
and performance opportunities through the winter months. Playing with the symphony also meant that he would be heard on the radio as part of the *Ford Sunday Evening Radio Hour*. Begun in 1934, the Ford Sunday Evening Radio Hour allowed the Detroit Symphony to be the first regularly broadcast orchestra. Through this program, Smith interacted with many of the leading orchestral conductors of the time, including Victor Kolar and Eugene Ormandy.⁸

After several years as cornet soloist with the Goldman Band and principal trumpet of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Smith enlisted in the Navy. It was Eugene Ormandy, conductor of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra at the time that steered Smith to join. Smith recalls,

> [Ormandy] was serving as guest conductor with the Ford Hour in Detroit. On this particular visit in 1941, Ormandy had come to Detroit and visited my home for dinner. He came not only to visit, but he said he wanted to organize a band for the Navy. It would be in Philadelphia with some of the greatest players from the Curtis Institute, Eastman, Julliard [sic] and all the other great schools. He was going to conduct what he thought would be a “band unlike any ever heard.” His plans were to go into the Navy as a commissioned officer and lead the band. I would be the assistant conductor, and we would use the library I had been developing.⁹

Unfortunately, Ormandy was not offered a high enough rank to secure his enlistment, but Smith enlisted anyway on 9 March 1942. He served as assistant conductor and soloed on many occasions with the Naval District 4 Band, a 28-member group based at the Navy Yard in Philadelphia that was often featured on WCAU radio. He also performed with the Washington-based United States Navy Band, under the baton of Commander Charles Brendler.

After a little over three years with the Navy Band of Philadelphia and with the close of World War II, Smith decided it was time to move on and in 1945 he was honorably discharged. Continuing as soloist with the Goldman Band was a primary motivating factor for this decision, however it was an opportunity that Goldman could no longer provide as that position was

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⁹ Polce, 38.
currently filled by the cornet virtuoso Del Steigers. This allowed Smith to return to Detroit and pursue another idea, conducting his own band.

Leonard B. Smith and the Detroit Concert Band

Upon leaving the United States Navy Band and moving to Detroit in 1945, Smith resumed playing with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He also began conducting the Detroit Shrine Temple Band. Of his involvement with this group, Smith noted,

I belonged to the Masonic Order since I was 21 so I had a strong loyalty toward them. Harry Philip was the leader of the band, and I took over when he became ill. Upon his death, they elected me to continue. It was, as far as Shrine bands went, very good. A Shrine Band is a lot like a high school band except the players are more older [sic] and stubborn. We played at the Masonic Temple here in Detroit and had some quality musicians. When I took over the band there were seventeen people coming to rehearsal. When I left some twelve years later, we had 104 on the rolls with around 75-80 coming regularly to rehearsals.10

Smith’s talent for successfully steering an ensemble is evident in the growth of the Detroit Shrine Temple Band. Many of the same practices that he used to grow this ensemble, such as his high expectations for performance, regular rehearsal schedule, and keen ear, are the same that he would use later to guide another ensemble in need of direction.

In 1946, Smith took over leadership of the Detroit Federation of Musicians Union Band. Prior to Smith’s appointment, the band provided a free concert series to the city. However, they often performed with little or no rehearsal that left the quality of the ensemble lacking. This deprivation of rehearsal did not go unnoticed by the city or its new conductor. Smith recalled, “These concerts were pretty bad. In fact, they were so bad that Mayor Edward Jeffries put the ultimatum to the Federation of Musicians Union that the city would cease funding the band

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10 Polce, 81.
unless it became more organized and functional for the city! That’s how I got into the act.”

Having been tasked with creating a concert band that the city could be proud of, Smith was finally able to put to good use the George W. Steart band library. He had acquired this collection several years earlier and it consisted of high-quality wind band literature. With this position and “available music, Smith’s dream was now becoming a reality. He was able to perpetuate the great tradition of the concert band as set forth by his boyhood idol, John Philip Sousa.”

Now in charge of the Detroit Federation of Musicians Union Band, Smith used his musical connections in the city of Detroit to “surround [himself] with musicians of such discriminating musical taste and performance that [the] band would quickly achieve a reputation for musical finesse and distinction.” He did not require members to be professional musicians; they simply needed to be fine players. Various band members corroborated this practice. Judy Peters, a member of the band from 1982 until 1991, recalled in a conversation with the author, “We were people from all walks of life. The trombone player, Bill Lane...was an engineer, car engineer. There were lots of teachers in the group. There were some professional musicians, but mostly people that did other things.”

