US Army Corps of Engineers.

AE Contract No.
W912DQ20D4000

Task Order
W912DQ23F4010

Project No.
19070.05

Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System - John Cochran Division St. Louis, MO

Prepared for US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS KANSAS CITY DISTRICT

The Palladium Building of St. Louis and Its Role in the St. Louis Music Scene, 1930-1959

24 April 2025

rlf
407.730.8600 | rlfaei.com

Submitted by
Row 10 Historic Preservation Solutions, LLC
New Orleans, Louisiana
Tiffany Bell, Anne-Marie Zarrelli, Kelly Sellers Wittie, and Lindsay S. Hannah

Prime Contractor
Rogers, Lovelock, & Fritz, Inc. "RLF"
Orlando, Florida

On behalf of
The United States Army Corps of Engineers – Kansas City District

and

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs

In partial fulfillment of
The Programmatic Agreement Among the John Cochran Division of the U.S. Department Of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Regarding Reconfiguration of the John Cochran Division of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System

and

The Amended Memorandum of Agreement Among the John Cochran Division of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Osage Nation, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Officer, and the City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office Regarding the Demolition of the Palladium Component Project of the Reconfiguration of the John Cochran Division of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System

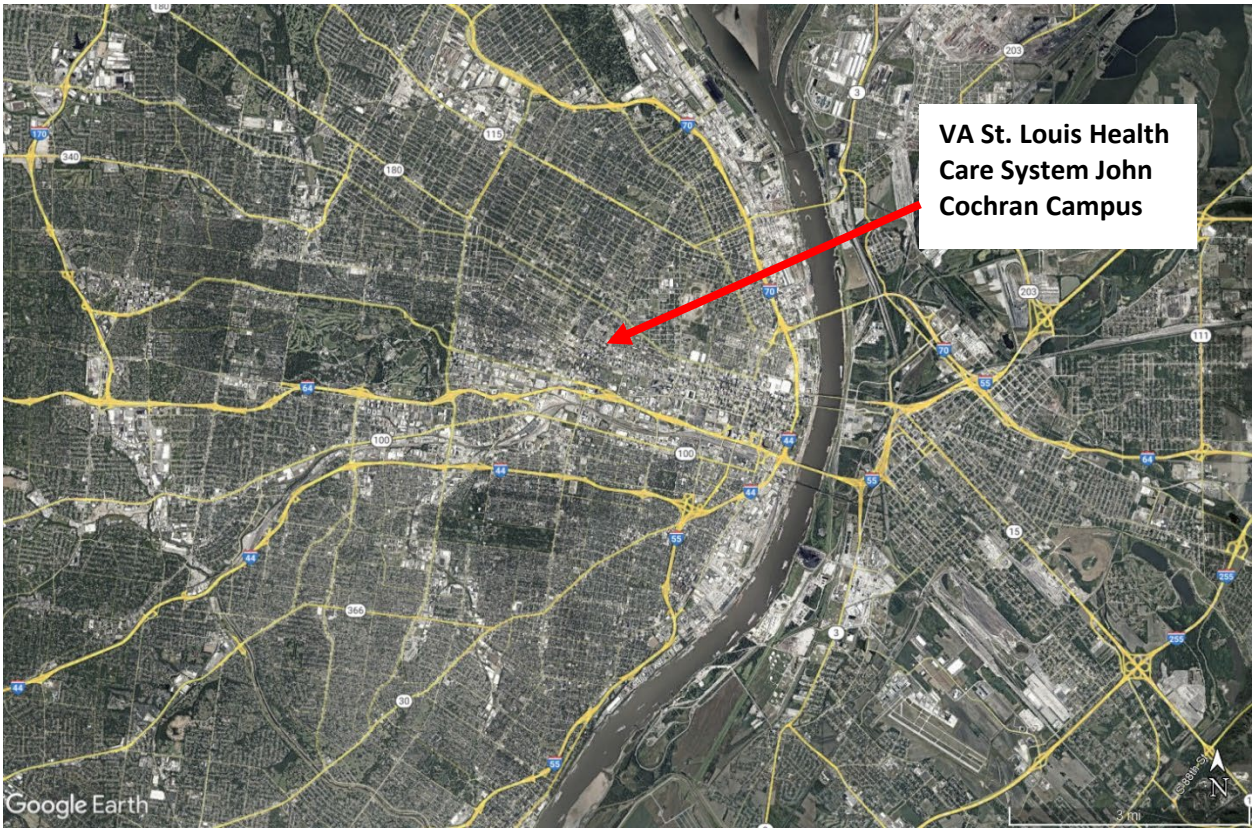
Executive Summary

The Palladium building had been vacant for approximately ten years before it was purchased by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 2020. Throughout its history, the building served as a roller rink, a bowling alley, an office, bars, a thrift store, and, most significantly, a nightclub. St. Louis' counterpart to Harlem's Cotton Club, the Club Plantation inside the Palladium was home to some of the mid-twentieth century's hottest music acts, including Dizzie Gillespie, Billie Holliday, Nat King Cole, and Ella Fitzgerald. The racist overtones of the Club's moniker were reflected in the advertising, and more than one musician refused to adhere to the Club's racial divisions. It was for this intersection of music and social histories the Palladium was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2013, VA initiated consultation pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (54 U.S.C. 3001001 et seq.) and 36 CFR Part 800, collectively referred to as "Section 106," concerning reconfiguration of the John Cochran Division of the VA St. Louis Health Care System (see figure below). Consultation continued into 2014 but was then paused pending additional studies and confirmation of funding. VA reengaged with the Consulting Parties in 2019 and continued consultation throughout the rest of that year. In January 2020, a programmatic agreement was executed that established a process for phased assessment of adverse effects.

As part of the 2013-2014 consultation, VA identified the Palladium building as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A: *Ethnic Heritage* for its history as a jazz nightclub; the Missouri State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with this determination on August 29, 2013. The Palladium building was privately owned at this time. Due to its poor structural condition, the City of St. Louis condemned the Palladium on March 14, 2018. In February 2020, VA purchased the Palladium, despite its condition, to use the land as part of the John Cochran Division campus reconfiguration. VA initiated consultation concerning the proposed demolition of the Palladium in October 2020; the memorandum of agreement (MOA) to resolve adverse effects was executed in December 2021. In accordance with Stipulation III.c of the MOA, VA agreed to produce a report about the role of the Palladium in the St. Louis music scene between 1930 and 1959 and its place within the social history of Grand Center, Midtown St. Louis and the city of St. Louis as a whole. The report is intended to assist the City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Offices and others in identifying important themes and properties significant to the history of St. Louis.

Sincere thanks to the National Ragtime and Jazz Archive at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, the St. Louis Public Library Archival Collections, the St. Louis Mercantile Library Special Collections at UMSL, the State Historical Society of Missouri Digital Collections and St. Louis Research Center at UMSL, and the St. Louis County Library History and Genealogy Department for their assistance in researching this report.



Satellite imagery of the City of St. Louis with a red arrow indicating the location of the Palladium Building and the VA St. Louis Healthcare System John Cochran Campus. "City of St. Louis Neighborhoods Map," Google Earth Satellite Imagery.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary ii

1. Research and Methodology 2
   1.1. Archives & Repositories 3
   1.2. Oral Histories 3
   1.3. Secondary Sources 3
   1.4. Other Sources 4
2. Introduction 5
3. St. Louis Music History in the Early Twentieth Century 7
   3.1. Blues 7
   3.2. Minstrelsy 8
   3.3. Ragtime 10
   3.4. Jazz and the Mississippi River 12
   3.5. St. Louis in Early 20th Century: Segregation and Jim Crow 23
4. The Midtown Neighborhood 28
   4.1. Demographics 30
5. Construction of the Palladium 38
   5.1. Palladium Roller Rink Management and History 40
6. Music Club 49
   6.1. Tony Scarpelli 50
   6.2. Influence of Harlem's Cotton Club and Neo-Minstrelsy 52
   6.3. The Club Plantation Before the Palladium 55
   6.4. Black Audiences at the Club Plantation 58
7. Club Plantation in the Palladium Building 60
   7.1. Club Plantation and Club Riviera 65
   7.2. Music and Entertainment at The Club Plantation 68
      7.2.1. Jeter-Pillars Orchestra 69
      7.2.2. Other House Bands and Prominent Musicians 72
      7.2.3. The Plantation Chorus Line 74
      7.2.4. Touring Musicians and Entertainers 77
   7.3. Closure of The Club Plantation 78
8. Palladium Building Post-Club Plantation 84
   8.1. Palladium Building and Veterans Administration Hospital 86
9. Legacy of The Palladium 90
10. Bibliography 91

Appendices 97
Appendix A: List of Oral Histories 98
Appendix B: Identified Roller-Skating Rinks St. Louis, 1930-1959 99
Appendix C: Identified Music Venues of Midtown St. Louis, 1930-1959 101
Appendix D: Biographies of Individuals Living Near Palladium in 1950 104
Appendix E: Other St. Louis Buildings by James Sidney Lee, Architect of Palladium 114
Appendix F: Palladium Tri-Fold Brochure 116
Appendix G: February 2021 Images of the Palladium 119

1. Research and Methodology

The Palladium building was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: *Ethnic/Heritage* for its role in the social and culture dynamics of mid-twentieth century St. Louis. Specifically, the club's routine as a place for Black entertainers and White audiences is representative of the blurring of racial and social segregation extant in other venues. VA determined the property eligible in 2013, with concurrence from the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office later that year.

The 2021 MOA required that VA focus this report on the role of the Palladium in the history and culture of the "St. Louis music scene from 1930 and 1959 and its [the Palladium's] place within the social history of this community."[1] The MOA further required VA to answer the following questions:

- What types of music were performed at the Palladium and its club? What musicians performed at the Palladium and its club? What other types of venues did these musicians play in? Was the type of music performed at the Palladium popular at the time? What neighborhoods in the city did these musicians reside in or were raised? Where were they educated? How did they learn their craft? Who were the patrons who frequented the Palladium?
- What other clubs were located in Midtown St. Louis when the Palladium and its club were open? What other music clubs were open in St. Louis at this time? What information is available about the musicians and patrons of other clubs?
- What is the legacy of the Palladium, its music, and its musicians?
- What role did the Palladium play in the social history of this community, and what was the nature of the relationships between the owner(s), musicians, and patrons?

The focus of this report was to understand the role the Palladium building played in St. Louis's history and to identify what if any, elements of significance are applicable to extant properties within St. Louis. The Palladium building was an important venue where musicians could showcase their talent in the city, even when utilized as a roller-skating rink. Later, after the building was altered into a jazz nightclub, the club was one of the most popular sites where Black jazz musicians could be paid a decent wage and have their music received by a large audience. This report used qualitative research to determine contextual knowledge about the history of jazz music and the history of the building, including relevant interpersonal relationships and social structures within St. Louis in the mid-twentieth century. This report identified important themes within the history of jazz music and other important properties significant to music and entertainment history in St. Louis.

For the study, both primary and secondary sources were utilized to collect data about the subject to identify thematic information. The historical academic community is in the process of analyzing the significance and contradictions of mid-twentieth century America, especially racial relations and developing quality secondary sources about this period. The 2014 riots in Ferguson, Missouri, spotlighted the issues facing Missouri, but the analysis is not yet complete. Extant and accessible sources may or may not tell a complete and accurate history of a subject. The rumored role of organized crime in the history of the Club Plantation, the transient lives of entertainers, and the nature of the nightclub industry in general are all potential reasons that details of the day-to-day routines of the Club are not available. It was also in the best interest of Club promoters to emphasize the glamor of the business in local

[1] MOA, 2021, page 4.

newspapers. It was, therefore, important to select both primary and secondary sources that could be triangulated with other sources for accuracy. Whenever possible, this report notes and centers first-hand accounts—in the form of oral histories and autobiographies—from Black artists and service workers who greatly understand the Palladium and Club Plantation experience. Even when their later oral history interviews were unclear or inaccurate regarding timeline, their stories and lived experiences are an integral part of understanding jazz history in St. Louis, and any discrepancies are noted.

1.1. Archives & Repositories

Historians with Row 10 accessed archives with collections relevant to jazz, blues, and African American music and entertainment history in St. Louis and along the Mississippi River for the relevant period, focusing on materials specific to Black jazz musicians with a relationship to St. Louis. The repositories that proved most helpful included the Blues Archive at the University of Mississippi, the Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University, the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University, the Jazz/Blues Archives and Collections at the University of Chicago, the National Museum of African American History and Culture Library, and the National Ragtime and Jazz Archive at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. Research also required examining materials related to steamboat history, racial settlement patterns, geographic history, and entertainment history in St. Louis. From the contextual research compiled, individuals who played an important role in the construction, development, and history of the Palladium building were identified.

Genealogical and historical materials related to the individuals were examined to determine the extent of their relationship with jazz history, St. Louis, and the Palladium building. Collections from Ancestry, FamilySearch, and Newspapers.com were utilized to establish this data. St. Louis had more than twenty newspapers in operation between 1880 and 1950, many specific to an ethnic or cultural group, such as *The Jewish Free Press* and *Neuer Anzeiger des Westens*. *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, The St. Louis Star and Times*, and *The St. Louis Argus* provided most press accounts in this report.

1.2. Oral Histories

Occasionally, oral histories, autobiographies, or other first-person and firsthand accounts were available for review for some individuals. Specifically, many of the Black musicians who played at the Club Plantation later gave oral history interviews about their careers. These accounts helped to paint a picture of the nightclub as discussed in Section 5. The firsthand accounts came from various sources, including newspaper articles, archives, and collections. The jazz musician oral history transcripts at the National Ragtime and Jazz Archive at Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville were a particularly invaluable resource for these firsthand accounts. Interview transcripts for the following interviewees were accessed: Vertna Saunders, Eddie Johnson, Hayes Pillars, and Robert Carter.

1.3. Secondary Sources

A review of secondary sources provided contextual knowledge for the building's roller rink and night club aspects and the broader history of jazz and segregation in St. Louis. Plantation-themed clubs were common, and much literature dives into the relationship between Black artists and the Cotton Club. Several books on the history of music in St. Louis were consulted. Further, books and articles about plantation-themed clubs, Black musicians and dancers during segregation, and the entertainment industry

in Jim Crow were consulted. Extremely useful publications included the Midtown St. Louis National Register Nomination, *Sweet, Hot and Blue: St. Louis' Musical Heritage* by Lyn Driggs Cunningham and Jimmy Jones, *Jazz on the River* by William Howland Kenney*, St. Louis Jazz, A History* and *City of Gabriels: The History of Jazz in St. Louis, 1895-1973* by Dennis C. Owsley*, Midtown, A Grand Place to Be!* by Jean Fahey Eberle, *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm, and Race Vols. 1 & 2* by Bruce R. Olson*, Hoecakes, Hambone, and All That Jazz: African American Traditions in Missouri* by Rose M. Nolen, "The Negro in Music in Saint Louis" thesis by John Cleophus Cotter, and *The History of Jazz* by Ted Gioia.

1.4. Other Sources

Various other sources were consulted. This included the design and conduction by Row 10 of a quantitative study with data gathered from the 1950 United States Federal Census. This data was then compared to census information from 1930 and 1940 which was gathered and analyzed in the *Archival Review of the Area of Potential Effects Associated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, St. Louis Health Care System, John Cochran Division Complex, City of St. Louis*, *Missouri* by the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis, Inc. This data allowed a close study of the immediate area surrounding the Palladium building. Racial, cultural, and socioeconomic statistics were compiled from the data, and this information was compared with other secondary sources to paint a complete picture of demographics for the area and Midtown generally.

2. Introduction

The Palladium building in St. Louis was constructed in 1913 just on the south side of a prominent geographic socioeconomic and racial split in St. Louis. Neighborhoods on the south of Delmar Boulevard were primarily White and neighborhoods North were primarily Black, established by Jim Crow Era residential segregation ordinances. The Palladium building once served the Midtown area of St. Louis as a White-only roller rink and later a nightclub—the Club Plantation—that hosted many well-known jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Dizzie Gillespie.

Club Plantation was St. Louis's counterpart to Harlem's famous Cotton Club, where affluent White audiences could see and hear Black artists. Harlem's Cotton Club began as a Black-run club but soon catered to a primarily White audience, a product of White fascination with the Harlem Renaissance. Because Black art had become profitable, White audiences sought to witness the "exoticism" of Blackness in safe, non-Black spaces. For most of its history, Club Plantation had strict rules that their audiences would be "White-only," and included plantation "Old South" motifs not only in its name, but in its décor and floor shows.

Over time, several jazz musicians refused to adhere to the Club's strict racial divisions and management was briefly handed over to members of the Black service staff, who allowed and encouraged Black patronage. The intersection of music and cultural histories made the Palladium building an important venue for Black artistry and musical history in St. Louis and allows us to consider the ethnic, cultural, and musical history of segregated Missouri.

1913	The Palladium building was constructed as the Palladium Roller Rink on the 3600 block of Enright Avenue.
1917	The Palladium Roller Club grew to over 1,000 members. Management of the rink introduced the first-ever street roller skating marathon in St. Louis that spanned a 10-mile course.
1926	The Palladium Roller Rink's signature skating music became jazz played by an all-White band.
1929	A Black jazz band led by Red Burnett was the first Black jazz band to play at the Palladium rink, 580 hours deep into a dance marathon, likely due to the exhaustion of the White bands.
1933	Louis Armstrong played a concert at the Palladium. Notably, this event was the first time Black patrons were allowed to patronize the Palladium Roller Rink, and his concert was advertised in the *St. Louis Argus*, a local, Black-oriented newspaper.
1933	Due to the widening of Delmar Boulevard, the Palladium building underwent heavy renovations to narrow the building from 215 feet wide to 150 feet wide. The renovations included a rearrangement of the rink as well as a new façade.
1938	Longtime manager of the Palladium Roller Rink, Rodney Peters, left to manage the Lakeside Park Roller Rink.
1940	The Palladium Roller Rink closed, and the building was leased and renovated by local mobster "Big Tony" Scarpelli into the new location for his nightclub, Club Plantation. He had originally opened Club Plantation a few blocks away in 1932 as an integrated nightclub, but authorities forced the club to move to White-only audiences to remain open.

1940	Club Plantation opened in the Palladium Building with 3 shows a night with acts produced by well-known producer Leonard Reed, who came directly from the Cotton Club in Harlem
1942	To comply with stricter laws being passed limiting the hours nightclubs could serve alcohol, Club Plantation became a “set-up” place that did not sell alcohol but provided mixers for patrons to bring their own liquor.
1944	The Mills Brothers played their first stint at the Club Plantation. Ella Fitzgerald played the Plantation for three weeks with Louis Russel’s band.
1945	The house band for the Plantation, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, began a U.S.O. tour of military bases in the United States, Philippines, and Japan. The Billy Eckstine Orchestra took over as the Club Plantation house band in their absence.
1946	Stricter laws about closing time for even “set-up” places led to the failure of many night clubs in St. Louis. The Plantation was raided by police several times and struggled to remain in business.
1947	Scarpelli turned over management of the club to a group of former Club Plantation waiters. This group of Black men advertised the club for Black audiences “Only” and continued to bring in talent for the club.
1948	Tony Scarpelli returned to managing the Club Plantation and attempted to revive the club by maintaining an integrated audience, showcasing two floor shows a night, and began selling alcohol, but it was too late. By summer, the Club Plantation had shuttered for good.
1949	The Palladium building was sold and changed hands several times, roller derbies and walkathons were periodically hosted in the building.
1950	Rothman Stores, Inc. leased the Palladium building and used it as a display area for their appliances and furniture.
2000	A thrift store opened in the Palladium building this decade.
2013	The thrift store in the Palladium building shuttered and the building remained vacant until its demolition.
2022	The Palladium building was demolished.

3. St. Louis Music History in the Early Twentieth Century

The blues and jazz aesthetic, to be fully understood, must be seen in as nearly its complete human context as possible.

–Amiri Baraka*, Jazz and the White Critic*

The end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries provided the setting for St. Louis to become a hotbed of musical growth that would lead to the development and refinement of jazz music and set the stage for venues like the Club Plantation in the Palladium building. The roots of jazz can be traced back through time to the rhythms of early Black folk music.

When discussing the genealogy and the pressures that created the early identity of African American music, jazz historian Ted Gioia traces the deepest roots to Africa:

> Generalizations about traditional African music are tricky at best… However, the most distinctive characteristic, the core element of African music, is its extraordinary richness of rhythmic content. It is here one discovers the essence of the African musical heritage, as well as the key to unlocking the mystery of its tremendous influence on so many disparate schools of contemporary music.[2]

Further pressures brought on by enslavement, religion, and identity in the early nineteenth century resulted in many overlapping genres of Black folk music that eventually led to the development of jazz.[3] St. Louis jazz historian Dennis C. Owsley described how two of these genres—blues and ragtime—"coalesced" into jazz in St. Louis between 1895 and 1920.[4]

3.1. Blues

The institution of human chattel slavery brought enslaved Africans to the Americas. Historian Kathy Ogden describes how the pressures African individuals faced under the institution of enslavement are associated with the creation of jazz:

> Students of black American culture emphasize the pervasive and continuing influence of oral performance on Afro-American speech, folklore, literature, and music. Because slaves from Africa lacked a common spoken language and because written literacy was restricted for many blacks until well into the twentieth century, music served a crucial role as a medium that conveyed the history and values of black culture. Consequently, it is easy to see many of the distinctive aspects of Afro-American oral performance in jazz.[5]

Ogden asserts how audience participation and improvisation in music is a large part of many different cultures in Africa and that these two strong characteristics were exhibited in Black music under enslavement.[6] In American enslavement practices, it was common to force enslaved individuals into the enslaver's religion. Under this structure, Black worshippers often melded their own African musical traditions with the Christian hymns of their captors. The ubiquity of Black Christian worship music under

[2] Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz.* 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 9-10.
[3] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 8.
[4] Dennis Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2019), 15.
[5] Kathy J. Ogden, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 12.
[6] Ogden, The Jazz Revolution, 12.

enslavement illustrated how enslavers encouraged a form of Christianity that highlighted values like honesty and diligent working. Ogden summarizes that enslavers decided to impose values such as these with the hope that enslaved workers would become easier to control. Projecting the idea of the hard-working, productive, yet "complacent and carefree slave."[7] However, enslaved individuals melded their African musical language with their new musical language and made the traditional hymns their own with additions such as audience feedback and improvisation. John Cotter, a Black jazz pianist for the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, notes that at the time, religious music represented a hope for freedom after death—perhaps the only freedom that many enslaved individuals could realistically hope to experience. Cotter and St. Louis historian Rose M. Nolen, however, remark on the shift in mindset and music when hope began to spread that enslaved individuals could be emancipated and experience freedom before death.[8] And with this hope, the blues was born, taking shape from the hymns. Blues music expressed the mourning and secular, earthly hope of the enslaved people at the time.

"The blues, yet another descendent of the Negro spiritual, became the gospel of the streets and was popularized by the publication of 'The St. Louis Blues,' composed by musician W. C. Handy…" Handy wrote the song about a visit to St. Louis in 1893.[9] Before its mainstream popularity, blues was primarily heard in the rural areas of the nation.[10] When it was found in cities, it was found in lower-income areas of town.[11] In St. Louis, blues music was more likely to be heard at house parties than in larger clubs or middle-to-upper-class establishments (such places favored ragtime music). Blues was especially popular in small clubs near the river and clubs in East St. Louis.[12]

3.2. Minstrelsy

Historian William Howland Kenney asserts that "[f]or at least a generation before the invention of riverboat jazz, St. Louis's Death Valley had produced commercialized version of urban black [sic] folk music that were adapted and further exploited by white musical entrepreneurs."[13] The most popular form of this exploitation was minstrel shows. Perhaps the most identifiable characteristic of the minstrel show was the blackface make-up used by non-Black actors to mimic dark skin. The actors would then act a dramatized caricature of a Black individual—often utilizing stereotypes like the "carefree slave" or the "Northern dandy Negro" to create material for the shows.[14] These caricatures were designed through the lens of White supremacy to reinforce the stereotypes of an antebellum fiction.[15] Minstrelsy was

[7] Ogden, The Jazz Revolution, 18.
[8] John Cotter, "The Negro in Music in Saint Louis" (master's thesis, Washington University, 1959), 23-26; 65, *Arts & Sciences Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (2025). https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/art_sci_etds/2025; Rose M. Nolen, *Hoecakes, Hambone, and All That Jazz: African American Traditions in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2003), 18.
[9] Nolen, *Hoecakes*, 87.
[10] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 13.
[11] Harriet Ottenheimer, "The Blues Tradition in St. Louis," *Black Music Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (1989): 140. https://doi.org/10.2307/779420.
[12] Ottenheimer, "The Blues Tradition in St. Louis," 140.
[13] William Howland Kenney, *Jazz on the River* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 11.
[14] William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 1; 4.
[15] Berndt Ostendorf, "Minstrelsy & Early Jazz," *The Massachusetts Review* 20, no. 3 (1979): 576. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088987.

developed and popularized because of the impending fear of Black power and its insinuation of a loss of White supremacy.

Although minstrelsy was born of the racist subjugation of Black bodies, African American entertainers developed "their own form of minstrelsy." Minstrel acts became a surprising way for Black performers to gain social and financial mobility in a time when power and mobility were hard to come by for non-White people. Douglas Malcolm writes that in this artistic expression, "irony appears to have been deeply engrained in black minstrelsy and not generally recognized by white audiences."[16] In other words, African Americans saw their exploitation at the hands (and faces) of White performers. The Black performers turned that performance on its head to become a pathway to upward mobility for them. Malcom further asserts that this irony exerted "influence on the development of jazz."[17] To understand the complexities of irony in jazz—and later, the irony in the Club Plantation concept itself—one must travel back to the original plantation in the antebellum era. An early example of Black irony in Black minstrelsy is the cakewalk, a dance in which enslaved individuals would mimic the dance and pomp of the White balls and galas.[18] This satire was "hidden in full view of the masters," and when the White enslavers witnessed this, they began to mock the dance themselves.[19] Malcolm describes this as "a remarkable kind of irony… not generally recognized by white audiences."[20]

After the Civil War, Black artists could find success in forming their own touring minstrel shows. Their content, however, was dictated by White venue owners and White-only audiences.[21] Of course, at the time, entertainment spaces were primarily segregated spaces.[22] Black artists were likely only allowed to enter White establishments because of their minstrelsy. Gioia states that Black artistry after emancipation, well into the twentieth century, was "influenced by the popularity of these secondhand evocations of their own culture." Even minstrelsy—"this degraded genre, despite its overt linkages to racism, could be assimilated and reinvented by African American performers, serving as just one more ingredient in the kaleidoscopic soundscape of black popular music."[23] Examples of this include early 1900s Black children in Picaninny minstrel shows and national dance crazes born of Black cultural movement like the bunny hug, the shimmy, the Charleston, and the Lindy hop.[24] Jayna Brown, in her book *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern*, describes the processes that created Black minstrelsy, "White recognition of black expressive exuberance was contingent on the codification of the black expressive body as a signature for the past, for a fictional moment of pre-industrial innocence."[25] In the deeply segregated music venues of the first half of the twentieth century, White audiences were more comfortable with the reinforced stereotype of the "complacent slave" whose role was to both serve and

---

[16] Douglas Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties': Subverting Racism through Irony in the Music of Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie," *Black Music Research Journal* 35, No. 2 (Fall 2015): 192. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/blacmusiresej.35.2.0185.

[17] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 192.

[18] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 191.

[19] Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 130. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g988s.

[20] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 192.

[21] Laurel Bettis, "Tough on Black Asses: Segregation Ideology in the Early American Jazz Industry," *Historical Perspectives: Santa Clara University Undergraduate Journal of History, Series II*: Vol. 17, (2012): 114-115. http://scholarcommons.scu.edu/historical-perspectives/vol17/iss1/11.

[22] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 200.

[23] Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 8.

[24] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 26; 158.

[25] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 162.

entertain. Forced into this role, Black artists utilized their performances as "assertive claims to social space."[26]

Historian Laurel Bettis states that "Ragtime and vaudeville shows in Southern speakeasies and dance halls commonly featured exclusively black entertainers, and as ragtime developed into early jazz music, some of the minstrel traditions in vaudeville carried over into jazz performances."[27] Further, that "Some [jazz] artists even recall that their music wasn't accepted and couldn't be performed for a white [sic] audience unless it incorporated aspects of Southern minstrel shows or blackface performances, even in more Northern locations."[28] Gioia points out that "[i]n this context, the grotesque spectacle of the Harlem club for all-white audiences was born, a musical menagerie in which social proximity and distance could coexist."[29]

3.3. Ragtime

Writer Rose Nolen describes how ragtime came to exist in St. Louis: "In the 1890s the African musical rhythms that had fueled the Negro spiritual joined with European musical styles and spread from the black [sic] church into saloons and parlors to create a new form of African American musical expression. It originated in St. Louis and became known as ragtime."[30] The "ragged" rhythm of the music gave it its name, and it was very different to the blues, as long, sad notes and improvisation were discouraged. Ragtime was influenced by marching band music and European classical music.[31] Solo pianists in the late nineteenth century would take a popular melody and "rag" on it, a technique that became popular in bars, saloons, and brothels in St. Louis, specifically with local composers Tom Turpin, Louis Chauvin, and Artie Matthews.[32]

Because of its bright local talent, St. Louis was known as a "major center" of ragtime music.[33] St. Louis ragtime was born in the vice district known as Chestnut Valley—the area of Chestnut Street near Union Station utilized as an entertainment district for African Americans, many of whom worked on packet boats or the levee. Owsley asserts that the development of ragtime provided a nourishing soil for the "roots of jazz" to take hold in St. Louis. Thus, it is important to understand the history of both ragtime and African American settlement in Chestnut Valley.[34]

After the Civil War, the sex work industry in St. Louis settled primarily along the riverfront.[35] Sex work was briefly legal in St. Louis from 1870 to 1874, and census records during this time show that White sex workers primarily worked along the riverfront in the downtown area of St. Louis, and African American

[26] Brown, *Babylon Girls,* 129.
[27] Bettis, "Tough," 115.
[28] Bettis, "Tough," 118.
[29] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 148.
[30] Nolen, *Hoecakes,* 78-79.
[31] Scott Yanow, "Sedalia and St. Louis: Ragtime," in *Jazz*: *A Regional Exploration*, 1-5. (Greenwood Guides to American Roots Music. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 1-2. *Gale eBooks*.
[32] Yanow, "Sedalia and St. Louis: Ragtime," 2.
[33] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 26.
[34] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, vi.
[35] Ashley B. Cundiff, "River Town Brothel Culture: Sex Worker Mobility, Policing, and Agency, 1870 to 1940," *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* (Order No. 10189555), 2016, 72. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/river-town-brothel-culture-sex-worker-mobility/docview/2305839920/se-2.

sex workers primarily worked North of the downtown area.[36] Over the next few decades, the repeal of the legalization of sex work in 1874 and a tornado in 1896 destroyed a large portion of the riverfront red light district and shifted the geography of sex work in St. Louis. At about the same time as the 1896 tornado, the Pure Home Association was formed and began lobbying for the further criminalization of sex workers. These events resulted in the centralization of sex work to Chestnut Valley. While the Pure Home Association fought the district moving anywhere, they especially lobbied for no brothels to move to the area south of Market Street. However, they were unable to prevent the move to nearby Chestnut Street. Thus, by 1900, the census lists sixty-one brothels on Chestnut Street and only nine brothels elsewhere in the city.[37]

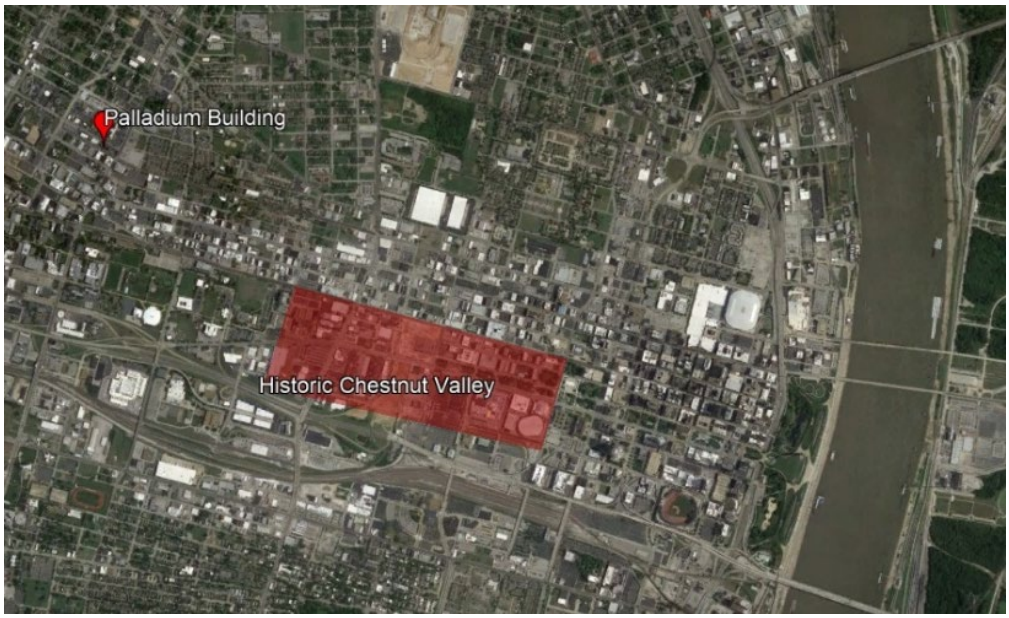


Figure 1: Map of St. Louis showing where the old Chestnut Valley district was in relation to the Palladium building. Google Earth 2020 map.

Chestnut Valley was a well-known African American neighborhood full of Black entertainment venues such as saloons and music clubs at the turn of the century. Ashley Cundiff, after examining several river town vice districts in her thesis, “River Town Brothel Culture: Sex Worker Mobility, Policing, and Agency, 1870 to 1940," came to the following conclusion:

> Interestingly, the core factor in the shared consolidation of African American entertainment districts and the sex industry in Memphis and St. Louis was increased policing. In Kansas City, where policing was far less prevalent, this type of consolidation did not occur. Rather, the African American entertainment district grew up near the sex industry but remained separate.[38]

The policing of Chestnut Valley was at least partially responsible for the consolidation of St. Louis’ Black entertainment district and sex work districts.

Notably, the houses of sex work that moved into Chestnut Valley around the turn of the century were houses with both White and African American sex workers. Census records indicate that most sex

[36] Cundiff, “River Town Brothel Culture,” 63-66.
[37] Cundiff, “River Town Brothel Culture,” 83-88.
[38] Cundiff, “River Town Brothel Culture,” 5.

workers in Chestnut Valley in 1900 were White but that integrated brothels were more common than when the brothels were located near the riverfront.[39] Thus, this African American entertainment industry became deeply integrated when the brothels moved to Chestnut Valley. The brothels themselves at this time became places of entertainment—with singers and pianists to compete with the attention of other venues on the street.[40] Saloons would host piano contests called "cutting contests," with the musicians cutting one another out for a chance to show off their talents."[41] Tom Turpin was famous for these "cutting contests" at his Rosebud Bar.[42]

This new genre of music left the brothels for higher-class bars and clubs, and ragtime quickly reverberated beyond Missouri to become popular in the rest of America, becoming a national sensation. Jazz historian Scott Yanow says ragtime was the very first "nationwide musical craze" and notes that sheet music was the primary way music spread at the time.[43] However, almost as quickly as it spread, it died. By the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, ragtime was declining in the city and the nation.[44] By 1910, Chestnut Valley had been dismantled by both city development and purity organizations.[45] The world had moved on from ragtime and on to a new music: jazz. Ragtime historian Scott Yanow summarizes: "Although some jazz history books claim that ragtime preceded and directly evolved into jazz, it was actually a contemporary of early jazz, and stands apart as a different style of music altogether, despite its influence."[46]

3.4. Jazz and the Mississippi River

There are many theories of the "birth" of jazz—with origin stories coming from San Fransisco, New Orleans, St. Louis, Chicago, and Memphis. Narrowing down a single point of creation is well-argued and well beyond the purposes of this study.[47] However, some credible studies suggest the genre "developed simultaneously" in both New Orleans and St. Louis, an indication of the relationship between the Mississippi River and early jazz. [48]

While it is an extreme oversimplification to say that jazz was created in New Orleans, jazz music took on one of its earliest recognizable forms in New Orleans. While jazz was developed because of a complex relationship between different iterations of Black folk music in the Western world, the intersection of these iterations is well documented in New Orleans. Before the Civil War, there was a Black upper class in New Orleans, with some members able to move and invest more freely than their counterparts in other parts of the United States. However, in the late nineteenth century—after the Civil War and an associated fear by many of the loss of White supremacy, laws were developed and enforced that segregated New Orleanians based on race instead of class. Thus, the descendants of the wealthy free people of color in

[39] Cundiff, "River Town Brothel Culture," 90.
[40] Cundiff, "River Town Brothel Culture," 83.
[41] Nolen, *Hoecakes*, 78-79.
[42] Dennis Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2019), 15-16; Scott Yanow, "Sedalia and St. Louis: Ragtime," in *Jazz*: *A Regional Exploration*, 3. (Greenwood Guides to American Roots Music. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), *Gale eBooks.*
[43] Yanow, "Sedalia and St. Louis: Ragtime," 1; 3.
[44] Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History*, 17-18.
[45] Cundiff, "River Town Brothel Culture," 91.
[46] Yanow, "Sedalia and St. Louis: Ragtime," 1.
[47] Gerald Horne, *Jazz and Justice*: *Racism and the Political Economy of the Music*, (New York: NYU Press, 2019), 10-11.
[48] Horne, *Jazz and Justice*, 10-11.

New Orleans were "grouped in" by the law with formerly enslaved Black individuals.[49] The consequence of this, in music, is that classically trained Black musicians were forced to work with Black folk musicians who had been only trained by ear. Both groups of musicians had access to a surplus of European instruments—the wealthy would purchase fine instruments for their formal lessons, and the poor often found cheap or free instruments from the disbanding of naval bands after the Civil War.[50] This combined formal and Black folk music (adapted from the African music of enslaved New Orleanians) melded with formal European music to form an early jazz comprised of both formal theory and looser sounds.[51] Gioia asserts, "In time, the hotter sound would emerge as the dominant strain—although assimilating many aspects of Creole tradition in the process."[52]

Many early jazz historians suggest that jazz was born in New Orleans's legal red-light district, Storyville. If not born, it was at least nurtured here in an important way. It is debated whether specific brothels in Storyville employed jazz musicians,[53] but "Pops" Foster reports that piano players were common in the brothels themselves, and Louis Armstrong stated that music could be heard throughout Storyville without even entering the bars and brothels.[54] Importantly, historian T. J. English writes that because of jazz's early history in Storyville, "from the beginning, jazz became identified as race-mixing music, an unusual development, perhaps unprecedented, where Blacks and whites came together to celebrate what was an authentically African American form of expression."[55] English's statement is technically correct but may be read as too optimistic during this period in American history. Policing in Storyville was relatively lax: sex work was legal until 1917, and police were not majorly concerned with White men seeking out sex workers who were non-White.[56] However, Black men were legally barred from being patrons of any brothels in Storyville. The only Black men allowed to exist in the space were musicians.[57] Jayna Brown summarizes this subjugation of Black labor and service in Storyville:

> It was at the sites of black women's sexual labor—the bordellos of Storyville, such as Lulu White's Mahogany Hall—where twentieth century black vernacular expressive forms—called jass [the original spelling of "jazz"]—developed. It was there that the rhythms of coerced and unfree labor were displaced in the ragged-time of male and female jazz pianists. Sites of exchange between the subjugated can be staked out right in front of, inside, and underneath the official economy.[58]

Another important relationship established during jazz music's structuring in New Orleans was that many of the Storyville clubs where jazz was played were owned by Italian immigrants.[59] At this time, "[r]ightly or wrongly, clubs in the district owned by Italians were believed to be mafia-connected." The clubs believed to be connected to an underworld were often safer places for Black musicians to work, partially because of the bouncers and physical protection offered by allying oneself with a powerful club owner but also because of the shared marginalization of Black communities and Italian communities faced at this

[49] Ronald L. Davis, "Early Jazz: Another Look," *Southwest Review* 58, no. 1 (1973): 2. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43468459.
[50] Horne, *Jazz and Justice*, 11; 31.
[51] Horne, *Jazz and Justice*, 30.
[52] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 39.
[53] Gioia, *The History of Jazz,* 35; Cundiff, "River Town Brothel Culture," 117-118.
[54] Ted Vincent, "The Window of Opportunity," *The Black Scholar* 22, no. 4 (1992): 12-13. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41069901.
[55] T. J. English, *Dangerous Rhythms: Jazz and the Underworld* (New York: HarperCollins, 2022), 29.
[56] Horne, *Jazz and Justice*, 35.
[57] Horne, *Jazz and Justice*, 36.
[58] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 107-108.
[59] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 36.

time.[60] The relationship that jazz musicians in New Orleans had with Italian club owners is similar to the relationship in the hierarchy at St. Louis' Club Plantation.