In 1950, the Detroit Federation of Musicians Band changed its name to the Belle Isle Band to honor the location of the Jerome H. Remick Music Shell, where their outdoor concerts were held until 1979. Belle Isle is a two-and-a-half mile long, 982-acre island park that is located on the United States side of the Detroit River. Still owned by the city of Detroit today and now operated by the state of Michigan, currently the island is home of the Belle Isle Aquarium and

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11 Polce, 83.
12 Polce, 83; Even though John Vincent Polce asserts that Leonard B. Smith identified John Philip Sousa as a boyhood idol of his, no indication is given with Smith’s first interaction with the band, either live or through other means.
13 Polce 85
14 Judy Peters, telephone conversation with author, October 30, 2016.
was considered the crown jewel of the city at its economic height in the middle twentieth-century.

The band rehearsed Saturday mornings each week during the summer. Rehearsals lasted four hours, from ten in the morning until noon, and again from one to three in the afternoon.\(^{15}\) Being a long-time Mason, Smith had access to the Masonic Temple building where the band rehearsed on the fifth floor. In his rehearsals, Smith reviewed repertoire to be performed for the following week’s concert series. However, rehearsing all the music for the concert series was impossible. Robert Finzel noted that the band rehearsed “as much as we could in four hours, but obviously, you couldn’t go through every piece for six different concerts. [Smith] would tend to hit the high spots on that. You had to be on your toes and you had to be a pretty good reader and get to know that library.”\(^{16}\)

The band performed on Belle Isle every night of the week except Monday during the summers. Prior to becoming a member of the band, Judy Peters recalled attending concerts as a child while her father performed in the tuba section. “As a kid, the concerts down on Belle Isle were very popular because the boats were going along the river and you could hear them toot. He played a lot of marches.”\(^{17}\) Performances for the band always began the same way with band members standing and performing Smith’s own arrangement of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Concerts included a wide variety of repertoire and were structured similarly to Sousa’s concerts.

The concerts continued unchanged until the shifting sands of social upheaval took their toll on Detroit and the Detroit Concert Band. Following the 1967 riots, racial tensions in the city were running high and many citizens did not venture out often. Concert attendance on Belle Isle dipped. Because of this, the band began splitting its performances between Belle Isle and the

\(^{15}\) Robert Finzel, telephone conversation with author, November 4, 2016.

\(^{16}\) Finzel interview.

\(^{17}\) Peters interview.
State Fairgrounds, which were further north. This continued for several years, until the atmosphere of the city changed beyond a manner acceptable to Smith. In 1979, the band permanently abandoned Belle Isle as a concert locale. Smith articulated the incident at the band’s final concert on the island that caused their permanent departure.

There were those big vans with speakers all over the place with kids blaring their music so loud we could not even hear the *Star-Spangled Banner*. There simply were no police or other security to help the situation so I simply turned and told the audience that I could not continue under the circumstances. This was always known as the ‘Blue Van Incident.’ The band and I left the stage and I’ve never returned.\(^\text{18}\)

This situation, while not his first negative experience with the community, caused further strain on Smith’s relationship with the city of Detroit. The community’s reaction was evident in the amount of press it received as well, but for Smith, “what happened that night was really just the tip of the iceberg. For years we were fighting deficiencies with regard to concert environment. The shouting of obscenities, vagrants, drunkards, motor bikes, and hecklers were becoming part of the norm.”\(^\text{19}\) While this incident sparked a permanent change in venue to the State Fairgrounds, it did not harm audience attendance. Their final concert of 1979 summer series at the State Fairgrounds brought in over 5,000 listeners. This served as clear evidence to Smith and the band that their place in the cultural life of Detroit was still cemented.

In 1992, Smith retired as conductor of the Detroit Concert Band with no intention of allowing someone else to take it over. Robert Finzel remembers discussing Smith’s wishes. “He said when he retired, that was going to be the end of the band. He didn’t want anybody to take it over. And the truth of the matter is, at the time he retired in 1992, I don’t think there was another musician in the city of Detroit that had the knowledge or experience to take that band over.”\(^\text{20}\)

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\(^\text{18}\) Polce, 98.
\(^\text{19}\) Polce, 99.
\(^\text{20}\) Finzel interview.
While we may never know if this was the case, Leonard B. Smith and the Detroit Concert Band’s cultural impact on the city of Detroit and the wind band medium will continue to be felt for many years to come.

The Making of the *Sousa American Bicentennial Collection*

Leonard B. Smith and Detroit Concert Band’s cultural influence is apparent in the history of Detroit, but their influence on the wind band medium is far more prominent. Not only did the band continue the tradition of John Philip Sousa well into the latter part of the twentieth century, but they also created an important aural record of great works for the wind band through various recording projects. Still commercially available today through Walking Frog Records, the *Sousa American Bicentennial Collection* was Smith’s, and the Detroit Concert Band’s, first foray into professional recording.21

In 1969, Kenneth Corden, head producer for the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), approached Leonard B. Smith and the Detroit Concert Band. He sought to engage the band in recording the soundtrack for a one-hour documentary on the life of John Philip Sousa called *The March King*.22 Raised in the model of the Sousa Band and having dedicated his life to preserving the legacy of legendary bandmasters such as Sousa, it is no surprise that Smith and the Detroit Concert Band were chosen after an exhaustive three-year research expedition of bands both in the United States and Europe.23 Corden’s confidence in Smith and the Detroit Concert Band was evident in his October 1969 interview in *International Musician* where he said,

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21 The collection has been digitally remastered and renamed *The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa*. It is commercially available through Walking Frog Records.
22 Polce, 144.
The name Leonard Smith loomed so prominently in all discussion and recommendations, that it could not be ignored. His reputation for unswerving fidelity to the classic concert band tradition, as delineated by John Philip Sousa, his uncompromising insistence upon excellence in performance, his knowledgeable and disciplined rehearsal techniques, his vast professional experience in film, TV and radio procedures, his genuine knowledge of Sousa and his compositions, his close association with members of the Sousa Band, his accurate interpretations relative to tempi and dynamics of the Sousa marches, all led us to seek him out.24

While documentation for the documentary recording session is not available as of this writing, Paul E. Bierley, who performed in the recording session, wrote in his book John Philip Sousa: American Phenomenon that the Detroit Concert Band was “augmented to sixty-six players to simulate the sound and appearance of the Sousa Band.”25 Which specific Sousa marches are included in this documentary is also unknown. Among the musicians present were three distinguished individuals: former principle tubist with the Sousa Band, William J. Bell; former clarinetist with the Sousa Band, Edmund C. Wall; and as stated above, Paul E. Bierley, noted Sousa biographer and tubist. All three members were brought out at Smith’s request to be a part of this feature documentary and added an additional layer of significance to the performance (see Appendix II).26

This project was extremely successful and brought Smith, the band, and the city of Detroit positive press from newspapers around the country including The Herald-Palladium of St. Joseph, Michigan, the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal of Lubbock, Texas, and The Journal News of Hamilton, Ohio. Smith received fan mail praising the quality of playing in the BBC documentary and he saw an opportunity for the band to produce a series of albums that would document all of Sousa’s known march compositions, making them readily available to the general public.

24 Polce, 145.
26 Bierley, 220.
The recording session on 2 July 1974 at the Masonic Temple Theater in Detroit, Michigan resulted in the tracks on the first volume of the *Sousa American Bicentennial Collection*. Sixty-five musicians were contracted for this date and were each paid a total of $101.00 for the three-hour session (see Appendix I). While one can speculate that some of the marches included on this album were also included on the original BBC documentary, no direct evidence of this is currently available. Some of the marches included are many of Sousa’s most popular compositions including *The Liberty Bell, The Pathfinder of Panama, The Thunderer, The Washington Post,* and *The Stars and Stripes Forever.* With the cost of recording, it is also a distinct possibility that Smith and the band recorded items during that session for future albums as well.

The popularity of this album is evident in a *Detroit Free Press* article from 18 August 1974. According to the article, the first pressing of the album produced five thousand copies of which half were sold by the time of the article’s publication. It goes on to state that this is a remarkable amount of sales considering “hardly anyone has known about it except Leonard B. Smith, and some sound engineers.” Smith’s intention was to record all 116 known Sousa marches on thirteen volumes.

The second recording session took place on 4 August 1975 at the Masonic Temple Theater (see Appendix I). Specific pieces recorded on this particular date are not documented in materials filed for the session, however using available information regarding instrumentation and players contracted, it seems likely that the session was used to complete the series’ second

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28 Chuck Thurston, “City’s Sousa Specialists Find They Have A Hit,” *Detroit Free Press,* August 18, 1974, 8-D.
29 Leonard B. Smith indicated the intention of thirteen volumes in a letter to Edmund C. Wall dated 17 May 1974, however, the completed set only became ten volumes.
and third volumes. Smith, being a clever businessman and creative marketer, gave each remaining volume in the collection a unifying theme. The second volume, released in 1975, was titled “Exposition Marches” and included marches that were somehow affiliated with a World’s Fair or Exposition, such as the 1894 St. Louis Exposition for which Sousa composed *The Directorate*.