Ultimately, historian Gioia describes how "…research indicates that sometime around the end of the nineteenth century, a growing body of musicians in New Orleans were playing a type of music that, with benefit of hindsight, can only be described as jazz."[61] Further, that jazz "combined the rhythms of ragtime, the bent notes and chord patterns of the blues, and an instrumentation drawn from New Orleans brass bands and string ensembles."[62] This jazz flourished in New Orleans's Storyville and soon spread to other large cities, especially to cities along the Mississippi River.[63]

Around the turn of the century, jazz soon replaced ragtime as the popular music in the St. Louis brothels of Chestnut Valley.[64] Like African American folk music did for decades before, jazz music was sparked, developed, shaken up, and re-sparked up and down the Mississippi River. The resulting mixture of musical styles from the river cities furthered the repeating "process in which black levee workers created intercity circuits of musical exchange along inland waterways after the Civil War."[65] In his book *Jazz on the River,* William Howland Kenney discusses this phenomenon:

> In addition to its strategic geographical location and its historic role as the leading packet boat in the nation, by 1918 St. Louis had established an impressive forty-year history of commercializing and popularizing African American music. In a town that had done so much to invent ragtime and Gilded Age popular music, the musical development of riverboat jazz came naturally.[66]

Upriver to St. Louis

Medium-size, steam-powered boats known as packet boats were utilized for both commercial and passenger travel on the Mississippi River since the early nineteenth century. Over time, the packet boats facilitated the spread and prevalence of Black folk music along the banks of the Mississippi. Jazz also spread along the river by packet boats and later, repurposed packet boats known as excursion boats, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[67] While the owners and passengers of the packet boats were White, usually a group of around twenty Black laborers were hired to work on each voyage. The laborers, known as roustabouts, would load and unload the vessel at the stops along the river.[68] Writer Lafcadio Hearn described the roustabouts as being a part of what he deemed the "under side" of America, documenting the songs they sang while they worked and describing them as living transient and carefree on the levee, framing them as both "pitiful" and "thoughtless", and reinforcing the White expectation at the time (borne in enslavement and perpetuated in minstrelsy) that working Black men were thought to be musical and exhibit characteristics of the "carefree slave" racist stereotype.[69] It is true that the

[60] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 36.
[61] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 43.
[62] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 41-42.
[63] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 13.
[64] Yanow, "Sedalia and St. Louis: Ragtime," 3.
[65] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 11.
[66] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 95.
[67] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 2; 29.
[68] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 51.
[69] Simon J. Bronner, "Levee Life: Haunts and Pastimes of the Roustabouts," in *Lafcadio Hearn's America: Ethnographic Sketches and Editorials,* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 37. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130j5fq.

roustabouts would sing and chant while loading and unloading the cargo in the Mississippi River communities. Both the cargo and the singing would attract townspeople to gather for socializing at the levee.[70] This would later be manipulated further from the idea of looking back on "the happy/carefree" slave and projecting that on to performing roustabouts and, later, professional musicians. It is important to note that both Black joy and empowerment had some movement in this space. Still, there was also immense financial pressure that led to Black men exhibiting exaggerated servility and entertainment in response for pay.

It is important also to understand the context of both the physical and the mental forms of brutality experienced by Black Americans at this time.[71] Musician Raymond F. "Peg" Meyer described the demeaning conditions the Black men would labor under, which he witnessed as a White, Cape Girardeau-based packet boat jazz musician in the 1920s. During harvest season, roustabouts were paid one penny for each bag of wheat loaded on the packet boat. Because their hands were full, they were forced to carry their pay in their teeth.[72] Later, Meyer recounts that when the Black roustabouts were on the lower deck, white passengers would throw coins down to the roustabout they deemed most entertaining:

> The roustabout was usually a happy-go-lucky character, and his antics were a source of entertainment for the passengers who sat up on the second deck and watched his capers. Each would try to outdo the other and gain the popularity of the passengers, as one of the events between stops was to toss coins down on the first deck for the roustabouts to scramble for, and the favorite had the most coins tossed his way. As soon as the tossing session ended, a blanket was spread, and the dice began to roll. Spectators on the decks above would shout encouragement to the contestants below who were pleading with Lady Luck to make a point in a manner that promised more coins from the deck above if they failed.[73]

Anecdotes like this suggest that roustabouts received more money for their fictional exaggerations of servitude and irresponsibility than their physical labor. White audiences' interest in the reenactments of Black submission and enslavement will be a theme throughout the history of jazz and Black entertainment.[74] According to writer Douglas Malcolm, this "persona" that the Black laborers take on may be "regarded as a form of signifyin(g), or more specifically, indirection or masking that facilitates ironic subversion."[75] Thus, assuming this role was an act of subverting racism in an ironic way that allowed the laborers to benefit—in this case, monetarily—from the stereotype and minstrel-borne expectations of the White audience. This theme, established in the nineteenth century, will serve as the basis for the literal and figurative themes of the Cotton Clubs and Plantation Clubs of the early twentieth century.

In addition to their vocal talent, banjoist Danny Barker discussed the instrumental abilities of the roustabouts and credited them for spurring the music that would later popularize bands—both White and Black—on packet boats and, later, excursion boats.

> This is how the riverboats got music on them. Those boats had roustabouts on them, and half of those roustabouts played guitar and nearly all sang. Well, when those boats went

[70] Raymond F. Meyer, *Backwoods Jazz in the Twenties* (Marble Hill, MO: Stewart Printing & Publishing Company, 1989), 81.
[71] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 37.
[72] Raymond F. Meyer, *Backwoods Jazz in the Twenties* (Marble Hill, MO: Stewart Printing & Publishing Company, 1989), 77.
[73] Meyer, *Backwoods Jazz in the Twenties*, 85.
[74] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 145.
[75] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 185-6.

> up the river, the roustabouts were on the lower deck and the passengers, the gamblers, et cetera, stayed up on the upper deck. But when the people on the upper deck heard the singing and playing of the roustabouts, they would come downstairs, and that gave Streckfus, the owner of the boats, the idea of putting music on the boats.[76]

As author William Howland Kenney described, "[t]he nineteenth-century roustabout tradition encouraged black folk music as an important ingredient of riverboat culture." In the late nineteenth century, railways became the most utilized transportation for commerce in the middle-United States, and thus, roustabouts began to disappear from the levees and investors sought ways to make money from the many underutilized packet boats.[77]

Dewey Jackson

Dewey Jackson, born in St. Louis, was a Black jazz trumpeter who played on the Streckfus riverboats and in venues in St. Louis in the 1920s and 1930s. A steamer musician who learned under "Charlie" Creath and Fate Marable, Jackson emerged to lead two of his own riverboat bands—the Golden Melody Band and the Peacock Orchestra. Like his mentors, he was known for being "hard to get along" with, but immensely talented. He was also known for his rough style of playing—something that jeopardized his work under Joe Streckfus, and he was also replaced with Marable's band for White audience engagements.[78] Jackson also notably played at the Cotton Club in Harlem for several months in 1926.[79]

John Streckfus purchased one such old packet boat in 1880 when he was twenty-four. He founded the Acme Packet Company, but by the turn of the century, his business was also impacted by the popularity of railroad service. In 1901, Streckfus ordered a modified packet boat known as an excursion boat, with space for tour groups instead of cargo. He named this boat the *J.S.*, which would become the first of many Streckfus excursion boats in the early twentieth century. Later, Acme would become known as the Streckfus Steamboat Line and eventually, Streckfus Steamers, Incorporated.[80] Streckfus advertised his cruises to strictly White audiences, except for Monday night excursions, when Black clients were allowed to rent out the excursion boat.[81]

Likely because of his and the public's familiarity with roustabouts and their reputation, Streckfus hired Black musicians to entertain his White clients on their excursions. Streckfus was able to monetize Black labor and capitalize on the stereotype that writers like Lafcadio Hearn encouraged—that all roustabouts were musical and they "harken[ed] back to the work songs of the slaves." Historian Kenney notes:

> Streckfus Steamers updated and popularized the roustabout tradition… they kept a few black entertainers on hand to play the roustabouts' role… Second, the excursion line's

[76] Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, eds., *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya* (New York: Dover, 1955), 75.
[77] Kenney, *Jazz on the River,* 2; 52-53.
[78] Chevan, "Riverboat Music," 168.
[79] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 67-68.
[80] Kenney, *Jazz on the River,* 16; 21.
[81] David Chevan, "Riverboat Music from St. Louis and the Streckfus Steamboat Line," *Black Music Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (1989): 156. https://doi.org/10.2307/779421.

> magazine published articles filled with what would now be considered blatantly racist stereotypes.[82]

John Streckfus initially hired a Black string band from Des Moines in 1901, but he soon grew his fleet of excursion boats and his number of bands. Streckfus outlined that the bands he hired were to play both popular music and traditional dance music.[83] In 1907, Fate Marable, a 17-year-old Black pianist, joined the Streckfus Line. He joined the new Streckfus excursion boat, the *St. Paul,* playing piano on the upper deck while an all-White band, the Gene Rodemich Orchestra, played dance music in the ballroom.[84] However, Marable soon became a band leader and recruiter for other musicians interested in working on the steamboats.[85] The Black Streckfus musicians "built on the roustas' struggle against oppression, carrying it into new realms of professional instrumental music, opening up new cultural space on the river."[86] Marable, a Black man from Paducah, Kentucky, was an undeniable catalyst for broadening this space for Black musicians. At this time, the upper deck band on the Streckfus boat was integrated, and Marable was a band leader over both Black and White musicians. Marable demanded them to be note-perfect, and Streckfus dictated the type and rhythm of the music. A white musician, Clarence W. Elder, remembers how strict Streckfus was:

> Captain Joe Streckfus was very particular about music on the Streckfus excursion boats. He would attend rehearsals, tap his feet with his watch in his hand, and if the band failed to keep the proper tempo (70 beats a minute for fox trots and 90 for one steps) somebody got hell. If it happened too often there were new faces on the bandstand…[87]

Black musician Singleton Palmer recalled about the music styles played on the boats,

> One thing about the boats, you only played the music that the captain wanted you to play. You didn't play what you wanted to play. It was a routine on the boat, because things would run time-wise. I think there was three tunes to a set, there was certain times of night you were supposed to play, certain tempos, and waltzes set. There wasn't too much improvisation on the boats; you played strictly to the music.[88]

After the 1917 East St. Louis Race Riots, the bands on the Streckfus line became strictly segregated like the audience had always been.[89] By this time, the Streckfus family gave Marable the power to hire his own musicians,[90] and in 1918, Marable hired several Black jazz musicians from New Orleans to work a long upriver tour. Because of Marable's seniority and relationship with John Streckfus, his bandmates would even have the opportunity to play their own music, jazz, alongside the usual dancing music.[91]

---

[82] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 29.
[83] Chevan, "Riverboat Music," 160.
[84] Bruce Olson, *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race*, Vol. 1 (Lulu Publishing Services, 2016), 404.
[85] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 38.
[86] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 53.
[87] Chevan, "Riverboat Music," 158.
[88] Dennis Owsley, *City of Gabriels: The History of Jazz* in St. Louis, 1895-1973 (St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2006), 19.
[89] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 42-44.
[90] Chevan, "Riverboat Music," 160.
[91] Olson, *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race*, Vol. 1, 404.

Local 44

The American Federation of Musicians (A.F.M.) was formed in 1896, and forty-four local unions formed at the inaugural meeting. Black musicians in St. Louis were organized and ready, so they sent delegate John L. Fields to the A.F.M. Fields was the only Black representative at the meeting but was successful in getting a Black union--Local 44—formed. A.F.M. used the "separate but equal" legal doctrine to justify the segregated unions, and to rule that Black and White musicians should be paid the same when working the same venue. Local 44 provided protection for Black musicians working in St. Louis, especially the musicians working on riverboats alongside White bands. However, during the Great Depression, musicians found themselves struggling to earn a living wage, and the White local in St. Louis, Local 2, lobbied to revoke Local 44's charter. A.F.M. complied, and bands with members belonging to Local 44 were kicked out of their jobs in favor of White union bands. This effort went beyond St. Louis, as Black unions in Kansas City, Denver, and San Francisco also had their charters threatened or revoked from A.F.M. due to White union efforts. Local 2 offered subsidiary status to Local 44—collecting dues in exchange for a small fraction of the number of jobs available, and Local 44 accepted in order to appease White riverboat and venue owners.[92] A.F.M. continued to deny Local 44's appeals to reinstate their charter until 1944, when—thanks to musician Elijah Shaw's tireless efforts—a new Black union, Local 197, was created. In 1971, Local 197 and Local 2 integrated.

Because New Orleans did not have its own Black musicians' union at the time, Marable pushed to have the New Orleans musicians join a musician's union for protection. While White and Black unions were segregated, the American Federation of Musicians had rulings meant to ensure equal pay for Black musicians. Marable had the New Orleans musicians join the Black musicians' union in Kentucky, taking them north by train—not steamer. As most of his New Orleans musicians could not sight-read music, Marable insisted they join the Paducah union since it did not require a sight-reading audition to receive a union card, while the union in St. Louis did require such an audition. The Kentucky union cards were then easily transferred to St. Louis.[93] Although Marable recruited many musicians who could not initially read music, he required the musicians to learn to sight-read sheet music to remain in his band.[94] His demand for perfection often frustrated his band members. Louis Armstrong called him "high strung," and Vertna Saunders described how Marable "would ride everybody…if you made the least little mistake, you'd hear him laugh above the band. He kept little articles on the piano, such as a metal fountain pen, a tray, a marble. Then when somebody would make a mistake, he would drop it, throw it down on the floor so it would make a sound."[95] However, Marable's push for jazz musicians to learn to sight read and become note-perfect allowed for the musicians to develop skills and a sound unique to St. Louis, known as riverboat jazz.

This jazz differed from New Orleans jazz partially because of the technical ability of the musicians and primarily because of the absence of improvised solos. Captains on the Streckfus Line dictated that music must be played as written, as that was what White audiences expected. Another defining factor of riverboat jazz that developed from the Streckfus Line was the musicians "playing together separately," a concept spurred upon by the absence of amplifying systems for music on the excursion boats—the

[92] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 107-108.
[93] Kenney, *Jazz on the River,* 38-45; 54-55.
[94] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 54-60.
[95] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 56.

musicians had to play very loud to stand out alone as well as create a cohesive sound to be heard around the large dance floors.

> Control of the aesthetic contours of riverboat jazz by tour promoters limited the amount and kind of freedom with which musical employees were allowed to perform. This careful adjustment of the music's racial elements was designed to express the Streckfus family's idea of what it was like to live on the move within white Middle America. For most excursion boat passengers, carefully rehearsed black jazz musicians offered just the right amount and kind of movement, a level of stimulation calibrated to carry steamboat traditions into the twentieth century… At the same time, with a telling illogic, riverboat jazz became an important touchstone by which white critics and jazz writers established the "authenticity" of African American jazz.[96]

Because St. Louis was the Streckfus Line's home port, St. Louis became the "capital port of riverboat jazz."[97] St. Louis historian Bruce Olson writes, "The river produced a literal boatload of other St. Louis Musicians,"[98] such as Charlie Creath, Dewey Jackson, and Gene Rodemich.

Charles "Charlie" Creath

Charles "Charlie" Creath, a Black trumpet player and band leader, led one of the most influential jazz bands in the 1920s, the Jazz-O-Maniacs.[99] The band recorded over a dozen numbers for the Okeh record label in the early 1920s.[100] Further, "Creath was the first black [sic] band booker in St. Louis… Often, Creath would book several bands around the city. He would visit each site in his Marmon car and play a few tunes with each band."[101] He brought his band onto the Streckfus steamboats in St. Louis. White excursion boat musician Raymond F. "Peg" Meyer described how one Labor Day in the early 1920s when his band had a night off and he decided to board a boat that had been chartered for a Black excursion that featured Charlie Creath's band and Dewey Jackson's band battling against each other. "It was tough choosing between the two, as they were both tremendous." [102] Creath later co-led bands on the *St. Paul* in the mid- to late-1930s alongside Fate Marable and Dewey Jackson.[103] Later, during World War II, he was an aircraft inspector.[104]

Before the Great Depression, the amount of work on the Streckfus boats available to Black and White bands had been equal. However, during the Great Depression, the Streckfus family requested a "concession price" from the Black and White musicians. The White Local 2 refused, and Streckfus decided to put three Black-led bands on the excursion boats and retain only one White band. Fate Marable would

[96] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 9.
[97] Kenney, *Jazz on the River,* 11; 60.
[98] Olson, *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race*, Vol. 1, 409.
[99] Scott Yanow, "Sedalia and St. Louis: Ragtime," in *Jazz*: *A Regional Exploration*, 1-5. (Greenwood Guides to American Roots Music. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 5. *Gale eBooks*. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2885500010/GVRL?u=tulane&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=8987ec38.
[100] Yanow, "Sedalia and St. Louis," 5.
[101] Dennis Owsley, *City of Gabriels: The History of Jazz* in St. Louis, 1895-1973 (St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2006), 34.
[102] Meyer, *Backwoods Jazz in the Twenties*, 53.
[103] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 68; David Chevan, "Riverboat Music from St. Louis and the Streckfus Steamboat Line," *Black Music Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (1989): 167. https://doi.org/10.2307/779421.
[104] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 34.

continue with his band, but Black band leaders Charlie Creath and Dewey Jackson were to lead their own bands on the excursion boats. However, when the St. Louis White musicians' union heard about this agreement, they not only appealed to Joe Streckfus to change his mind, but they revoked Local 44's charter. After Local 44's charter was revoked, Local 2 offered subsidiary membership in their charter, where they collect dues from Black musicians but only provide a fraction of the jobs. Because there was no other option to work than to stay in the good graces of White venue operators like Joe Streckfus, the Black musicians agreed. Streckfus appointed three White-led bands to his fleet, and there would be only one Black-led band. The three Black band leaders, Fate Marable, Charlie Creath, and Dewey Jackson were forced into a band together. Competition became more intense for Black musicians as fewer slots were available in the band.[105]

Marable stayed with Streckfus for 43 years, from when he was 17 until he was 50. He not only taught his musicians jazz, but "[h]e taught them the exquisitely precise requirements of Jim Crow performance etiquette on the river."[106] As summed up by Kenney,

> Marable's Cotton Pickers, his Society Syncopators, and his Metropolitan Jazz-E-Saz Orchestra dramatically, even theatrically, announced to all customers, white and black, advance musical notice of the Great Migration, of an elegant, liminal new world emerging for whites and blacks, a world of new possibilities and dangers."[107]

Unfortunately, by the 1940s, after Fate Marable left, only one Black bandleader was on the Streckfus boats.[108]

Louis Armstrong

Some of the musicians who joined Marable in the mid-1910s were from New Orleans.[109] Perhaps because of Storyville's shut down in 1917 or because of reasons that led to the Great Migration, musicians like Louis Armstrong traveled north and began careers on the riverboats. Armstrong joined Fate Marable on the Streckfus Line in 1918.[110] Armstrong noted in his memoir that White people in places like St. Louis and Davenport, Iowa, had never had Black bands play for them until the riverboat docked.

> The ofays were not used to seeing colored boys blowing horns and making fine music for them to dance by. At first we ran into some ugly experiences while we were on the bandstand and we had to listen to plenty of nasty remarks. But most of us were from the South anyway. We were used to that kind of jive, and we would keep on swinging as though nothing had happened. Before the evening was over they loved us.[111]

[105] Chevan, "Riverboat Music," 169-70.
[106] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 38.
[107] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 58.
[108] Chevan, "Riverboat Music," 170.
[109] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 59.
[110] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 58-59.
[111] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 60.

Simultaneously, he described how he heard a music he described as jazz among Black musicians, residents, and river workers; jazz had already arrived before the arrival of the riverboats. Armstrong experienced success with Fate Marable on the *St. Paul*. When he was interviewed by a St. Louis journalist in 1941, he recalled his time on the boats: "Fate…was responsible for lots of us youngsters getting a start and there were a lot of good men in his band. We were the first hot band to come up on the boats and people thought we were really something out of the ordinary… we really had 'em jumpin'."[112] White audiences loved the "exoticism" of Black jazz, and the steamboats left White residents of St. Louis wanting more, setting the stage for the development of nightclubs like Club Plantation.

Figure 2: Fate Marable's Orchestra with Louis Armstrong. Courtesy of the New Orleans Jazz Club Collection of the Louisiana State Museum, 1978.118(B).00667. Note: Some debate about whether the photo was taken on the Sydney or the Capitol.

When he left the Marable band in 1922, Armstrong left St. Louis for Chicago and later New York. He returned to play in St. Louis periodically during the late 1920s, but at this time, his engagements in St. Louis were only advertised in the Black-oriented newspaper, the *St. Louis Argus*. He played at the Black clubs: the Coliseum (Jefferson and Washington Avenues), Paradise Dance Place (930 North Sarah), Capital Palace (23rd Street at Market Street, and the Pythian Hall and Chauffeurs' Club (later renamed the Regal Nite Club, 3222 Pine Boulevard).[113]

In 1930, Armstrong was finally acknowledged in the White-run papers in St. Louis for his contribution to popular movies at the time, showing the growing demand for jazz in the social mainstream.[114] In the early 1930s, Armstrong found fame as a solo artist in California and then Europe. The next few years saw him trying to rebuild his American audience.[115] Despite his popularity elsewhere and the growing commercialization of Black music in St. Louis, his returns to the city were still only advertised in the *Argus*.[116] White newspapers, despite praising his music or appearances in films, never acknowledged his presence in St. Louis. This continued throughout the mid-1930s, even when the White newspapers began reporting when to listen to his live broadcasts from larger cities on the radio.[117] During this time, one of his appearances in St. Louis occurred at the all-White Palladium Roller Rink, but it was utilized on May 3, 1933, as an all-Black music venue for the night he appeared.[118]

[112] Clarissa Start, "Louis Armstrong—Came Up the River With Jazz," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 2, 1941.
[113] *St. Louis Argus* ads: October 1, 1926; January 27, 1928; November 30, 1928; February 21, 1930; February 28, 1930; June 13, 1930.
[114] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 10, 1931.
[115] Clarissa Start, "Louis Armstrong—Came Up the River With Jazz," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 2, 1941.
[116] *St. Louis Argus*: February 17, 1933; April 14, 1933; June 2, 1933.
[117] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 17, 1935.
[118] *St. Louis Argus*, April 14, 1933.

Finally, in 1936, the *St. Louis Star and Times* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that Louis Armstrong would play for a White audience at the Ambassador Theater (411 North 7th Street). He would be there with his "swing band" (not jazz band) playing his own part alongside the movie "Pennies from Heaven."[119] He returned to St. Louis in March of 1939 for a charity appearance benefiting the Pine Street Y.M.C.A. Circus at the Municipal Auditorium (now the Stifel Theatre at 1400 Market Street). This was for a Black audience;[120] however, a few months later, he played for a White audience at the Forest Park Highlands Ballroom.[121] Local promoter Jesse J. Johnson, who was responsible for organizing all of Louis Armstrong's appearances in St. Louis, issued an apology in the *Argus* stating that Armstrong was supposed to play at the Paradise Deluxe Ballroom on June 27, but the booking agent for the venue asked too much in comparison to the White booking agent for the Highlands Ballroom, and so Armstrong would not be playing at the Black club.[122]

By the 1940s, the demand for Black jazz for White audiences in St. Louis had reached a fever pitch, and Louis Armstrong—fresh from a 36-week run at the Cotton Club in Harlem—played for the White audiences at Tune Town (3517 Olive) for a week in 1941.[123] On this same trip, he played two Black venues, the Castle Ballroom[124] and the Comet Theatre (4106 Finney Avenue).[125] It was also on this trip that White journalist Clarissa Start interviewed Armstrong, and her article in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* unequivocally stated that Armstrong "Came Up the River With Jazz."[126] Also this year, a column in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* stated, "Few musicians have influenced the style of American jazz as much as has Louis Armstrong… [Jazz] has left its indelible mark on American music."[127] The next year, however, the same column reported that when he revisited the White Tune Town club, "most folks who went to Tunetown [sic] Ballroom to hear King Louis went there to shake a festive foot," as Armstrong had not become a "household name" in St. Louis yet. Further, while he laid the groundwork for other more popular artists, "The style of Louis Armstrong has been taken by the superb bands of today, and has gone through a process of refinement."[128]

Armstrong played the Castle Ballroom and the Municipal Auditorium in 1943 before finally playing the Club Plantation in February of 1946 for an all-White audience.[129] He played there every night for nearly two weeks.[130] A few months later, he had a one-night appearance at the Black-owned Club Riviera on July 5. In a rare, star-studded show, Louis Armstrong and his band would battle Gerald Wilson's band (the band who was engaged at the Riviera at the time) fronted by Ella Fitzgerald.[131] The show was a smash, and the Riviera chorines backed the famous artists.[132] With the exception of the Municipal Auditorium—

[119] "Top Cast at Ambassador," *St. Louis Star and Times*, November 19, 1936; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 19, 1936.
[120] *St. Louis Argus*, March 17, 1939.
[121] "Louis Armstrong at Highlands Wednesday," *St. Louis Star and Times*, June 24, 1939.
[122] "An Apology," *St. Louis Argus*, June 30, 1939.
[123] *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 25, 1941; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 26, 1941.
[124] *St. Louis Argus*, January 17, 1941.
[125] *St. Louis Argus*, January 31, 1941.
[126] Clarissa Start, "Louis Armstrong," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 2, 1941.
[127] "The Music Whirl," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 19, 1941.
[128] "The Music Whirl," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 15, 1942.
[129] *St. Louis Argus*, February 26, 1942; *St. Louis Argus*, December 17, 1943;
[130] *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 31, 1946; *St. Louis Argus*, February 1, 1946; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 1, 1946.
[131] *St. Louis Argus*, June 21, 1946.
[132] *St. Louis Argus*, June 5, 1946.

now the Stifel Theatre, none of the advertised venues where Louis Armstrong played in St. Louis in the 1920s through the 1940s are extant.

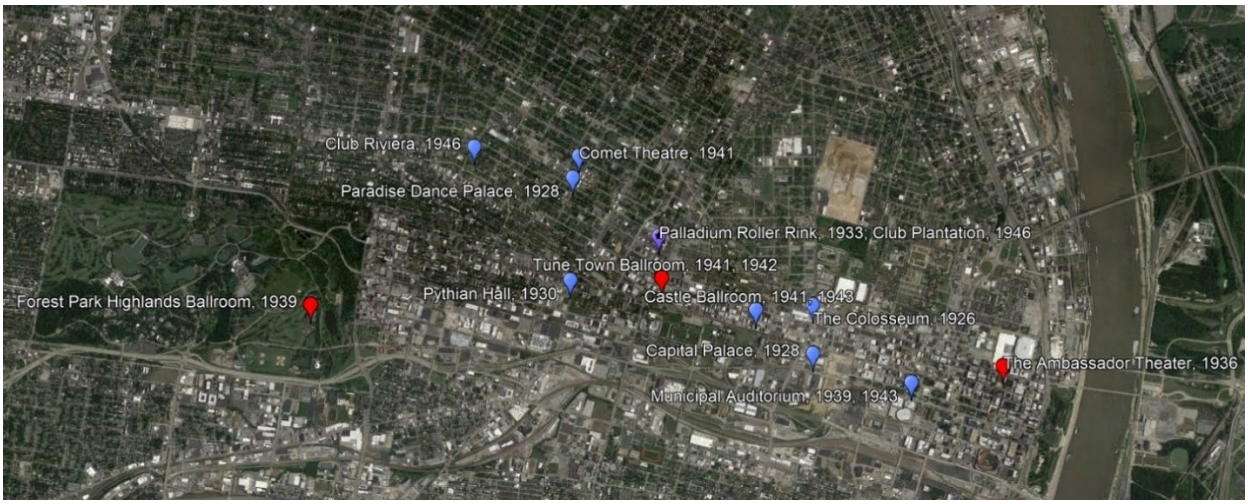


Figure 3: Map showing the clubs where Louis Armstrong played from the 1920s through the 1940s. Blue tags represent Black clubs and red tags represent White clubs. A purple tag indicates the Palladium, as Armstrong played for both Black (1933) and then White audiences (1946) there. Data taken from Newspaper analysis of the period. Google Earth 2020 map.

3.5. St. Louis in Early 20th Century: Segregation and Jim Crow

New art forms are often pilloried, not least because they are misunderstood, but jazz carries the added burden of being billed as one of the few art forms developed in North America and done so primarily by African Americans, who had been pilloried because of their earlier slave status and adamant refusal to accept supinely a slaveholders' republic. This contributed to an 'anti-jazz' movement…"

– Gerald Horne, *Jazz and Justice*

In the 1890s, a particularly heinous string of laws and policies in the United States known as "Jim Crow" were created to oppress and exploit non-White people. At this time, Black voting was suppressed, Black labor was exploited through sharecropping, and segregation was imposed.[133] In 1896, with *Plessy v. Ferguson*, "separate but equal" became the law of the land.[134] St. Louis historian Rose M. Nolen writes about the Black community,

> As they had once been bound by slavery, the freed people were now bound by ties of color and condition. This tradition of community underwent its greatest test during this period. Using the tools of mutual aid and self-help, communities expanded customs and traditions to accommodate their separate but almost always less-than-equal status.[135] The trait of Blackness was particularly stigmatized in the southern states with the perception that Northern states had more infrastructure and programs to support Black Americans. This, coupled with a labor shortage from World War I, led to a mass exodus

[133] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 186-7.
[134] Nolen, *Hoecakes*, 81.
[135] Nolen, *Hoecakes*, 82.

> from the South.[136] From 1916-1919, 500,000 African Americans left the south for more northern states. During this Great Migration (roughly from 1910-1930), the Black population of many northern cities doubled or tripled.[137] St. Louis, objectively not a "southern" city, had a central geography that allowed it to exist in a unique position during the Great Migration. Missouri, since its introduction as a state into the United States, was considered a "slave state" with legalized human chattel slavery. It was also a border state during the Civil War, and though officially a part of the Union, an organized Confederate government was competing for state power. This position meant that Missouri had fewer protections than "free states", but by the early twentieth century, Missouri was still viewed as a more northern reprieve by the Black families who were fleeing the southern states. Thus, St. Louis experienced an influx of Black settlers during the Great Migration. White residents were afraid that this increase in Black citizens meant a loss of White supremacy and power. In 1916, St. Louis passed the first referendum that imposed strict racial segregation on home buying. The ordinance prevented anyone from purchasing a home in a neighborhood with a population greater than 75% of another race. Though the Supreme Court decided the ordinance was illegal in 1917, continued fear of Black "encroachment" into White neighborhoods led to White residents forming associations that instituted binding legal agreements for their fellow residents to never sell to an African American.[138] The 1917 Race Riots in East St. Louis served to reinforce White residents' fears and led to even more legal segregation.[139]

Policies, laws, and social pressures led to extreme racial segregation in settlement patterns. Additional policies in the 1930s created by home loan corporations created maps with "redlined" areas—the areas with more Black residents—and made residential loans more difficult to attain in these areas. African American communities that had been established in the southern half of the city were forced out by fearful White residents. The population of the city's northern half became almost entirely Black, and the southern half was majority White. Social and cultural norms further reinforced this geographic racial division over time and became evident in the geography of the city, even effecting the settlement of Black and White sex workers to Chestnut Valley and the riverfront, respectively.[140]

---

[136] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 194.
[137] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 53.
[138] Jeannette Cooperman, "The story of segregation in St. Louis," October 17, 2014, *St. Louis,* https://www.stlmag.com/news/the-color-line-race-in-st.-louis/.
[139] Kenney, *Jazz on the River*, 42-43.
[140] Cooperman, "The story of segregation in St. Louis."

Figure 4: "City of St. Louis Distribution of Negro Population" from 1930 Census data. City Plan Commission. Light blue overlay shows districts with more than 450 Black individuals in it. Red arrow points to where the Palladium building is located. Map from City Plan Maps, Missouri Historical Society.

Southern Black musicians—like those trained in the vice districts like Storyville in New Orleans—were also swept along in the Great Migration, and jazz became even more prevalent in northern cities at this time. Music itself also became a way to "reflect" these "social and cultural changes that occurred as more African Americans were able to gain greater personal autonomy free from interference by white society."[141]

> Characterized by profound change, the Great Migration gradually fragmented the stable irony that had existed in the black community prior to 1900. While they frequently encountered resentment and violent resistance from white workers, the black newcomers gradually entered a broad range of semiskilled and skilled occupations and earned significantly higher wages than those paid for agricultural labor in the South. The Great Migration, then, opened up a plurality of geographic and occupational communities that not only offered African Americans different ways to conceive of the world and themselves but also to communicate and interpret irony.[142]

St. Louis experienced a large population boom in the first half of the twentieth century. By 1940, the city was overcrowded and poorer. The city was hit hard by the Great Depression and was experiencing a slower rebound than other cities in the nation. Because of these pressures, "[b]y 1940, a racial divide between black and white had been carved along the streets of the city. The old lines of the 1916 segregation vote stood firm."[143] The city experienced increased blight and overcrowding:

[141] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 193.
[142] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 195.
[143] Bruce Olson, *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race*, Vol. 2 (Lulu Publishing Services, 2016), 1-3.

> The city population grew to its high-water mark of 856,796 in 1950. Congestion in the no-loan, redlined black neighborhoods became tighter, with 88,000 families in pre-1900 housing. The Great Migration continued as more and still more southern blacks chased the job opportunities north. Anything was better than the virtual slavery of share cropping in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. The city made little attempt to improve the housing shortage until 1949, and then the answer involved bulldozers and high-rise apartment blocks… The county population, 70 percent white, rose faster than ever to 406,349 in 1950.[144]

This "White flight" would only increase over the next two decades.[145] In the city, slow progress was made with the building of apartments and integration, but not without cost: demolishing original Black neighborhoods for "progress" and the moving of Black schools out of Black communities.[146] St. Louis historian Nolen summarizes:

> As African Americans continue to move into Missouri's mainstream they are also moving to guard and protect the treasures of their past—their customs and traditions—and carry this heritage with them on their journey. The tradition of entrepreneurship was nearly destroyed by the demolition squads of urban renewal. Many black owners of the small businesses that were shoveled into the dustbins by the land clearance programs came to view the process as "urban removal." Since most black businesses were located near black neighborhoods, the efforts to clear away substandard housing caught them in its path. The wheels of progress ground the businesses into the dust. Though many of the poorly planned and badly managed housing projects, such as Pruitt-Igoe, were pulled down in the 1970s, the black businesses that had been there before were gone forever.[147]

Today, the city's past is still evident in the settlement of Black and White communities:

> The resources that are necessary to live a long and productive life are not equally distributed throughout the St. Louis region. They are not randomly distributed either. This unequal distribution of opportunity is the result of decades of policy at the local, state, and federal levels of government, and it is reinforced by systems, institutions, and industries (e.g., regulators, real estate, banks) that reproduce unequal outcomes in health and in access to the resources that influence health, like quality housing, education, employment opportunities, transportation, and basic services.[148]

The Jim Crow era normalized discrimination on all levels and produced segregation at home, work, and play. This furthered the idea that Blackness is "other" and "exotic," leading to the simultaneous fascination with and fear of Black art in the mainstream. A network of talented Black musicians—especially in St. Louis—are disenfranchised by White musicians, their unions, and club owners and face pressure to earn a living wage. These widespread social, geographical, and cultural pressures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created the "perfect storm" of distrust, intrigue, and financial incentives that led to the demand for and the creation

---

[144] Olson, *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race*, Vol. 2, 6.
[145] Olson, *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race*, Vol. 2, 7.
[146] Nolen, *Hoecakes*, 110.
[147] Nolen, *Hoecakes*, 127.
[148] N. Cambria, *Segregation in St. Louis: Dismantling the Divide* (St Louis: Washington University in St. Louis, 2018), 7. https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.wustl.edu/dist/3/1454/files/2018/06/Segregation-in-St.-Louis-Dismantling-the-Divide-22ih4vw.pdf.

of spaces like Club Plantation, where White audiences could “safely” consume Black art without getting too near to the Blackness they were taught to fear and minimize.

4. The Midtown Neighborhood

The neighborhood where the Palladium was built had a handful of different monikers over time. A portion of Midtown has been described as the Central West End, Covenant Blue, Grand Center, and Vandeventer, or a combination of the names. Officially, the Palladium is just south of the current Vandeventer neighborhood as defined by the city government today, with the official title: "Covenant Blue-Grand Center Neighborhood."[149] Though once farmland and rural country homes outside of the city, Midtown St. Louis was part of the metropolis by the mid-nineteenth century as the old downtown extended.[150] Notably, the Palladium building sits just on the south side of the geographic racial split discussed earlier and thus has a unique cultural and racial history.

Around 1870, wealthy developers, notably Peter S. Vandeventer, developed the area into several exclusive White residential neighborhoods.[151] Fire insurance maps drawn in 1909 depict two- and three-story brick and stone single-family homes. The only non-residential buildings nearby were churches, a clubhouse, and a hotel.[152] However, even as early as 1895, newspapers reported that the city's rapid growth may soon overtake this residential area.[153] Between 1910 and 1930, several theaters were built between Lindell and Delmar along North Grand Avenue, the centralized motorway bisecting the neighborhood. This entertainment stretch became known as the great "White Way" of St. Louis.[154] First, the Princess (1912), the Empress (1913), and then the Grand Central (1913) were built. Also at this time, the old Victoria Theater reopened as the Lyn Theater (1915). The Missouri Theatre (1921) and the St. Louis Theater/Powell Hall (1925) opened in the next decade. In 1929, the Fabulous Fox was built as well.[155]

The Palladium Roller Rink was an early addition to the entertainment lineup in the area, opening in 1914 in an empty plot of land in the neighborhood. This and the other all-White houses of entertainment were not an issue for the wealthy White neighbors, but in 1922, the neighborhood made the newspaper when two White residents wanted to violate the single-family residential deed restriction and open a hospital and a boarding house on their property. While the deed restrictions were upheld at first, it was not long before the former single-family homes were transformed into multi-family homes and tenement housing.[156] By the 1930s, homes were razed for commercial buildings to be built, and the area developed into a mixed residential and commercial corridor with a concentration of multi-story buildings along North

---

[149] "Neighborhoods of St. Louis," *StLouis-MO.gov.* *https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/live-work/community/neighborhoods/.*

[150] Joe Harl, Justin Bensley, and Abigail Dairaghi, *Archival Review of the Area of Potential Effects Associated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, St Louis Health Care System, John Cochran Division Complex, City of St. Louis, Missouri* (St. Louis: Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis, Inc. 2021); also "Covenant Blue Grand Center," StLouis-MO.gov. https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/live-work/community/neighborhoods/covenant-blu-grand-center/.

[151] Dr. Glen Holt and Tom Pearson, "St. Louis Streets Index (1994)," St. Louis Public Library.

[152] *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Saint Louis, Independent City, Missouri*. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 5, 1909. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn04858_008/.

[153] Caroline Hewes Toft, "Midtown Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1978), Section 7-8.

[154] Jean Fahey Eberle, *Midtown, A Grand Place to Be!* (St. Louis: Mercantile Commerce Trust Company, 1980), 48-49.

[155] Toft, "Midtown Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 7-8.

[156] Toft, "Midtown Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 7-8; "Court Holds Vandeventer Places Hasn't 'Slipped' Because of Rink Music," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 9, 1922, page 7.