The remaining marches included *King Cotton, A Century of Progress, Sesquicentennial Exposition, Yorktown Centennial, La Flor de Sevilla, The Fairest of the Fair, The Legionnaires, The Invincible Eagle, and Hail to the Spirit of Liberty*. Marches included on the third album, titled “Classic Marches,” were works that did not have the notoriety of some of the more famous compositions, including *The Royal Welsh Fusiliers, Semper Fidelis, America First, Power and Glory, The Picador, Sabre and Spurs, Naval Reserve, The Wolverine March, The Aviators, and Magna Charta*.

Another three-hour recording session occurred 29 June 1976, again at the Masonic Temple Theater in Detroit with a compliment of sixty-three performers including Smith himself, Paul Bierley, and Edmund C. Wall. Specific repertoire recorded at this session is again unavailable, however a reasonable assumption based on the sixty-two players contracted is that it included marches from the fourth and fifth volumes of the collection. The fourth album titled “Fraternal Marches” was comprised of compositions dedicated to or written for a fraternal organization. The album included *National Fencibles, The Boy Scouts of America, The Gridiron*

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30 In a letter to Harvey Phillips dated 9 December 1977, Smith indicated that coming release of the sixth volume in the series. This would imply that he was efficient during recording sessions and recorded as many marches as possible in each of them. The inclusion Edmund C. Wall, Paul E. Bierley, and Harvey Phillips (former student of William Bell and professor of tuba at Indiana University), as well as the use of sixty-two musicians (larger than the normal Detroit Concert Band instrumentation), would indicate that this session most likely consisted of Sousa recordings. Additionally, volumes three, four, and five were all released in 1976 and that would indicate a significant amount of the recording took place prior to the 29 June 1976 recording session.

31 Bierley, 61.

32 Edmund C. Wall and Paul E. Bierley again performed on this recording session, as well.

On 1 August 1977, the band held their next recording session. Again, little information is available on the exact repertoire recorded, however it is believed that this session finished any remaining works for the fifth volume and completed the sixth. Compositions on volume five, “Marches for His Friends,” included Manhattan Beach, Resumption, The Gladiator, Congress Hall, The Salvation Army, The Pride of the Wolverines, The National Game, Guide Right, Keeping Step with the Union, The Diplomat, and Imperial Edward. Sousa composed Imperial Edward for King Edward VII as a thank you for having received the Victorian Order on 1 December 1901 at the end of the Sousa Band’s European tour.

Both albums were well received as indicated in a brief review in the 14 January 1977 edition of the Detroit Free Press. Writer John Smyntek wrote that the “Detroit Concert Band winds up the bicentennial year with a bang” and that these albums contain “stirring music and a treat to the ears, no matter what your musical persuasion.” Smith titled the sixth album “A Sousa Potpourri” and included The Glory of the Yankee Navy, Atlantic City Pageant, Ancient & Honorable Artillery Co., Jack Tar, Who’s Who in Navy Blue, Hands Across the Sea, The High School Cadets, The Gallant Seventh, The Bride Elect, Harmonica Wizard, From Maine to Oregon, and The Rifle Regiment. A review of this album by a Detroit Free Press music contributor seems to indicate that the sixth album was not as popular. In a 22 January 1978 submission, John Smyntek, who also reviewed several other Sousa American Bicentennial Collection albums stated, “this effort is the band’s latest attempt to record John Philip’s Sousa

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33 Again citing the letter to Harvey Phillips dated 9 December 1977, Smith would have had to complete the sixth volume prior to writing this letter and the next session date would not happen until 8 August 1977. Additionally, this session includes the same size and instrumentation of other session and also includes Wall and Bierley.
34 Bierley, 69.
best stuff for posterity, and now they are into material unfamiliar to all but Sousa fanatics.”

He goes on to say that the album is “glorious for Sousaphiles, [but] a bit tedious for the less-enthralled listener.”

It is interesting to note that while it seems this album was not as enthusiastically received by general audiences of the time, there are several marches that are still regularly performed by ensembles today including *The Glory of the Yankee Navy, Who’s Who in Navy Blue,* and *The High School Cadets.* It is also imperative to note that official release date indicated for the sixth volume is 1976, however the review of the album by Smyntek did not occur until 1978. Further research into this discrepancy is required to determine the reason behind the two-year delay.