Grand Avenue.[157] The National Register Nomination form for Midtown describes the skyline as evoking "a 'second downtown.'"[158]

During WWII, Midtown became a transitive place for hundreds of servicemen from Jefferson Barracks looking for entertainment.[159] After this brief boom, near the war's end, many Midtown structures—including five theaters—were razed for parking or other development.[160] By the 1950s, the Fox and the Lyn sat empty.[161] The type of commercial buildings in the area shifted from entertainment commercial buildings to industrial commercial buildings. Residents were further pushed out of the area due to its industrialization. In 1947, the remainder of the eastern half of the residential Vandeventer Place was demolished when construction on the John Cochran VA Hospital began. In the 1960s, "White Flight" further pushed residents out of the area. White families left the overcrowding of the city for the opportunity and space of the suburbs (St. Louis County). Central West End historian Jeff Fister remarked that,

> The fall and rise of the Central West End reflected national trends, but both were more extreme here than in some other cities. White flight to the suburbs took place in most cities during the '60s, but our housing stock was older than that in many cities, the city schools worse than most. As our neglected city decayed and minority population increased, fear of falling real estate values led to a stampede west. The need for adequate public schools caused families to lead the way. [162]

As the area became less wealthy, more crowded, and more industrial, the area also became less White as a product of the Great Migration, "White Flight," and reinforced racially segregated settlement. The Fabulous Fox had shifted to feature primarily Black movies at the time.[163] In the 1960s and 1970s, several nightclubs and entertainment venues opened in the nearby Gaslight Square, and this became an integrated hang-out, right on the border between the Blacker north city and the Whiter south city.[164]

Later, the "back to the city" movement of the 1970s prompted young couples to return to the nation's metropolitan areas. In 1974, property owners in Midtown became eligible for property tax relief under Missouri's "353" Redevelopment Law,[165] and the Central West End "was a good place to come back to, because a loyal percentage of city dwellers had never left." At this time, the values of larger homes rose 600 to 700%. Similarly, New Town/St. Louis, Incorporated began the "revitalization" of the underutilized office buildings in the area.[166] In 2020, the racial makeup of the Vandeventer neighborhood was still a Black majority.[167]

---

[157] Joe Harl, Justin Bensley, and Abigail Dairaghi, *Archival Review,* 170.
[158] Toft, "Midtown Historic District."
[159] "There's Revelry Now from Dusk to Dawn: War Workers and Service Men Set a Merry Pace at After-Dark Amusement Emporiums," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 30, 1942.
[160] Toft, "Midtown Historic District"; Eberle, *Midtown*, 55-59.
[161] Eberle, *Midtown*, 55.
[162] Jeff Fister, *The Days + Nights of the Central West End: A Look Back at the Rebirth of a Great Urban Neighborhood* (St. Louis: Virginia Publishing Company, 2007), 39.
[163] Toft, "Midtown Historic District."
[164] Cooperman, "The story of segregation in St. Louis."
[165] Toft, "Midtown Historic District."
[166] Fister, *The Days + Nights*, 40-41.
[167] Jason D. Whiteley, "City of St. Louis – Neighborhood Population & Demographics Census 2020 P.L. 94-171 Redistricting Data Release," Research Department, City of St. Louis Planning & Urban Design Agency.

4.1. Demographics

As shown on the map on the next page, the area immediately surrounding the Palladium building shifted racially, socially, and economically during this time. Demographics of the area outlined in red were examined to provide further insight into the neighborhood on a micro-level. Demographics for the area for the 1930 and 1940 census records were shown in a 2021 report by the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis, Inc. (ARC) titled "Archival Review of the Area of Potential Effects Associated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, St. Louis Health Care System, John Cochran Division Complex, City of St. Louis, Missouri." Demographics for the 1950 census were extracted and compared with the ARC findings for a defined area surrounding the Palladium building.

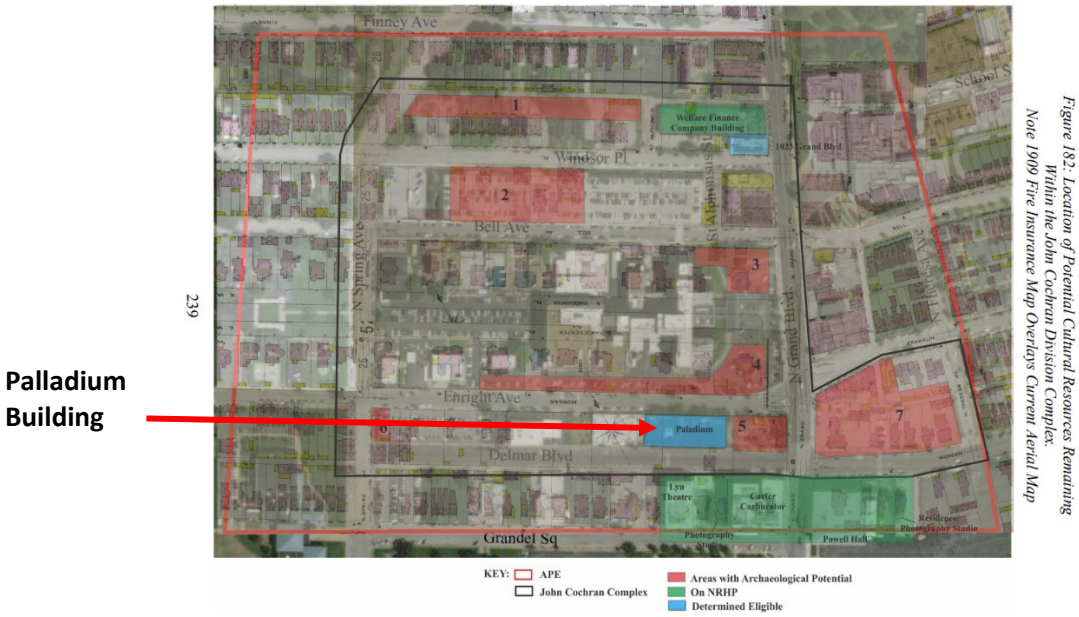


Figure 182: Location of Potential Cultural Resources Remaining Within the John Cochran Division Complex. Note 1909 Fire Insurance Map Overlays Current Aerial Map

239

Figure 5: Map of demographic area studied for this analysis. Red arrow indicates Palladium Building, red box indicates study area. Map is the Archeological Probability Map from the Archival Review of the Area of Potential Effects Associated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, St. Louis Health Care System, John Cochran Division Complex, City of St. Louis, Missouri (St. Louis: Archeological Research Center of St. Louis, Inc. 2021), 239.

The overall population of this area decreased between 1900 and 1930 because of the increase of commercial enterprises and the loss of residential housing along Vandeventer Place.[168] Other than the homes of the affluent White residents along Vandeventer Place, population density was high, with three hotels in operation at the time of the 1930 census. In this census, the population within the area saw an increase in African American and Chinese American residents, with an overall population total of 939. Of the 117 residences identified, 84 contained multiple families, and 55 homes had lodgers. Though the number of persons renting their residence increased, 52 families owned their homes.

[168] Joe Harl, Justin Bensley, and Abigail Dairaghi, *Archival Review*.

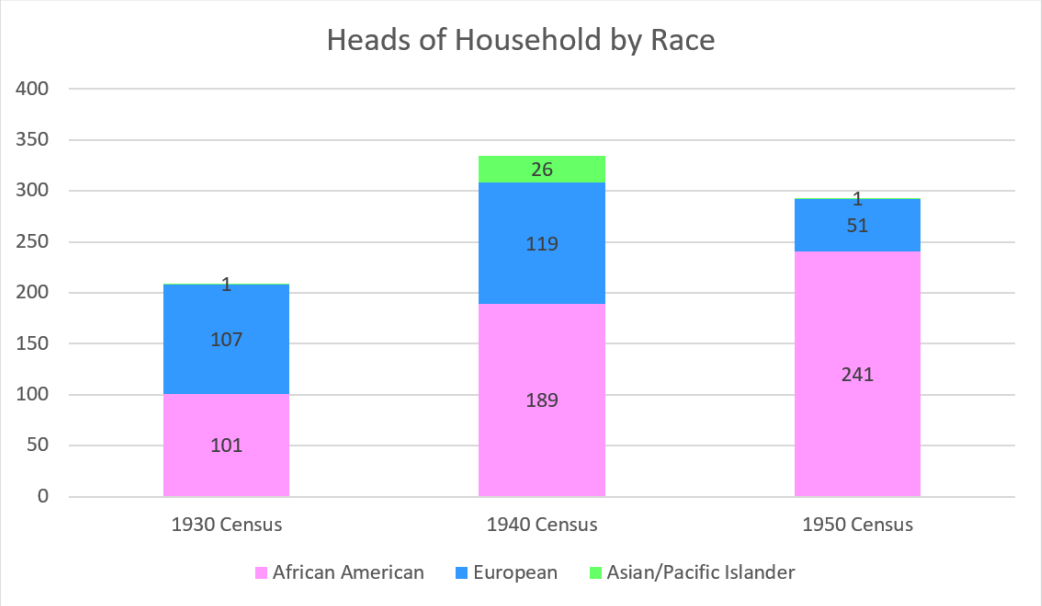


Figure 6: Heads of Household by Race in the defined area surrounding the Palladium building. Image credit Row 10.

The 1940 census saw the population in the area increase to 1214 people and 160 residences. Single-family homes decreased to 50% from the 1930 census percentage of 71.8%. One of the three hotels reported on the 1930 census had closed, and a second had been converted to apartments. ARC stated that only 43 families owned their homes and that what renters were paying for monthly rent was also down from the 1930 rates. This increase in population and decrease in home values and rents was attributed to the Great Depression.

At the time of the 1950 census, the population within the area had decreased to 1024 people. The construction of the Veterans Administration Hospital (later, US Department of Veterans Affairs) was starting, and though thirteen homes along Vandeventer Place were still occupied, some blocks had begun demolition, which explains the loss of almost 200 people over the previous ten years. The population within the area was mostly African American, 84.1%, but White and Asian populations were still represented at 15.4% and 0.5%, respectively. Population density was high, with many multi-family homes, apartment buildings, and rooming houses, and many families taking in lodgers. There was a total of 215 lodgers, representing 20.1% of the population of the area. 45.7% of the population reported that they worked outside of the home. This represented 164 women (30.3% of all women) and 304 men (63.1% of all men). The census also asked workers to report their hours worked the previous week to when the census was enumerated. Of

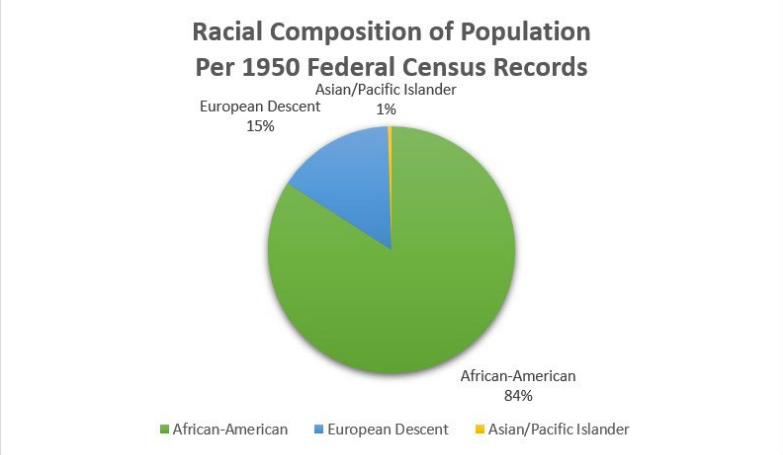


Figure 7: Racial Composition of the Population in the defined area surrounding the Palladium building studied in the ARC study and by Row 10. Image credit Row 10.

the 468 people reporting on their employment, 425 said the number of hours they worked, with a majority (92.2%) working 40 or more hours a week. Twenty-three people reported owning a business or being in business for themselves. Nine of the business owners were women, and fourteen were men. Interestingly, business owners represented all cultural groups included in the census, with one Hawaiian woman, one Chinese man, three White men, eight African American women, and ten African American men as business owners or independent contractors. See Appendix E for short biographies of some people who lived in this area.

Within this immediate area surrounding the Palladium building lived individuals who worked in the entertainment industry in Midtown. A review of the 1950s census for this area identified several people of note. Their stories provide insight into the living conditions, geographical settlement, and cultural and socioeconomic status of the entertainment service workers who resided there.

Azleaner Edgerson

In 1950, according to the federal census records, Azleaner "Lena" Edgerson was working as a cook in a "Private Club Night Club". She lived at 911 North Theresa Avenue on the third floor. Though the night club she worked at was not named on the census, she was just a block and a half away from the Palladium Building. The previous week she worked 48 hours at the nightclub. Lena was living at the same address in 1949. She had gone to school to grade 8 but had not completed the grade. She worked 50 weeks in 1949, earning $1,500 for the year. This made her wage between $0.625 and $0.75 an hour. Lena was listed as a 62-year-old widow. She was born in Mississippi and was considered the Head of Household. At this time, she had one Lodger, Rosco Gaines. Roscoe was a 63-year-old Black man, also born in Mississippi, who worked as a laborer at a Steel Foundry. The previous week Rosco had worked 40 hours at the foundry.

In 1916, Lena was listed as living at 500 Cleveland Street in Greenville, Mississippi, with her husband Ambrose Edgerson, born in New Orleans, Louisiana.[169] Ambrose was listed in the city directory as "propr" (proprietor) of Delta Garage at 213 South Walnut Street.[170] When Ambrose ("Ambrose Edgerson, Jr.") filled out his WWI draft card in September 1918, the couple lived in St. Louis, Missouri, at 3009 Market Street in Midtown. Ambrose was a chauffeur to Mr. James Garnan at 25 Washington Terrace and was 37 at the time of the draft. Lena is listed as "Nearest Relative" as "Asleane Edgerson."[171] Ambrose Edgerson, Jr. died in August 1933 from a disease of the lungs. His death certificate stated that he had last worked ten months prior. His occupation was "Gen[eral] Hauling," which he had been employed at for four years. The informant is his wife "Elizabeth," and they lived at "Saratoga & Shelby".[172] The place of death is listed as St. Louis County, Bonhomme Township, City of South Kirkwood. His wife reported his father as Ambrose

[169] Ambrose Edgerson Death Certificate, Missouri, U.S., Death Certificates, 1910-1969 [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[170] Ambrose Edgerson entry, 1916 City Directory, Greenville, Mississippi, U.S., City Directories, 1922-1995 [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[171] Ambrose Edgerson, U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[172] A second city directory found for Lena Edgerson was the Gould's 1920 St. Louis Directory that lists Lena by herself working at a restaurant at 3000 Market Street and living at 3015 Market. Although it is entirely plausible that hospital staff misheard Azleaner and wrote down Elizabeth, it is also possible that Ambrose and Lena separated and divorced between 1918 and his death in 1933 and Ambrose remarried an Elizabeth. (1920 City Directory, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S., City Directories, 1922-1995, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.)

Edgerson, Sr., born in Louisiana, but did not know his mother's name. He was buried on August 21st at Father Dickson Cemetery in Crestwood, St. Louis County, Missouri.[173]

Lena died on October 9, 1958, at Homer G. Phillips Memorial Hospital. Her address was listed the same as during the 1950 census, 911 North Theresa. The informant was Mamie Allen of Chicago, and her relationship with Lena was not listed. Her birth is listed as June 29, 1892 (but was given as 1888 in the 1950 census), making her age at the time of death between 66 and 71 years. Lena was again listed as a widow. Her occupation at her death was listed as a cook for the Stack Club. The cause of her death was heart disease, and she also had diabetes. She was buried at Washington Park Cemetery in Berkeley, St. Louis County, Missouri, as Lena Edgerson.[174]

James Madison Dickson (Dixon)

At the time of the 1950 census, James M. and Myrtle E. Dickson were enumerated as lodgers in the home of Joseph A. and Ellen Gentry at 3437 Delmar.[175] Myrtle, 50, was born in Kentucky and worked as a maid in a private home. In the previous week, she had worked forty hours. James, 53, was a porter at a "Nite Club" [sic] and in the previous week he had worked forty hours.[176]

James was born in Mississippi to James, Sr., and Ella Dickson in October 1895. In 1900, the family were Black sharecroppers, renting the farm they worked on in Warren County. James, Jr., was the youngest of four children, with all three of his older sisters (Rosa, 14; Pearlie, 11; Mary, 8) listed as attending school.[177] After the death of James, Sr., the family moved to Mound Bayou in Boliver County, Mississippi, by 1910. In the 1910 census, Ella was listed as 34, only 14 years older than her oldest living child, Rosa, 20. Ella was listed as a farmer, but Rosa worked as a teacher at the County School. Living with Ella and Rosa were James, Jr., now 13, and Pearl, 16.[178] Interestingly, Ella, Pearl, James, Jr., and Mary are all listed as "Mulatto" but Rosa, the eldest, was listed as Black.[179]

Notably, Mound Bayou, Mississippi, had been established by formerly enslaved individuals in 1887 with the purchase of 840 acres in Bolivar County by Isaiah T. Montgomery and Benjamin T. Green, cousins and former slaves of Joseph Davis, brother of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. They sought out other former slaves to clear the land and settle the town, which has retained a majority African American population to this day. The town set up a lumber mill and oil mill. Education was prioritized and a hospital was built, employing Black doctors and nurses. The town, like many small rural areas, saw a decline in

[173] Ambrose Edgerson Death Certificate, Missouri, U.S., Death Certificates, 1910-1969, [database on-line],Ancestry.com.
[174] Lena Edgerson Death Certificate, Missouri, U.S., Death Certificates, 1910-1969, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[175] Joseph and Ellen were a Black couple, originally from Arkansas. Ellen worked as a maid in a private home and Joseph had no listed occupation outside the home. Another lodger in the home was Christopher Griffin, a 62-year-old Black man born in Tennessee.
[176] James Dickson, 1950 U.S. Census, St. Louis, Missouri, District 96-1211, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[177] James Dickson, 1900 U.S. Census, Beat 2 (part), Warren County, Mississippi, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[178] Daughter Mary was listed as age 8 in the 1900 census was listed as 12 on the 1910 census, meaning she would have been about 2 on the previous record. In 1900 Ella listed that she had 5 pregnancies and 4 living children. In 1910 she stated she had 6 pregnancies and 4 living children. It is unclear whether Mary's age was incorrect on the 1900 census or the 1910 census.
[179] James Dickson, 1910 U.S. Census, Mound Bayou, Bolivar County, Mississippi, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

population and industry starting in the second half of the 20th century and is now better known for its history than its future.[180]

The Dickson family were still living in Mound Bayou in June 1918 when James, Jr., completed his WWI draft registration card. This was the first time the family name was shown as "Dixon"; however, James signed his name as "James Dickson." Twenty-one at the time of his draft registration, James listed his birthdate as September 1, 1896 (which differed from the 1900 census report of October 1895). He was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi. His employer was listed as Dan Thomas of Mound Bayou, Mississippi.[181] The 1920 census listed Dan W. Thomas as a farmer outside the town of Shelby in Bolivar County, Mississippi. It is likely James was working as a field hand on Mr. Thomas' farm at the time of the registration.[182]

James and his mother, Ella, are enumerated on the 1920 census as "Dixon." Ella, 49, was still listed as a "Farmer of Gen[eral] produce in Mound Bayou" and owned her farm free of mortgage. James, now 22, was the manager of a Pool House, but his sister Mary (19) was listed as a farm laborer. Neither Rosa nor Pearl lived in the home, but a child named Marvel Holden, 2, was living with Ella and was listed as her grandson. It is unclear whose son Marvel was.[183]

The record has not been found if James was enumerated in the 1930 census. His mother, Ella, was likely Ella Jones, who was listed on the census as a lodger at 626 Summit Street in McComb, Mississippi.[184] Ella, 63, was listed as married; however, another lodger named Jones was not listed at this address. The home was owned by a 79-year-old widow, Harrison Love. Living with Harrison was his daughter Mary Love, 31, a laundress; grandson Thomas Knox, 9; and Boarder, Joseph James, a 36-year-old widower who worked as a railroad laborer. Ella was the final resident enumerated for the address and did not list employment. All the residents at the address were listed as Black.[185]

James M. Dickson (given as "Dixon") was enumerated on the 1940 census as living in St. Louis, Missouri. At the time, he lived at 3645 Cook as a lodger in Sylvia M. Palmer's home. Sylvia was a 42-year-old Black widow with five Black lodgers. The other occupants were Nathaniel and Lonnie Winters, a fireman at a steel foundry and a nut picker at a nut factory, respectively. Also lodging at the home were Alfred and Wanetta Miller, a factory watchman and a new worker just starting an unnamed job. James was described as a 43-year-old married Black man working as a porter for a Barber Shop. James' wife, presumably Myrtle, was not listed as an occupant, and her 1940 census record was not found. James' record also stated that he had worked 60 hours the previous week and earned $494 in 1939. His highest grade completed was 6th grade, and he was listed as a resident of the address for April 1, 1935, along with the four other lodgers and Sylvia, the head of household, who rented the home.[186]

In February 1942, James completed his World War II registration card. His full name was given as "James Madison Dixon," and he listed his address as 3655 Windsor Place. He gave his age as 45 and his birthdate as September 1, 1897 (another difference from previous records). The "Name and Address of Person Who

[180] Kelsey Davis Betz, "Mound Bayou's history a 'magical kingdom residents fight to preserve", *Mississippi Today*, May 19, 2018, https://mississippitoday.org/2018/05/19/mound-bayous-history-a-magical-kingdom-residents-fight-to-preserve/.
[181] James Dickson, U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[182] Dan Thomas, 1920 U.S. Census, outside corporation of Shelby, Bolivar County, Mississippi, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[183] James "Dixon," 1920 U.S. Census, Mound Bayou, Boliver County, Mississippi, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[184] Ella's surname changed to Jones, listed on James' death certificate.
[185] Ella Jones, 1930 U.S. Census, McComb, Pike County, Mississippi, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[186] James "Dixon," 1940 U.S. Census, St. Louis city, Missouri, District 96-472, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

Will Always Know Your Address" was given as his cousin, Daniel L. Edmunds, who lived with him. James was still employed at a "Barber Shop" at 623 ½ North Grand Avenue. James' description was listed as dark complexion, brown eyes, black hair, and having a scar on the outside right leg near the knee he received from an automobile accident.[187]

In the 1950 census, James was listed at 3437 Delmar with his wife Myrtle and working as a porter at a night club.[188] While it is unclear which night club James worked at, it was likely one of the clubs in the surrounding Midtown area. In 1952, James and his wife Myrtle were listed in a city directory as living at 4734A Newcomb Place, with James working as a custodian at the Victory Theatre.[189] James died on December 24, 1966, at the age of 70. He had been hospitalized for two months in De Paul Hospital for pancreatic and liver cancer and had fallen into a coma three days before his death. He and Myrtle were back living at 3655 Windsor Place (where James had lived with his cousin in 1942), and he was still working as a porter, though the business he worked for was not listed. As informant, Myrtle stated that James never served in the US Armed Forces. His birthdate was given as September 1, 1896. He was buried in Washington Park cemetery, St. Louis County, on December 29, 1966.[190]

Thomas Walter Troupe

The 1950 census enumerated Thomas Troupe, a Black 64-year-old widower at 3428 Franklin Avenue, as a renter in the downstairs apartment. Thomas was a lodger of Emma L. Moore, 75, a Black widow who had two boarders. The second lodger was Ollie M. Smith, a 29-year-old Black man who worked as a shirt presser for a commercial laundry. Thomas was a doorman for a "Nite club," and had worked 40 hours the previous week. The census listed that he was born in Mississippi.[191]

Thomas' parents were William and Emma Troupe. At the time of the 1900 census, the family lived at 617 North Birmingham Street in Paris, Texas. The Troupes rented their home. William was 45, born in Mississippi, and a preacher. Emma, also 45, was born in Mississippi and had given birth to 8 children. Six were living with them in the home. The eldest listed daughter, Cordelia, worked as a laundress. Emma, 18, Thomas, 14, and Attrell, 7, were all attending school. The two youngest were still at home: Floyd, 4, and Wauneita, 2. The three older children were all listed as having been born in Mississippi, and the three youngest were born in Texas, starting with Attrell in 1893.[192]

The 1908 Paris, Texas City Directory listed the family at 621 North 24th Street and Thomas' father as Rev. William B. Troupe.[193] At the 1910 census, he was noted as the pastor of the Methodist Church.[194] Thomas was not found on the 1910 census. A man named Thomas Troupe was listed in the Paris, Texas City Directory in 1911 as a laborer at 914 North 24th Street.[195] The next city directory listing found for what is very likely our Thomas Troupe was in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1914. Thomas "Trupe" was listed at 2611 Pine and worked as a waiter.[196]

---

[187] James "Dixon," U.S., WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[188] James "Dixon," 1950 U.S. Census, St. Louis, Missouri, District 96-1211, [database on-line],Ancestry.com.
[189] James Dickson, 1952 City Directory, St. Louis, Missouri, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[190] James Dickson, U.S., Missouri, Death Certificates 1910-1969, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[191] Thomas Troupe, 1950 U.S. Census, St. Louis, Missouri, District 96-1281, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[192] William Troupe, 1900 U.S. Census, Texas, Lamar County, Paris, District 71, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[193] William Troupe, 1908 City Directory, Pairs, Texas, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[194] William Troupe, 1910 U.S. Census, Texas, Lamar County, Paris, Ward 4, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[195] Thomas Troupe, 1911 City Directory, Paris, Texas, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[196] Thomas "Trupe," 1914 City Directory, St. Louis, Missouri, [database on-line],Ancestry.com.

In 1914, Troupe married Addie Walker in St. Louis. They lived together at 2611 Pine.[197] Their address was also the location of a Black-owned commercial laundry business called Accurate Laundry. In 1919, the *St. Louis Argus* reported the laundry was unable to acquire essential supplies due to the rationing during World War I, but the managers were hoping to hire about one hundred new employees as the economy was expected to improve post-war. The advertisement was asking the Black community to support this Black-owned business.[198]

On his World War I Draft Registration card, Troupe listed his birthdate as July 8, 1885, and his age as 33. His employment was listed as a waiter at Remley's Garden on Oliver Road, St. Louis. When asked about his nearest relative, he simply wrote "Wife."[199] In the 1920 census, Thomas was listed as the head of household who worked as a hotel waiter. He rented the apartment with his wife listed as "Adda," 35. Addie was not listed as having employment outside the home. They had two boarders, Mary and Jonas Crutcher, 16 and 19-year-old siblings from Tennessee. Jonas was working as an automobile mechanic.[200]

Addie died in May 1922 from tuberculosis after being hospitalized for the last eight days of her life. Thomas gave her age incorrectly as "about 45" and listed her birthdate as unknown. She was born in Columbus, Kentucky, to Samuel Walker and Mary J. Robinson Walker. She was buried on May 28, 1922, in Washington Park Cemetery.[201]

By 1935, Thomas had finally moved from 2611 Pine to 4123 Cook Avenue.[202] In 1938, a man named Thomas Troupe, who lived at 4129 Lindell Boulevard and worked as a waiter, was listed in the city directory.[203] Though Thomas was not found on the 1940 Federal Census, his World War II Draft Registration card from April 1942 was found. On it, Troupe, now 56, lived at 3321A Franklin Avenue and was listed as working at the "William Malony Tavern" at 277 De Baliviere Avenue.[204] As stated above, in 1950, Thomas lived at 3428 Franklin near the Palladium and worked as a Doorman for an unnamed nightclub.

Thomas died at the age of 73 in June 1963. He had been hospitalized at Homer G. Phillips hospital for six days and died from a cerebral hemorrhage as a result of a cardiac vascular disease. The informant was his sister-in-law, Willie Mae, who stated Thomas had lived with her at 1069 Semple Avenue and he had most recently worked as a waiter at "Private Clubs." Thomas was buried June 5, 1963, in Washington Park Cemetery, just as Addie had been 41 years prior.[205]

---

[197] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 24, 1914.
[198] *St. Louis Argus*, May 9, 1919.
[199] Thomas Troupe, U.S., WWI Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[200] Thomas Troupe, 1920 U.S. Census, St. Louis, Missouri, Ward 17, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[201] Addie Troupe, Missouri, U.S., Death Certificates, 1910-1969, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[202] *St. Louis Argus*, August 30, 1935.
[203] Thomas Troupe, 1938 City Directory, St. Louis, Missouri, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[204] Could not find reference to a tavern by this name or any tavern at this address. Thomas Troupe, U.S., World War II, Draft Registration Cards, 1942, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[205] Thomas Troupe, Missouri, U.S., Death Certificates, 1910-1969, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

Tuberculosis in St. Louis Tenements

Tuberculosis in the tenements of St. Louis grew more prevalent with the increase in Black migrants from the rural south and with the return of the military from Europe after the end of World War I. A 2017 article in the *Missouri Historical Review* by Washington University doctoral candidate Taylor Desloge called "Creating the Lung Block: Racial Transition and the Making of the 'New Public Health' in a St. Louis Neighborhood, 1907-1940", details the city's approach to social welfare and public health in the first four decades of the 20th century. Desloge found that early reports on the tenements created to house poor immigrants in the 20th century considered population density, condition of housing, and availability of toilet and bathing facilities. Though still rife with racist assumptions, a 1908 report by Charlotte Rumbold, an affluent White woman educated in social work at Columbia University and commissioned by the St. Louis Civic League, studied a 48-block area of north-central St. Louis around Carr Square. The study area (referred to interchangeably as Carr Square or DeSoto-Carr) was bordered on the west by Grand, the south by Market, the north by Natural Bridge Road, and the east by the Mississippi River. This area only caught the southeast corner of our studied area, incorporating the blocks between Bell Avenue to Delmar Blvd, Grand east to North Theresa Avenue. The report noted that brick homes built by and for European immigrants in the mid to late 19th century were originally utilized as single-family-homes and had been subdivided into multi-family rentals. In addition, many properties had poorly built wooden structures built at the rear property line offering even less space per family than the front structures. Sanitary conditions were atrocious with a large percentage of rentals with no indoor toilets or baths. Shared outdoor privies were in poor and often leaking condition. Rumbold determined that the poor quality of housing was contributing to the poor health of the residents and that the property owners held responsibility.

However, municipal governments in the United States have historically been cautious to regulate what people do with their private property, especially if those people were White voters. Additionally, sanitation, cleanliness, and a new appreciation for 'modern medicine' and science were of national interest. As social welfare studies adopted more 'scientific' methods in the 20th century, occupants of neighborhoods became numbers and figures and social welfare transitioned to social policies.

> More critically, however, Rumbold's report arrived at the very moment that American public health was beginning a slow retreat from the more expansive social=environmental approach that she advocated. The New Public Health, pushed heavily in the twentieth century's second decade by philanthropic groups like the Rockefeller Foundation and the Rosenwald Fund as well as professional organizations such as the American Public Health Association, sought to wed the field of public health to the expertise of science and the resources of private charities. Termed the "laboratory revolution" in its day, the New Public Health fundamentally reoriented municipal health departments away from environmental sanitation and toward modern biomedical techniques like the bacteriological laboratory and the vaccine. (Page 135.)

Through the 1920s and 30s the St. Louis city Health Department tracked disease by location and began to equate the source of the diseases, especially tuberculosis, with the influx of African Americans migrating from rural southern locations. The perceived primary causes for the spread of the disease were shifted from the environment surrounding the sick to the diseased people themselves and either their ignorance or willful non-compliance of public health demands. The owners of the tenements that first became "slums" then transitioned to "urban blight" were absolved of any responsibility, as were the politicians and business owners dictating where people could live and what wage they could earn. The city's position was that neighborhoods where disease was most pronounced were diseased because of who lived there, not because of the conditions the people were forced to endure. Eventually more than 1,000 residents of the Carr Square neighborhood were relocated in the early 1940s to make way for mass demolition of substandard housing and the construction of Carr Square Village, the city's first public housing project, segregated for African Americans only.

5. Construction of the Palladium

Around the turn of the century, roller skating became a prevalent leisure activity for upper-class Americans. Several skating rinks had opened in New England, primarily at the prodding of James Plimpton—inventor of the four-wheel or "quad" skate—in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Plimpton popularized skating in resort towns along the East Coast and focused his marketing on pushing skating as one of the few appropriate physical activities that could be co-ed.[206] New England became the first hub of skating rinks, and because of the indoor nature of skating, it was convenient and accessible to most of the upper class. The popularity spread outward from the East Coast, and by the 1910s, most metropolitan cities had skating rinks.[207] At this time, "New concepts of physical wellness for 'ladies and gentlemen' were designed, as cultivation and maintenance of the body were central to new meanings of the self."[208] This was a "purposeful exercise" for "respectable classes"—meaning wealthy White individuals—and the Palladium Roller Rink followed this social structure, advertising the rink upon opening as "The Rendezvous of the Elite" for St. Louis. Of course, it catered to White patrons only.[209]

In August 1913, the Grand Amusement Company applied for a permit to construct a $35,000 office building and skating rink "this autumn on the south side of Morgan Street, just west of Grand avenue [sic], on a lot with 350 feet frontage." This was right next to the affluent, deed-restricted to White-only Vandeventer neighborhood. The permit specified a two-story building on the lots addressed 3618 to 3634 Morgan Street (modern Enright Avenue).[210] Few details of the building's design were included in the notices and articles about the opening of the Palladium. The floor was described as a "costly maple hardwood…kept spotlessly clean" to prevent a fall from ruining a dress or suit.[211] Interestingly, while the building permit had been secured for a building costing $35,000 in August, the building was described as costing $75,000 in December announcements. However, in a 1926 court case, the building, "to the extent that it was completed, cost approximately $66,000."[212] At least a portion of the cost increase may be attributable to expanding the building's footprint from 220 feet x 152 feet to 225 feet x 215 feet. Additional description of the building presented at court noted that the building was constructed of brick with the elevation facing Morgan Street (Enright Avenue) as "designed for stores and the rear portion for a roller-skating rink." The owners spent a further $20,000 when they outfitted the club with "linoleum, seats, tables, chairs, draperies, electric signs, and a soda fountain," as well as equipment such as skates.[213] Though the rink was ready for business less than five months after the building permit application, the planned storefronts were not operational until after 1915.[214] A review of city directories and local

[206] Ruth Terry, "The History Behind the Roller Skating Trend," *JSTOR Daily*, September 7, 2020, https://daily.jstor.org/the-history-behind-the-roller-skating-trend/; "The History of Inline Skating," National Museum of Roller Skating website, accessed September 21, 2023, https://www.rollerskatingmuseum.org/inline-skating.
[207] "Rodney Peter to Open Sans Souci for Rollerites," *St. Louis Star and Times,* February 9, 1913.
[208] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 131.
[209] *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 13, 1913.
[210] "Building Permits for Week," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 24, 1913, page 9; "Skating Rink to Cost $35,000 to be Built in West End," *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 24, 1913.
[211] "Valet for Skaters in Palladium Rink," *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 18, 1913, page 6.
[212] Grand Amusement Company v. Palladium Amusement Company, 287 S.W. 438 (Mo. 1926), CourtListener.com [database online].
[213] Grand Amusement Company v. Palladium Amusement Company, 287 S.W. 438 (Mo. 1926).
[214] Grand Amusement Company v. Palladium Amusement Company, 287 S.W. 438 (Mo. 1926).

newspapers indicates that the intended storefronts never truly materialized, perhaps contributing to the high cost of operations.

James Sidney Lee, Architect

James S. Lee was listed as the architect of the proposed Palladium skating rink in the August 1913 building permit. Lee's office at the time was located at 6038 Delmar Boulevard, a space described in 1916 as "one of the most attractive real estate offices in the West End" [of St. Louis].[215] Some sources claim that Lee entered into a business partnership in 1905 with Henry Rush, also known as Henri Rusch, a South African national who had designed for the 1904 Centennial Exposition. Still, Rush is not listed with Lee, nor is the firm listed in the 1914 City Directory. That year, Lee placed an ad in the local newspaper stating, "I WILL alter your 2-story flat into 3-story apartment building [sic], and make big money for you." [216] In 1916, the firm of Lee & Rush was responsible for the design of St. Pius V Church (3310 Grand Boulevard, St. Louis), and Lee was listed as the architect of record at the laying of the cornerstone for the Catholic Church of the Holy Name constructed at the corner of Grand Avenue and Emily Street in March 1916.[217] The firm made headlines in 1923 when Lee's ex-wife attempted to auction off the company's furniture as back payment for alimony, but it does not seem to have affected the partnership.[218] By 1926, the firm had expanded to Rush, Lee & Rush when they designed the Tpheris Israel synagogue.[219] In 1928, the firm was tapped to head a "syndicate" responsible for the design and construction of a fifteen story hotel. Still, legal wrangling over the adjacent Delmar Viaduct appears to have scrapped such plans.[220] James Sidney Lee died in 1946.[221]

Charles Nelson Lund, Contractor

Charles Nelson Lund was listed as the contractor in the August 1913 building permit for what would become the Palladium.[222] Lund variously reported entering the United States either in 1908 or in January 1912 from his home nation of Denmark.[223] He had married St. Louis native Ruth E. Koenig by December 1912.[224] Professionally, Lund was engaged in 1912 with the design and construction of a single-family home in today's Holly Place Historic District for George Wunderlich (property addressed 4550 Holly

---

[215] "Architects," Gould's St. Louis City Directory 1914, page 2370, Ancestry.com; "D.B. Brennan in New Office," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 18, 1916.
[216] "Builders' Column," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 19, 1914.
[217] "Archbishop Will Lay Corner Stone of Church Today," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 26, 1916.
[218] "Architect Firm's Furniture Is Sold To Raise Alimony," *St. Louis Star and Times*, April 13, 1923.
[219] "Three New Buildings of Diverse Design," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 30, 1926.
[220] Berry Moore, "Hotel Proposed for Delmar to Face Viaduct," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 2, 1928.
[221] "James Sidney Lee," Missouri Death Certificates, Missouri Secretary of State, http://www.sos.mo.gov/records/archives/archivesdb/deathcertificates/: accessed 24 August 2014.
[222] "Skating Rink to Cost $35,000 to Be Built in West End," *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 24, 1913; Grand Amusement Company v. Palladium Amusement Company, 287 S.W. 438 (Mo. 1926), CourtListener.com [database online].
[223] Charles Lund, St. Louis Ward 11, St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri; Roll: T625_954; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 214. 1920 United States Federal Census [database on-line], Ancestry.com; Charles Lund, Missouri, U.S., Federal Naturalization Records, 1856-1942 [database on-line] Ancestry.com.
[224] Charles Lund, Missouri, U.S., Federal Naturalization Records, 1856-1942 [database on-line] Ancestry.com.

Place).[225] Lund was identified in the 1913 city directory as a carpenter and contractor.[226] In 1914, Lund secured the contract to build a two-story "fireproof" building addressed 2206-08 Locust Street to serve as headquarters for the Fisk Rubber Company.[227] In addition to smaller commissions, in 1923 Lund constructed the Aubert Theater at the intersection of Eastern and Aubert avenues (extant, modern address 4949 Dr. Martin Luther King Drive), and, in 1926, the company was listed as the contractor of a bus building at the intersection of Delmar Boulevard and the railroad tracks.[228] He died in 1961.

5.1. Palladium Roller Rink Management and History

Charles Lund was more than the building's contractor: he was president of the Grand Amusement Company and had invested in the Palladium endeavor with partners George and George's son Terrell Peter. According to these shareholders in a later court proceeding, the storefronts included in the Palladium design were incomplete when the rink opened for business in December 1913. In this same court proceeding, Lund stated that the company was paying employees, constructing the building, maintaining equipment such as skates, and reducing its debt burden throughout the first half of 1914. By June 1, 1914, the list of shareholders had expanded to include Ruth E. Lund, Charles Lund's wife; Charles G. Knueppel, Ben Schrand, four other individuals, and the Hummelscheim Lumber Company. Of these, Kneuppel had served as the mason on the Palladium, and Schrand had painted the building. The full extent of contractors' fees paid as stock in the company is unknown.