For the 1 August 1977 recording session, a significant rise in union scale was paid to the players. Just one and a half years earlier, the average union scale wages for a musician in the ensemble was $116.60 for a three-hour recording session with an additional nine percent contributed to the American Federation of Musicians pension fund, and three percent was contributed to the musician’s union health and welfare account. However, for the three-hour session in 1977, those costs had risen to $155.46 for base scale, plus $15.55 and $3.25 that were contributed to the American Federation of Musicians pension fund and the health and welfare account, respectively (see Appendix I). This translates to an increase in staffing costs of $2,570.71 or about $10,458.88 by today’s standards; not an insignificant amount of money considering the year of the session and that fact that Smith was essentially using the sales of previous albums to fund future recording dates.

Among Smith’s recording session notes, there is a folder for a session that occurred on 14 May 1978 at the Lake Shore High School auditorium located in Saint Clair Shores, Michigan, a
suburb of Detroit. Included in the folder is a correspondence between Smith and Fred Lingeman of the Lakeshore Public Schools that seems to indicate the change in venue occurred suddenly (see Appendix II). Based on available information, it is this author’s belief that the one-and-a-half-hour session at Lake Shore High School was not used for any portion of the Sousa collection, but instead was Smith’s first foray into recording pieces for his Gems of the Concert Band series; however, no direct information is available to confirm this.38

Found with documentation of the next session is verification of what was recorded. The session, which took place on 8 August 1978 from eleven o’clock in the morning until two o’clock in the afternoon at the Masonic Temple Theater, carried a compliment of sixty-three players including Smith. Notes in his hand indicate that he intended to record the marches that would become the seventh album of the collection, plus a few others that would go on later albums (see Appendix III). The marches of this album, “Marches for the Military,” include Anchor and Star, The Black Horse Troop, Bullets & Bayonets, Esprit de Corps, Globe and Eagle, Loyal Legion, The Man Behind the Gun, Riders for the Flag, Right Forward, Right Left, and Sound Off. In addition to these pieces, Smith indicated that he intended to record six other marches for future albums. Those marches were Daughters of Texas, The Dauntless Battalion, Northern Pines, On the Campus, Prince Charming, and The Chantyman’s March. While his notes mention these other works, the notes for a future session also indicate that these last six works were recorded later as well. Perhaps the 8 August 1978 session ran out of time to lay down those tracks or higher quality recordings were needed. It is interesting to note is that the total scale wages decreased to $128.26 per musician for the session.

38 A note in Smith’s hand is included and lists four compositions that would end up on the Gems of the Concert Bands series, leading to the conclusion that this session was not used to record any of the Sousa marches.
For the last session of the 1970’s, Leonard Smith prepared a tall order. It was his intention to record the marches for the next two albums during the session. As mentioned above, he initially intended to record six of the works for volume eight at the previous session, however those same marches reappear in Smith’s handwritten notes that include other information regarding the 7 August 1979 session. The remaining marches included on this album, titled “The Collegiate Marches,” are Marquette University, University of Illinois, Kansas Wildcats, University of Nebraska, Wisconsin Forever Upward, New Mexico, and The Minnesota. Chuck Thurston, columnist for the Detroit Free Press favorably reviewed this album saying, “somewhere, someone may have recorded more Sousa than Smith has, but never with more feeling” and that these “marches are monotonous by nature because they must adhere to the left-right unchanging beat. It takes deft use of the concert band’s broad voice to individualize the 11 marches, a deft touch that Smith and the band obviously have. The album sounds good.”

In addition to Prince Charming and The Chantyman’s March mentioned above, Smith and the band also recorded Transit of Venus, The Occidental, The Volunteers, On Parade, Powhatan’s Daughter, Solid Men to the Front, Mother Hubbard, Pet of the Petticoats, Bonnie Annie Laurie, On the Tramp, The White Plume, and The Free Lance, all of which would end up on the ninth volume, titled “A Sousa Kaleidoscope” (see Appendix III).