In the summer of 1914, Schrand was elected president of the Grand Amusement Company and Kneuppel was made general manager responsible for the Palladium property, a position he held until 1915. Per Kneuppel, the company suffered considerable financial hardship in 1914 and early 1915. Kneuppel secured several bank loans to meet needs, but the influx was insufficient to allow the company to pay its 1914 taxes and other bills. In the summer of 1915, the Grand Amusement Company was forced to sell its assets, including the Palladium building. Kneuppel bought the goods for a little over $15,000, which he immediately conveyed to the Palladium Amusement Company, an entity consisting of himself, Charles and Ruth Lund, and Schrand. According to Charles Lund,

> "We first spoke of organizing the Palladium Amusement Company at the time of the foreclosure of the Grand Amusement Company. It was generally understood that if the Grand Amusement Company was sold out and we bought it in [sic] we would organize it under the name of the Palladium Amusement Company for our own benefit. The property was bought in at the sale for the benefit of Bernhardt Schrand, Mr. Knueppel, Mrs. Lund and myself. That was all agreed upon prior to the foreclosure. It was agreed between us that each was to receive a quarter interest of the company."[229]

A lawsuit filed against the Palladium Company in 1921 alleging impropriety was ruled in favor of the defendants (Charles Lund, Ruth Lund, Schrand, and Kneuppel). By then, the Lunds had divorced, with Ruth

[225] National Register of Historic Places, Holly Place Historic District, St. Louis, St. Louis County, Missouri, National Register No. 07000704, Section 8, page 30.
[226] Charles Lund entry, Gould's St. Louis Directory 1913, page 1346, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[227] "Robber Company to Have New Home," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 15, 1914.
[228] Ad, "Aubert Theater," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 8, 1923; "Garage Completed To House Motor Bus Fleet," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 21, 1926.
[229] Grand Amusement Company v. Palladium Amusement Company, 287 S.W. 438 (Mo. 1926).

Lund receiving all of Charles's shares in the company as part of the settlement.[230] She was listed as Vice President of the Palladium Amusement Company in the city directories as late as 1932. Interestingly, she was described as the widow of Charles, though her former spouse was alive and even listed on the same page of the directory. Ruth E. Lund passed away in 1984 in Los Angeles, California.[231] Her daughter with Charles Lund, Margaret Joanne, was interred beside her in 2006.

The Peters

George W. Peter's obituary in 1951 claimed that he "erected the old Palladium roller skating rink at Grand and Morgan [Street], now Enright [Avenue]…" George Peter did not build the rink himself, but George and his sons were integral to the skating rink's establishment, promotion, and popularity.[232] George Peter was born July 14, 1864, in Illinois, but after the turn of the century, he and his two sons moved to St. Louis, Missouri.[233] George's sons, Rodney and Terrell, were first involved in roller skating in their hometown of Metropolis, Illinois, and brought this passion with them to St. Louis.[234]

Rodney and Terrell traveled the nation successfully competing in roller skating races and exhibitions in the first decade of the twentieth century.[235] They traveled to Europe around 1910 and placed in international competitions. While at the Olympic Rink in London, Rodney was reportedly so successful that he was able to give a skating tutorial to the royal family, including King George and his son, the then 15-year-old Edward Prince of Wales.[236] On the other hand, Terrell was reported in several newspapers to return from Europe with a "Countess" he was set to wed upon their arrival in New York.[237] This woman, a Jewish actress named Wanda Blaustein, had once married the Count of Chamere in a hospital after he was fatally injured in a motorcycle accident but before his demise. She inherited a large amount of money, land, and the title of "Countess of Chamere." His aristocratic family legally challenged the legitimacy of their marriage, and after three years, the family won the lawsuit and the marriage was annulled.[238] This scandal followed her, but she still was using her title when she met Terrell. Unfortunately (and perhaps influenced by learning of her identity and her past in the European papers), Terrell returned to America alone.

After the Peter siblings had returned from Europe, Rodney continued to win roller races in the United States. When he was home in St. Louis, Rodney joined his father in business, managing a roller rink at Delmar Garden.[239] Rodney Peter began his involvement in the Palladium Roller Rink as a performer, dancing and racing for the crowds within the first few months of the rink's opening. Under Peter's

---

[230] Grand Amusement Company v. Palladium Amusement Company, 287 S.W. 438 (Mo. 1926).
[231] Ruth E. Lund, California Death Index, 1940-1997, U.S. Death Index, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[232] "George W. Peter Dies; Chiropractor 25 Years," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 26, 1951.
[233] George Peter, St. Louis, Missouri, City Directory, 1914, *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[234] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 21, 1907.
[235] *Burmingham Post-Herald* (Burmingham, Alabama), March 21, 1907; *The Pittsburgh Post* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), January 12, 1908; *Kansas City Star* (Kansas City, Missouri), January 15, 1908.
[236] "Edward Taught How to Skate by Metropolis Youth When Prince of Wales Was Only 15," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 14, 1936; "'Round and 'Round They Go on Roller Skates," *St. Louis Star and Times*, March 13, 1936.
[237] "Vienna Countess and St. Louis Boy Skater Elope," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 11, 1912.
[238] "Deathbed Marriage Annuled [sic]; Tragedy in Love Affair," *San Antonio Gazette*, February 28, 1908; Flaneur, "Current Comment," *The Oshkosh Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), September 15, 1919.
[239] "Rink Lessors Sue Delmar Garden Co.," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 2, 1912.

management, the Palladium boasted theme nights and parties—including themed décor and music—to attract patrons every week. Events like "A Night in Germany," Masqued Balls, and classes for Waltzes and Tangos on Skates kept things fresh for their patrons. Rodney continued to set world records at the rink, hosting open competitions so locals could race against him.

When the rink closed in 1912, Rodney Peter opened his own roller-skating rink, reportedly the first permanent skating rink in St. Louis.[240] Rodney spent $30,000 on remodeling a large building near the intersection of Park and Eighteenth Streets to be a state-of-the-art roller rink. This rink, the Sans Souci Roller Rink, opened in February of 1913, but after about a year, advertisements halted for the Sans Souci.[241] At this time, Rodney shifted his interest to a new rink established by his father and brother with their company, the Palladium Amusement Company.[242] In 1937, Rodney Peter was one of the seventeen founding members of the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association, which became the Roller Skating Association International, an organization and resource for skaters globally that in 1980 founded the National Museum of Roller Skating.[243]

Events at the Palladium Roller Rink

George was the listed manager of the Palladium Roller Rink when it opened on December 19, 1913. The Palladium was advertised as "The Rendezvous of the Elite" and featured live performances of music and professional roller skaters.[244] The Palladium rapidly became a popular place for young White folks of the upper class, with features about the new amusement bragging that patrons of the Palladium are "Society with a capital S."[245] This premier roller-rink fulfilled a need for West End socialites of the day.[246]

The Palladium celebrated its grand opening on Friday, December 19, 1913. The opening night of the Palladium Roller Rink saw Gene Rodemich's orchestra play the building for many of high society's skating patrons.[247] This was one of the bands that also played excursion boats on the Mississippi River and was one of the earliest White bands to popularize jazz in St. Louis, even though Rodemich "was a classically trained pianist, whose jazz credentials [were] slight."[248] In addition to the orchestra, opening night patrons were treated to fifteen uniformed instructors to "teach the newest roller waltzes and two-steps to any one who wishes to learn" and discourage "fast skating." Opening night of the Palladium seemed geared toward roller dancing rather than traditional skating, as announcements of the debut noted that the "tango, maxixe, hesitation waltz, and many other dances are not only possible on rollers, but are conceded to be infinitely more graceful and pretty [than on a dance floor]." Sybil Henderson reported the "former premier instructress of the magnificent Saint Sidier Skating Palace of Paris," was hired to teach at this occasion.[249] In the first year of opening, the Palladium building was home to world records set in

[240] "Rodney Peter to Open Sans Souci for Rollerites," *St. Louis Star and Times,* February 9, 1913.
[241] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 17, 1914.
[242] Grand Amusement Company v. Palladium Amusement Company, 287 S.W. 438 (Mo. 1926).
[243] "About Us," Roller Skating Association International, *Rollerskating.com*. https://www.rollerskating.com/pages/about/2; "The History of Speed Skating," National Museum of Roller Skating, *Rollerskatingmuseum.org.* https://www.rollerskatingmuseum.org/speed-skating; "History of Artistic Skating," SkateDance Diagrams and Tools (blog), https://skatedancediagrams.weebly.com/history-of-skating.html.
[244] *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 13, 1913.
[245] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 18, 1914.
[246] *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 23, 1914.
[247] *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 13, 1913; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 11, 1914.
[248] Olson, *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race*, Vol. 1, 409.
[249] "Valet for Skaters in Palladium Rink," *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 18, 1913, page 6.

skating races (usually by Rodney Peter himself),[250] professional waltz skating classes,[251] and a large checkerboard skating game (played like musical chairs).[252]

Papers report that in the first months of opening, young West Enders would make it to the rink at least once a week,[253] especially as the rink boasted theme nights and the "World's most famous roller skaters" to put on a show for attendees.[254] The Peters used their connections to continue to host international races, theme parties, and shows with dancers on skates.[255]

The introduction of the second season (after closing for the summer months in 1915)[256] saw the initiation of events with famous women skaters,[257] masquerade balls,[258] and endurance races.[259] Attendance was steady over the years. The Palladium even introduced a special club for regularly attending members called the "Palladium Roller Club." In 1916, the "Palladium Roller Club," boasted 250 people who had joined, [260] but one year later, the club had grown to over 1,000 members.[261] At this time, notably, management introduced the first-ever street roller skating marathon in St. Louis. They designed a ten-mile race, but as it was held in December, ice likely limited it. Nevertheless, 50 people raced, and Alber Cookson, Jr. won.[262]

In 1919, several windows of the Palladium elevation along Enright Avenue were destroyed after an "explosion from an undermined cause" damaged the building. A police investigation determined someone had thrown an explosive at the building at approximately 12:20 AM on March 17, 1919.[263] Other than replacement windows, it appears no other repairs were needed. In 1922, residents of the adjacent Vandeventer Place filed a lawsuit seeking to remove a "hospital for incurables" within the boundaries of the gated community. In describing the neighborhood, witnesses testified to the area's general appearance, including the "rays of light from electric signs" and daily music from brass bands at the Palladium. Though some found the signs distasteful, others remarked that the lights made parking in the neighborhood easier.[264]

The rink continued to host races, carnivals, and balls, even going so far as to host boxing matches on skates.[265] By the early 1920s, a large draw to the Palladium was their elaborate shows with music and dancing all on skates. A modern show called the "Palladium Follies of 1922" was a show designed by Rodney Peter that showcased him dancing with Grace Roberts to jazz music.[266] Before this time, The music

[250] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 15, 1914.
[251] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 24, 1914.
[252] *St. Louis Star and Times*, November 5, 1914.
[253] *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 23, 1914.
[254] *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 7, 1914.
[255] *St. Louis Star and Times*, March 30, 1914; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 24, 1914.
[256] *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 15, 1915.
[257] *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 2, 1915.
[258] *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 13, 1916.
[259] *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 19, 1916.
[260] "Palladium Club Boosts Spirit of Fellowship," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 22, 1916.
[261] *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 6, 1916.
[262] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 9, 1916; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 11, 1916; *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 13, 1916.
[263] "Explosion at Skating Rink," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 17, 1919, page 2.
[264] "Court Holds Vandeventer Places Hasn't "Slipped" Because of Rink Music," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 9, 1922, page 7.
[265] *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 9, 1918.
[266] *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 21, 1922.

was local orchestras playing military music or "cooler" popular music.[267] A few months after the jazz show, nearby residents discuss the Palladium's loud music, light-up signs, and loud patrons in a court case. The judge remarks that the neighborhood "hasn't 'slipped'" because of the entertainment venue.[268] The Palladium was allowed to continue operating normally and introduced more jazz music by way of another all-white band: Scotty's Jazz Orchestra.[269] Their "Follies" show became an annual event, and the "Palladium Follies of 1926" boasted a band management had named themselves, the Palladium Jazz Band, with their slogan, "So Hot That It Burns Your Lips to Talk About Them."[270]

From 1926 until the rink's closing in 1939, jazz was the signature music of the rink. Unless a theme night called for different music, "capital S" society was happy to skate to jazz. Newspaper articles suggest that the jazz bands—including the Palladium Jazz Band—were always all-White in the 1920s.[271] This changed in the latter half of 1929 during a dance marathon. (Dance marathons were locally popular and were one of the few reoccurring events at the Palladium that did not require skates.)[272] On June 24, 1929, eight couples were 580 hours deep into the dance marathon, and the Palladium management decided to introduce a "Colored Jazz Jamboree" band. Under Red Burnett's direction, this band would play jazz music every night from 1:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m.[273] While this decision was likely due to the exhaustion of White bands who had been playing for the last 24 days, there was no backlash, and the precedent was set for other Black musicians to play in the building.

The Palladium Roller Rink continued to be billed as a "White-only" establishment, but their doors were opened for the first time for Black patrons when Louis Armstrong played a show at the Palladium on May 3, 1933. His show was only advertised in the Black newspaper, and Jesse J. Johnson was the event's promoter.[274] This was a notable exception for both the Palladium and the neighborhood, and signaled a shift toward the environment that would make the Club Plantation feasible and successful.

Owners replaced the "costly maple hardwood" rink floor in 1927. The replacement materials were not described, but the renovated space was large enough to hold 100 couples "waltzing on skates."[275] In 1928, a significant renovation of the rink's interior resulted in the construction of box seats around the rink and a new ladies' room.[276] Eighteen years after it was built, in 1933, the Palladium was reduced from 225 feet x 215 feet to 225 feet x 150 feet to widen Delmar Boulevard from 60 to 80 feet to alleviate traffic on the roadway.[277] The loss required a "rearrangement of the roller rink" and a new façade. At this time, the iconic terra cotta details were added to the Delmar Boulevard elevation.[278] In early October of 1935, the *St. Louis Star and Times* reported a building permit for the Palladium building to the Palladium Amusement Company. It does not state what kind of alterations took place, but that the alterations were worth $750

[267] *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 23, 1921.
[268] "Court Holds Vandeventer Place Hasn't "Slipped" Because of Rink Music," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 9, 1922.
[269] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 29, 1925.
[270] *St. Louis Star and Times*, March 2, 1926.
[271] *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 5, 1928.
[272] Because of the large floor, the Palladium Roller Rink was alternately used as a ballroom throughout its history but was rarely marketed as such.
[273] *St. Louis Star and Times*, June 24, 1929.
[274] *St. Louis Argus*, April 14, 1933.
[275] "Palladium Skating Rink Will Open September 8," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 3, 1927, page 9.
[276] "Palladium Rink's 16th Season Will Open Tomorrow," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 5, 1928, 18.
[277] "Widening of Delmar Boulevard Criticised [sic] by Property Owners," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 4, 1929, page 15; "Last Link in Delmar Widening," *St. Louis Star and Times*, November 3, 1933, page 9.
[278] "Palladium Rink Being Remodeled," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 6, 1933, page 17.

and completed by an architect referred to as "Mr. Roach" and contractor Charles Lund.[279] A few months later, a small fire in January of 1936 caused by an "overheated furnace" caused approximately $1,000 worth of damage to the Palladium. The list of necessary repairs is unknown; however, the rink manager reported 300 pairs of skates lost to the flames.[280] Later alterations were made when the skating rink closed, and the Club Plantation nightclub was opened in the building in 1940. The alterations included changing the entrance from Enright to Delmar, outfitting the club (besides the stage and dance floor) in carpet, and building terraced tables of "ultra-modern design" that could seat 450 guests.[281]

The Palladium Rink was an extremely popular enterprise throughout its entire existence. Attendance increased, prize money for the races increased, and event frequency increased throughout the 1920s and 1930s.[282] However, the Palladium Amusement Company and later the Grand Amusement Company experienced issues with the fiscal management of the rink. Issues surrounding the reimbursement of the Grand Amusement Company for the extensive renovation of the rink that took place upon the widening of Delmar in 1933 caused later issues with the company.[283] In 1938, Rodney Peter moved to be manager at the Lakeside Park Roller Rink (Natural Bridge and St. Charles roads),[284] and the other owners decided to sell the building in October 1939.[285]

In the fall of 1939, the Palladium Roller Rink was purchased by Koenig Enterprises, an entity of sportsman Edwin C. Koenig. He teamed up with local tennis champion and frozen custard shop owner Ted Drewes to take over the roller-skating business at the Palladium.[286] The pair had worked together in a similar arrangement on other roller-skating rinks around St. Louis. Koenig purchased the Lorelei Swimming Pool (4525 Olive Street) in 1936 and the Crystal Natatorium (3411 Cook Avenue) in 1937, both venues which converted from indoor swimming pools in the summer to roller rinks in the winter.[287] Drewes was also the manager of the Lorelei and the Crystal.[288] In 1938, Koenig purchased a building at 1427 Chouteau Avenue consisting of a theater, stores, offices, and a gymnasium. He soon renovated the gymnasium into a roller rink.[289] Further, Koenig was the owner and operator of the Cahokia Speedway in Alton, Illinois.[290] He was responsible for converting the speedway from a greyhound racetrack to an auto racetrack in the late 1930s.[291]

---

[279] "Building Permits, Brick," *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 3, 1935.
[280] "$1000 Fire at Palladium Rink," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 24, 1936, page 1.
[281] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 22, 1940; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 25, 1940; "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 30, 1940; "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 16, 1940; "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 20, 1940.
[282] "Palladium Rink's 16th Season Will Open Tomorrow: Skating Emporium Has Been Completely Renovated—Band Engaged," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 5, 1928; *St. Louis Star and Times*, May 4, 1929.
[283] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 14, 1934; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 23, 1936.
[284] *St. Charles Weekly Banner-News*, (St. Louis, MO) May 12, 1938.
[285] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 4, 1939.
[286] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 4, 1939; "History of Ted Drewes Frozen Custard & Christmas Trees," *TedDrewes.com.*
[287] "Lorelei Building at 4525 Olive Bought," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 27, 1936; "Crystal Pool Sold; Other Transactions," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 30, 1937; "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, November 3, 1938.
[288] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, March 8, 1939.
[289] "Building on Chouteau Acquired by Improvement Co.," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 1, 1938.
[290] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 4, 1939.
[291] "Inaugural Races Slated Tonight at Cahokia," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* June 21, 1939.

Around the same time that he purchased the Palladium building, Koenig purchased a large swath of land on the north side of Chippewa Street, just east of Kingshighway Boulevard, to construct a new roller rink in a $250,000 building of 54,000 square footage. This would make it the largest roller-skating rink in the United States at the time. It was meant to be designed by Saum Architects.[292] Unfortunately, in 1941, these plans had not materialized as the tract of land was deemed too small for a building that large. Undeterred, Koenig purchased more land on the south side of Chippewa Street and decided to create an entertainment complex with a smaller building north of Chippewa and a larger building on the opposite side of the street.[293] While neither of the plans ever amounted to anything, Koenig's grand plans for Chippewa Street are likely why, in May of 1940, he decided to shutter the Palladium Roller Rink and lease the building to nightclub owner Tony Scarpelli.[294]

Edwin C. Koenig

In the fall of 1939, Edwin Koenig and Ted Drewes purchased the Palladium Roller Rink as one of their many skating rink holdings around St. Louis.[295] Born in St. Louis to Lisette and Henry Christian Koenig, Edwin grew up in a house his father built on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River at 3836 Kosciusko Street.[296] Henry Christian Koenig was a brick manufacturer who founded the Missouri Press Brick & Improvement Company around 1880.[297] He made a small fortune selling bricks and began investing his profits in real estate, shifting his brick company into an investment holding company.

Owner of Fast Speed Boat Entered in Peoria Race

EDWIN KOENIG

The launch Columbia, towing the Independence II, the 40 speedboat which will represent St. Louis and the St. Louis Power Boat Association in the races to decide the championship of the Mississippi Valley at Peoria, Ill., Wednesday, departed early Sunday morning. Edwin C. Koenig, owner of the Independence II, will handle the steering wheel during the races, in which boats from Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio and Kentucky are entered. Great interest also attaches to the one-mile speed trial, in which it is expected that some of the boats will make considerably over 30 miles an hour.

Figure 8: Edwin Koenig in St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 16, 1909.

Inspired by his father's love of the river (his father was a member of the Western Rowing Club in his youth and had specifically built his home overlooking the Mississippi River), Edwin joined the St. Louis Yacht Club at age 15 as their youngest member. Later, he became president of the club and presided as its president for 40 years, witnessing the change from sails to steam to engine-powered boats.[298] He did not just witness this change; he was a sportsman through and through, who raced and broke speed records with every new propulsion technology that emerged. In the early 1900s, Edwin operated the *Kabekona* private excursion steamer. After World War I, Koenig became captain of the *Belle of the Bends* packet boat, running excursions for three years.[299] As captain of the *Idlewild*, he raced and

[292] "$250,000 Roller Skating Rink on Chippewa," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* September 29, 1940.
[293] "Acquires Tract on Chippewa St.," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 20, 1941.
[294] *St. Louis Star and Times*, May 27, 1940; "$250,000 Roller Skating Rink on Chippewa," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* September 29, 1940.
[295] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 4, 1939; "History of Ted Drewes Frozen Custard & Christmas Trees," *TedDrewes.com.*
[296] "Commodore Koenig Spends Lifetime 'Down by Levee,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 14, 1955.
[297] "H. Christian Koenig Dies at 99, Brick Firm Head," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 26, 1951.
[298] "Commodore Koenig Spends Lifetime 'Down by Levee,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 14, 1955.
[299] "Boating Enthusiast Edwin C. Koenig Dies," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 5, 1960.

beat the *Yankee* in 1906.[300] The *Idlewild* was one of the excursion boat cutting grounds for Black musicians, and both Singleton Palmer and Chick Finney were two jazz musicians who played onboard.

Later, he steered the *Independence I, II*, and *III*, breaking records by pushing the limits of all three.[301] A *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* article from 1943 about Edwin says, "the river was his playground and anything that would skim over its surface his pride and joy."[302] In the 1920s, he organized regattas along the river front in St. Louis, easily drawing crowds of over 150,000 people to watch the boat races.[303] In 1926, Koenig creatively organized for a race between an airplane and a boat, with the airplane winning by a landslide and the pilot circling back to perform tricks for the crowd.[304] The pilot was—at the time—a relatively unknown air mail pilot named Charles Lindbergh.

Figure 9: Pilot Charles Lindberg racing a boat on the Mississippi River. "Airplane Gamboling with Speed Boat," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 19, 1926.

Koenig later purchased the historic harbor steamboat *Erastus Wells*, a city boat built in 1907 at a cost of $65,000. The boat was in poor condition, and he purchased it for only $6000. He restored the boat and gifted its use to his St. Louis Yacht Club.[305] Koenig also donated money for the women's rowing team to have a regatta exclusively for women crews and offered them the use of the boat, now renamed the *St. Louis*.[306] He also operated this boat as an excursion steamer, a nostalgic nod to his days decades ago.[307] When he again failed to break the record time from New Orleans to St. Louis in a steamboat after many

[300] "Commodore Koenig Spends Lifetime 'Down by Levee,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 14, 1955.
[301] "Commodore Koenig Spends Lifetime 'Down by Levee,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 14, 1955.
[302] "Sons of Ol' Man Rivier: Koenigs Have Seen Mississippi Roll By All Their Lives," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 21, 1943.
[303] "Commodore Koenig Spends Lifetime 'Down by Levee,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 14, 1955; "Thrills Galore Promised Sunday in Boat Regatta," *St. Louis Star and Times*, July 12, 1926.
[304] "Thrills Galore Promised Sunday in Boat Regatta," *St. Louis Star and Times*, July 12, 1926;
[305] "St. Louis Yacht Club Buys Steamer as Headquarters," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 4, 1932.
[306] Marion F. Parker, "Assurance Already Given by Central and Quincy Crews," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 21, 1936.
[307] "Boating Enthusiast Edwin C. Koenig Dies," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 5, 1960.

years of attempts, he designated an annual trophy—the "Edwin C. Koenig Cup" –for boaters who could make the journey in less than 12 hours.[308]

Chasing speed and pushing limits in other sports, he also operated a racetrack,[309] several roller rinks,[310] and occasionally flew hot air balloons.[311] Koenig never married; instead, he chose to live with and take care of his parents. He remained at his childhood home along the Mississippi River on Kosciusko Street during his father's death at age 99 in 1951, and his mother's death at age 93 the next year.[312] He only left his childhood home after experiencing his own health issues, and in 1960, Edwin C. Koenig died at the age of 80 years old. At his death, he left most of his estate to four local institutions: Washington University, St. Louis University, Cardinal Glennon Memorial Hospital, and the local Shriners Hospital.[313] The Koenig Cup continued to be awarded into the 1990s.[314]

[308] "Commodore Koenig Spends Lifetime 'Down by Levee,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 14, 1955; "Up-Rivier Speedboat Record Beaten by 17 Hours, 15 Minutes," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 9, 1953.
[309] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 4, 1939.
[310] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 4, 1939.
[311] "Four in a Balloon Get Bath in Pond," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 2, 1914.
[312] "H. Christian Koenig Dies at 99, Brick Firm Head," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 26, 1951; "Mrs. Lisette Koenig Funeral to be Wednesday Afternoon," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 29, 1952.
[313] "Edwin C. Koenig Estate Valued at $1.2 Million," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 30, 1960.
[314] Tim Renken, "Little Guy Cox Showed Up the Big-Money Boat Racers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 11, 1993.

6. Music Club

The history of organized crime in America, much like the history of jazz, is part fact and part mythology.[315]

– T.J. English, Dangerous Rhythms: Jazz and the Underworld

The history of jazz and the history of American organized crime are inextricably linked. In the late nineteenth century, Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants arrived in large numbers in the United States. At the same time, Southern Black individuals sought refuge in select cities. Immigrants fleeing similar pressures as Black individuals, but "without [the] traditional American bigotry toward blacks… [were] all unable to penetrate significant segments of the American economy and faced similar patterns of exclusion from the chieftains of industry and finance."[316] In night life districts and vice districts, there was an opportunity for economic advancement for those shunned in mainstream America.[317]

> As the American underworld took shape in the late nineteenth century, the mafia was certainly a factor, but it was not the progenitor. The idea of money as the elixir that would grease the wheel of urban advancement was baked into the system long before the first wave of Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants came ashore. Municipal corruption, graft, boodling, illegal gambling and prostitution proceeds, street-level extortion and gangsterism were a consequence of men and women maneuvering for power, clawing and scratching to gain a foothold and advance in society.[318]

As jazz became a foothold in houses "of ill repute," mobsters and jazz musicians developed an important relationship. Because the operation of clubs often existed "outside of the law," there was little regulation on exploitative labor. Historian T. J. English suggests "the relationship was based on a kind of plantation mentality…. mob-controlled clubs ignored [union] regulations…. because they exerted undue influence over the political and municipal system under which the clubs operated."[319] Even still, "[t]he early twentieth century [Black] musician had less to fear from a gangster than he did from a policeman."[320] Indeed, saxophonist Bud Freeman stated that mobster-owned venues were not only safer but often allowed for more artistic expression: "The better hotels and restaurants employed violinists and pianists who played…very old fashioned music. We were happy to have a (mobster) place to play the kind of music we loved."[321] Drummer Sonny Greer went on the record as saying, "I keep hearing about how bad the gangsters were. All I can say is that I wish I was still working for them. Their word was all you needed."[322] Other musicians report favorable conditions at clubs like the Plantation Club for safety and monetary reasons.

> America has historically shamed and denigrated its ethnic subcultures. Yet ironically if it were not for these groups, that which is seen as most American—in the present study the art of jazz—would have been irretrievably lost in the cul de sacs of time. Without the black

[315] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 40.
[316] Ronald L. Morris, *Wait Until Dark: Jazz and the Underworld, 1880-1940* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980), 12. https://archive.org/details/waituntildarkjaz0000rona/mode/2up.
[317] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 52.
[318] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 42.
[319] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 7.
[320] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 5.
[321] Morris, *Wait Until Dark*, 5.
[322] Morris, *Wait Until Dark*, 2.

> musician's Jewish and Sicilian allies, despicable as they may seem, jazz would never have fabricated the crucial staying power to advance.[323]

6.1. Tony Scarpelli

Anthony "Big Tony" Scarpelli was a central figure in the Palladium building's history—leasing and operating the Club Plantation out of the building from 1940 to 1948, contributing to the building's contemporary popularity and historical significance. Antonio Scarpelli was born in 1899 in Easton, Pennsylvania, the son of Frank and Rosa, two Italian American immigrants.[324] Francesco (Frank) and Rosa Scarpelli had five children—Emilia, Vito, Vincenzo, Antonio, and Gelsomina. Antonio and his brothers assumed Americanized names when they were young adults—Vito became William, Vincenzo became James, and Antonio became Anthony.[325] By 1910, the Scarpelli family had moved from Pennsylvania to St. Louis, Missouri.[326] The three sons worked at the Brown Shoe Company at 18th and Washington Avenues into young adulthood.[327]

Anthony Scarpelli married Missouri-born Lillian Eberhardt in 1924. In the 1930 census, Anthony reports owning a home at 3681 Kingshighway Park. He reported his job as a "dealer of fruits" at this time.[328] In 1932, he shifted careers and was one of three men who opened a brand-new music venue, the Club Plantation, on North Vandeventer Avenue.[329] In mid-1932, Anthony Scarpelli and his two business associates—Morris Barnholtz and Frank Krevin—leased the former Maccabees Hall at 911 North Vandeventer Avenue at the corner of Vandeventer and Enright Avenues.[330] Less than half a mile from the Palladium building at Grand and Delmar, it was here that they opened Club Plantation in August of 1932.[331] The club was initially advertised as the "Plantation Nite Club." On one of its first nights in business, on the 28th of August, five White men and thirty-two African American men were arrested at the club when several bottles of gin were found on the premises. These were the days of Prohibition, and Barnholtz was arrested and booked on a liquor violation.[332]

---

[323] Morris, *Wait Until Dark*, 18.

[324] Anthony Scarpelli, WWII Draft Card, U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, [database on-line], Ancestry.com; Frank "Scarpel" entry, 1900 U.S. census, Northampton County, Pennsylvania, enumeration district (ED) 0128, p. 13A, NARA T623, 18.

[325] Frank Scarpelli's Will, Missouri, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1766-1988, [database on-line], Ancestry.com; Frank "Scarpel" entry, 1900 U.S. Census, Northampton County, Pennsylvania, ED 0128, p. 13A; Frank "Scarpell", 1920 U.S. Census, St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri, enumeration district (ED) 74, p. 1B, NARA T625, 949. All on-line databases from Ancestry.com.

[326] Frank Scarpelli entry, 1910 St. Louis City Directory, City Directories, 1922-1995, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

[327] James Scarpelli WWI Draft Card, U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, [database on-line], Ancestry.com; Frank "Scarpell" entry, 1920 U.S. Census, St. Louis (Independent City), MO, ED 74, p. 1B, NARA T625, 949. [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

[328] 1930 U.S. Census, St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri, enumeration district (ED) 471, p. 2A, Tony A. Scarpelli; NARA T626, 1234. [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

[329] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 26, 1932.

[330] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 26, 1932.

[331] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 26, 1932, and Dennis Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2019), 42.

[332] "37 Arrested at Night Club," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 29, 1932.

These arrest records indicate that Club Plantation initially opened as an integrated club. An evaluation of nightclub review articles in the St. Louis newspapers showed that no other nightclubs in St. Louis were "officially" integrated at the time. It soon became evident that political institutions had a hand in why no other integrated clubs were extant (or at least extant in the mainstream). According to historian Dennis Owsley, nightclub musician Kimball Dial claimed that the police stepped in and gave the club's owners an ultimatum—reopen as a Whites-only club or be entirely shut down.[333] Indeed, by the next month, an ad in the *St. Louis Argus* states, "Plantation Club Open to Colored Sundays:"

> The management of the Plantation Club wishes to thank those who have given their loyal support in their past activities and patronage; and desires to make this announcement, that the Club will only be open one night a week for the Colored people... We wish to see all of your smiling faces Sunday, this September 18th. [334]

Ads such as this continued for the next week; however, by September 27, the *St. Louis Star and Times*, a White paper, advertises, "Plantation Nite Club… This Club Caters Strictly to White People Only."[335] However, later in the season, the *Argus* still advertises the Plantation Sunday night to its patrons.[336] One notable advertisement in the Argus in January 1933 was for a breakfast dance and included an image of the Club Plantation stage. (Occasionally, Black patrons were allowed in certain clubs after the club had shuttered to White patrons for the night, and these were called "breakfast dances.")

The *Argus* ceased regular advertisement of Club Plantation by the club's second season. Announcing the opening weekend of their second season, the *St. Louis Star and Times* revealed the Plantation has undergone several small "improvements:" not only had the proprietors made the choice to paint scenes "from Dixie" on the walls, but they had also altered the seating for the White patrons:

> And instead of booths along the walls, like so many other spots of that stripe, the Plantation will have a row of miniature log cabins…And if the occupants care to witness the floor show they'll have to rest their elbows on the window sills and watch…Just like Pickaninnies peering from their cabins when things happen in Dixie.[337]

On the opening night of the season, the *Star and Times* further reports, "With scenes from Dixie painted on the wall and looking so realistic that Charley Richart, the pride of Columbia, Ill., asked one of the painted cotton pickers to hold his hat while he found a seat…"[338] The shift to an all-White clientele better aligned the Club Plantation with Harlem's famous Cotton Club, where all the performers were Black and the audience was all-White.[339]

Not just in name, plantation décor was an integral aspect of the club. These themes were evident also in the very fabric of the club. The décor of the club was trimmed in "negative racial stereotypes for commercial white entertainment…manifest through regular reinventions and reiterations of Deep South black plantation themes…among other black musical theater cliches."[340] Owner Tony Scarpelli

---

[333] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 51. Owsley cites Kimball "Cabbage" Dial interview by Frank Driggs, May 5, 1986. Frank Driggs Archives, University of Missouri—Kansas City.
[334] "Plantation Club Open to Colored Sundays," *St. Louis Argus*, September 16, 1932.
[335] "Plantation Nite Club," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 27, 1932.
[336] *St. Louis Argus*, May 19, 1933.
[337] "'Round the Town With Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 28, 1933.
[338] "'Round the Town With Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 15, 1933.
[339] Owsley, St. Louis Jazz, 40.
[340] Howland, John. "'The Blues Get Glorified': Harlem Entertainment, Negro Nuances, and Black Symphonic Jazz," *The Musical Quarterly* 90, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter, 2007), 326.

commissioned wall murals to be painted for "scenes from Dixie," which were "designed to evoke a racial caste system from the antebellum South."[341]

Further, the minstrel stereotypes in the Club Plantation painted an unthreatening picture for the White audience, and specifically in St. Louis, the characters acted out by Black artists were a call back to the packet boat era.[342] Black bodies were subjugated and fetishized in the shows.[343] The "Dixie" décor, minstrelsy, and deep segregation between audience and performer set the stage for a popular nightspot on the Central West End.

Douglas Malcolm, jazz theorist and historian, states that jazz "from its origins…was increasingly performed by black musicians for white audiences." Further, "African American jazz musicians have often been a focal point for racial conflict in the United States, especially during the first half of the twentieth century." The Great Migration in the 1910s set the stage for the "social incongruity experience by Black Americans in the 1920s," a facet of which meant that jazz moved from primarily being performed within Black communities for Black audiences to increasingly White audiences,[344] this same movement had become more common as it did in the bordellos of both Storyville and Chestnut Valley early on.

Historian Jayna Brown points out that "[i]n many studies black culture is source material, made legitimate only through its effects on whiteness as a construction, or in relation to white class formation."[345] Perhaps the best illustration of this is the Cotton Club in Harlem. Historian T. J. English asserts that "…the Cotton Club would come to represent the relationship between jazz and the underworld at its highest pinnacle—an unholy alliance, some might say, but one that dressed up the concepts of sin, sensuality, and jazz as a song-and-dance revelry…"

6.2. Influence of Harlem's Cotton Club and Neo-Minstrelsy

The Harlem Renaissance was a boom of Black culture, art, and philosophy in the late 1920s concentrated in New York's Harlem neighborhood. At this time, Black art became profitable in a way it had never been before. White writers arrived first, and jazz historian Ted Gioia describes them as "donning a linguistic equivalent of black-face."[346] Writing about their experiences, the writers publicized Black culture to White audiences, inducing a larger invasion into the nightclubs of Black Harlem. Now, bringing Black artistry into the mainstream encouraged White audiences to approach it through Harlem.[347] This effectively "[channeled] the financial means of white society into black artistry, [creating] a staging point for a cultural fermentation that would transform American music for good."[348]

Though Harlem had eleven nightclubs specifically catering to affluent White audiences in the 1920s, none reached the fame of the Cotton Club.[349] The Cotton Club originally had a different name, was owned by a Black man, and was marketed toward a Black audience. In 1923, White gangster Owney Madden took over the club and opened it as the Cotton Club[350] because "…white audiences were becoming fascinated

[341] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 170.
[342] Kenney, *Jazz on the River,* 30; Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 30; 200.
[343] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 170.
[344] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 200.
[345] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 129.
[346] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 147.
[347] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 147.
[348] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 149.
[349] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 148.
[350] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 149.

by Negro culture and that jazz was a major part of the Cotton Club, as a paean to an era when whites were in charge and Blacks were viewed as mere supplicants and entertainers."[351] White visitors' attraction to this "neo-minstrelsy" was profitable. White individuals began visiting Harlem nightclubs in droves to see Black musicians in a process that was known as "slumming." [352] As "slumming" became more popular, the Cotton Club shifted to White-only patronage—cornering the market on White individuals who wanted to witness the "exoticism" of Blackness with the fear of an integrated audience. At this time, the performances at the Cotton Club became more minstrel-adjacent, including more of the plantation setting tropes. To paraphrase historian Jayna Brown, this was meant to evoke a "fictional idea of Antebellum innocence."[353]

Duke Ellington played as the house band leader at the Cotton Club from 1927 to 1931.[354] Brown discusses "how black people's performances in the center of the modern city played on…irony, as well as acted as assertive claims to social space."[355] Ellington was a stand-out example of this. Ellington, as an artist at the Cotton Club, "pandered to the white fascination with black Americans that extended back at least to the beginnings of minstrelsy in the first half of the nineteenth century,"[356] but notably, Ellington was largely responsible for a shift in modern minstrelsy. His performances changed the baseline of minstrelsy from characteristics of "apparent submission" to "feigned aggression." He did this by incorporating more "jungle" and "exotic" characteristics that were meant to evoke the Black community's past in Africa as opposed to the features of the "carefree slave" of the African American under enslavement.[357] While Ellington's attachment to Africa may have been genuine, his act on stage was dictated by a White audience, [358] giving his music an ironic twist:

> Traditionally, black irony had relied on a broad community of decoders who understood the implications of a particular observation because of a shared background. Jazz increasingly became a hermetic community constructed around a shared ideology distinct from that of mainstream society, both black and white, that allowed band members to decode the ironic references of their peers both semantically and musically. [359]

Further, "Ellington dealt with the Cotton Club's contradictions primarily by adopting the minstrel mask…" but eventually "letting it slip on purpose, making fun of it."[360] He did so by "repeated and deliberately heavy-handed jungle allusions," and indeed, in front of a paper mâché jungle, the result was an irony that White audiences were meant to pick up on.[361] Because of the comfort they felt in the all-White audience of the Cotton Club, the audience found the irony acceptable and even enjoyable, and Ellington proved very successful. Ultimately, through his music and his manipulation of the minstrel mask, "Ellington's

[351] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 170.
[352] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 147.
[353] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 162.
[354] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 200.
[355] Brown, *Babylon Girls,* 129.
[356] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 200.
[357] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 185-6.
[358] Kimberley Hannon Teal, "Beyond the Cotton Club: The Persistence of Duke Ellington's Jungle Style," *Jazz Perspectives* 6 (2012, 1-2): 125-6.
[359] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 196.
[360] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 202-3.
[361] Hannon Teal, "Beyond the Cotton Club," 125-6; Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 209.

orchestra [was] able to present the white spectators with a vision of African Americans that has become enlarged and more humanized…"[362] At least more so than other depictions of Black minstrelsy in the past.

The Cotton Club eventually changed their policy to allow Black patrons entry, but the club implemented a high admission fee, preventing most non-White, non-wealthy persons from entering.[363] With its deeply racist aspects, the Cotton Club remains an extremely important ingredient for the formation of jazz as we know it. Historian Gioia states that,

> In America, music was the first sphere of social interaction in which racial barriers were challenged and overturned... Channeling the financial means of white society into black artistry, they created a staging point for a cultural fermentation that would transform American music for good.[364]

Ellington made several stops in St. Louis over the years. Notably, in April of 1936, he and his Cotton Club Orchestra played at the Coliseum (Jefferson at Washington), assisted by the Jeter-Pillars Plantation Orchestra and Eddie Johnson's Recording Orchestra.[365] Ellington and the Jeter-Pillars crew occasionally played together when they met in St. Louis. Later, Duke Ellington periodically had engagements at the nearby Club Riviera.

The Club Plantation was carefully modeled after the Cotton Club. It was one of many Club Plantations that opened in the 1930s. A St. Louis newspaper bragged that the club was the "local version of New York's famous Cotton Club,"[366] Similarly, the booking agent for the Plantation later reflected, "The nightspot was the St. Louis equivalent of Harlem's legendary Cotton Club in three significant ways: the performers were black, the customers were white [sic] and owners were hoodlums."[367]

[362] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 213.
[363] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 171.
[364] Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 148-149.
[365] "Duke Ellington," *St. Louis Argus*, April 3, 1936.
[366] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 14, 1940.
[367] Harper Barnes, "He Drops Jazz Names With Best," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 22, 1993.

Radio, Recordings, and Jazz

The ability to record and broadcast music was an important reason that jazz further spread across the United States. While ragtime was a quick trend that was more often spread through sheet music and piano rolls, blues was suitable for phonographic recording. Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues," sold one million records in six months in 1920. Jazz soon followed.[368] However, most of the bands and artists allowed to record in this new, expensive medium were White. Many of the first recording jazz artists were White, and White artists would often make records with "acoustic blackface"—dramatizing their perception of Black folk songs for White entertainment. "When black artists eventually made it into the studio, the labels marketed their songs in a segregated series of 'race records'," with labels not putting much financial backing, effort, or interest into Black artists or Black audiences.[369]

However, radio would soon alter this. In 1922, when the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) demanded radio cease playing copyrighted music without paying them an annual fee, radio stations—especially smaller local stations—responded by broadcasting live music.[370] In the decade between 1920 and 1930, the number of radio stations in the United States grew from five to over six hundred stations.[371] Notably, "The abundance and the diversity of local radio outlets in the early heyday of broadcasting—before the advent of commercial networks—resulted in more African American radio programming during the Jazz Age than during the [later] Depression."[372] Thus, one of the most popular genres at the time was jazz, and the decade became known as the Jazz Age. Both Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington experienced rapid popularity among both Black and White audiences because of the radio. [373] The radio allowed for an interesting position: suddenly, it was not clear to audiences the race of the music maker they were enjoying. Also, the distance that a broadcast put between musician and listener allowed for the White individuals who would not enter clubs with Black musicians or audiences to openly enjoy Black music.[374] The flip side of this, is that radio became a place where "minstrel-style comedy" could continue to flourish. An extremely popular program performed by White voice actors, *Amos 'n' Andy,* used minstrel exaggerations of Black language to captivate audiences. [375] By the end of World War II, "a definable national music culture had emerged, as radio came to link Americans across time and space. Regional cultures blurred as a national culture emerged via radio transmissions, motion picture releases, and phonograph records."

6.3. The Club Plantation Before the Palladium

Before moving to the location on Delmar, Scarpelli operated the Club Plantation at 911 North Vandeventer, approximately half a mile from the Palladium building. The Club Plantation became extremely popular in the 1930s in Midtown, St. Louis; jazz historian Dennis Owsley states that the club "was a primary venue, and the leading bands of the 1930s included Eddie Randle's St. Louis Blue Devils, the Crackerjacks, and the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra." While "young black musicians still got their training through schools and such community bands as the Tom Powell American Post Drum and Bugle Corps,"[376] playing with the fiery local bands who played at the Plantation was a top-notch gig for local Black musicians.

[368] Clive Thompson, "How the Phonograph Changed Music Forever," January 2016, *Smithsonian Magazine* (website), https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/phonograph-changed-music-forever-180957677/.
[369] Thompson, "How the Phonograph Changed Music Forever."
[370] William Barlow, "Black Music on Radio During the Jazz Age," *African American Review* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1995), pp. 328. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3042311.
[371] Tennant, "Radio and Music in the 1920s United States."
[372] Barlow, "Black Music on Radio During the Jazz Age."
[373] Tennant, "Radio and Music in the 1920s United States."
[374] Tennant, "Radio and Music in the 1920s United States."
[375] Tennant, "Radio and Music in the 1920s United States."
[376] Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History*, 47.

In the fall of 1933, Tony Scarpelli was arrested four times for failing to follow the law and shut the club down at 1:00 a.m. He was not the only club owner arrested for breaking the rules, and by November 1933, the charges against him were dropped, provided he promised not to violate operating hour laws again.[377] It seems Scarpelli was able to follow these laws closely enough, as he was not arrested again during the club's run at North Vandeventer. By the end of 1934, Barnholtz and Krevin had left the business: Barnholtz retired as manager in January of 1934 because the job was "too trying on the nerves," for him, and Krevin left after his home and delicatessen business caught on fire in February. Scarpelli was left as the only proprietor thanking patrons for visiting during the 1934 Christmas season.[378]

One of the first big-name performers to play the Club Plantation was local singer Velma Middleton, who would later go on to sing and record with Louis Armstrong. When she came to the club on North Vandeventer, she was fresh from New York, and Tony Scarpelli posted an open invitation for her rehearsals in the early afternoons.[379]

Eddie Johnson and his orchestra opened as the first house band for the Plantation in September 1932.[380] At the time, personnel included Harold "Shorty" Baker, James Telphy (trumpet), Winfield Baker (trombone), Singleton Palmer (tuba), Eddie Johnson (piano), Walter and Freddy Martin (alto sax), Ernest "Chick" Franklin (tenor sax), Benny Jackson (guitar, banjo, vocal), and Lester Nichols (drums).[381] At this time, the Plantation had three shows a night and Singleton Palmer remarked, "Oh… [the Plantation] was a good place to work. It just had long hours…it was a hard job."[382]

By November, Walter "Crack" Stanley had taken over the gig from Johnson, being billed as the "Walter Stanley's Plantation Band" by 1934.[383] In 1934, Jimmy Lunceford's "[Harlem] Cotton Club Band" played multiple engagements.[384] By July 1934, Tony made a deal with "the Jeter and Pillars orchestra, the most popular colored orchestra to play this town in some time," to play for his Club Plantation for the next two years.[385] This began the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra's extremely successful and long run with the Club Plantation, lasting far more than two years.[386] When famous traveling acts and musicians would come to the Plantation, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra would back them.[387] In the mid-1930s, the club was the "hottest

[377] "Two Night Club Owners Booked Under Closing Law: Each Arrested Four Times for Failure to Shut Doors at 1 A.M.," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 25, 1933; "Cases Against Night Club Managers are Dropped," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 7, 1933.

[378] "'Round the Town With Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 26, 1934; "Delicatessen Store Damaged by Fire," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 25, 1934; *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 24, 1935.

[379] "Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 9, 1933. Note that the paper calls her "Thelma Middleton." Sure enough, she was often billed as Thelma in her early career. See Discogs.com for "Velma Middleton."

[380] Eddie Johnson, interviewed by Deane Wiley, transcript, Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

[381] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 52.

[382] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 53.

[383] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 8, 1932; *St. Louis Argus*, January 27, 1933.

[384] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, July 26, 1934.

[385] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, July 26, 1934.

[386] Owsley, *History*, 47.

[387] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 5, 1935.

spot in town," with three floor shows every night.[388] In the 1935 season, Californian singer Callye Dill fronted the Jeter-Pillars band for the season, and pianist Delores McKay joined their ranks.[389]

The first advertised producer at the Plantation was Sherman H. Dudley, Jr., son of a nationally acclaimed Black theater producer whose home-base was New York City.[390] In 1933, he produced other shows around town: a "Harlem and Dixie" show at the Fox Theater and a "Night in Harlem" show with singer Mae Johnson in the winter of 1933.[391] Sammy Reiss became a manager and chairman of the reception committee in January of 1934.[392] In 1935, the Plantation Revue, comprised of the dancers from Club Plantation, completed a stint at the Missouri Theater under the direction of Joe Johnson. The reviews were fantastic, "the work of Daisy Boone, Joyce Tucker, Birdie Warfield, Chickie Collins, and Producer Joe Johnson made Antonio wish he owned the showhouse…So he could watch the matiness as well as the evening performances…The Plantation crowd did three turns per day at the Grand boulevard showhouse, and Tony's help claims that he didn't muff a single showing…."[393] Tony swiftly hired Johnson as a producer for his club shows. Also in 1935, Tony Scarpelli outfitted the Vandeventer club with air conditioning so it could remain open for a longer season.[394]

Historian Dennis Owsley reported that the Plantation "offered the best wages and working conditions for black musicians… the first venue in the city to offer top black entertainment for whites in St. Louis.[395] In the 1930s and 1940s, Hayes Pillars reported that musicians were paid $40-45 a week. Management did help many Black musicians find work in other clubs. In early 1936, an article in the *Star and Times* reported,

> There should be more people like Tony Scarpelli, proprietor of the Club Plantation…Antonio never releases an act or a performer at his Vandeventer avenue hideout until other employment has been secured for them…Often keeping acts he doesn't really need, but refusing to lop them off, because, as he asks, "Where would they go?"[396]

Around 1935, the Jeter-Pillars orchestra picked up a "genius" on guitar, Floyd Smith.[397] Historian Dennis Owsley postulated that Floyd Smith played the first electric guitar solo ever recorded when he was with Jeter-Pillars.[398] The Jeter-Pillars Orchestra was broadcast on KMOX in 1936,[399] and around this time, Eddie Johnson's original Club Plantation orchestra did another stint at the club, but the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra soon returned.[400]

---

[388] "Recreation Guide," *St. Louis Star and Times*, March 13, 1935
[389] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*: October 5, 1935; November 23, 1935; December 7, 1935.
[390] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 23, 1937.
[391] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, November 22, 1933; "'Round the Town With Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, December 20, 1933.
[392] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 26, 1934.
[393] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 9, 1935.
[394] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 25, 1935.
[395] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 50; 89.
[396] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 6, 1936.
[397] Hayes Pillars, interviewed by Samuel Floyed, March 2, 1977, recording, Jazz Oral History Project, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, New Jersey.
[398] Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History*, 47.
[399] Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History*, 46.
[400] Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History*, 46; "' 'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 23, 1937.

In the 1938-1939 season, singer Madelaine Green was lead vocalist for the Jeter-Pillars band.[401] Joe "Ziggie" Johnson had decided to try his luck producing in Detroit but returned to the Plantation by September 1939.[402] In 1939, Scarpelli, who had been operating the club alone for several years, got an assistant named Bill Oberbeck. Oberbeck suggested inviting college fraternities to hold meetings at the club and make the club their "usual" spot after football games.[403] A blurb notes that Oberbeck was a former sports promoter and press agent and has "gone legit" as the promotion manager for the Club Plantation.[404]

At this time, the Plantation typically advertised a $1.50 admission, except on Saturdays when the fee was $2.00. With admission, a patron received food, unlimited beer, and access to the floor show.[405] Musician Hayes Pillars reported that even on the more expensive Saturday nights, people had to be turned away at the door because the venue wasn't big enough. January 1940 saw the newspaper publish a "rare" picture of a candid Tony Scarpelli. The column noted that the photographer showed the image to Lillian, his wife, "who ordered a dozen prints."[406] A few weeks later, Tony took his "all-star group of Negro entertainers" to the Veterans Hospital at Jefferson Barracks "to put over a typical Plantation floor revue for the wounded vets in the early evening…"[407] In search of more space, in late 1940, Tony Scarpelli leased the former Palladium Roller Rink and moved his nightclub.[408]

6.4. Black Audiences at the Club Plantation

Interestingly, Tony Scarpelli periodically opened the club to Black clientele. The club's first few months open was a confusing time, as after the arrest of 32 Black patrons on opening night due to a Prohibition violation, the club began to be advertised in the White newspapers as "Whites-Only" while still being advertised in the Black newspaper, *The St. Louis Argus*, as being open to Black patrons on Sundays and special occasions. On February 1, 1933, a Wednesday, the *Argus* advertised a "Breakfast Dance," including one of the first images of entertainers comprising the Plantation Revue that research uncovered.[409] Jean Calloway headlined—straight "from Plantation Club NY"—and Walter Stanley backed the large floor show revue. Similarly, that December saw a Christmas Breakfast Dance thrown for a Black audience at 6:00 a.m. on a Monday with Eddie Johnson's "Plantation Cotton Pickers."[410]

In 1939, Black *Argus* "Town Chatter" writer J. Von Chapman noted he'd "dropped in" to the club to see Snowball and Harris. "While at the Club we had a chat with E. Whiteside and Herny Cables, head writer and captain of waiters, respectively, who are responsible for the service deluxe at the Plantation…"[411] Chapman visited later in the year to catch Eddie Johnson's show at the club. Indicating that the color lines were perhaps only strict for Black clientele from which Tony could not benefit.

---

[401] *St. Louis Argus*, April 21, 1939.
[402] Chapman, *St. Louis Argus*, September 15, 1939.
[403] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 2, 1939.
[404] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, November 14, 1939.
[405] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 64.
[406] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 1, 1940.
[407] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 11, 1940.
[408] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 29, 1940.
[409] *St. Louis Argus*, January 27, 1933.
[410] *St. Louis Argus*, December 22, 1933.
[411] *St. Louis Argus*, January 27, 1933.

Later that year, a Black club hosted both the Jeter-Pillars "Club Plantation Orchestra" and the Plantation Revue.[412] Also a notable occurrence in May of 1939, the Palladium Roller rink hosted a party for a Black audience to view the latest Plantation revue, "… this being the first time some of the talent has performed for a colored audience."[413] This was only a few months before the Palladium was selected to be the next location of the Club Plantation. Just before the move, the 20th Century Social Club had its annual party at Club Plantation.[414]

During the Plantation's move to the Palladium building, the Club Plantation Revue played at the Y.M.C.A. Camp Benefit Circus at the Muny, it "was a special attraction through the courtesy of Tony Scarpello, owner of the Plantation."[415] When the Plantation opened on Delmar, the *Argus* posted an open casting call for "glamour girls galore… No experience necessary."[416] When the club opened, some of the first images of the interior of the club were published in the *St. Louis Argus*, with Black celebrities attending the revue and images of that year's "20th Century Social Club Plantation party" with Black entertainers sitting with Tony Scarpelli and Leonard Reed.[417] The 20th Century Social Club continued to host parties at the Club Plantation.

Later, when the Plantation was struggling to survive the strict laws enacted during and after World War II, a stunning reversal occurred for a brief period when Tony turned over management of the club to a group of former Club Plantation waiters. This group of Black men advertised the club for Black audiences "Only" and continued to bring in talent for the club. While Tony eventually returned and the Plantation was advertised again in White newspapers, this period of management was quite a marked difference to the Plantation's typical energy.[418]

[412] *St. Louis Argus*, April 7, 1939.
[413] *St. Louis Argus*, May 2, 1939.
[414] *St. Louis Argus*, April 26, 1940.
[415] *St. Louis Argus*, May 10, 1940.
[416] J. Von Chapman, "Town Chatter," *St. Louis Argus*, September 20, 1940.
[417] "St. Louisans And Visiting Celebrities Make Merry Over Week End," *St. Louis Argus*, May 9, 1941.
[418] "Club Plantation for Colored," *St. Louis Argus*, August 22, 1947; "Enjoy Our Hospitality," *St. Louis Argus*, August 22, 1947; *St. Louis Argus*, August 8, 1947.

7. Club Plantation in the Palladium Building

When the Club Plantation vacated the building at 911 North Vandeventer in 1940, it briefly relocated to Kansas City for a portion of the season.[419] The *St. Louis Star and Times* discusses Scarpelli's impending plans to return to St. Louis in a larger venue: "[Club Plantation] is supposed to return here next fall to occupy new quarters to be constructed on Washington boulevard, west of the old World Theater building. The new place had not been started at a late hour last night, and some of the lads were saying Senor [sic] Scarpelli may spend next winter in Kansas City if the local gymkhana is not readied in the meantime. The plantation [sic] will not return to its old address on Vandeventer. All club fixtures were removed when the club closed several weeks ago."[420]

Figure 10: Club Plantation Floor Show, Night Club on Delmar Near Grand, Arthur Witman photo. Arthur Witman Photograph Collection, S0836. 1686. State Historical Society of Missouri.

In June of 1940, Scarpelli's Club Plantation in Kansas City burned: "'Nero fiddled while Rome burned' and they say Ted Smith sang while the Club Plantation in Kay Cee burned, the difference being that Ted was not the incendiary… so Joe 'Ziggie' Johnson and his whole Club Plantation Revue will be at the West End

[419] The Kansas City Club Plantation was located at 103rd Street and Wornall Road.
[420] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, May 16, 1940.

Waiters Club [in St. Louis] this week end…" Scarpelli returned to St. Louis to focus solely on bringing "the finest night club in America to the City of St. Louis."[421] Further,

> Plans have been drawn up and work started on the new Club Plantation, to be located in the quarters of the old Palladium Roller Rink, with a new entrance at 3617 Delmar. Signor Antonio J. (Big Tony) Scarpelli, operator of this quaint merry spot, has signed contracts calling for an outlay of important money to be spent for outfitting a club to be advertised as 'St. Louis' Most Beautiful Nite Spot'…[422]

The *St. Louis Star and Times* described the alterations in August of 1940:

> Skilled Decorators are making an elaborate night club of the old Palladium Roller Rink at Grand and Enright. Antonio W. (Big Tony) Scarpelli, operator of Club Plantation since the lifting of Prohibition, leased the huge skating palace several weeks ago, sanctioned an extensive alteration system and warned a corps of workmen to have the plant ready for a grand opening on the night of September 12. Tony fled the scene in the meantime, embarking for New York to sign a top-notch floor show producer named Leonard Reid (said to be one of the best in the business) and a staff of entertainers. The decorators, thrilled at Tony's instructions to shoot the works, painted the premises inside and out, changed the entrance from Enright to Delmar and began hanging drapes that will give Senor Scarpelli the first real lavish night spot since the days of Elsie Rothschild's "Tent" on downtown Washington avenue and Jack Ford's picturesque Casino de Paree on Manchester road. It looks like someone in authority must have advised Tony there's a business boom in the offing…[423]

A blurb in the *St. Louis Star and Times* later that month notes that Tony spared no expense in the renovation:

> … [A] group of skilled workers and high-geared decorators went to work on his new night spot in the old Palladium Building. These lads have been piling up expenses right and left for the past month—Tony's broad smile has been narrowing daily—and it's possible the final figures will send our hero along for many months without so much as a snicker…[424]

Tony Scarpelli took some time during the renovation to pay a visit to Harlem to recruit talent for his new club. As soon as he secured the lease and funding to remodel the club, he set his sights on finding people who would give the club top-notch production. Wanting the best for his newly renovated club, "Tony Scarpelli, operator of Club Plantation, mid-town merry place reopening in the old Palladium Roller Rink on September 12, has departed for New York to book revues to run until after New Year's Eve…"[425] He returned with the Cotton Club's Leonard Reed. Leonard Reed had been the producer for Harlem's famous Cotton Club and was considered "one of the best in the business." He left his Harlem gig and relocated to St. Louis for the Club Plantation. An advertisement in the *St. Louis Star and Times* boasts the grand opening of the "New Club Plantation" in September of 1940. The club was "ultra modern in design," and featured

[421] *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 24, 1940.
[422] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, July 30, 1940.
[423] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 22, 1940.
[424] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 30, 1940.
[425] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 5, 1940.

an "all New York Show" of 32 people—all under the direction of Leonard Reed, "direct from the Cotton Club—New York."[426]

> Opened as the "Largest night club for miles on all sides is the new Club Plantation, opening tonight. Antinio [sic] Michael (Big Tony) Scarpelli, general boss man and operator of this particular plant, starts his sixth season with this franchise—offering a huge program of entertainment, a rollicking dance band and a full crew of deckhands—in a rebuilt and lavish layout occupying the old quarters of the Palladium Roller Rink…[427]

Although Tony sought new revues to bring down from New York, he kept the Jeter-Pillars band as the house band, and singer Ted Smith was the main act for opening week. The club was open seven days a week and was a grand success. The opening month saw the *St. Louis Star and Times* make an extraordinary claim that, "Night life shift[ed] to the mid-town belt since the recent opening of the new Club Plantation, local version of New York's famous Cotton Club."[428] The club reportedly had more floor space than any other local club, with another blurb bragging that "Tony Scarpelli's new Club Plantation is so roomy—in the old Palladium Roller Rink—that he can seat 450 guests, stage a show on a huge dance floor and offer the Cardinals or Browns enough space to hold infield practice."[429] Only thirteen days after opening, Tony commissioned 15 carpenters to work all night one Wednesday to build terraces for more tables for the new club.[430]

Also in 1940, Scarpelli hired his stepson, Jimmy O'Toole, as the club's promoter, a member of Markham O'Toole booking agency.[431] The club continued to operate a full Leonard Reed-produced floor show every night, with new smaller acts every few weeks. A popular theme for the shows was "an All New York Show," with many of Reeds former colleagues visiting to perform.[432] Attendance was steady in the early 1940s, despite the impending World War. In 1942, Tony Scarpelli's brother, James "Jim" Scarpelli (born Vincenzo Scarpelli), began helping with security at the Plantation,

> Antonio J. (Big Tony) Scarpelli, operator of Club Plantation, calls on Brother Jim to help explain a new checking system in effect at that midtown fun center. It's a long story—best told by the waiters—who say the new method is so simple it's hard to decide whether the guest, the management, or the waiter benefits most…[433]

Perhaps this security was necessary because of an increase in patronage due to an increase in swing-shift war workers in the area: a *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* article titled, "There's Revelry Now from Dusk to Dawn: War Workers and Service Men Set a Merry Pace at After-Dark Amusement Emporiums," discusses the influx of late-night war workers into Midtown. At this time, around 30,000 men and women were employed as swing-shifters locally. After the workers got off their shifts, they traveled to Midtown to seek out food, drinks, and fun.[434] Further increasing this number, 20,000 servicemen would travel into the city on the weekends for entertainment. Generally, "night clubs have been forced to turn away customers…",

---

[426] *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 7, 1940.
[427] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 12, 1940.
[428] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 14, 1940.
[429] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 16, 1940.
[430] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 20, 1940.
[431] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, November 19, 1940.
[432] *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 26, 1940.
[433] "'Round Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 11, 1942.
[434] Toft, "Midtown Historic District."

and the Club Plantation had one night where "there were 1200 persons in the club at 11 p.m., and from then until 3 a.m. employes had to say 'No' to additional hundreds who tried to get in. 'And we didn't have anything special, either,' says Tony Scarpelli, one of the owners. 'Tonight I got an order for a party of 800 persons. Where'll I put em?'"[435]

During the Palladium's run, St. Louis had a "closing hour law" for places that sold liquor. This closing hour differed over time, but usually fell between midnight and 1:30a.m. Often, this meant that the venue could remain open if the ceased selling alcohol after the designated hour. The Palladium had been raided and Scarpelli arrested for violating this ordinance several times in its early days of operation, but Scarpelli had avoided arrest for some time before World War II. However, the increase in swing shift patrons into the St. Louis entertainment districts meant increased scrutiny on nightclub operations. "To circumvent this [closing] law and in response to popular demand, half a dozen places featuring a policy of 'Bring your own liquor,' have developed here in recent weeks. This enables them to remain open until the owners—and not law—decide to close."[436] These clubs were known as "set-ups" clubs, and at the time, the Plantation became one, at least as "officially" advertised.

Simultaneously, bands around St. Louis were losing musicians to the draft, and the George Hudson Orchestra was hired to replace the leaving Jeter-Pillars Orchestra. Hudson recalled his time at the Plantation,

> I enjoyed working at the Plantation. The only thing about it just wasn't a lot of money involved. But we had all the best of working conditions to work under but the finance wasn't as good. But you had a good year 'round job and the place was air-conditioned during that time. And you always had a good crowd. Both clubs were air-conditioned and you worked with the best performers… But the Plantation and the Riviera, you couldn't have worked at a better place. That club [Plantation] was owned by some of the boys; you know what I'm sayin'? Do your job and they were so nice to you during the holidays with nice presents and things. Beautiful. It was just enjoyable to work. No problems with the owners at all. See I did all the emceeing at the shows that actually came in. And I would emcee then. That's about all I can tell you. Beautiful to me and to all the guys.[437]

The Hudson outfit personnel were trumpeters Clark Terry, Paul Guydner Campbell, Cy Stoner, and Edin Backman; trombonists John "Bones" Orange and Robert Horne; reeds William "Weasel" Parker, Thomas Starks, Clifford Batchman, Charles Pillars, and William Rollins; pianist Robert Parker; bassist Singleton Palmer; and drummer Earl Martin.[438]

[435] "There's Revelry Now from Dusk to Dawn: War Workers and Service Men Set a Merry Pace at After-Dark Amusement Emporiums," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 30, 1942.
[436] "There's Revelry Now from Dusk to Dawn: War Workers and Service Men Set a Merry Pace at After-Dark Amusement Emporiums," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 30, 1942.
[437] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 93.
[438] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 93.

Figure 11: Club Plantation Floor Show, Night Club on Delmar Near Grand, Arthur Witman photo. Arthur Witman Photograph Collection, S0836. 1687. State Historical Society of Missouri.

Leonard Reed

Leonard Reed was a famous producer for Harlem's Cotton Club. He was born in Lightning Creek, Oklahoma to a Black and Choctaw mother and a White father. He never knew his father and his mother died when Reed was only two years old. He was raised by his great-grandmother and various other family members. He spent a large portion of his childhood in Kansas City, Missouri. He reportedly toured as a Charleston dancer during his childhood summers and occasionally toured with vaudevillians.[439] When he was sixteen, he moved to New York City to attend college and become a dancer. He was White-passing and was hired as a dancer in a touring minstrel show. He continued to work on the dance and vaudeville circuit, and teamed up with Willie Bryant, also a light-skinned man of color, in 1927.[440] Reed and Bryant popularized the Shim Sham Shimmy dance and continued to tour until the showrunners found out that they were not White in 1933. Reed reported, "'When I was with Willie, everything was white,' he said in an interview for Rusty E. Frank's book "Tap" in 1988. 'But after that, I never did work white again. That was 1933.'" Reed

[439] "Leonard Reed: Tap dancer and his partner popularized the Shim Sham Shimmy," *Daily Telegraph – The Vancouver Sun*, April 12, 2004.
[440] Malcolm Mayhew, "Tapped for Glory," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 24, 2003.

retired from dancing and moved to Harlem to become a producer himself.[441] In 1934, Reed began producing shows for the Apollo Theater and the Cotton Club.

In September of 1940, Tony Scarpelli, owner of Club Plantation, visited New York to recruit talent for his newly renovated club. He returned to St. Louis with Leonard Reed.[442] Leonard Reed would remain at the Club Plantation until at least May 1941,[443] before returning to New York to continue producing for the Apollo Theater. He remained the producer there for a decade and was highly regarded as one of the best in the business. Later, Leonard Reed wrote songs for Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong.[444]

7.1. Club Plantation and Club Riviera

Contemporary to the Club Plantation's run in the Palladium building was the Club Riviera at 4460 Delmar Boulevard. The Riviera opened in the summer of 1944, and from 1944-1963, the Riviera and the Plantation shared talent, including producers, musicians, and chorines during the early years of the Riviera. After the Plantation closed, many of the St. Louis musicians who were integral to the Plantation's success can be followed to the Riviera for another decade or so. Historian Dennis Owsley pointed out that often, "groups playing at the Plantation might be found playing at the Riviera a few months later."[445]

The building that would later host the Club Riviera was constructed at Delmar Boulevard near North Taylor Avenue in the spring of 1908. The white stone building was designed by architect George H. Kennerly and built by contractors W. J. Hogan and L. G. Miller. The building, erected for dance instructor Harry W. Trimp, housed a ballroom, a bowling alley, two stores, and several apartments. The ballroom on the second story had a circular maple dance floor, with a wrap-around intricately carved balcony and dome ceiling above. It was designed to host a capacity of 2,500 people. The bowling alley was constructed with eight lanes and box seating to host up to 400 people.[446]

Harry W. Trimp, originally a secretary of the Master Builders' Association in St. Louis, was inspired to teach dance after a bet he made with one of his contractor peers led to a conversation with a dance instructor. The instructor offered him an assistant job, but within a matter of months, Trimp had struck out to teach on his own. At the turn of the century, Trimp expanded to teaching at several studios around town. This proved too much for Trimp, so he concentrated on one large dance school, eventually having the building at 4460 Delmar designed just for him. Even before the building was complete, Trimp was leading dances and parties:

> For six months parties were held nightly in the new structure, although it had no front and had to be shielded from the elements by a canvas covering. The contractor had failed to finish the building on the specified time, but the hall had been rented out in advance, and so the dance went on, regardless of the fact that it was only partially completed. [447]

A beloved teacher, Trimp operated his business out of the building for 20 years, often having students join classes when they were teenagers and later bringing their own young children for lessons. He notably

[441] "Leonard Reed: Tap dancer and his partner popularized the Shim Sham Shimmy," *Daily Telegraph – The Vancouver Sun*, April 12, 2004.
[442] *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 7, 1940.
[443] *St. Louis Argus*, May 9, 1941.
[444] Howard Blume, "One Step Ahead," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), April 18, 2004
[445] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 90.
[446] "New West End Dancing Academy, Trimp Dancing Academy on Delmar," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 8, 1908. "Trimp's Dancing Academy and Trimp's Bowling Alley," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 9, 1909; *St. Louis Star and Times*, November 10, 1910.
[447] "Recalling His Days As A Cotillion Leader," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 27, 1931.

once taught the Charleston dance while sitting in a chair—having injured his ankle on a fishing trip the same week the Charleston rage swept St. Louis.[448] However, by the late 1920s, Trimp's business was slowing down:

> The growing-up of his later generations of pupils there coincided with the coming of prohibition and the post-war jazz age, a harm rather than a help to his profession. Sponsored dances and careful training of ballroom dancers, alike declined in favor with the coming of the hip flask and the catch-as-catch-can orchestra… It was not that Mr. Trimp resisted innovations…he taught [modern dances] on request to private pupils. But he devoted his greatest attention to the traditional forms… But the havoc of the jazz age, and particularly the flask era, extended beyond the traditional dances.[449]

Trimp sold his academy-ballroom in 1927 in favor of a smaller studio. However, in 1938, he returned to the building at 4460 Delmar with his dance studio operating out of a smaller room, but the studio closed upon his sudden death in August 1939.[450]

During the Great Depression, a number of businesses utilized Trimp's former dance school building. In 1930, The Avalon Supper Club, also known as Club Avalon, moved into the ballroom space at 4460 Delmar Boulevard from its original location at 3621 Washington Boulevard.[451] By 1934, the Avalon was shuttered, and the Showboat Dance Palace had moved in.[452] The Showboat was owned by Sammy Greenberg and remained at the location for a decade. After the Showboat closed for the summer of 1944, notable Black politician and activist, Jordan W. Chambers, purchased the property from the owners of the Showboat for $25,000. Chambers was familiar with the building because he had worked as a pin boy in the former bowling alley there when he was younger. Chambers had a successful undertaking business and became heavily involved with politics in the St. Louis area before investing in the former Showboat.[453]

Chambers, as well as running his undertaking business at 3100 Franklin Avenue,[454] was a long-time advocate for the African American community: his job as a watchman in the Fifth District of St. Louis and later, as Constable, allowed him to use his power to defend the community from predatory landlords and unfair evictions during the days of the Great Depression.[455] While he originally supported the Republican Party, in 1932, after the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt for president, he began a long-time career supporting the Democratic Party.[456] In 1936, he became a Democratic committeeman for the Nineteenth ward in St. Louis,[457] later becoming the director of the Negro Division of the Democratic Campaign

[448] "Recalling His Days As A Cotillion Leader," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 27, 1931.
[449] "Harry Trimp Dies of Heart Attack, Dancing Instructor for 40 Years in City Succumbs at 60," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 13, 1939.
[450] "Harry Trimp Dies of Heart Attack, Dancing Instructor for 40 Years in City Succumbs at 60," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 13, 1939.
[451] "Seven Arrested after Fight at 3a.m. at Club Avalon," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 28, 1930; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 9, 1927.
[452] *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 27, 1934.
[453] Ralph Coghlan, "St. Louis Letter: If You Don't Know Jordan Chambers--," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 14, 1949.
[454] "Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2, 2014.
[455] Ralph Coghlan, "St. Louis Letter: If You Don't Know Jordan Chambers--," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 14, 1949; "Negro Constable in Fifth District," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 26, 1936.
[456] "Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2, 2014.
[457] "Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2, 2014.

Committee. He was known as a structural, grassroots leader in the African American community and Democratic Party in St. Louis, [458] and was even given the title of the "Negro mayor of St. Louis."[459]

Chambers renovated the space at 4460 Delmar Boulevard in the early summer of 1944, opening his Club Riviera that June.[460] The club was advertised as a Black entertainment spot, [461] and historian Dennis Owsley posits that the club was opened as an African American "alternative" to Club Plantation, as it was located less than a mile and a half away.[462] Whether it was created as an explicit foil to the White-only policy at the Plantation or not, Club Riviera became a hub for the African American community in the Central West End.

Black musician John Cotter, who played at the Club Riviera and the Club Plantation with the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, explains in his thesis, "The Negro in Music in Saint Louis," that establishments opened for Black audiences were typically integrated: "which automatically means, in Saint Louis, that everyone is welcome for whites are seldom refused admission to Negro establishments."[463] This is supported in the newspapers of the time. While the Riviera was advertised as a "Negro entertainment spot" in the White-owned newspapers, the *St. Louis Argus*—an African-American-oriented and Black-owned newspaper—the club advertisements included the phrase "all welcome." Later, in 1952, the White-run *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* finally left out its usual parenthetical phrasing "Club Riviera – (Negro, but whites invited)"[464] and ran an advertisement for the Riviera that included the phrase "where all are welcome."[465]

As evidenced in the early newspaper advertisements, and considering the club was owned and operated by an influential African American community member for a Black and integrated audience, the White population of the entertainment district on Grand Avenue in Midtown known as the "White Way" expressed concerns.[466] These were noted in the club's opening notice in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, titled "Negro Buys Club on Delmar, Highlighting Westward Migration." The article stresses that,

> The westward migration trend of the Negro has been marked in recent weeks by the purchase of more than a dozen homes along Delmar boulevard [sic] between Vandeventer and Taylor, an area previously inhabited by white persons. Several of the homes purchased still are occupied by white tenants.

In response, Jordan W. Chambers is quoted,

> "It's just a case of the Negro being forced to find a place to live," Chambers said. "So many buildings have been razed downtown that it is necessary to find more space. And with many in steady war jobs Negroes have more money to pay for homes." Some Negro leaders envisioned an expansion of the Negro residential area as far west as Kingshighway. The general northern boundary would be left at St. Louis avenue [sic] and the southern extremity at Delmar boulevard.[467]

---

[458] Ralph Coghlan, "St. Louis Letter: If You Don't Know Jordan Chambers--," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 14, 1949.
[459] "Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2, 2014.
[460] "Negro Buys Club on Delmar, Highlighting Westward Migration," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 25, 1944.
[461] "Negro Buys Club on Delmar, Highlighting Westward Migration," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 25, 1944.
[462] Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz*, 52.
[463] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 341.
[464] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 21, 1949; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 22, 1950.
[465] Club Riviera advertisement, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 13, 1952.
[466] Eberle, *Midtown,* 48.
[467] "Negro Buys Club on Delmar, Highlighting Westward Migration," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 25, 1944.

The explicit hope for and discussion of "boundaries" for African American settlement is indicative of the extent of the geographical segregation in St. Louis. The African American community in St. Louis, cognizant of what this "westward expansion" meant, also discussed this in the *Argus* in direct relation to Club Riviera's opening. Upon the opening of the club, J. Von Chapman, in his well-known column "Town Chatter," remarked that "Everybody is of one accord in agreeing that Mr. Chambers has put this ole burg on the map in the amusement field, and it is our job to support this swanky place." While the Riviera was not the first night club in the area, it was the first nightclub in the area opened to African Americans. Also, Chambers was clearly very aware of the nearby White community's concerns, as one of the first ads for the Riviera's opening night in the *Argus* states, "Due to the location and the fact that critical eyes will be constantly watching for something to criticize everyone is requested to be on his best 'behavior.' (This comment fortunately applies to only a few, but it is often the few who bring grief to many) …"[468]

Despite the anxieties, the Club Riviera opened as a grand success, with patrons from as far as Chicago attending the grand opening. The *Argus* happily reports that the Chicagoans "all were enthusiastic in their praise of Jordan W. Chambers' gift to nite [sic] life, being obliged to admit (somewhat reluctantly) that Chicago had nothing that could "top" this elaborately beautiful new club with its air-cooled spaciousness."[469] The club continued to draw crowds for its many revues that typically included a top musical band, several dance acts, and a show created around the handful of Riviera chorines.

Not only was the club used for nightly revues, but Jordan W. Chambers also used the club to host community open hours every day "to listen to troubles or ideas of his people…"

> …[He] goes to the Riviera (considered the best Negro night club in the Midwest with name bands and good floor shows). There a mecca of local Negroes, he sees many other people. The cocktail bar on the lower floor of the club is often turned into a kind of debating society. There Pops, as the youngsters call him, listens to argument and dispenses wisdom. "Some nights," said Pops, "you might see three or four Negro Ph.Ds at the bar." So The Riviera, in addition to being a place of entertainment, is a kind of intellectual center, too… The "Open House" at The Riviera lasts until 12, when Pops finishes the last of many bottles of mineral water. But his political activity continues next day as he sees people at his funeral establishment, at Nineteenth Ward political headquarters, at meetings of the Democratic City Committee and so on. That's why if you tap Pops, you will probably have a good idea what Negroes are thinking about.[470]

The Riviera was home not only to general community open houses, but to social and fraternal clubs and organizations, primarily Black and integrated ones. The club was also often utilized for graduation parties for the two Black high schools in St. Louis, Sumner and Vashon high schools.[471]

7.2. Music and Entertainment at The Club Plantation

Over time, both the later acts of the Club Plantation and the Club Riviera experienced a shift away from jazz music and toward swing and bebop music. Even as early as 1943, the *Post-Dispatch* advertised that nightclub managers around town were getting frustrated with the younger generation's infatuation with

[468] *St. Louis Argus*, June 23, 1944.
[469] J. Von Chapman, "Town Chatter," *St. Louis Argus*, June 30, 1944.
[470] Ralph Coghlan, "St. Louis Letter: If You Don't Know Jordan Chambers--," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* December 14, 1949.
[471] "Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2, 2014.

the dance craze the "Jitterbug," and the music that went with it. This music was calmer, less hot than the jazz of the 1930s.[472] The Club Riviera was noted in the article as a venue for the "old-fashioned" kind of music, but there started a slow creep of swing into the Plantation and Riviera.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Riviera featured acts like Lorraine "Be-Bop" Carter, the "Rajahs of Swing,"[473] Dennis Owsley notes that from 1947 to 1950, slower genres like swing and rhythm and blues became prevalent, and that this "was reflected in the bookings at the Riviera and small clubs in the city."[474] According to historian Douglas Malcolm,

> One unintended irony that occurred as a consequence of bebop was that jazz became less relevant to mainstream African-American culture as the twentieth century progressed and, indeed, to American culture as a whole…[Jazz] became the methodological template for a philosophy explicitly designed to resist and subvert oppressive authority.[475]

7.2.1. Jeter-Pillars Orchestra

The Jeter-Pillars Orchestra was the house band for both the Club Plantation and Club Riviera. Hayes Pillars recalls that when the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra opened at the Plantation,

> To best of our knowledge, they had never had a band—a Black band—to play like we played in St. Louis at that particular time. We played sweet music sweeter, and we played jazz—we played it. We played all varieties of music. And we did our best to keep the music soft, so the people in the nightclub could converse and enjoy themselves. This was what I learned from Garden C Harrison, in Texarkana, Texas, a few years before that. And one thing we did, starting from our opening night, if we got a request for a piece, if we knew it, we'd play it. And we kept a file of different tunes that different friends would come in and like. And once we knew a person, and knew the song they like, they would never have to ask for that song anymore, because when they'd walk down the steps, coming here to that club, we would start playing their favorite song. Now this is what helped put the band over. And we thought of it as being a nice public relation sort of thing, to please the patrons and keep them coming to the nightclub.