The 1980’s kicked off a fruitful decade of recording that would see Smith’s Gems of the Concert Band series take life. Before he could fully dedicate himself to this new series however, he had one last Sousa album to produce with the band. This would be the tenth and final album, titled “Through the Years with Sousa.” The session took place on 26 August 1980 from ten o’clock in the morning until one o’clock in the afternoon at the Masonic Temple Theater and

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included a compliment of sixty-two performers, including the conductor. According to notes from the session’s folder, this studio date served a dual purpose of finishing the Sousa marches and also starting to record pieces that would go on *Gems of the Concert Band* albums such as Bach’s *Fugue a la Gigue*, as transcribed by Holst, and Percy Grainger’s *Country Gardens* (see Appendix III). The marches that Smith recorded on this date for what he nicknamed the “Sousa Leftovers” album were *Revival March, Triumph of Time, The Federal, Mikado, The Triton, Mother Goose, The White Rose, Ben Bolt, Flags of Freedom, The Charlatan, When the Boys Come Sailing Home, Across the Danube, Pushing On, Liberty Loan*, and *Golden Jubilee*. As noted by Chuck Thurston in his 16 August 1981 article for the *Detroit Free Press*, this album contains Sousa’s very first march composition, *Revival March*, and his last, *Golden Jubilee*. Thurston goes on to say that the “Detroit Concert Band, under Leonard B. Smith’s baton, interprets Sousa better than anyone,” reinforcing the popularity of the entire collection.\(^40\)

One thread to note from all the recording session dates is their approximate time of year. The majority of sessions took place in the month of August, with one taking place in late June and one other occurring in early July. The timing of these recording dates coincides with the active performing season the Detroit Concert Band had in the summer months. It would not be unreasonable to assume that many of the pieces recorded in these sessions were rehearsed and performed as part of the regular concert series the band that would save the project money by efficiently using rehearsal time.

The method by which Smith funded the entire collection is also interesting to note. When asked about how the albums were funded, Robert Finzel, former band member and personnel manager of the band shared that Smith “had his own recording label [H & L Records] and the way it was set up, the sale of one recording more than paid for the cost of doing another

recording. They got to the point where they were sort of self-sustaining.”\textsuperscript{41} This coupled with a mailing list cultivated with names of concert-goers helped to support projects for the band. Again, we see Smith’s keen business sense in this project, further reinforcing his understanding of the professional business band model and the legacy of John Philip Sousa.

The Importance of the \textit{Sousa American Bicentennial Collection}

In his interview with John Vincent Polce, Leonard B. Smith stated, “could you imagine George Washington’s ‘Farewell Address’ or Lincoln’s ‘Gettysburg Address’ being heard live once and never committed to paper for posterity?”\textsuperscript{42} This was Smith’s impetus for creating both the \textit{Gems of the Concert Band} series and the \textit{Sousa American Bicentennial Collection}. Further research could be conducted into the process by which the \textit{Gems of the Concert Band} series came to be and the repertoire Smith planned to include on volumes that were completed due to his death.

With respect to the Sousa collection, Smith’s education and career, as well as his close association with former Sousa band members and leading Sousa biographer Paul Bierley add weight and significance to these recordings. During his career, Smith and the Detroit Concert Band were known the world over as the leading interpreter of Sousa’s marches and the documentation of this tradition is an aural legacy that Smith left to future generations. Of the 136 marches that scholars such as Patrick Warfield and Paul E. Bierley attribute to Sousa, Smith and the Detroit Concert Band recorded 116. In the almost 40 years since the release of volume ten of this collection, twenty more marches by Sousa have been discovered. While interpretation of these works by Smith will forever be unavailable, “The Presidents Own” United States Marine

\textsuperscript{41} Finzel interview.
\textsuperscript{42} Polce, 142.
Band, is currently involved in a multi-year project to record all of Sousa’s marches, including those not available on the *Sousa American Bicentennial Collection*.

Still available today on Walking Frog Records as a five-disc set, a Sousa fan, educator, or musicologist can listen to a documented tradition of Sousa’s marches as interpreted through Leonard B. Smith.\(^{43}\) Among his many other contributions to the field of music, this legacy is one of Smith’s most substantial and offers future generations a glimpse into the story and mind of John Philip Sousa himself.