The band had an extremely successful decade-long run at the Plantation. The Jeter-Pillars Orchestra was formed out of the remnants of the Alphonso Trent Orchestra, a band that was regionally popular in the southwestern and midwestern United States.[476] Saxophonists James Jeter and Hayes Pillars had both joined Trent in 1927, and Hayes's brother Charles Pillars (also saxophone) joined in 1932, just a year before the Trent band split.[477] A few months later, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra's was formed by James Jeter and Hayes and Charles Pillars, and in July of 1934, the band came to St. Louis to play at the Plantation.[478] At

[472] "Taming the Jitterbug: The St. Louis Ballroom Bosses Frown on Kid Carpet Cutters," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 20, 1943.
[473] Chick Finney, "Blue Notes," *St. Louis Argus*, January 7, 1955.
[474] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 130-133.
[475] Malcolm, "'Myriad Subtleties,'" 222.
[476] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 62.
[477] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 338-345.
[478] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 63.

the time, personnel included Harry Edison (trumpet), Snub Mosley (valve trombone), Walter Page (bass violin), Jimmy Miller (guitar), Godman (piano), and A. G. Godley (drums).[479]

Over the 1933-1934 season at the Plantation saw the inclusion of musicians: Dan Minor, Joe Jones, Floyd Smith, Gus Wilson, Ray Perry (one of few jazz soloists on electric violin), George Hudson, and Jimmy Blanton.[480] By 1936, Walter Page, Dan Minor, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Joe Jones had left the band to join the Count Basie Band.[481] Records indicate that Charlie Christian (guitar), Kenny Clarke (drums), "Big" Sid Catlett (drums), Jo Jones (drums), Jimmy Forrest (tenor saxophone) and Carl Pruitt (bass) also played in the band. [482]

In 1937, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra recorded several popular songs, "Make Believe," "I'll Always Be In Love With You," "Lazy Rhythm," and "I Like Pie, I Like Cake." The latter two becoming two of their signature songs. Reflecting upon this time, Hayes Pillars reported that they never capitalized on their soloist talents as they were limited by their work at the Plantation. "A lot of stuff we wanted to do we didn't have time to get ready for it… All we had to do at the Club Plantation was play current music, because that's what the public was asking for."[483] The band played seven nights a week, three shows a day on all days except Sundays. For a time, their shows were broadcast on local radio stations every night. [484]

In 1944, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra opened the Club Riviera as the new house band. This marked the first time the Black community could easily attend their shows.[485] While the band was at the Riviera, John Cleophus Cotter (piano) joined the outfit.[486] Cotter would later write a thesis titled "The Negro in Music in Saint Louis," for Washington University in 1959.

The band stayed at the Riviera for seven months, with the exception of a brief stint at the Plantation when Tony asked Jordan Chambers to trade for the Billy Eckstine outfit.[487] Seven months after the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra opened the Club Riviera as the house band, they were supplanted by Jordan W. Chambers' desire to have top-tier talent at his club every weekend. In the January of 1945, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra left St. Louis to play in Chicago at the Club Rhumboogie for ten weeks. After their run in Chicago, they went on a theatre tour with headliner Louis Jordan, touring the rest of the Northeast that spring, and opening at the Apollo in New York City on Good Friday. In May of 1945, the Orchestra returned to St. Louis's Club Plantation as the house band for the summer season. That September, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra began a U.S.O. tour of military bases in the northeastern states in a show called "Red-Hot and Blues."[488] After completing a tour of the American military bases in the United States, they went on to tour bases in the Philippines and Japan.

In June 1946, the Jeter-Pillars band returned to St. Louis, and played again the Club Riviera. They did several more stints at the Apollo throughout the next few months, until in Summer of 1947 they disbanded due to lack of work. Citywide, St. Louis nightclubs were shuttering after strict laws were passed that limited their operation.[489] Several local musicians from the band would occasionally play dances and for

[479] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 338-345.
[480] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 338-345.
[481] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 338-345.
[482] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 63.
[483] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 64.
[484] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 64.
[485] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 342.
[486] Cotter would later write a thesis titled "The Negro in Music in Saint Louis," for Washington University in 1959.
[487] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 89.
[488] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 338-345.
[489] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 338-345.

charity events, but the group was much smaller. The annual Y Circus in St. Louis tapped into Hayes Pillars leadership skills by having him organize the orchestra for the charity circus in 1952, 1953, and 1954. This orchestra performed under the Jeter-Pillars name, and John Cotter even wrote some of the musical arrangements for the band.[490]

The Jeter-Pillars Orchestra USO Tour

In September of 1945, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra left once again for New York—but this time, to begin their United Service Organization (USO) Camp Show tour of military bases in New England.[491] During World War II, the War Department (precursor to today's Department of Defense) recognized the importance of boosting the morale for service members in the Armed Forces,[492] and thus, the USO was formed in 1941, and the Camp Show tour began soon after. Throughout the war, approximately one million Black individuals served in the American Armed Forces,[493] and although the USO formally agreed to open all USO locations to all races, the practice of integration was not enforced and was largely dictated by the towns where the service members were stationed. Many USO locations remained segregated, and originally, Black service members had few options for entertainment. This would improve near the end of the war, but integration never fully took hold during that time.[494] Dick Campbell was hired as the director of the Negro Division of the USO Camp Shows and became the producer of over 65 Camp Shows—which ran almost simultaneously.[495] He was the only Black producer of a Camp Show during the war. Campbell was a Harlem-based producer and activist who was a founder of the Negro Actors Guild of America in 1937.[496]

Black artists had over 200 different acts in the Negro Division of the USO Camp Shows. Under Campbell's guidance, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra and several other artists joined to create a large revue show.[497] Personnel of the orchestra at the time were James Jeter, Hayes Pillars, Charles Pillars, "Razz" Mitchell, Carl Pruitt, John Cotter, James Taylor, Louis Transue, Walter "Crack" Stanley, Sam Massenburg, Wimpy Mosby, Warren Scott, Nat Story, and Edward Weston.[498] The band was joined by several other famous artists—comedy act Apus and Estrelita, the Cabin Girls (formerly Cabin Kids), dancing duo Verne and Hutchie, and singer Helen Wood. Together, they formed a large revue, called the "Red-Hot and Blues." After the success of the New England USO tour, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra and the entire revue was sent overseas in December 1945. The *New York Age* boasted, "That ork [orchestra] that kept the Club Plantation's audiences swooning and crooning for so-ooo-ooo many years, because it had the "stuff" it took to entertain, is readying itself for another lap of its USO-Camp Show tour…and you know its name Jeter-

[490] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 338-345.
[491] Cotter, "The Negro in Music," 341-343; Owsley, *St. Louis Jazz: A History*, 53-54.
[492] K. B. Saine, "Military Minstrelsy in Text and Performance," *Theatre Symposium* 14 (2006): 66-67; 74.
[493] Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000), 233.
[494] Sydney Johnson, "How the USO Served a Racially Segregated Military Throughout World War II," *USO.org*, February 7, 2022, https://www.uso.org/stories/3001-how-the-uso-served-a-racially-segregated-military-throughout-world-war-ii.
[495] Florence Murray, "USO Camp Shows," in *The Negro Handbook, 1946-1947* (New York: Current Books, Incorporated, 1947), 256-258; Tucker, *Swing Shift,* 232.
[496] Joseph Bernardo, "Negro Actors Guild of America (1937-)," *BlackPast.org*, December 30, 2008. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/negro-actors-guild-america/.
[497] Chick Finney, "Blue Notes," *St. Louis Argus*, August 9, 1946.
[498] Cotter, "The Negro in Music in Saint Louis," 338-345.

Pillars…."[499] First, the band toured the Philippine Islands for three months, and then Japan for another three months. On this tour, the personnel were James Jeter, Hayes Pillars, Charles Pillars, Otis White, Ernest Wilkins, Jimmy Taylor, William Mosby, William Martin, Walter "Crack" Stanley, Nat Story, Warren Scott, John Cotter, "Razz" Mitchell, Edward Levy, and William Moore.[500] In late March 1946, when the Jeter-Pillar Orchestra arrived in Japan, the *St. Louis Argus* reported on their trip:

> Most of the trip being made by plane until six week [sic] ago when a plane carrying a white USO show unit was reported missing. Now that the remaining of the tour will be made by boat, Walter (Crack) Stanley and Nat (Tram) Story are full of smiles because it reminds them of the good old Fate Marable days, when he was King of the River.

The article highlighted the community's pride in the patriotism of the orchestra:

> When the name bands began their USO overseas tour, the Jeter-Pillar Band, was mentioned by their booking agent to be among the first big outfits to sign for six months overseas. The contract will end June 6, and then the great St. Louis band will head for home, where it is expected to stay in the limelight.[501]

When the band returned in the United States, *The Pittsburgh Courier* stated that the band would rest before returning to play at the Club Riviera in St. Louis. The revue overseas was a resounding success, where the St. Louis band had played "to packed GI houses in all of the major cities of Japan and in [the] Pacific Theatre of Operations." Further, that when they band appeared in Kyoto, they were able to view Japanese art and in Tokyo were able to experience the Emperor's Palace:

> Worthy of mention is the fact that Jeter-Pillars artistry placed them in Tokyo's Imperial Garden which was open for the first time in May of this year. This appearance as guests marked the first time for a Negro to enter the Emporer's [sic] Garden of Royalty which includes the Emperor's Palace, colorful gardens, tea houses, ballroom, floral landscaping and the private gardens of the Emperor.[502]

While the Pittsburgh paper was correct that the band returned to St. Louis, they did not take time to rest—they played the Tune Town night club beginning August 13, until they opened at the Riviera on August 30.[503]

7.2.2. Other House Bands and Prominent Musicians

Eddie Randle's St. Louis Blue Devils, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, and the George Hudson Orchestra were the major proving grounds for black St. Louis musicians. Many local musicians learned their trade with these bands before moving on to the national stage, including the incomparable Miles Davis and Jimmy Blanton, who had an indelible impact on jazz despite a career cut far too short.

– Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, p. 75

---

[499] Lou Swarz, "Town Topics," *New York Age*, November 10, 1945.
[500] "Jeter-Pillars' Band Back on U.S. Soil," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1946; Cotter, "The Negro in Music in Saint Louis," 338-345.
[501] Chick Finney, "St. Louis Band Arrives in Tokyo for U.S. Tour," *St. Louis Argus*, March 29, 1946.
[502] "Jeter-Pillars' Band Back on U.S. Soil," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1946.
[503] Tune Town ad, *St. Louis Star and Times*, August 8, 1946; "Jeter-Pillars Back from Japan; Open At Club Riviera Aug. 30," *St. Louis Argus*, August 23, 1946.

Dizzie Gillespie

Dizzie Gillespie, Elijah Shaw, and Billy Eckstine got together and created the Billy Eckstine Orchestra in 1944. Other members included Charlie Parker, Gerry Valentine, and Sarah Vaughan. After a tour, they opened as the new Club Plantation house band in 1945. Drummer Art Blakey joined them at the time, and recalled their experience at the Plantation as a harrowing one:[504]

> We were playing in a prejudiced club [the Plantation Club]: [Sarah Vaughan], Billy Eckstine, Bird, Dizzy. The man told us all to come in through the back door, and these damn fools, they got together and they came in the front door. The guy wigged. They all come in the front door havin' a ball. He said, "I don't want you to fraternize with the customers." When Charlie got to the intermission, they all sat at the tables and the guy was about to wig. He told someone, "You gotta get this band the hell outta here." The guys were carrying on something fierce despite the fact that gangsters were walking around with big guns on their hips. They didn't scare Bird or anyone. Tadd Dameron was drinking a glass of water, out of one of the beautiful glasses they had to serve the customers. Bird walked over to him saying, "Did you drink out of this, Tadd?" Tadd says, "Yeah." Bam! He [Parker] smashes it, "It's contaminated. Did you drink out of this, Tadd?" "Yeah," Tadd says. Bam! "It's contaminated." He broke about two dozen glasses. A guy was glaring at Bird: he just looked back coolly. "What do you want? Am I bothering you?" Bird asks him. "Are you crazy?" the guy asks. "Well if you want to call me crazy," Bird replies. Then once again he turns to Tadd, "Did you drink out of this glass?" Bam! "It's contaminated." They put us out. They sent Jeter-Pillars in our place at the Plantation and they sent us to the Riviera, which was a colored club. There the band started, and we went from there to Chicago.

While extremely plausible for a strictly segregated club like the Plantation, a later newspaper report blamed the music as being too "hot" for his White audience, not the musicians' behavior.

> Memory Lane: Our town's old Club Plantation played many a big-name entertainer in its hey-day, but Tony Scarpelli, the boss man, will probably never forget the night he fired $1,000,000 worth of talent. At that time the people he hired weren't too well known, but they all went to the top a little later on. It was a jazz combo and, after Tony heard them play a screamingly loud number, he paid them off and told them to leave. The combo included Dizzy Gillespie as director, Billy Eckstine, Charlie (Yardbird) Parker and Sarah Vaughan….[505]

In an interview, Hayes Pillars, frontman for the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, discussed how the issue was not Eckstine's music, but Scarpelli's preference for music for the Plantation audience. Pillars advised Eckstine to play the first few songs as written, then finish with songs that Eckstine wanted to play. The hope was that the audience would be captivated the whole time.[506] The booker for the Club Plantation in the 1940s, Charlie Wells, also recalls Scarpelli's and Eckstine's issues being about the music:

---

[504] Paul Combs, "The Architect of Bop," in *Dameronia: The Life and Music of Tadd Dameron*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 43. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.22963.9.
[505] Bob Goddard, "In Our Town," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 14, 1953.
[506] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 91.

> "I was sort of a stooge for the Mafia," said Wells, laughing. "A guy named Big Tony ran the place… I did the booking and public relations. The club seated 1,300 people, and we brough in all the top black acts – Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, the Mills Brothers. One night around 1944, we brought in a band led by Billy Eckstine, who recently [1993] died. He sang and played valve trombone. God, he was a good-looking son of a gun. The women just went wild over him. You know who else was in that band? The musical director was Dizzy Gillespie. The lead sax was Charlie 'Yardbird' Parker. The girl vocalist was Sarah Vaughan. At the Plantation, we did three shows every night – 11 p.m., 1 a.m. and 3 a.m." Well's blue eyes grew dreamy as his thoughts drifted back. "And that band came out for their first show and did a number called 'Night in Tunisia.' Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie must have blown 20 choruses apiece. Big Tony came to me and said, 'Charlie, I got to get them mothers out of here. I can't stand that music.' We went into the office, and he called Jordan Chambers, the black politician. He had a place out at Delmar and Taylor called the Club Riviera. And I heard Tony say on the phone, 'Jordan, I just got these guys out of New York, and you can have them for nothing, just let me have the Jeter-Pillars band back.'" Wells laughed. "That Eckstine band was just too far-out for the white people who came to the Plantation. They were used to Jeter-Pillars, which was much easier to listen to." (The late trumpeter Miles Davis tells a similar story in his autobiography, although he attributes the swift move from the Plantation to the Riviera to Eckstine's refusal to adopt a subservient attitude toward the club's white owners. Ironically, the move meant that Davis, who was 18 years old and living in East St. Louis, could get in the door to hear the Eckstine band and his musical hero, Charlie Parker. Soon, Davis joined the band.)[507]

The Billy Eckstine Orchestra did indeed move to the Club Riviera for a three-week engagement at the time.[508] Upon the move, trumpeter Miles Davis joined the outfit.[509] A couple weeks into their engagement, a reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that "I didn't think so much of Billy Eckstine and band when I saw him a few months ago at Club Plantation," elaborating that "tonight he is letting himself go and being the true Eckstine that he is. He is knocking the patrons out. He is terrific. The band is showing decided improvement."[510] Notably, when the Club Plantation was struggling after World War II, the club advertises a one-night stand for Dizzie Gillespie. On May 21, 1948, Gillespie would play. The newspaper advertised that "This dance is open for Colored or White patronage."[511]

7.2.3. The Plantation Chorus Line

After the first World War, chorus lines became recognizable parts of grand revues.[512] At this time, the stage opened for women, including women of color. First, Black women dancers trained White dancers behind the scenes and "formed the backbone of what would make black vernacular dances emblematic of urban popular entertainment."[513] In the days of the segregated Harlem nightclub and Black women—at least light-skinned Black women—were allowed on stage, "Black bodies were fetishized in the club's

[507] Harper Barnes, "He Drops Jazz Names With Best," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 22, 1993.
[508] *St. Louis Argus*, October 19, 1945; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 21, 1945.
[509] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 86.
[510] "Riviera Club Great! Eckstine's Band Terrific! Declares Mound City Press," *St. Louis Argus*, October 26, 1945.
[511] *St. Louis Argus*, May 21, 1948.
[512] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 165.
[513] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 164.

fantabulous stage shows, with dancers both male and female in skimpy costumes, in dance numbers that were lusty and sexually explicit. The dominant theme was one of jungle exotica."[514] Evoking an earlier time, Jayna Brown describes,

> Light-skinned, limber-legged, and boisterous black women on the burlesque stage carried with them the history of the fancy girl trade and practice of plaçage centered in New Orleans and extending across the Caribbean. Their rigorous and suggestive acts carried the memory of the fancy girl slave auctions, very public rituals of bodily exposure and surveillance that their recent ancestors had endured.[515]

The traditions created in the Antebellum period are evident especially as an all-Black chorus line performing in front of a White audience, as was the case at Club Plantation. Chorines at Club Plantation were often billed in advertisements as "sepia steppers," "brown-skin dancing girls," and "bronze beauties."[516]

In 1937, Lena Kilgore briefly became the leader of the eight Plantation dancers and worked with then-producer Sherman Dudley, Jr.[517] Later that year, Evelyn "Bunny" Wiggins took over Kilgore's role.[518] A few months later, Desoree Alexander was listed as the head dancer.[519] When Alexander fell ill in 1939, a chorine named Claudia Oliver stepped in as dance leader. [520]

After the Plantation moved to the spacious new Palladium building, the chorus line doubled from eight women to sixteen.[521] Joe Johnson led the chorines at this time (from around 1938).[522] This number would later decrease after the Plantation began struggling in the late 1940s. The *Argus*, when discussing the Riviera, summarizes the importance of the chorines to the very essence of the nightclub institution:

> … chorus girls play an outstanding part in all floor shows. That is one reason why Club Riviera is nationally known for its high class entertainment. In every revue, you may see the same girls but their changing routine of singing dancing and costumes give the show a beautiful color. Amos Williams, sensation ballet dancer, is the only male member of the chorus.[523]

[514] English, *Dangerous Rhythms*, 170.
[515] Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 106.
[516] "'Round the Town with Regan" column in the *St. Louis Star and Times* on January 11, 1941, January 23, 1937, and September 14, 1937.
[517] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 23, 1937.
[518] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 25, 1937.
[519] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 26, 1938; March 12, 1938.
[519] *St. Louis Argus*, June 23, 1944.
[520] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 26, 1938; March 12, 1938.
[521] *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 11, 1941.
[522] "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 22, 1938; "'Round the Town with Regan," *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 11, 1942.
[523] Chick Finney, "Blue Notes," *St. Louis Argus*, November 12, 1948.

Several of the identified chorines that worked at the Plantation overtime were: Margaret Adams (1935), Chickie Collins (1935), Bertie Warfield (1935), Laura Cathrell (1935),[524] Claudia Oliver (1938-39), [525] and Hortense Allen (1939) [526].

Hortense Allen

Hortense Allen (later Hortense Allen Jordan) was a chorine and long-time choreographer at the Club Plantation. Raised in East St. Louis, she began dancing in clubs around town in 1933, when she was only 14. By her early 20s, she began choreographing dances at the Club Plantation under producer Leonard Reed.[527] In 1943, a *St. Louis Argus* article describes her work.

> To lovely Hortense Allen goes the distinction of being the only woman of her race to produce a show of the magnitude of those at Tony Scarpelli's Club Plantation, one of the leading ofay nite spots in the country. Those who have seen her productions, claim them to be superlative. Indeed, the beautiful Hortense would have no trouble selling her production talents anywhere on the "big stem," but so far she has chosen to favor St. Louis with her artistic abilities. She has brought in some of the best acts in the country and around them has built shows that never fail to thrill. The producer has followed such big names as Joe "Ziggie" Johnson, Leonard Reed, and Larry Steele.[528]

Allen would go on to produce shows at the Club Riviera by the mid-1940s, billed often as "Hortense Allen and her Riviera Chorines."[529] She would later produce shows in Atlantic City. She appeared—dancing alongside Billy Eckstine—in the 1947 film *Rhythm in a Riff*. In her later life, she had a stint in New York City, becoming the first Black woman to lead a chorus line on Broadway at the Paramount Theatre. She later produced shows with famous musicians like Louis Jordan, Sugar Ray Robinson, and Lionel Hampton.[530]

Laura "Laurie" Cathrell

Laura "Laurie" Cathrell was born in 1914 and was a chorine at Club Plantation in the late 1930s. Notably, her sister, Sally Cathrell, was a magazine publisher and created *The Show Down*, a magazine that reported on nightclubs and entertainers in nearly every major central and eastern city of the United States.[531] Laurie Cantrell graced the front cover of the first issue of the magazine published in November of 1935, and an article about her was featured on page eight. Earl J. Morris wrote about Cathrell's most recent

---

[524] "LIST OF PERFORMERS AT CLUB PLANTATION," *The Show Down* vol. 1 no. 1, Nov. 1935. *The Laura Cathrell Show-Down Magazine Collection*. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. 2013.46.25.73. http://n2t.net/ark:/65665/fd511aed399-24f8-4349-9bdf-d8fafc3464de.

[525] *St. Louis Argus*, November 3, 1939.

[526] *St. Louis Argus*, November 3, 1939.

[527] Lili, "Hortense Allen Jordan," *the pearl* (blog), February 10, 2010.

[528] "Hortense Allen," *St. Louis Argus*, September 10, 1943.

[529] *St. Louis Argus*, June 23, 1944.

[530] Lili, "Hortense Allen Jordan"; Jack McCarthy, "From The Vault: Hortense Allen Dancers at Robin Hood Dell," *theMann.* (blog), March 5, 2021.

[531] *The Show Down* vol. 1 no. 1, Nov. 1935. *The Laura Cathrell Show-Down Magazine Collection*. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. 2013.46.25.73. http://n2t.net/ark:/65665/fd511aed399-24f8-4349-9bdf-d8fafc3464de; also, the Collection Description.

engagement at Club Harlem in Kansas City and described how she had once toured around the country dancing with the "Shake Your Feet" company in 1929. He continued regarding Laurie:

> She, however, has one eccentric habit. That of wearing trousers. She has several suits made with trousers… and has often been referred to affectionately as the Marlene Dietrich of Kansas City…This article was written with the fond hope that it will serve as an inspiration to Sepia girls all over America. Also as a tribute to the many ambitious girls of St. Louis, who despite the fact they have grown into womanhood, have done their bit to add to the progress of a race with which they happen to be identified.[532]

The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture retains copies of *The Show Down* magazine along with images collected by Laurie in their Laura Cathrell Show-Down Magazine Collection.

7.2.4. Touring Musicians and Entertainers

Unlike the "house" bands of the Club Plantation who stayed for months or even years at the club, touring musicians and entertainers only played at the club for one night or up to a handful of weeks. Most often, the touring acts were woven into a large revue that included the house band and house chorus line. The Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, specifically, backed many famed artists who visited to play the Club Plantation.

Mills Brothers

After achieving national fame, the Mills Brothers came to St. Louis to play Tune Town Ballroom in 1942, alongside the George Hudson Orchestra.[533] In 1944, the Mills Brothers finally made it to the Club Plantation in mid-September and stayed for a three-week engagement.[534] George Hudson again backed the "brothers" when they played in fall of 1945 and the summer of 1946.[535] Eddie Johnson reported that he too had backed the Mills Brothers when they came to the Plantation.[536]

In 1947, when the Club Plantation was placed for sale, Tony Scarpelli attributed the closure of the club to both the laws that restricted their ability to profit and also the increased expense of top talent. He specifically calls out the Mills Brothers as having increased their charges from $2000 to $3500 over the last year.[537] Despite this, when the Plantation building didn't sell, Tony brought the Mills Brothers back as a last hurrah in January of 1948.[538]

---

[532] *The Show Down* vol. 1 no. 1, Nov. 1935. *The Laura Cathrell Show-Down Magazine Collection*. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. 2013.46.25.73. http://n2t.net/ark:/65665/fd511aed399-24f8-4349-9bdf-d8fafc3464de; also, the Collection Description.
[533] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 5, 1942.
[534] Cecil D. Mitchell, "At the Night Clubs," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 17, 1944; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 17, 1944.
[535] Finney, *St. Louis Argus*, October 12, 1945; *St. Louis Star and Times*, July 27, 1946.
[536] Eddie Johnson, Elijah Shaw, Chick Finney, and Eddie Randle, interviewed by Irene Cortinovis, August 20, 1971, transcript, Oral History Collection, 1971-1995 (S0829), The State Historical Society of Missouri, Missouri.
[537] "Club Plantation Offered For Sale," *St. Louis Star and Times*, June 25, 1947.
[538] *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 31, 1948.

Ella Fitzgerald

In the summer of 1944, Ella Fitzgerald stayed at the Plantation for three weeks, headlining for Louis Russel's band after they had recently played at the Apollo.[539] In April of 1946, Ella Fitzgerald returned to St. Louis to play the Y Circus Charity.[540] A few months later, Ella Fitzgerald returned to the Club Plantation for a three-week stint, singing in front of the George Hudson band.[541] Immediately following her time at the Plantation, she did a three-week stint at the Club Riviera alongside the Gerald Wilson band, including a one-night event on July 5 with Louis Armstrong and the Gerald Wilson Orchestra, where Armstrong's band and Wilson's band battled it out while Louis and Ella themselves battled on vocals. A newspaper advertisement for the event correctly stated, "This will be one of the greatest attractions ever under one roof in St. Louis and everyone will want to be on the scene to witness this great show." Sure enough, the event "drew a record breaking [sic] crowd, with thousands turned away at the door."[542]

Tina Turner

Though she never played the Club Plantation, Tina Turner did one show at the Club Riviera with Ike Turner on May 2, 1963.[543] Tina Turner was born Annie May Bullock in 1939 in Brownsville, Tennessee. She, her mother, and her sisters moved to St. Louis in the mid-1950s, and at only age 17 Tina joined the Ike Turner and his Kings of Rhythm band as a singer. Ike Turner billed her as "Tina," as one of several vocalists. When he wrote a song for a local singer who failed to show up for the scheduled recording session, Ike let Tina record the song, "A Fool in Love." The song became popular, rocketing Tina to fame. Ole Turner then changed the name of the group to Ike and Tina Turner's Revue. (Notably, they were both dating other people at the time and the name was just a stage name. However, that changed when a few years later Ike and Tina got married.) The pair soon received national fame and began to tour nationally.[544] They made frequent visits back to St. Louis, where they often played at the Club Imperial—a later Whites-only club similar to the Plantation but run by their friend George Edick who supported their early work.[545]

7.3. Closure of The Club Plantation

After World War II, swing-shifters and service-members left St. Louis after the military's downsizing and the war production industry ended. Property values of nearby Vandeventer Place had declined due to the higher-density population housing being constructed nearby. Simultaneously, more and more laws were passed and enforced that limited the Plantation's opening hours. Even after the Plantation became a "set-

[539] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 30, 1944; Clyde Bernhardt and Sheldon Harris, "Luis Russell's Orchestra, 1944," in *I Remember: 80 Years of Black Entertainment Big Bands, and the Blues*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986). http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16ptn8w. 167.
[540] "20,000 Expected to See Annual 'Y' Circus 'Loaded' with Stars," *St. Louis Argus*, April 5, 1946.
[541] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 16, 1946.
[542] "Louis Armstrong Set For One Nite at Club Riviera," *St. Louis Argus*, June 21, 1946; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 23, 1946; "Ella Fitzgerald 'Breezes In' For Hot Show At Club Riviera," *St. Louis Argus*, June 28, 1946; Chick Finney, "Blue Notes," *St. Louis Argus*, June 5, 1946; Chick Finney, "Blue Notes," *St. Louis Argus*, June 12, 1946.
[543] *St. Louis Argus*, April 26, 1963.
[544] Harper Barnes, "Tina Returns," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 20, 1985.
[545] Harper Barnes, "Tina Returns," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 20, 1985; *St. Louis Argus*, April 26, 1963.

up" place (a place that did not sell alcohol but provide mixers for patrons to bring their own liquor), laws further limited the hours.[546] In 1945, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* column, "At the Night Clubs," reported:

> It's one thing to go to opening nights, and quite another to go to closing nights. If you want to go in for this sport, find an ex-late hours spot that's trying to run under the present curfew and take a last look around. Chances are the place will be closed the next time you want to wander in. Here's what you'll see, if the Club Plantation may be taken as a typical example: The bright lights will make the place look strange and dingy; employes will rush around collecting the old junk they thought they'd always take home some night—as well as their own pay; you'll hear shouts about what war plant who is going to enter. And no one looks very down-in-the-mouth about it at all. Two of the best known characters in St. Louis late-hours night life will now be missing: Tony Scarpelli, co-owner of the club, and Whiteside, the unruffled and correct head waiter.[547]

Tony Scarpelli passed the club off to Spizzie Canfield, long-time producer of the Plantation Revues in 1945.[548] This was perhaps a symbolic transfer, because in February 1947, five New York music publishers sued Club Plantation for pirating five different popular songs, and the defendants were co-owners Tony Scarpelli and Charles Bologna.[549] This would not be their last legal issue of the year. In April, the Supreme Court of Missouri upheld a 1946 act that would limit the consumption of liquor at "set-up" places after a certain time of night. In early May, policemen raided three "set-up" clubs, including the Club Plantation. 800 patrons were forced to leave the premises, and both Bologna and Scarpelli were arrested.[550]

This proved to be the last straw for Tony Scarpelli. He and Bologna listed the club for sale in June. Scarpelli reported that the cost of operating the club had been about $7,000 weekly. While he was once able to run three shows a night to make enough money to stay in business, he was limited to two shows a night with the new limited hours. The club's nightly attendance, which had reportedly been hovering between 300 and 400 people, had dropped even further with the new laws.[551] Tony was quoted as saying, "'Far as I'm concerned,' he concluded, 'people, including the kind of people who make the laws, many of whom used to be my most enthusiastic customers, can make their setups from now on at home or in hotels, if they can get people to stand still for the noise.'"[552]

Because of veterans returning from World War II, Veterans Administration began plans for a new hospital in St. Louis.[553] The decline of Vandeventer Place neighborhood allowed VA to purchase and demolish half of the mansions in the adjacent Vandeventer Place neighborhood for the hospital site.

Due to alcohol laws and the new hospital, it seemed unlikely that anyone would purchase the club. The newspaper reported "'The club also is in the area earmarked for a veterans' hospital, and faces eventual

[546] "There's Revelry Now from Dusk to Dawn: War Workers and Service Men Set a Merry Pace at After-Dark Amusement Emporiums," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 30, 1942.
[547] Cecil D. Mitchell, "At the Night Clubs," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 11, 1945.
[548] Cecil D. Mitchell, "At the Night Clubs," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 7, 1945.
[549] "Music Publishers Accuse Club Here of Pirating Songs," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 7, 1947.
[550] "3 'Setup' Clubs Raided As Hours Law Is Enforced," *St. Louis Star and Times*, May 12, 1947.
[551] "Club Plantation to Quit; Squeezed By Hours, Players," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 25, 1947; "Club Plantation Offered For Sale," *St. Louis Star and Times*, June 25, 1947.
[552] "Club Plantation to Quit; Squeezed By Hours, Players," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 25, 1947.
[553] "Vandeventer Pl. VA Hospital Bids by Midsummer," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 4, 1948, page 8.

federal condemnation, he [Charles Balogna] said… 'We've got a $100,000 investment here…Maybe all we can do is wait for Uncle Sam.'"[554]

In a last-ditch effort to keep the club open, Scarpelli allowed his own Black employees to rent out the Club Plantation for Black community events. In late May, the Plantation Waiters Social Club presented, "A Night at Club Plantation," featuring Buggs Roberts, with a cover of $1.00.[555] In mid-July, "The Employees of Club Plantation" presented the Jeter-Pillars band, featuring Austin Wright and complete with a Gala floor show, with $1.50 cover.[556] Scarpelli turned the entire management of the club over to the waiters of the club. The waiters-turned-managers were Booker Dawson, J. L. Turner, John Haley, Odell Moriss, and Howard B. Washington. The new Black management began advertising in the *St. Louis Argus* the club was "strictly for colored," and "strictly for Negroes."[557] Dewey Jackson and George Hudson headlined the club at this time.[558]

By November of that year, Club Plantation advertisements resumed in the White newspapers, and briefly the club had no cover charge to enter.[559] Still not profiting, Scarpelli left the Club Plantation entirely and moved to manage the music venue the New Hammer Inn at 6983 Gravois.[560] In early 1948, several newspaper articles reported that the pending VA Hospital would not move forward until the nightclub was shut down and razed. VA was legally barred from purchasing the land because it was not contiguous to its proposed hospital site, but demanded that the "city…arrange for removal of Club Plantation and Hotel Miami, in the block adjoining the site of a planned $15,000,000 VA hospital, before construction can begin."[561] However, plans for the hospital changed and the new design would "not require utilization of the block to the south bounded by Delmar and Grand blvds. And Enright and Spring avs.," meaning that the Plantation Club would not be demolished.[562]

In March 1948, Scarpelli returned to the Club Plantation, reopening the club with two floor shows a night except Sunday. The club advertised "pre-war prices" of a $2.00 cover and began selling alcohol: "Bring your own liquor or buy it here."[563] Despite this last hurrah of hope, the Club Plantation shuttered for good that summer. Notably, the two last events held in the Plantation were Black events: ads for Dizzie Gillespie on May 21 boasted, "This dance is open for Colored or White patronage."[564] In late August, a Black fraternity had their formal at Club Plantation.[565] By the second week of September, an advertisement was placed selling the Plantation's 200 tables, 800 chairs, audio system, baby grand piano, spinet piano, silverware, and carpeting.[566]

---

[554] "Club Plantation Offered For Sale," *St. Louis Star and Times*, June 25, 1947.
[555] *St. Louis Argus*, May 30, 1947.
[556] *St. Louis Argus*, July 11, 1947.
[557] "Club Plantation for Colored," *St. Louis Argus*, August 22, 1947; "Enjoy Our Hospitality," *St. Louis Argus*, August 22, 1947; *St. Louis Argus*, August 8, 1947.
[558] Ibid.
[559] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 7, 1947.
[560] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 7, 1948.
[561] "Hospital to Be Withheld Unless Club, Hotel Go," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 23, 1948; "VA For City Removing Club, Hotel Adjoining Hospital Site," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 23, 1948.
[562] "Enright To Bound Vandeventer Pl. VA Hospital Site," *St. Louis Star and Times*, February 11, 1948.
[563] "Club Plantation Closed," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 3, 1948; *Globe-Democrat*, March 10, 1948; *Post-Dispatch*, April 25, 1948.
[564] *St. Louis Argus*, May 21, 1948.
[565] *St. Louis Argus*, August 20, 1948.
[566] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 19, 1948.

Chambers faced similar struggles at Club Riviera. The Club Riviera was open nightly from June 1944 to January 1947, but in 1945, governmental regulations (the same ones that affected the Club Plantation) went into effect to close night clubs far earlier than St. Louisans were used to.[567] This slowed business, but the club was able to operate the full seven nights a week until May 1947, when the club shuttered for a couple of months before re-opening with a truncated weekly schedule.[568] After that, the Riviera was open five nights a week, still drawing big name acts. The Riviera, like the Plantation, became a target for liquor violation arrests. In 1947, a raid occurred at the Club Riviera and three Black service workers were arrested for serving liquor in an establishment without a state license after police witnessed liquor sales to approximately 70 patrons.[569]

In 1953, Jordan W. Chambers and bartender Elijah A. Dixon were arrested after two undercover policewomen were served drinks at the Club Riviera at 2:30am, well after the legal closing hour of 1:00am. The policewomen also reportedly observed about 150 patrons there at the time were observed also drinking liquor. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that the two police officers left to retrieve the police liquor squad, but when they returned, the bar was bare of all liquor. Nevertheless, the owner and bartender that served them were still charged with violating city liquor ordinances and perhaps even state liquor control laws. The two bonded out in a matter of hours.[570] In a follow-up report a few days later in the *St. Louis Argus*, Chambers requests a supplemental police report for the arrests "because of a mixup in the address of the Celebrity Room. The club is located at 4458-60-62 Delmar [Boulevard], however a cocktail lounge occupies 4462 Delmar under a separate liquor license. The excise commissioner pointed out that the restaurant is allowed to stay open after the 1 a.m. Sunday morning curfew, but the sale of liquor is prohibited." Further, the article states that bartender Dixon admitted that he was selling his own personal alcohol to the patrons because Chambers had forbidden employees to serve alcohol after the legal closing hour.[571]

After this further pressing, Chambers was fined $350 and forced to defend his club by showing cause of why his city and state liquor licenses should not be suspended or revoked. At this time, Elijah Dixon's description of events changed, claiming now that the two drinks sold to the undercover policewomen were drinks that he made at 12:45am, but after noticing the people who ordered them had left, he strained out the ice and set them aside to sell later.[572] Over two months after the raid, the charges for Dixon were finally dropped because he was not the "licensee," and the punishment for Chambers was announced: his city liquor license would be suspended for five days and his state liquor license would be suspended for a week.[573] Chambers, unhappy with this outcome, appealed his fine and punishment to the court of criminal correction and was acquitted of the liquor violation by a jury.[574]

However, in May 1954, Jordan Chambers and four employees were again arrested for liquor violations and operating their club after legal closing hours. Miss Sabel Harris, assistant Manager, Miss Sirelha Stanford, barmaid, Odell Franklin, waiter, and Clarance Sanford, dishwasher were all arrested with Chambers after a liquor agent found 100 patrons in the club and the orchestra still playing at 1:50am. All

[567] "Maintenance of Riviera Up To St. Louisians," *St. Louis Argus*, March 2, 1945.
[568] "Riviera Ends As Night Club May 29; Will Be Available For Club Affairs," *St. Louis Argus*, May 23, 1947; Robert Goddard, "At the Night Spots: Lights On Again," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 20, 1947.
[569] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 10, 1947.
[570] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 3, 1953.
[571] "Excise Office Studying Club Riviera Complaint," *St. Louis Argus,* August 7, 1953.
[572] "Ward Leader Chambers Fined in Liquor Case; Democratic Committeeman Assessed $350 on Charge of Selling Drinks on Sunday," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 19, 1953.
[573] "Waiter Freed on Charge of Sunday Liquor Sale," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 6, 1953.
[574] "Politician Arrested in Night Club Raid," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 24, 1954.

were released on a $1000 bond by the next day. Chambers again fought this arrest, claiming that he had a permit from the Director of Public Welfare to remain open until 2:30am. Eventually, a representative of the city testified that he did indeed have this permit, and the legal hour violation was dropped. Eventually, the state and city liquor violation laws were also dismissed for lack of evidence.[575]

Odell Franklin, Club Riviera

Odell Franklin was a Black man from Mississippi who worked at the Club Riviera. In 1947, a *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* article details that Franklin was one of three Black men who had been arrested at the club "on suspicion of selling liquor without a state license" after the police witnessed liquor sales to approximately 70 patrons. Odell's address was listed as 3859 Windsor Place and his occupation at the club was a waiter.[576] In the 1950 census, his address was the same, and his landlord was Parmella Lowery, a 49-year-old Black widow. He was 34 and single and had worked forty hours the previous week at the Club Riviera.[577] In May of 1954, Odell was again arrested by a state liquor control agent at Club Riviera during his waiting shift when a police raid occurred. He was listed as living at 4459 Delmar at the time, which would have been across the street from the club. Also arrested was owner Jordan W. Chambers; Miss Sable Harris, assistant manager; Miss Sirelha Stanford, barmaid; and Clarence Sanford, dishwasher. Liquor control agent Dewey McCarthy reported 41 bottles of whiskey and gin were seized in the raid when they entered the club at 1:50am to find approximately 100 customers drinking and dancing. However, Chambers appealed the fine and was acquitted by a jury.[578] Odell Franklin died in February of 1960.[579]

In 1962, Jordan W. Chambers died one week after being renominated as constable, serving his community until his dying day.[580] After his death, the Riviera remained open until December 1963, when the club completed its final show on Christmas night with "A Little Bit of Soul" singer McKinley Mitchell. Both Jordan W. Chambers and his club left a lasting impact on St. Louis's Black community. The post office on North Garrison Avenue was named in his honor.[581]

In November of 1970, a fire broke out in the rear of the empty Riviera building. The building was undergoing renovations to become the Riviera Civic Center. Firemen had to pry open boarded windows in spray in water, and the newspaper reported that the entertainment hall with the large stage was the most damaged part of the building. The stage was charred and had collapsed, the stairway and circular balcony was blackened, and ultimately two inches of water remained on the second floor once the fire was extinguished.[582] Just over a month later, a second fire engulfed the building, inflicting extensive

[575] "Politician Arrested in Night Club Raid," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 24, 1954; "Jordan W. Chambers Arrested at Club on Liquor Charges," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 24, 1954; "One Charge is Dismissed Against Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 1, 1954; "Chambers Within Law on His Dancing Permit, City Learns," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 2, 1954; "Liquor Charge Against Jordan Chambers Dropped," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 19, 1954; "Liquor Warrants Refused Against Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 25, 1954.
[576] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 10, 1947.
[577] Odell Franklin entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1950, St. Louis, Missouri, District 1212, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[578] "Jordan W. Chambers Arrested at Club on Liquor Charges," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 24, 1954.
[579] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 25, 1960.
[580] "Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2, 2014.
[581] "Jordan Chambers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2, 2014.
[582] "Riviera Club Is Damaged By Fire," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 6, 1970.

damage. The east and west walls and roof collapsed almost immediately, and firemen could not enter the building to put out the flames. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that while arson was not suspected in the November fire, the December fire seemed suspicious to investigators and was under further investigation.[583]

[583] "Fire Destroys Old Riviera Club," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 8, 1970.