Appendix I

Union Contracts

I. Phonograph Recording Contract, 25 June 1974.............................................................22

II. Phonograph Recording Contract, 4 August 1975..........................................................23

III. Phonograph Recording Contract, 10 December 1976 .................................................24

IV. Phonograph Recording Contract, 1 August 1977.........................................................25
Phonograph recording contract portion included in 25 June 1974 recording folder. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
# Phonograph Recording Contract Blank

**American Federation of Musicians**

OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

THIS CONTRACT for the personal services of musicians, made this 4th day of August, 1975, between the undersigned employer (hereinafter called the “employer”) and the respective musicians (including the leader)

WITNESSETH, That the employer hires the employees as musicians severally on the terms and conditions below, and as further specified on the reverse side. The leader represents that the employees already designated have agreed to be bound by said terms and conditions. Each employee yet to be chosen shall be so bound by said terms and conditions upon agreeing to accept his employment. Each employee may enforce this agreement. The employees severally agree to render collectively to the employer services as musicians in the orchestra under the leadership of

as follows:

**Name and Address of Studio**

Masonic Temple, Detroit

**Date(s) and Hours of Employment**

August 4, 1975 - 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

**Type of Engagement:** Recording for phonograph records only.

WAGE AGREED UPON: $67.48

This wage includes expenses agreed to be reimbursed by the employer in accordance with the attached schedule, or a schedule to be furnished by the employer on or before the date of engagement.

Upon request by the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (herein called the “Federation”), or the local in whose jurisdiction the employees shall perform hereunder, the employer either shall make advance payment hereunder or shall post an appropriate bond.

**Employer**

H & L Record Company

**Authorized signature**

[Signature]

**Address**

P.O. Box 5109

**City**


**State**

**Phone**

**Leader’s name**

Leonard B. Smith

**Local**

5

**Leader’s signature**

[Signature]

**Street address**

403 Shore Club

**City**

St. Clair Shores, Mich. 48080

**State**

**Phone**

773-5946

**Name of Artist or Group**

Detroit Concert Band

---

**Label Name**

Session No.

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**LOCAL UNION NO.**

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**Total Scale Wages**

$162.00

**Cartage**

$19.08

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Phonograph recording contract portion included in 4 August 1975 recording folder. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
Phonograph recording contract portion included in 10 December 1976 recording folder. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
Phonograph recording contract portion included in 1 August 1977 recording folder. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
Appendix II

Correspondence

I. Letter from Leonard B. Smith to Edmund C. Wall, 17 May 1974                      27

II. Letter from Edmund C. Wall to Leonard B. Smith, 19 May 1974                    28

III. Speed Message from Leonard B. Smith to Harvey G. Phillips, 8 August 1975     29

IV. Speed Message from Leonard B. Smith to Paul E. Bierley, 8 August 1975         30

V. Speed Message from Leonard B. Smith to Edmund C. Wall, 8 August 1975          31

VI. Letter from Leonard B. Smith to Fred Lingeman, 20 May 1978                     32
May 17, 1974

Mr. Edmund C. Wall
5572 Netherlands Avenue
Apartment 6E
New York, New York 10071

Dear Eddie,

Glad to talk with you on the phone last evening. The recording will be at 10:00 AM on Tuesday, June 25, at the Masonic Temple main auditorium. It is a three hour date.

It would be my suggestion that you call me collect when you arrive back in the USA on Monday at 313-886-0394 (office) and I can advise you of any possible changes (which at this time I cannot foresee) and we can make arrangements to meet you etc. I will make a reservation for you at the Holiday Inn East in Detroit, at 11 560 Harper Ave. (The reservation if confirmed at this time.) You will be picked up at the motel and taken to the recording session and then to the airport or whatever you wish.

We will take care of all your expenses incurred and the recording fee, which is symphony orchestra rate for the three hours.

I hope you will enjoy the session. I'm using 65 men and this first record will be only one in a series of some 13, which will encompass just about all the Sousa marches. If you see anybody along the way on your trip who might want records, I'm enclosing some of my cards! We will be looking for European outlets.

I hope you and Mrs. Wall have a wonderful time on your trip and I'll await a call from you when you arrive in New York.

All the best,

Sincerely,

Leonard B. Smith

Leonard B. Smith

Letter from Leonard B. Smith to Edmund C. Wall, 17 May 1974. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
Letter from Edmund C. Wall to Leonard B. Smith, 19 May 1974. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
Speed Message from Leonard B. Smith to Harvey Phillips, 8 August 1975. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
Speed Message from Leonard B. Smith to Paul E. Bierley, 8 August 1975. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
Speed Message from Leonard B. Smith to Edmund C. Wall, 8 August 1975. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
May 20, 1978

Mr. Fred Lingeman
Lake Shore Public Schools
St. Clair Shores, Michigan 48082

Dear Mr. Lingeman:

Please accept our sincere appreciation for your courtesy in making available, on such short notice, the High School auditorium on May 14th.

Mr. Boren was there and everything was handled very well in every respect. We had a good recording session and accomplished what we had hoped to do.