8. Palladium Building Post-Club Plantation

Palladium building owner Edwin Koenig was able to trade the Palladium building in exchange for an apartment building in October of 1948.[584] The building was used as an empty shell of itself for a few months—several roller derbies and walkathons were hosted in the building, and occasionally one of these would be broadcast on local station KXLW.[585] In the late 1940s through the mid-1950s, a local photographer named Arthur Proetz took several photos of the changes in Midtown St. Louis. Notably, the photos show the construction of the VA hospital next door, however, the Delmar elevation Palladium building is present in several images. The Palladium is shown as a two-story building dwarfed by the adjacent Sun Theater and VA hospital. Each bay along the southern elevation was marked with three small windows along the first floor with one large, arched set of multi-paned windows above. The building had a flat roof. Its bricks appear lighter in color than the surrounding building. Proetz shot from Washington Avenue, so photos of the building's façade are not available in his collected works. In one photo, taken prior to construction of the VA hospital, a black sign with gold lettering projecting upward from the west elevation. The words "CLUB PLANTATION" are clearly visible.[586]

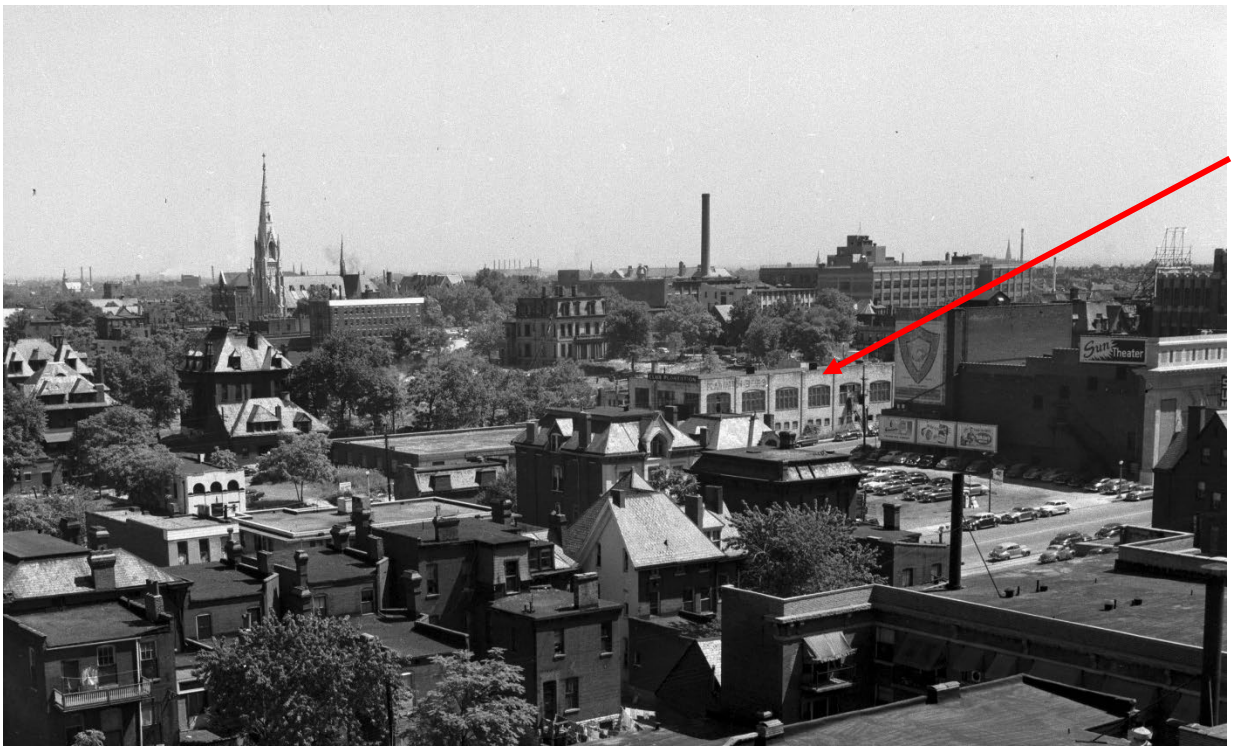


Figure 12: Detail of "Cityscape, From Beaumont Building 3720 Washington, Sun Theater, Club Plantation, St. Alphonsus Liguori Rock Church," shot by Arthur Proetz in 1955. Arthur W. Proetz Collection, S0537. 985. The State Historical Society of Missouri. Red arrow pointing to the Palladium building.

[584] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 10, 1948.
[585] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 7, 1949; *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 22, 1949.
[586] Arthur Proetz, photographer, various, ca. 1945-ca. 1955, Arthur W. Proetz Photograph Collection, 1890-1963 (S0537), Saint Louis Manuscript Collection, The State Historical Society of Missouri.

Rothman Stores, Inc. leased the Palladium Building in July 1950, shortly after the Club Plantation closed its door. A photo in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* shows the Delmar elevation. The building was ten bays in length with three small windows along the first floor and a large set of panes at the upper story. Doors were located in the terminus bays. The retail giant intended to use the 19,000 square feet of open floor space as a display area for appliances and furniture with displays in the storefront bays on Enright.[587]

In 1951, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company documented the Palladium building. It was depicted as a brick building with the Enright elevation measuring two stories in height and the Delmar elevation at only one story plus a basement. A marrow band of storefronts stretched along Enright with space for eight, one-room businesses. An entrance in the center of the Enright elevation led to the open floorplan, still labeled as a night club despite closing the previous year.[588]

Later, in the 2000s, the Palladium building housed a thrift store until it closed in 2013. Further alterations after the conversion to the storefront seem not to be extensive. Details of the building were documented in 2013 when an architectural historian meeting the Professional Qualification Standards of the field established by the Secretary of the Interior was provided access to the Palladium. The building had been vacant for approximately one year but had not been cleared of debris or all materials from the thrift store. The description of the interior materials includes details of those features that remained intact after years of retail use:

> The interior of the building has had many alterations, but, like the exterior stucco, several have encapsulated historic materials. Inside the former primary entrance, a historic tile floor survives partially intact. The extant floor features a white field and a brightly colored border featuring stylized floral design. The stair risers also feature decorative geometric tile patterns, unlike the ornamental flowers of the border. Sections of similar decorative tile survive as wainscoting on the northeastern wall near the main entrance.
>
> The second floor, the former thrift store space, also features an historic floor, but this surface is comprised of narrow width wooden boards. The floor has been laid in a limited geometric pattern, with sharp right angles dividing up the space. Water ingress has caused the floor to buckle in places, but the overall pattern and appearance remains intact.
>
> Also within the second floor, the arched windows on the west elevation remain intact, with several retaining their original frames. In the 1960s, a drop ceiling was added to the second floor, hiding the ceiling and once-exposed steel framework. Neither feature exhibits extensive or elaborate ornamentation, emphasizing function over appearance, in their current condition. Access to the second floor is provided via a staircase that appears to retain possibly historic handrails, door, and mirrored panels, now obscured by a thick coat of paint. Some interior partitions have been added to the second floor to create storage and office spaces, but the bulk of the space retains the open feeling of the former skating rink and night club. Per the owner, the bandstand once stood at the north end of

[587] "Delmar-Enright Space Leased," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 16, 1950, part 5, page 1; "Leases Former Club Plantation," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 16, 1950, page 23.

[588] Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, St. Louis, Missouri, Volume 5, Sheets 27 and 52, 1951. Certified copy provided by EDR.

the second floor, but it has since been removed. Clerestory windows also remain intact, encapsulated by the stucco and obscured by the drop ceiling.[589]

8.1. Palladium Building and Veterans Administration Hospital

The influx of servicemembers returning from World War I strained the existing federal Veterans healthcare system. To meet needs in the St. Louis area during World War I, the government leased an infirmary on Arsenal Street to serve as a hospital for veterans.[590] The space was not sufficient to provide space for the treatment of general medical conditions plus meet the specialized needs of tuberculosis and mental health care. Adding to the space deficiencies, the facility was segregated. In July 1921, the Secretary of the Treasury Department approved construction of a Public Health Service (PHS) Veterans hospital on the grounds of Jefferson Barracks, a U.S. Army post close to the Mississippi River.

Congressman Harry B. Hawes forwarded a report to the Director of the Veterans Bureau in November 1921 describing the inadequacies of the leased space at 5800 Arsenal Street. Hawes reported that more than 200 Veterans a month were being sent to Veterans hospitals in other area and that more than 350 Veterans were being cared for in private facilities in the St. Louis area.[591]

The timing of the report may have contributed to the construction schedule of the new hospital. Later that month, the Director of the Veterans Bureau announced that the facility should be built "without delay" and called that state of Veterans healthcare in the St. Louis area "an emergency."[592] The Treasury Department awarded the contract to construct the new hospital on July 5, 1922.[593] The Jefferson Barracks Veterans Hospital opened in 1923.

The Veterans Administration (VA),[594] successor to the Veterans Bureau, faced the challenge of an inadequate number of facilities to meet Veterans needs following World War II. Due to the pressing need, the agency embarked on a massive construction campaign to build new facilities. On January 14, 1946, a representative of the Veterans Administration arrived in St. Louis to begin seeking potential 400-acre sites for a 500-bed neuropsychiatric facility in or around St. Louis.[595] That plan was scrapped and by February 1948, VA had pivoted to an expansion of the Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital and construction of a second hospital. The VA had recently acquired a large swath of land in Midtown. This site was adjacent to but did

[589] Letter from Lindsay Hannah (R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.) to Caitlin Cunningham (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs), January 29, 2013.
[590] "Men Wounded in War to Observe Christmas Here," *St. Louis Star & Times*, December 22, 1920.
[591] National Register of Historic Places, Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital, St. Louis, St. Louis County, Missouri, National Register No. 15000419, Section 8, pages 21-22.
[592] "New Hospital at Barracks May Cost $2,000,000," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 21, 1921, page 6.
[593] National Register of Historic Places, Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital, St. Louis, St. Louis County, Missouri, National Register No. 15000419, Section 8, page 22.
[594] Prior to World War I, Veterans benefits, including healthcare, were split between multiple federal agencies. Long-term domiciliary care and limited medical services were provided by the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. The Veterans Bureau was created in August 1921. In 1930, Veterans services, including PHS Veterans hospitals, were consolidated into the Veterans Administration. The agency was promoted to the Cabinet in October 1988 and rechristened the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Both the Veterans Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs will be identified as "VA" in this report unless distinction is helpful to the understanding of the material.
[595] "VA Official to View Sites for 500-Bed Hospital Here," *St. Louis Star and Times*, January 14, 1946, page 3.

not include the Palladium building. The site was "bounded by Grand boulevard, Bell, Spring and Enright avenues."

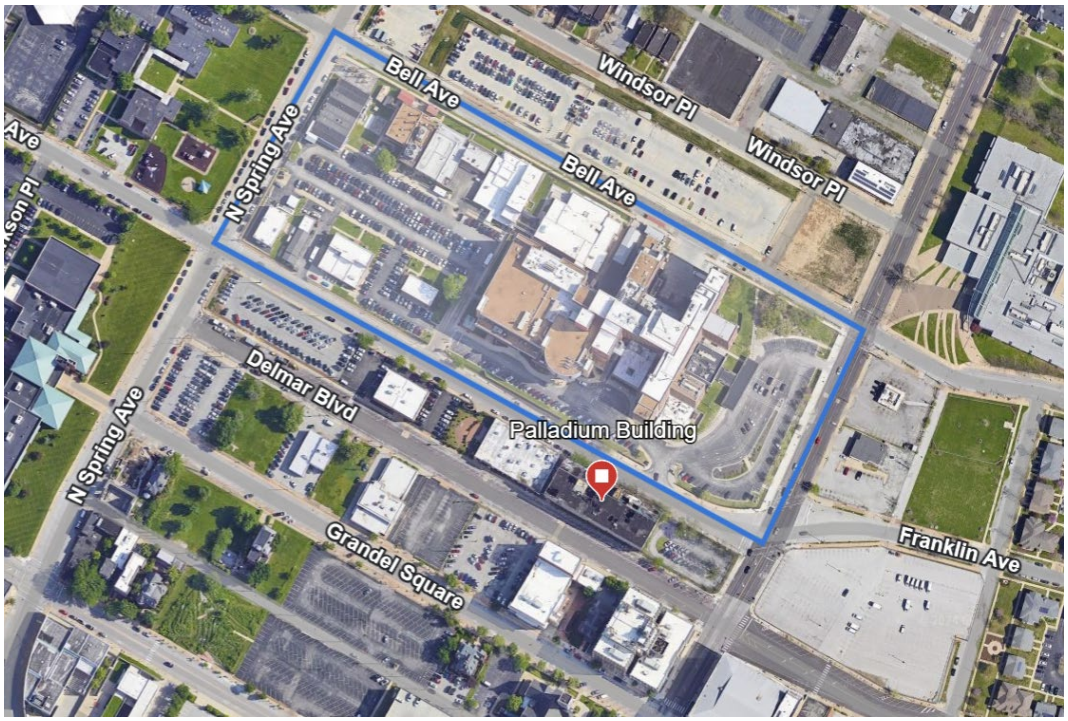


Figure 13: Map showing the land VA acquired in 1947. The Palladium was south of the lots VA purchased at that time.

The selected tract measured approximately 16 acres and was the site of fourteen "mansions" of Vandeventer Place.[596] According to the subdivision's corporate board, VA purchased 46 of the total 86 lots and demolished the entire eastern half of the property. The loss of homeowner fees, "destroyed our [the board's] legal existence as an improvement association." The remaining lots were purchased and razed in 1958 to construct a children's detention facility. The former gates to the exclusive neighborhood were moved to Forest Park.[597]

VA broke ground for the new hospital on August 26, 1950. An announcement that the facility would be named for former St. Louis Congressman John Cochran was included as part of the ceremonial speeches.[598] After a series of construction delays, the facility opened in patients in March 1954. The main hospital was nine stories in height, excluding the penthouse and basement, and was clad in red brick.

The VA hospital did not have any major expansions of its campus footprint until 2020, when they acquired the Palladium building. The Palladium building had been condemned in 2018 by the City of St. Louis, citing "a condition which endangers the health, and/or lives, and/or safety and welfare, of persons or property; and further that they [the premises] cannot be made reasonably safe with the repair or demolition and removal of the… property."[599] Just before VA purchased the unstable Palladium building, portions of the roof had collapsed.

[596] "Vandeventer Pl. VA Hospital Bids by Midsummer," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 4, 1948, page 8.
[597] Forest Park Forever, "Vandeventer Place Gates," Forest Park Statues & Monuments, https://www.forestparkstatues.org/vandeventer-place-gates, accessed October 18, 2023.
[598] "Ground is Broken for New 500-Bed VA Hospital Here," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 26, 1950, page 1.
[599] Letter from the City of St. Louis Department of Public Safety to Five Star Realty Inc., March 14, 2018.

The Palladium building was demolished in 2022, and VA is using its expanded footprint to reconfigure the John Cochran campus to provide a modern environment for inpatient services. As proposed, the current 1950s hospital will remain in operation while VA constructs a nine-story tower. Once constructed, VA will relocate existing inpatient functions to the new building and consolidate women's healthcare, primary care, and outpatient mental health into the modern building. Additionally, VA intends to utilize the reconfigured campus to provide substance abuse, spinal cord injury recovery, and acute inpatient services. The resulting medical facility will have increased accessibility, improved safety, and enhanced medical amenities. Future expansion for the second major phase has been designed for an additional 880,000 square feet of clinical/administrative space and another 1,900 structured parking spaces. In this phase, VA proposes to replace the existing 1950s hospital with a new outpatient facility that harmonizes with the inpatient care tower.

VA is designing the new buildings to compliment the adjacent St. Louis Arts District by utilizing select aesthetic features found on the nearby theaters. Additionally, VA intends to utilize greenery, plants, and water features to create a more tranquil environment for patients and the surrounding community. VA is working with the City of St. Louis and community groups within Grand Center to achieve these goals.[600]

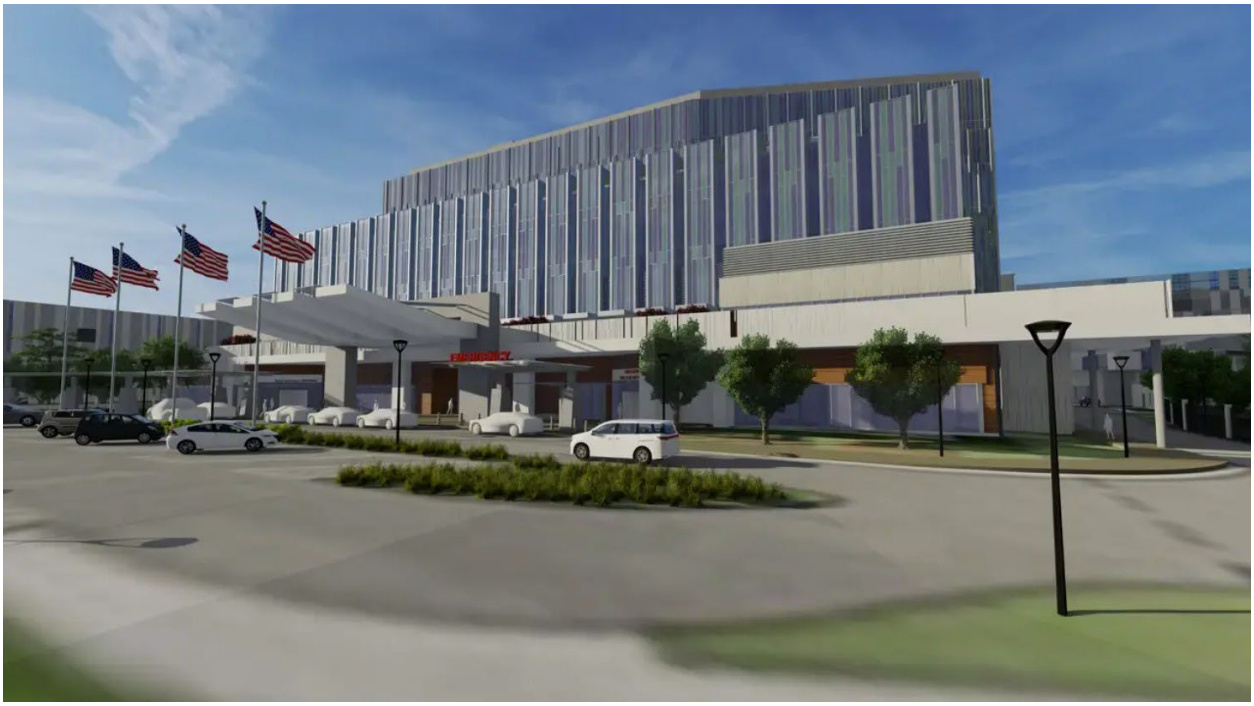


Figure 14: RLF Architects rendering of the expanded VA John Cochran Campus.

Design plans for the reconfigured John Cochran campus are not complete, however, as VA intends to soften the potential for effects to historic properties south of the campus by utilizing setbacks and lower building heights along Delmar Boulevard. The location of the former Palladium will be at least partially greenspace but may also include fencing, roadways, and a parking garage.

[600] "John Cochran VA Medical Center," RLF Architects website, https://www.rlfarchitects.com/projects/john-cochran-va-medical-center-2.

To document the importance and history of the Palladium building, VA undertook extensive photo documentation of the building prior to its razing, further, VA produced this extensive research report that examines the role of the building in the jazz music scene. VA will also produce a plaque with information about the Palladium to be installed on site of the new campus. The Palladium building played an important role in the social history of the neighborhood, and the research conducted on the building will assist the City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Offices and other similar entities in identifying central themes and properties significant to the social and musical history of the city of St. Louis.

9. Legacy of The Palladium

The Palladium was an integral part of the St. Louis jazz scene. Its location at the nexus of both Black and White neighborhoods during segregation allowed affluent White audiences to see and hear Black artists while providing Black artists with steady work and a better wage than they could have gotten in other clubs, despite the club's plantation call-backs and motifs. Club Plantation and Club Riviera set the stage for future jazz venues in St. Louis, such as those within Gaslight Square (also in Midtown, located about a mile and a half from the Palladium building).

Gaslight Square became the new primary entertainment district in Midtown. Even as popular culture experienced a shift from jazz into swing, the legacy of Club Plantation was evident in the operation new clubs: Charles Wells, the booking agent for the Club Plantation in the 1940s went on to own and operate the Tiger's Den in Gaslight Square.[601] Later, Gaslight Square experienced decline (like much of the Midtown area) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Black jazz musicians lost important venues for their shows.[602] The Black Artists' Group was established in the late 1960s by local musicians seeking to work together to gain social and economic power at a time when their solo options were limited. Notably, the artists included all kinds of entertainers and artists to work together to claim a stake in the St. Louis art scene. The Black Artists' Group supplied funding and space for many St. Louis artists until the early 1970s when many members relocated to Paris and New York.[603] Many Black jazz artists are still creating music in St. Louis influenced by the politics, culture, art, and legacy of Club Plantation, Club Riviera, Gaslight Square, and the Black Artists' Group. St. Louis historian Rose M. Nolen describes the continuing process of Black artists creating space for themselves and their art:

> As African Americans continue to move into Missouri's mainstream they are also moving to guard and protect the treasures of their past—their customs and traditions—and carry this heritage with them on their journey.[604]

[601] Owsley, *City of Gabriels*, 133.
[602] Liam Otten, "Rediscovering the Black Artists' Group," February 2, 2006. *The Source*, Washington University in St. Louis.
[603] Liam Otten, "Rediscovering the Black Artists' Group."
[604] Nolen, *Hoecakes*, 127.

10.Bibliography

"About Us," Roller Skating Association International. *Rollerskating.com*. Accessed September 21, 2023. https://www.rollerskating.com/pages/about/2.

Allen, Michael R. "Old Palladium Ballroom is for Sale," *Preservation Research*, September 21, 2009. http://preservationresearch.com/midtown/old-palladium-ballroom-is-for-sale/.

——."The Palladium Made St. Louis Music History; What Will We Make of the Palladium?" *Preservation Research*, December 15, 2011. http://preservationresearch.com/midtown/the-palladium-made-st-louis-music-history-what-will-we-make-of-the-palladium/.

Anderson, Maureen. "The White Reception of Jazz in America." *American Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring, 2004): 135-145. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1512237.

Baraka, Amiri. "Jazz and the White Critic." In *Black Music*, 15-26. New York: AkashiClassics, 2010.

Barlow, William. "Black Music on Radio During the Jazz Age." *African American Review* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1995). 325-328. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3042311.

Belford, Kevin. "More History of the Palladium/St Louis Club Plantation," *Devil at the Confluence* (blog), July 19, 2011. https://devilattheconfluence.blogspot.com/2011/07/more-history-of-palladium-st-louis-club.html.

——. *Devil at the Confluence: The Pre-war Blues Music of Saint Louis Missouri*. Virginia Publishing, 2009.

Bernardo, Joseph. "Negro Actors Guild of America (1937-)." *BlackPast.org*. December 30, 2008. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/negro-actors-guild-america/.

Bernhardt, Clyde E. B. and Harris, Sheldon. "Luis Russell's Orchestra, 1944." In *I Remember: 80 Years of Black Entertainment Big Bands, and the Blues*, 163-168. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16ptn8w.

Bettis, Laurel. "Tough on Black Asses: Segregation Ideology in the Early American Jazz Industry." *Historical Perspectives: Santa Clara University Undergraduate Journal of History, Series II*: Vol. 17, (2012): 107-133. http://scholarcommons.scu.edu/historical-perspectives/vol17/iss1/11.

Betz, Kelsey Davis. "Mound Bayou's history a 'magical kingdom residents fight to preserve." *Mississippi Today*. May 19, 2018. https://mississippitoday.org/2018/05/19/mound-bayous-history-a-magical-kingdom-residents-fight-to-preserve/.

Bronner, Simon J., ed. "Levee Life: Haunts and Pastimes of the Roustabouts." In *Lafcadio Hearn's America: Ethnographic Sketches and Editorials*, 37-53. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130j5fq.

Brown, Jayna. *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g988s.

Cambria, N. et al. *Segregation in St. Louis: Dismantling the Divide*. St Louis: Washington University in St. Louis, 2018. https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.wustl.edu/dist/3/1454/files/2018/06/Segregation-in-St.-Louis-Dismantling-the-Divide-22ih4vw.pdf.

Carter, Robert. Interview by Dan Havens. Transcript. March 31, 1982. Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Chevan, David. "Riverboat Music from St. Louis and the Streckfus Steamboat Line." *Black Music Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (1989): 153–80. https://doi.org/10.2307/779421.

Combs, Paul. "The Architect of Bop," In *Dameronia: The Life and Music of Tadd Dameron*, 41-65. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.22963.9.

Cooperman, Jeannette. "The story of segregation in St. Louis." October 17, 2014. *St. Louis.* https://www.stlmag.com/news/the-color-line-race-in-st.-louis/.

Cotter, John Cleophus, "The Negro in Music in Saint Louis." Master's thesis, Washington University, 1959. *Arts & Sciences Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (2025). https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/art_sci_etds/2025.

"Covenant Blue Grand Center." *StLouis-MO.gov.* https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/live-work/community/neighborhoods/covenant-blu-grand-center/.

Cundiff, Ashley B. "River Town Brothel Culture: Sex Worker Mobility, Policing, and Agency, 1870 to 1940." *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* (Order No. 10189555), 2016. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/river-town-brothel-culture-sex-worker-mobility/docview/2305839920/se-2.

Cunningham, Lyn Driggs and Jones, Jimmy. *Sweet, hot, and blue: St. Louis' Musical Heritage*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1989.

Davis, Miles and Troupe, Quincy. *Miles*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990.

Davis, Ronald L. "Early Jazz: Another Look." *Southwest Review* 58, no. 1 (1973): 1–13. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43468459.

Desloge, Taylor. *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. 111, Issue 2. (January 2017): 124-150. https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/mhr/id/59078/rec/2.

Eberle, Jean Fahey. *Midtown, A Grand Place to Be!* St. Louis: Mercantile Commerce Trust Company, 1980.

English, T. J. *Dangerous Rhythms: Jazz and the Underworld*. New York: HarperCollins, 2022.

Farley, John E. "Race, Not Class: Explaining Racial Housing Segregation in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area, 2000." *Sociological Focus* 38, no. 2 (2005): 133–50. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20832262.

Feldman, Carrie and Grantham, Hannah. "Showstoppers! Putting Chorines Back Under the Spotlight." *Collection Story* (blog), *National Museum of African American History and Culture*, September 24, 2021. https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/showstoppers-0.

Fister, Jeff. *The Days + Nights of the Central West End: A Look Back at the Rebirth of a Great Urban Neighborhood.* St. Louis: Virginia Publishing Company, 2007.

Forest Park Forever. "Vandeventer Place Gates." Forest Park Statues & Monuments, *Forestparkstatues.org*. https://www.forestparkstatues.org/vandeventer-place-gates, accessed October 18, 2023.

Gioia, Ted. *The History of Jazz.* 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Gold, Jeff. *Sittin' In: Jazz Clubs of the 1940s and 1950s.* New York: HarperCollins, 2020.

Gushee, Lawrence. "The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz." *Black Music Research Journal* 22 (2002): 151–74. https://doi.org/10.2307/1519947.

Hannon Teal, Kimberley. "Beyond the Cotton Club: The Persistence of Duke Ellington's Jungle Style." *Jazz Perspectives* 6 (2012, 1-2): 123-149. https://doi.org/10.1080/17494060.2012.721292.

Harl, Joe, Justin Bensley, and Abigail Dairaghi. *Archival Review of the Area of Potential Effects Associated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, St Louis Health Care System, John Cochran Division Complex, City of St. Louis, Missouri*. St. Louis: Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis, Inc. 2021.

"History of Artistic Skating." SkateDance Diagrams and Tools (blog). Accessed September 21, 2023. https://skatedancediagrams.weebly.com/history-of-skating.html.

"History of Ted Drewes Frozen Custard & Christmas Trees." *TedDrewes.com.* http://teddrewes.com/history.

Holt, Glen and Tom Pearson. "St. Louis Streets Index (1994)." St. Louis Public Library. http://rbsc.slpl.org/STL_STREETS_(A-Z).pdf.

Horne, Gerald. *Jazz and Justice: Racism and the Political Economy of the Music.* New York: NYU Press, 2019.

Howland, John. "'The Blues Get Glorified': Harlem Entertainment, Negro Nuances, and Black Symphonic Jazz." *The Musical Quarterly* 90, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter, 2007): 319-370.

Johnson, Eddie. Interview by Deane Wiley. Transcript. 1982. Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Johnson, Eddie, Elijah Shaw, Chick Finney, and Eddie Randle. Interview by Irene Cortinovis. August 20, 1971. Transcript. Oral History Collection, 1971-1995 (S0829). The State Historical Society of Missouri, Missouri.

Johnson, Howard Eugene and Wendy Johnson. "Harlem and the Cotton Club," *A Dancer in the Revolution: Stretch Johnson, Harlem Communist at the Cotton Club,* 26-36. Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2014. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0102.7.

Johnson, Sydney. "How the USO Served a Racially Segregated Military Throughout World War II." *USO.org*. February 7, 2022. https://www.uso.org/stories/3001-how-the-uso-served-a-racially-segregated-military-throughout-world-war-ii.

Judd, Dennis R. "The Role of Governmental Policies in Promoting Residential Segregation in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area." *The Journal of Negro Education* 66, no. 3 (1997): 214–40. https://doi.org/10.2307/2967162.

Kenney, William Howland. *Jazz on the River.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Kofsky, Frank. "The Jazz Tradition: Black Music and its White Critics," *Journal of Black Studies* 1, no. 4, (1971): 403-33. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2783818.

"LIST OF PERFORMERS AT CLUB PLANTATION," The Show Down vol. 1 no. 1 , Nov. 1935. The Laura Cathrell Show-Down Magazine Collection. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of

African American History and Culture. 2013.46.25.73. http://n2t.net/ark:/65665/fd511aed399-24f8-4349-9bdf-d8fafc3464de.

Lili. “Hortense Allen Jordan,” *the pearl* (blog). February 10, 2010.

Locke, Alain. “Enter the New Negro,” *Survey Graphic*, Volume LIII, no. 11 (March 1925) reprinted in *The Making of African American Identity*: *Vol. III, 1917-1968*, National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox, 2007.

Mahar, William J. *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Malcolm, Douglas. "'Myriad Subtleties:' Subverting Racism through Irony in the Music of Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie.” *Black Music Research Journal* 35, No. 2 (Fall 2015): 185-227. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/blacmusiresej.35.2.0185.

McCarthy, Jack. “From The Vault: Hortense Allen Dancers at Robin Hood Dell.” *theMann* (blog). March 5, 2021. https://manncenter.org/vault/coppertone.

Meyer, Raymond F., *Backwoods Jazz in the Twenties*. Marble Hill, MO: Stewart Printing & Publishing Company, 1989.

Morris, Ronald L. *Wait Until Dark: Jazz and the Underworld, 1880-1940.* Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980. https://archive.org/details/waituntildarkjaz0000rona/mode/2up.

Murray, Florence. “USO Camp Shows.” In *The Negro Handbook, 1946-1947*, 256-258. New York: Current Books, Incorporated, 1947.

National Museum of Roller Skating. “The History of Inline Skating.” Accessed September 21, 2023. https://www.rollerskatingmuseum.org/inline-skating.

“Neighborhoods of St. Louis.” *StLouis-MO.gov.* https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/live-work/community/neighborhoods/.

Nolen, Rose M. *Hoecakes, Hambone, and All That Jazz: African American Traditions in Missouri*. Columbia: University of Missouri, 2003.

Ogren, Kathy J. *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Olson, Bruce. *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race, Vol. 1*. Lulu Publishing Services, 2016.

——. *That St. Louis Thing: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race, Vol. 2*. Lulu Publishing Services, 2016.

Osofsky, Gilbert. “Symbols of the Jazz Age: The New Negro and Harlem Discovered.” *American Quarterly* 17, no. 2, Part 1 (Summer, 1965): 229-238. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2711356.

Ostendorf, Berndt. “Minstrelsy & Early Jazz.” *The Massachusetts Review* 20, no. 3 (1979): 574–602. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088987.

Ostransky, Leroy. “Early Jazz.” *Music Educators Journal* 64, no. 6 (1978): 34–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/3395393.

Otten, Liam. “Rediscovering the Black Artists’ Group.” February 2, 2006. *The Source*, Washington University in St. Louis. https://source.wustl.edu/2006/02/rediscovering-the-black-artists-group/.

Ottenheimer, Harriet. “The Blues Tradition in St. Louis.” *Black Music Research Journal*, 9, no. 2 (1989): 135–51. https://doi.org/10.2307/779420.

Owsley, Dennis C. *City of Gabriels: The History of Jazz in St. Louis, 1895-1973*. St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2006.

——. *St. Louis Jazz: A History*. Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2019.

Pillars, Hayes. Interview by Samuel Floyed. March 2, 1977. Recording. Jazz Oral History Project, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, New Jersey.

——. Interview by unknown. Transcript. 1981. Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Proetz, Arthur. Photographer, various, ca. 1945-ca. 1955. Arthur W. Proetz Photograph Collection, 1890-1963 (S0537). Saint Louis Manuscript Collection, The State Historical Society of Missouri.

Reed, Leonard. Interview by Fred Strickler. ca. 1997. Transcript. Oral History Project, Dance Collection, New York Public Library.

“Roller Skating As An Indoor Exercise.” *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 2762, (1913): 1505–06. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25308108.

Saine, K. B. Military Minstrelsy in Text and Performance, *Theatre Symposium* 14, (2006): 65-76.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Saint Louis, Independent City, Missouri. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 5, 1909. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn04858_008/.

Saunders, Vertna. Interview by Dan Havens. Transcript. April 5, 1982. Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Smith, Virginia Whatley. “The Harlem Renaissance and its Blue-Jazz Traditions: Harlem and its Places of Entertainment.” *Obsidian II* 11, No. 1/2 (Spring-Summer, Fall-Winter, 1996): 21-60. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44502721.

Tennant, Amie. “Radio and Music in the 1920s United States.” June 25, 2020. *FamilySearch Blog*.

Terry, Clark and Gwen. *Clark: The Autobiography of Clark Terry*. 1st ed. Oakland: University of California Press, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnb82.

Terry, Ruth. “The History Behind the Roller Skating Trend.” *JSTOR Daily*, September 7, 2020, https://daily.jstor.org/the-history-behind-the-roller-skating-trend/.

“The History of Inline Skating.” National Museum of Roller Skating. Accessed September 21, 2023. https://www.rollerskatingmuseum.org/inline-skating.

“The History of Speed Skating.” National Museum of Roller Skating. *Rollerskatingmuseum.org.* Accessed September 21, 2023. https://www.rollerskatingmuseum.org/speed-skating.

The Show-Down, Show-Down Publishing Co., 1935. The Laura Cathrell Show-Down Magazine Collection. 2013.46.25.77. Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. National Museum of African American History and Culture Collection.

Thompson, Clive. “How the Phonograph Changed Music Forever.” January 2016, *Smithsonian Magazine* (website). https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/phonograph-changed-music-forever-180957677/.

Toft, Caroline Hewes. “Midtown Historic District.” National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1978.

Tucker, Sherrie. *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s*. North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000.

“Vandeventer Neighborhood.” *StLouis-MO.gov*. https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/live-work/community/neighborhoods/vandeventer/.

Vincent, Ted. “The Window of Opportunity.” *The Black Scholar* 22, no. 4 (1992): 12-13. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41069901.

Whiteley, Jason D. “City of St. Louis – Neighborhood Population & Demographics Census 2020 P.L. 94-171 Redistricting Data Release.” Research Department, City of St. Louis Planning & Urban Design Agency.

Yanow, Scott. "Sedalia and St. Louis: Ragtime." In *Jazz*: *A Regional Exploration*, 1-5, Greenwood Guides to American Roots Music. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005. *Gale eBooks*. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2885500010/GVRL?u=tulane&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=8987ec38.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Oral Histories

Carter, Robert. Interview by Dan Havens. Transcript. March 31, 1982. Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Johnson, Eddie. Interview by Deane Wiley. Transcript. 1982. Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Johnson, Eddie, Elijah Shaw, Chick Finney, and Eddie Randle. Interview by Irene Cortinovis. August 20, 1971. Transcript. Oral History Collection, 1971-1995 (S0829). The State Historical Society of Missouri, Missouri.

Pillars, Hayes. Interview by Samuel Floyed. March 2, 1977. Recording. Jazz Oral History Project, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, New Jersey.

Pillars, Hayes. Interview by unknown. Transcript. 1981. Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Reed, Leonard. Interview by Fred Strickler. ca. 1997. Transcript. Oral History Project, Dance Collection, New York Public Library.

Saunders, Vertna. Interview by Dan Havens. Transcript. April 5, 1982. Oral Histories at National Ragtime and Jazz Archive in Lovejoy Library, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Appendix B: Identified Roller-Skating Rinks St. Louis, 1930-1959

Although the Palladium was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: *Ethnic Heritage*, the history of the building as a roller-skating rink identifies St. Louis as a city of skating enthusiasts in the early twentieth century. This report is not a comprehensive study of eastern Missouri's skating history; however, some former roller rinks remain in St. Louis and may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: *Entertainment/Recreation*. The property would have to retain sufficient integrity of materials and design to be eligible including the large, open expanse of floor that once served as the rink.

Eligibility under *Entertainment/Recreation* does not preclude eligibility under other criteria, such as architecture, association with an influential person, or commerce. Given the broad floorspace, many rinks appear to have been adapted to other uses, thereby opening additional potential for National Register designation. Any and all areas of significance require research beyond the scope of this report.

The following list was compiled using St. Louis city directories, newspaper articles, and advertisements published between 1881 and 1950. Additional venues may have been in operation but not broadly advertised.

Name	Address	Extant?	Additional Information
Chouteau Roller Rink	1435 Chouteau Avenue	☐	1930s-40s
Cinderella Palace	2731-39 Cherokee Street	☒	Constructed 1913, converted to theater 1915. Contributing resource to the Gravois Jefferson Streetcar Subdivision Historic District. In City's Cherokee-Lemp Brewery Historic District
Crescent Roller Rink	3220 Olive Street	☐	1905
Crystal Roller Rink	3411 Cook Avenue	☐	Venue segregated for at least a portion of its history Malcolm X spoke at the venue in April 1963
Roller Rink	Delmar Gardens	☐	At least 1906 - 1912
Eclipse Roller Skating Rink	Uhrig's Cave, West End	☐	1899
Exposition Roller Rink	No address, possibly outside city limits	☐	1885, 11,800sq ft floor, featured "the Prismatic Fountain"
Exposition Roller Rink	Corner of 13th & Olive Streets	☐	December 1905 – September 1906
Garrison Hall Rink	3302 Easton Avenue	☐	1895

Name	Address	Extant?	Additional Information
Globe Rink	Broadway & Chouteau Avenue	☐	1886
Jai Alai Roller Skating Rink	Corner of DeBaliviere & Kingsbury Boulevard	☐	Constructed in 1904 for the Olympics, first used for skating in 1905, opened to the public in 1910, demolished in the 1960s[605]
Lorelei Roller Rink	4525 Olive Street	☒	Building held a rink in colder months and a pool in warmer ones. Today used as a Masonic hall. Identified as a location on the Tennessee Williams Tour and on the LGBTQ St. Louis website. Located within the boundaries of the Central West End (local) Historic District.
Natatorium Roller Skating Rink (also Star Roller Rink, also Creamer Roller Rink)	19th & Pine Streets	☐	1881 Natatorium Roller Skating Rink, 1885 Star Roller Rink, later Creamer Roller Skating Rink 1899
Palladium Roller Rink	3626 Morgan	☐	
Sans Souci Roller Skating Academy	1803 Park Avenue	☐	George W. Peter was a partner in the Sans Souci and Rodney Peter was manager.
Union Roller Rink	NW corner 13th & Cass Avenue	☐	1885-1886

[605] "St. Louis has a long history in sport of speedskating thanks to its athletes, coaches," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 17, 2008.