Our check in the amount of $52.50, as per your invoice is enclosed as well as the portion of the application sheet, duly signed. I hope everything is in order.

Again, our thanks and my personal thanks also.

Sincerely,

THE DETROIT CONCERT BAND, INC.

Leonard B. Smith
Music Director

LBS:mlh
E
Enclosures
Appendix III

Handwritten Notes by Leonard B. Smith

I. Handwritten notes from 8 August 1978 recording folder........................................34
II. Handwritten notes from 7 August 1979 recording folder........................................35
III. Handwritten notes from 26 August 1980 recording folder........................................36
Handwritten notes by Leonard B. Smith included in 8 August 1978 recording folder. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
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<thead>
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<tr>
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<td>On the Campus T3</td>
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<td>Chautauqua</td>
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<td>Wisconsin Forever</td>
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<td>We The Minnesotans</td>
<td>3:16</td>
<td>5:12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Un j Illinois</td>
<td>2:26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Un j Orchestra</td>
<td>2:26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
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Handwritten notes by Leonard B. Smith included in 30 August 1980 recording folder. (Detroit Concert Band Inc. Archives at the C.L. Barnhouse Co.; used by permission.)
Appendix IV

Discography of the

*Sousa American Bicentennial Collection*


<table>
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<td>The Liberty Bell</td>
<td>We Are Coming</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Our Flirtations</td>
<td>George Washington Bicentennial</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Washington Post</td>
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<td>The Pathfinder of Panama</td>
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<td>El Capitan</td>
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<td>King Cotton</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>A Century of Progress</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sesquicentennial Exposition March</td>
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<td>Yorktown Centennial</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Liberty Loan</td>
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<td>Golden Jubilee</td>
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Appendix V

Discography of

The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa

(Detroit Concert Band Recordings Re-released by Walking Frog Records)


VOLUME 1: The Thunderer; The Gladiator; Harmonica Wizard; The Pathfinder of Panama; Esprit du Corps; Boy Scouts of America; U. S. Field Artillery; Triumph of Time; The Loyal Legion; Bonnie Annie Laurie; The Black Horse Troop; Who's Who in Navy Blue; The White Rose; Jack Tar; University of Nebraska; The Crusader; Power and Glory; The Triton; Comrades of the Legion; The White Plume; When the Boys Come Sailing Home; America First; The Occidental

VOLUME 2: El Capitan; Bullets and Bayonets; Keeping Step With the Union; The National Game; Our Flirtations; Daughters of Texas; The High School Cadets; Revival March; Magna Charta; The Atlantic City Pageant; The Liberty Bell; The Royal Welch Fusiliers; Sabre and Spurs; Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company; The Minnesota March; The Glory of the Yankee Navy; La Flor de Sevilla; Across the Danube; Imperial Edward; Right Forward; Mother Goose; Globe and Eagle; The Wolverine March

VOLUME 3: The Washington Post; George Washington Bicentennial; The Gridiron Club; The Dauntless Battalion; On Parade; Sesquicentennial Exposition March; Manhattan Beach; Transit of Venus; The Naval Reserve; Powhatan's Daughter; The Invincible Eagle; The Diplomat; Corcoran Cadets; Solid Men To the Front; The Picador; The Chantyman's March; New Mexico; The Volunteers; Mikado March; Kansas Wildcats; From Maine to Oregon; National Fencibles; The Man Behind the Gun

VOLUME 4: Hands Across the Sea; A Century of Progress; The Federal; Riders for the Flag; The Lamb's March; University of Illinois; King Cotton; On the Tramp; Wisconsin Forward Forever; The Northern Pines; The Circumnavigators Club; Anchor and Star; he Fairest of the Fair; The Pride of the Wolverines; Sound Off; Nobles of the Mystic Shrine; Liberty Loan; The Legionnaires; Congress Hall; Golden Jubilee; Prince Charming; Ben Bolt; Flags of Freedom

VOLUME 5: Semper Fidelis; The Gallant Seventh; The Belle of Chicago; The Salvation Army; The Rifle Regiment; Hail to the Spirit of Liberty; The Directorate; Resumption March; The Aviators; Yorktown Centennial; The Free Lance; The Beau Ideal; The New York Hippodrome; The Bride Elect; Guide Right; The Charlatan; Marquette University March; Pushing On; Right-Left; On the Campus; We Are Coming; Pet of the Petticoats; Mother Hubbard March; The Stars and Stripes Forever
Bibliography