Appendix C: Identified Music Venues of Midtown St. Louis, 1930-1959

Nightclubs may be eligible for a National Register nomination under multiple criteria. If a nightclub operated successfully for a period of time, it could be eligible under Criterion A: *Entertainment/Recreation* as a significant entertainment destination that showcased famous artists and performers. Alternately, it could be nominated under *Performing Arts* if a nightclub was associated with the formation of a significant musical style or dance trend, such as being the "birthplace" of a dance that gained national popularity. A property also may be significant for its *Ethnic Heritage* if the nightclub had been owned by, managed by, or staffed by a specific ethnic group, or for a specific audience. This could speak to the history of segregation (such as the case with Club Plantation in the Palladium building), shared spaces, the Civil Rights movement, etc. The property would have to retain significant integrity of materials and design to be eligible, including the stage, dance floor, orchestra pit, or other defining feature for that specific club.

Under Criterion B, a nightclub may be eligible if a significant figure in entertainment was associated with the building. For example, where a famous musician, composer, or dancer first started in the entertainment industry. Club owners and music producers also made significant contributions to developing and supporting the entertainment industry in St. Louis and could also be important on a local level.

Under Criterion C, a nightclub may also be eligible as an example of architecture. Some clubs would have been purpose built with eye-catching details and prominent features such as grand entrances and highly decorative exteriors. Speakeasies would have more subtle features and often hidden entrances. The architecture would have to retain significant integrity of design and materials pertinent to the use of the building while utilized as a nightclub to be eligible.

Row 10 identified night clubs operating in St. Louis between 1920 and 1950. Row 10 utilized newspapers, city directories, and advertisements to create a data set of the clubs, including when the club was operational, whether the club building is still extant, and any further information relevant to the club, such as whether it advertised to Black audiences or not or other notable information about the venue or building.

The following list was compiled using St. Louis city directories, newspaper articles, and advertisements published between 1920 and 1950 to identify nightclubs operating in St. Louis.

Name	Address	Extant?	Additional Information
Hotel Chase	Kingshighway & Lindell Boulevard (212 Kingshighway Boulevard)	☒	Designated room in hotel; advertised as St. Louis' first nightclub. Now The Royal Sonesta Chase Park Plaza St. Louis
Ben Garavelli's Terrace Garden	Olive Street, east of Grand (3561 Olive Street)	☐	
Catalina Island Saturday Club	11th & Locust, City Club Building	☒	Hotel Missouri Auditorium, built as DeSoto Hotel in 1923. Listed on National Register.

Name	Address	Extant?	Additional Information
Tent Nite Club	1122 Washington Avenue	☒	
Ochs Nite Club	6191 Maple Avenue	☒	Also known as Alamo Nite Club
German Nite Club	110 North 8th Street, rear	☐	
Momart Nite Club	4916A Delmar Boulevard	☐	
Wedge Night Club	3516 Olive Street	☐	
Club Paradise	4111 Olive Street	☐	
Bismarck Night Club	410 North 12th Street	☐	
Plantation Nite Club	911 North Vandeventer Avenue	☐	Also known as Club Plantation
Samovar Night Club		☐	
Club Plantation	3617 Delmar Boulevard	☐	Converted from Palladium skating rink
Club Riviera	4460 Delmar Boulevard	☐	Stone building constructed in 1908, designed by George H. Kennerly and built by contractors W.J. Hogan & L.G. Miller. First use as a dance academy and ballroom, included a bowling alley, retail stores, and apartments.
Castle Ballroom	Olive at 29th St (2839 Olive Street)	☐	
Tune Town	Olive, East of Grand (3517 Olive Street)	☐	
Club 49	16 North Jefferson Avenue	☐	Black nightclub
Carioca Ballroom	Sarah St & Finney Avenue	☐	Black nightclub
West End Waiters Club	1034 North Vandeventer	☐	Black club
Club Paradise	930A North Sarah Street	☐	Black nightclub?
Circus Snack Bar	4900 West Pine Boulevard	☒	Forest Park Hotel, built 1923. Listed on National Register.
Claridge Club	18th & Locust (1800 Locust Street)	☐	Hotel Claridge
Club Casino	5355 Wilson Avenue	☐	Not sure if same building
Club Wind-Up	708 North Kingshighway	☐	
Club Shangri-La	6600 Chippewa	☐	

Name	Address	Extant?	Additional Information
Club Silver Star	9025 South Broadway	☐	Not sure if same building
Crystal Terrace Room	Kingshighway & Maryland	☐	Park Plaza Hotel, basement
Merry-Go-Round Night Club	Kingshighway & Maryland	☐	Park Plaza Hotel
Flamingo Room	Maryland & Euclid	☐	Fairmont Hotel
400 Club	3631 Grandel Square	☐	
Kings-Way Crown Room	Kingshighway & West Pine	☐	Hotel Kings-Way, originally Buckingham Hotel. Demo'd as Ambassador Hotel in 1970's.
Top O' The Town	5604 Delmar Boulevard	☒	
Wonder Bar	Delmar at Euclid (4903 Delmar)	☐	Roosevelt Hotel, Art Deco Bar
Circle Bar	8th & Pine (110 or 112 North 8th Street)	☐	

Appendix D: Biographies of Individuals Living Near Palladium in 1950

Biographies of individuals of note who lived within the immediate area surrounding the Palladium building in the 1950 United States Federal Census. Their stories provide insight on the living conditions, geographical settlement, and cultural and socioeconomic status of the people who resided in the area.

Elizabeth Johnson

Elizabeth Johnson lived at 3833 Delmar Blvd, 3rd floor rear, with her husband Willie Johnson. Elizabeth was Hawaiian and the proprietor of a retail radio shop. Willie was a 35-year-old Black man from Mississippi and worked as an independent operator as a truck hauler. 3833 Delmar was a multi-family apartment building or larger home cut into at least seven separate units. All other apartments enumerated on the 1950 census were occupied by African Americans. Elizabeth was 20 and had been born in Honolulu, Hawaii. She was a naturalized citizen of the United States as Hawaii did not become a state until 1959. She had worked 32 hours the previous week at her radio shop.

Wing Huie, Chong Shing, Hue Gouey Tung, and Harry Lum

Wing Huie lived at 910 Grand Avenue which appeared to be between the YMCA building at 900-908 Grand and Hotel Granville at 914 Grand. No one else was enumerated at that address. Wing was a 54-year-old man born in China and a naturalized citizen. The 1950 census did not ask for people's immigration date. He had never married and was the proprietor of a "Chinese Café". He reported working 40 hours the week prior to the census.[606]

Living just around the corner on Franklin Avenue were three cooks for a "Chinese Café", likely Huie's establishment. The three cooks lodged with Edward and Nellie Harman at 3511 Franklin. The home at 3511 Franklin appeared to be a single-family home. The Hartmans were an older White couple with no other source of income reported. One cook was named Chong Shing (45), who was born in California and never married. He reported working 36 hours the previous week. Hue Gouey Tung (50), also a cook, was born in China, stated that he was married, and reported working 48 hours. The third cook was Harry Lum (45), a widower who was born in China and reported working 48 hours the prior week. All three men were listed as naturalized citizens despite Chong Shing listed as born in California.[607]

Dr. Oreba T. Bryant Griffin

On the 1950 census, a woman was enumerated as Arbes T. Griffin, lodging at 3437 Delmar in the rear apartment. Her occupation was listed as a physician at a hospital.[608] However, this was in fact Dr. Oreba Tory Bryant, the first Black female dentist in St. Louis. Dr. Bryant was married to Christopher Griffin.

---

[606] Wing Huie entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1950, St. Louis, Missouri, District 1276, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[607] Wing Huie entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1950, St. Louis, Missouri, District 1276, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[608] "Arbes" Griffin entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1950, St. Louis, Missouri, District 1281, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

Dr. Bryant was born in June 1892 in Arkansas. In the 1900 census her family was living in Muskogee, Oklahoma, at which time it was Creek Nation in "Indian Territory".[609] Her father Pearson Bryant was a 35-year-old Black school teacher and her mother, Eula Braynt, a 32-year-old housewife. Oreba was 7 at the time of the census and was attending school. She had two younger siblings, bother Roscoe C., 3, and Ola M., 1.[610]

In 1902, Eula had applied for Mississippi Choctaw Indian registration for herself as 1/8, and her three children, including Oreba, as 1/16 "blood". Eula entered under "Tribal Enrollment of Parents" her father Mose Collins as a non-tribal citizen and mother, Lizzie Collins, as "Claims Choc" [claims Choctaw]. As Eula and children were all enumerated as Black on the 1900 census, it is likely that Mose Collins was Black and Lizzie was at least partially Black with one Native American grandparent. However, the registration form was stamped "Refused" and the registration was rejected by the Secretary of the Interior on October 21, 1902.[611]

In 1910, the family was still living in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Pearson was listed in the 1910 census as a "Teamster" driving his own team. Pearson and Eula listed five living children. Joining Oreba, Roscoe, and Ola May were daughters Odessa A. (6) and Adelea J. (3).[612] In the 1920 census, the family was joined by Eula's widowed mother Elizabeth Collins. Pearson, 53, was listed as a laborer, but also as an owner of the family home. All the children except for Oreba were listed as attending school. Oreba, however, had completed school and was listed as a dentist in a laboratory at only 26 years old.[613]

The *Dallas Express* newspaper published a poem in May 1920 regarding Oreba and her studies:

> A Woman of Interest
>
> Last Year
>
> At Oklahoma City
>
> The capitol of the "Boomer State"
>
> In the warm month of July
>
> The State Medical Examinations were in progress
>
> In the first row with pen in hand and knitted brow
>
> Sat Oreba T. Bryant.
>
> Reared in the "Home of the Red Man"
>
> Her diploma bore the golden seal of Meharry.
>
> Three days thus she sat, writing constantly.

[609] Oklahoma became a state in November 1907.
[610] Pearson Bryant entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1900, Muskogee, Creek Nation, Indian Territory, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[611] Eula Bryant, Mississippi Choctaw Indian Registration, Oklahoma and Indian Territory, U.S., Dawes Census Cards for Five Civilized Tribes, 1898-1914, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[612] Pearson Bryant entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1910, Porter Township, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[613] Pearson Bryant entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1920, Muskogee, Oklahoma, [database on-line],Ancestry.com.

Theory well she knew of the science of Dentistry

In practice she was skilled in the science of Surgery.

None save her had black skin.

"Pale Faces" gazed in wonderment at Oreba's ease.

Then the test was over

And Oreba returned to her busy Muskogee

In the dear, old "Boomer State."

Then came a letter saying she had passed

With HONORS.

And she was glad!

Just twenty-six years old

The first one of her sex

To make this record in her state.

She laughed and said:

"Dentistry is the only work I have ever done

That seems to me like play. I love it so"

Hasn't Oreba a wonderful future?

We think so. – Competitor.[614]

1920 was also the year of Dr. Bryant's first marriage to Robert H. Price, 34, of Kansas City, Missouri. They were married by a Justice of the Peace in Okmulgee, Oklahoma with Eula as a witness. The marriage did not last long but did produce a daughter, Yvonne Everette Price, who was born in Chicago, Illinois. By 1929, Dr. Bryant was living in St. Louis with a dental practice of her own at 112 ½ North Jefferson Avenue. In June 1929 Dr. Bryant entered her second marriage. She was married to Christopher Griffin in Sedalia, Missouri by a probate judge. Both Oreba and Christopher's residence was listed as St. Louis.

Christopher Griffin was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1887. In the 1910 census, Christopher was living with his (presumably first) wife, Jennie Griffin, at 1535 North 16th Street in St. Louis with his occupation as porter at a dentist's office. They had been married for 3 years in 1910.[615] However, by his World War I draft registration card in 1917, he stated he was employed as a "Dentist Mechanic" by Dr. M. C. Hutchinson in St. Louis. He reported that he was divorced and that both his father and his child were dependent upon him at the time.[616]

[614] *Dallas Express* (Dallas, Texas), May 1930.
[615] Christopher Griffin entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1910, St. Louis, Missouri, District 55, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[616] Christopher Griffin, U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

In 1933 Dr. Bryant advertised that her practice, the "No-Hurt Dentist", was moving to Jefferson and Morgan Street, which became Jefferson and Delmar.[617] Later advertisements in 1933 at Jefferson and Delmar advertise her service as "Rich man dentist; poor man price".[618] In addition to her dental practice, Dr. Bryant was also active in the community. In 1935 she was acting chairman for a driving school for Black women under the auspices of the St. Louis Safety Council, with classes held at the (segregated) Y.M.C.A. at 2846 Pine Street. The class was held by William F. Yorger, Public Safety Supervisor, for 4 consecutive Wednesday evenings "for instruction on traffic laws, hill climbing, use of clutch and brake, and car maintenance."[619] Dr. Bryant also served as a Republican election clerk for Precinct 12 for several years.[620] Through the 1930's her address was listed as 803 North Jefferson.

Dr. Oreba Bryant's census records were not found for 1930 or 1940. Christopher was recorded in the 1940 census in St. Louis at 803 Jefferson Avenue.[621] In 1940, Oreba's daughter Yvonne was living in Chicago with Oreba's mother Eula and sister Ola May, now married to George C. Willis, a Black pharmacist. Yvonne was 19 and had already completed 2 years of college.[622] By 1946, Yvonne was living in Detroit, Michigan, working as a teacher, and had married veteran Clarence Boyd. A photo of a wedding announcement uploaded by a user of *Ancestry.com* stated that Yvonne graduated from Northwestern University and Clarence was an alum of Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, and served in the Coast Guard as a first-class petty officer. [623] He was to join that term the Meharry Dental College, which was where Dr. Bryant trained.

Meharry College is now known as Meharry Medical College. It is located in Nashville, Tennessee and is one of the oldest Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) dedicated to educating Black physicians, dentists and researchers. It was founded in 1876 as the Medical Department of Central Tennessee College. It was the first medical school in the southern United States for Black students.[624] Dr. Bryant was an active alumna of the college and in 1945 served as secretary for a new health program endorsed by Meharry Alumni and proposed by the Missouri Social Hygiene Association. The program was to help fight venereal diseases in St. Louis.[625]

In 1950, Christopher and Oreba Griffin were living at 3437 Delmar near the Palladium Building. Christopher did not list an occupation on the 1950 census but in 1940 he stated he was a "Dental mechanic" for a private practice. In a holiday greeting printed in December 1951 in the *St. Louis Argus*, "Drs. O. T. Bryant and C. E. Griffin" wished their patrons a merry Christmas and cheery New Year.[626] This proved problematic as Christopher was not a doctor and did not hold a medical license. In 1955 Christopher was fined $150 and sentenced to six months in the "Workhouse" after he was found guilty of practicing dentistry without a license. Patient Calvin Matthews of 2800 Gamble Street filed a complaint charging that Griffin had made a partial plate that failed and Griffin refused to refund his money.

---

[617] *St. Louis Argus*, March 24, 1933.
[618] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 19, 1933.
[619] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 17, 1935.
[620] *St. Louis Star and Times*, September 5, 1936.
[621] Christopher Griffin entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1940, St. Louis, Missouri, District 104, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[622] Eula Bryant entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1940, Chicago, Illinois, District 206, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[623] Undated newspaper clipping from unknown newspaper, uploaded to Ancestry.com family tree by user Roscoe C. Bryant. Oreba's younger brother was named Roscoe Bryant so this may be his descendant.
[624] "About Us", Meharry Medical College website, https://home.mmc.edu/about/.
[625] *St. Louis Argus*, March 16, 1945.
[626] *St. Louis Argus*, December 28, 1951.

> At the trial Griffin denied he examined the man's teeth prior to making the plate. He said his wife, Dr. Oreba Bryant Griffin, a practicing dentist, made the examination.
>
> When jurors reported they were unable to agree on the extent of punishment for Griffin, Judge Louis Comeford set the sentence.
>
> Police records show that Griffin has been arrested previously on a similar charge. In June 1949, a permanent injunction restraining the technician from practicing dentistry was issued in circuit court on complaint of the Missouri Dental Board.[627]

That same year, Dr. Bryant moved her practice from an office to her and Griffin's home at 3437 Delmar.[628]

Christopher died at age 85 in 1972 and had a veteran's burial at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery.[629] Around the time of his death, Dr. Bryant retired. Dr. Oreba T. Bryant Griffin died at the age of 90 in 1983. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* stated that she first established her St. Louis practice in 1923 as the first Black female dentist in the city after previously setting up practice in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She was buried next to Christopher in the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. She was survived by her daughter Yvonne Boyd.[630] Yvonne died in Detroit in 2000 at the age of 79.[631]

Nathan H. Dixon

The 1950 census enumerated Nathan Dixon ("Dixson"), 42, and family, all African American, living at 3735 Windsor Place. His occupation was listed as the principal of a city elementary school. His wife Louise, 36, was a housewife. They had two children, Nathan, 9, and Mary, 7.[632] Nathan, Sr., was a native of St. Louis and one of 13 children born to Frank T. and Gertrude Bass Dixon, who lived at 4160 West Belle Place in a single family, three-story home they owned. Frank and Gertrude were celebrated in St. Louis as modest parents who put all 13 children through college on a postal clerk's salary.[633]

Both Frank Thomas Dixon and Gertrude M. Bass graduated from Sumner High School in 1894[634] and 1895,[635] respectively. Sumner was the first Black public high school in St. Louis, and west of the Mississippi. In December the following year, 1896, Frank and Gertrude were married.[636] In April 1900 Frank was appointed a Post Office Clerk by Postmaster Baumhoff after approval of appointments from Washington.[637] In July 1904 Frank and Gertrude purchased a 25-foot-wide lot on Rutger Street.[638] This was likely 706 Rutger Street as it was their address at the time of the 1910 federal census. In 1910 the family was already large with three daughters and five sons. Their children were: Irma, 12; Melba, 11; Frank Jr., 9; Harriet, 7; William, 5; James, 3; Nathan, 2; and Walter, 9 months. They were also caring for 9-year-old Hattie Sage who was listed as an "Uncle". The entire family, including Hattie, are listed as Mulatto. The

---

[627] *St. Louis Argus*, January 14, 1955.
[628] *St. Louis Argus*, February 4, 1955.
[629] Christopher Griffin, FindAGrave.com memorial.
[630] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 15, 1983.
[631] Yvonne Price, U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[632] Nathan "Dixson" entry, U.S. Federal Census, 1950, St. Louis, Missouri, District 1212, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[633] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 22, 1961.
[634] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 18, 1894.
[635] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 17, 1895.
[636] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 1, 1896.
[637] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 4, 1900.
[638] *St. Louis Republic*, July 26, 1904.

four oldest children were listed attending school.[639] By 1917, Frank and Gertrude had four more children: Mary, Bass, Gertrude, and Francis. The were living at the single-family home that became the family home at 4160 West Belle Place when they had their 12th child.[640]

At least one of the sons fought in the first World War. Frank, Jr. was a First Lieutenant in the 370th Infantry (the former 8th Illinois) and served overseas. Sister Irma was active with the Red Cross and gave a benefit dance at the family home to assist her 72 pupils to become members of the organization.[641]

The 1920 census saw the addition of one-year old daughter Leanora. Frank was listed as a Postal Clerk. Again, the entire household are enumerated as Mulatto.[642] In 1924, he hosted the Inter-Collegiate Club of St. Louis for a "smoker".[643] The Inter-Collegiate Club had been founded to support Black college students and their families, certainly an issue dear to his and Gertrude's hearts.

For the 1930 census, the family home at 4160 West Belle Place was valued at $8,060. The children were enumerated as follows: Melba P. (ab), 31, public school teacher; Frank T. Jr. (ab), 29, divorced, Insurance agent; Ruth H. Smith, 26, married, Social Worker Provident Association; William T. (ab), 25; James J. (ab), 23; Nathan H. (ab), 22; Walter L (ab), 20; Mary A. (ab), 18; Bass (ab), 17; Gertrude N., 14; Frances O., 13; and Leonora L., 11. They also listed Frank T. Dixon, grandson, 7, at the home. James through Frank III were listed as attending school.[644]

In 1934, Nathan was one of 25 Civil Works Administration (CWA) recreation workers reassigned by the City Recreation Department to the new Public Works Administration (PWA) program upon the dissolution of the CWA. Nathan was assigned to the Pine Street YMCA.[645] In June 1938, Nathan married Louise Ida Myers, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Myers. Louise grew up in St. Louis and graduated from Vashon high school. She received a Bachelor of Arts from Hillsdale College in Michigan and a Bachelor of Music from Northwestern in Evanston. Nathan, like his parents, was a graduate of Sumner High School and received a bachelor's in psychology from the University of Iowa. He was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi and the Gaylord social club.[646] At the time of his marriage, he was teaching at the Bellefountaine Farms in Florissant, Missouri, a work farm institution for boys opened by the city of St. Louis in 1920. Though they accepted both White and Black boys, the eight cottages (30 boys each) were segregated. The boys had both schooling and labor each day.[647]

By 1940, Nathan and Louise were living at 4162 Enright Avenue. Nathan was a public-school teacher who had worked 40 hours the previous week. In 1939 he earned $1,400. They rented their home for $30 a month. Both Nathan and Louise, 26, were listed as having completed 4 years of college. Louise was not listed with an occupation outside the home.[648] That was the same year his father retired from the Post Office as senior clerk in the Mailing Division, with 42 total years of service to the agency.[649] Nathan filled out his WWII draft registration in October 1940, before the United States entered the war. He was 32,

[639] Frank Dixon, U.S. Federal Census, 1910, St. Louis, Missouri, District 257, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[640] *St. Louis Argus*, January 12, 1917.
[641] *St. Louis Argus*, May 3, 1918.
[642] Frank Dixon, U.S. Federal Census, 1920, St. Louis, Missouri, District 460, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[643] *St. Louis Argus,* August 15, 1924.
[644] Frank Dixon, U.S. Federal Census, 1930, St. Louis, Missouri, District 126, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[645] *St. Louis Argus*, April 13, 1934.
[646] *St. Louis Argus*, May 27, 1938.
[647] Douglas E. Abrams, "A Very Special Place in Life: The History of Juvenile Justice in Missouri", *Missouri Juvenile Justice Association*, 2003, Pages 98 – 107.
[648] Nathan Dixon, U.S. Federal Census, 1940, St. Louis, Missouri, District 572, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[649] *St. Louis Argus*, December 6, 1940.

born on January 17, 1908. He listed his parents' address as his home address but Mrs. Louis Dixon as his next of kin. He stated he worked for the Board of Education at 911 Locust Street. He was described as having a light complexion, black hair, and brown eyes.[650] In the 1944 city directory, Nathan was listed as a teacher for the Board of Education and he and Louise were living at 4340 Labadie Ave (directly inside The Ville).[651]

In August of 1946, the *St. Louis Argus* ran an article, with group photo, of the Dixon family for the occasion of Frank and Gertrude's 50th Wedding Anniversary. The 12 siblings came home to 4160 West Belle Place to witness their parent's vow ceremony followed by a reception for 600. When asked what the secret to the success of the family was, Gertrude responded, "We realized that we couldn't leave them all money so we wanted to give them an education- something that they could not squander." In addition to the reception the extended family and visiting friends also celebrated with a family picnic at Forest Park, an Opera Party, a dinner party, and a dance at Keil Auditorium. The article detailed the children's and some of the grandchildren's educational accomplishments:

- Irma D. Wilson, New York. Graduated from Teachers College and New York University graduate school. Taught history in NYC high schools for past 18 years. Summer of 1946 serving as assistant secretary of Room Registry at Harlem YWCA.
- Melba D. Smith, Chicago. Graduated from the University of Chicago. Former teacher at Sumner High School in St. Louis and Attucks High in Indianapolis. Teacher of mathematics at Dunbar Trade School in Chicago.
- Ruth D. Smith (Melba & Ruth married brothers), New York. Graduated from University of California and received Fellowship to University of Cincinnati. MA from Atlanta University. Working on doctorate at NY School of Social Work and Graduate School of Social Work at Howard University. District Secretary of Youth Consultation Service under auspices of Episcopal Church, New York.
- Mary Ann D. Jones, St. Louis. Graduate of Fisk University and University of Illinois. Attending graduate school at St. Louis University. Taught in East St. Louis and now connected with Provident Association.
- Gertrude D. Randol, St. Louis. Graduated from Stowe College, and MA from Columbia University. Taught at Vashon High School and Charleston, WVa. Recently associated with Social Security Commission, Division of Public Health and Welfare.
- Frances D. Norris, Chicago. Graduate of Store College, Kroeger School of Music, and American Conservatory of Music, Chicago.
- Lennora D. Briscoe, Philadelphia. Graduate of Stowe Teachers College and graduate school at Columbia University. Former teacher at Curtis School.
- Frank Dixon II, New York. Attended Art Institute of Chicago and Butler University where he participated in track. Artist exclusively for the US Post Office.
- Nathan Dixon, St. Louis. Graduated from University of Iowa before getting an MA from University of Chicago. Taught at Bellefontaine Farms for ten years. Presently teaching at Washington Technical High School and serving as Executive Secretary of Webster Groves YMCA.
- William Dixon, New York. Attended Springfield YMCA College and Talladega College. Working at New York Airport.
- James Dixon (died 1934) graduated from University of Iowa. Taught at high school in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

[650] Nathan Dixon, U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.
[651] Nathan Dixon, City Directory, 1944, St. Louis, Missouri, [database on-line], Ancestry.com.

- Bass Dixon, St. Louis. Graduate of University of Iowa. An upholsterer for Pullman Shops.
- Walter Dixon, St. Louis. Attended University of Kansas. Working as Senior Clerk at Vashon High School.
- Grandson Frank Dixon III, New York. Attending NYU and nationally ranked cross country racer. Competed across the country (which was extensively covered by all St. Louis papers)
- Janet Dixon, New York. Frank II's daughter. At 13 is highly rated musician at National Auditions for 3 consecutive years.
- Ashby Gordon Smith Jr, Chicago. Melba's son. Attends University of Chicago Laboratory High School (for students', staffs' and faculty's' children).
- Melba Smith, New York. Ruth's daughter. Attends Hunter College High School.
- Frederick Wilson Jr. Irma's son. Completed 2 years at Rutgers and currently attending officer's training school. Recommended for West Point by Congressman Powell.
- Florence Wilson. Irma's daughter. Attending NYU.[652]

By 1950 Nathan and Louise were living on Windsor Place near the Palladium building and Nathan was working as an Elementary School Principal. They had three children, Nathan, Jr., 9, James, 8, and Mary, 7. In December 1955 the *Argus* noted that Nathan Jr. was home for the holidays from Thomas Jefferson School.[653] The Thomas Jefferson School was founded south of the city in 1946, patterned after the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. For the first 25 years the school was a boarding and day school for boys grades 9 – 12. In the 1950's it was known as a "feeder school" for Harvard. It became co-educational in 1971.[654]

In 1961, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ran an article about the Dixon family and Frank and Gertrude's success in raising 13 children and putting all 13 through college. The article also ran the photo from the 1946 Golden Anniversary and a new photo of Frank and Gertrude with the 5 children still living in St. Louis. Frank, Sr., was still working as a checkroom attendant at the squash courts of the Racquet Club. The paper also states that in addition to all the undergraduate degrees, there are 5 Masters and one seeking a PhD between the siblings.

> "I started saving for their college educations when the first one was a baby," she related. "I also saved enough to buy this house (at 4160 West Belle place) for cash. We managed that just before the first one [Irma] graduated from high school."….
>
> This system of thrift didn't mean there was no fun.
>
> "We didn't give allowances; we couldn't afford it," said Mrs. Dixon. "But if one of them did something special, brought home a good report card from school, we'd celebrate with a candy pulling. My husband made ice cream every Sunday in a two-gallon freezer. That was cheaper than giving each one a dime or a quarter for sweets. It was saving and still they had the advantages of other children."
>
> "The boys sometimes worked, selling papers or scrubbing steps, if they wanted money to go to a show. The oldest daughter played the piano at silent pictures at the movie house on Whittier and Finney avenue. My foster brother managed the candy booth at the show and he'd take first one girl to work and when she went on to college he'd take the next. Their father would go and pick them up every night."….

[652] *St. Louis Argus*, August 23, 1946.
[653] *St. Louis Argus*, December 16, 1955.
[654] Thomas Jefferson School, St. Louis, Missouri, online profile at www.wikipedia.org.

> Mrs. Dixon contributed to the family income, too. The first Negro woman to belong to the musician's union in St. Louis, she played piano with dance bands- William Flowers' band and one led by her uncle, Jeffrey Bass. In her spare time she played piano at All Saints Episcopal Church which the family still attends.
>
> The children selected the college they wished to attend.
>
> "And because that was long before integration in this area, they had to go away to college and that meant room and board," said Mrs. Dixon. "It's easier on families now."

The 12 living children's situations were updated. Irma was teaching special education students in New York City and her son was a civic engineer for the city of New York. Melba was teaching in a Chicago parochial school. Her son was getting his master's at Roosevelt College in Chicago. Frank Jr.'s daughter had a master's degree, married a hospital technician and was living in Iran. Ruth was working on her doctoral thesis while raising three children. One daughter received an MA from Howard, another graduated from Vassar, and her son graduated from Rutgers before joining the Navy. William was the only single sibling and worked for an airline in New York. Nathan was principal of Riddick School on Evans Avenue in St. Louis. Nathan Jr. was in the Air Force studying Chinese, James was attending Howard University, and Mary was graduating that year from Sumner High School and was to attend Purdue. Walter's middle child was joining her older sister in the gifted classes in elementary school that year. Mary Ann was in graduate school for psychology at St. Louis University while also the social work coordinator and admin asst in the Pupil Welfare and Adjustment division of the Board of Education. Her two sons were both in Los Angeles, one a probation supervisor and the other a recreational worker. Bass was supervising examinations in the postal service after a stint in the Army. Gertrude was one of the first teachers for St. Louis' integrated program. She was now teaching English at McKinley High School. Her son was in the Air Force and her daughter in grade school. Frances took further musical study in Chicago after graduating from Kroeger School of Music and was raising two daughters. Lennora was teaching in Philadelphia and mother of 2. One daughter was playing for church services.

> On their sixtieth wedding anniversary, the senior Dixons took three of the family- Irma, Melba and Mary Ann (chosen because they didn't have small children)- on a two-month tour of seven countries of Europe because Mrs. Dixon had "always wanted to see what other people were like."
>
> She's proud of two things. One is her children's good fortune.
>
> "They all say, 'Mama, don't talk so much about us,' but I can't help it. I think we've had wonderful success but I don't take credit. I see other mothers and fathers whose children didn't turn out as well and it seems to me they were just as good mothers and fathers as we were. I guess part of it is good luck."
>
> "They treat us lovely," says Mrs. Dixon proudly. "They're the nicest children. I tell them they're so nice I wish I had 24 instead of only 12."[655]

On Sunday, October 29, 1961, Frank T. Dixon Sr died at St. Mary's Infirmary after a suffering a stroke at the age of 84. His funeral was at All Saints Episcopal Church and was buried in St. Peter's Cemetery.[656] Gertrude followed him the following year, dying at home on October 10, 1962, at the age of 83.[657] Nathan died at the age of 78 in November 1986. They were living in Olivette, Missouri, and he died at Missouri

[655] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 22, 1961.
[656] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 31, 1961.
[657] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 11, 1962.

Baptist Hospital from complications from Alzheimer's. He retired in 1977 as principal of Clark Elementary School. He had worked over 30 years in the St. Louis public school system. His obituary stated he did post-graduate work at Washington University and at Princeton. In addition to his work with the Pine Street and Webster Groves YMCA's, he had also been a scoutmaster with Boy Scouts of America. His service was at All Saint's Episcopal Church and his burial "private".[658] Louise M. Dixon died at age 79 in 1993, passing away in their home in Olivette. Services were held at All Saints Episcopal Church. Her obituary stated she also taught for many years in the St. Louis Public Schools. Her burial was also "private".[659]

[658] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 30, 1986.
[659] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 26, 1993.

Appendix E: Other St. Louis Buildings by James Sidney Lee, Architect of Palladium

Architect James Sidney Lee is listed as the architect on the Palladium's building permit. Lee was born and educated in St. Louis. He earned his architecture degree but in 1904, at his second wedding, the young widower was described as a "well known civil engineer and draughtsman".[660] In 1908 he was hired as a draughtsman by the city Building Commissioner as assistant concrete engineer in the commission's new inspection division. Henry Rusch had been hired as chief concrete engineer to head the department.[661]

Lee worked for the city for several years before heading out first on his own, advertising his services as an architect specializing in converting existing buildings to earn owners more income.[662] Lee was a practicing Catholic and earned many jobs as architect for local churches, both on his own and as partner with Henry Rusch in their architectural firm that for a few years was joined by Rusch's son Charles Rush.[663]

James Sidney Lee worked consistently throughout his career as a local St. Louis architect. He appears to have been well respected in St. Louis and buildings he designed or co-designed that are still existent and retaining a majority of original materials and design elements should be considered as eligible for National Register nominations under Criterion C for Architecture as examples of popular architectural styles, with local significance.

The following table is a list of buildings readily attributed to Lee, or the firm of Lee & Rush, that are still existent and appear to retain the majority of their original design elements. This is not presumed to be an exhaustive list of Lee's existing work in St. Louis.

Name & Address	Designed By & Date	Individually Listed in National Register of Historic Places?	Notes
4535 Holly Place (Single Family Home)	James S. Lee, 1915	No	Listed as a contributing building in the Local and National Register Holly Place Historic District (St. Louis, MO).
St. Pius V Catholic Church, 3310 South Grand Blvd	James S. Lee, 1916	No	Listed as a contributing building in the City of St. Louis' Tower Grove East Local Historic District and is within the National Register Tower Grove Heights Historic District.
Catholic Church of the Holy Name,	James S. Lee, 1916	No	Within the Certified Local Hyde Park Historic District. Local City Landmark Number 124. The Holy Name Catholic

[660] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 17, 1904.
[661] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 15, 1908.
[662] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 19, 1914.
[663] The Rusch family appears to have anglicized their name to 'Rush' around the time of World War I.

2047 East Grand Blvd			Church closed in 1993. Current name is New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ at the Cathedral.
St. Roch Catholic Church, 6052 Waterman Blvd	Lee & Rush, 1921	No	Located within the Certified Local Skinker- DeBaliviere- Catlin Tract- Parkview Neighborhood Historic District.
Tpheris Israel Synagogue, 6910 Delmar Blvd, University City, MO	Rush, Lee & Rush, 1926	No	Outside both Local and National Historic Districts in University City. Local District terminates at property line. Tpheris Israel moved in the 1960's and sold the building to the Bais Abraham Congregation.

Appendix F: Palladium Tri-Fold Brochure

Attached is the tri-fold brochure for the Palladium produced using information from this report.

HOUSE CHORUS LINE

After the First World War, chorus lines became recognizable parts of grand revues. Both men and women dancers wore elaborate costumes. The chorus lines at the Plantation were comprised of all Black dancers ("Chorines").

The house chorus line usually included sixteen chorines. Prominent chorines at the Club Plantation included: Margaret Adams, Chickie Collins, Bertie Warfield, Laura Cathrell, Claudia Oliver, and Hortense Allen. Several of the women went on to become choreographers for other nightclub revues when Club Plantation shuttered.

Above image: Club Plantation Floor Show, Night Club on Delmar Near Grand, Arthur Witman Collection, State Historical Society of Missouri.

Cover image: Arthur W. Proetz Collection, The State Historical Society of Missouri.

The Palladium was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2013 for its significance as a jazz nightclub. VA demolished the building in 2022 due to its deteriorated condition. This brochure was developed in accordance with

The Programmatic Agreement Among the John Cochran Division of the U.S. Department Of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Regarding Reconfiguration of the John Cochran Division of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System

and

The Amended Memorandum of Agreement Among the John Cochran Division of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Osage Nation, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Officer, and the City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office Regarding the Demolition of the Palladium Component Project of the Reconfiguration of the John Cochran Division of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System

Information provided from "The Palladium Building of St. Louis and Its Role in the St. Louis Music Scene, 1930-1959" April 2025. Report submitted by Row 10 Historic Preservation Solutions, LLC prepared for Rogers, Lovelock, & Fritz, Inc. "RLF" on behalf of the US Army Corps of Engineers Kansas City District and the US Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System - John Cochran Division, St. Louis, Missouri, under direction of the VA Historic Preservation Office.

April 2025

THE PALLADIUM BUILDING of ST. LOUIS

Its role in the St. Louis Jazz Scene 1930 - 1959

The Palladium building in St. Louis was constructed in 1913 just on the south side of Delmar Boulevard. The Palladium building once served the Midtown area of St. Louis as a White-only roller rink and later a nightclub—the Club Plantation—that hosted many well-known jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Dizzie Gillespie.

The intersection of music and cultural histories made the Palladium building an important venue for Black artistry and musical history in St. Louis and allows us to consider the ethnic, cultural, and musical history of segregated Missouri.

HOUSE BAND

The Jeter-Pillars Orchestra was the house band for the Club Plantation for over a decade. Saxophonists James Jeter and Hayes Pillars formed the band and in July of 1934, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra came to St. Louis to play at the Club Plantation. The band played seven nights a week, three shows a day on all days except Sundays. For a time, their shows were broadcast on local radio stations every night.

In 1937, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra recorded several popular songs, "Make Believe," "I'll Always Be In Love With You," "Lazy Rhythm," and "I Like Pie, I Like Cake."

USO SERVICE

In 1945, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra and the Plantation Chorines left to begin their USO Camp Show Tour of military bases. Their travel on the "Red-Hot and Blues Tour" took them to the Phillippine Islands, Japan, and all major cities of the Pacific Theatre of Operations. They were the first Black performers to enter the Emporer's Garden of Royalty in Tokyo.

"To best of our knowledge, they had never had a band—a Black band—to play like we played in St. Louis at that particular time. We played sweet music sweeter, and we played jazz—we played it."

-Hayes Pillars, saxophone

"I enjoyed working at the Plantation. The only thing about it just wasn't a lot of money involved. But we had all the best of working conditions to work under but the finance wasn't as good. But you had a good year 'round job and the place was air-conditioned during that time. And you always had a good crowd."

-George Hudson, trumpet

TIMELINE

1913 The Palladium building is constructed as a Roller Rink in Midtown St. Louis

1933 Louis Armstrong plays a concert at the Palladium Roller Rink, marking the first time Black patrons are allowed to enter the rink

1940 Palladium Roller Rink closes, "Big Tony" Scarpelli leases and renovates the building into Club Plantation nightclub

1944 Ella Fitzgerald plays a stint at the Plantation for three weeks

1945 Club Plantation's house band, the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, begins an international USO tour

1949 After years of increasingly limiting liquor laws, Club Plantation shutters and the building is sold

Club Plantation Floor Show, Night Club on Delmar Near Grand Arthur Witman Collection, State Historical Society of Missouri.

Appendix G: February 2021 Images of the Palladium

Attached is a photo log including images of the Palladium taken in February 2021 by the St. Louis Landmarks Association.

PHOTO LOG

Former Palladium: 3617 Delmar Avenue, St. Louis, St. Louis County, Missouri
Photographer: Katie Graebe, St. Louis Landmarks Association
Date Photographed: February 2, 2021

Photo 01 of 10: Enright Avenue (NE) elevation, camera facing NNW

Photo 02 of 10: Enright Avenue (NE) elevation, camera facing SSE

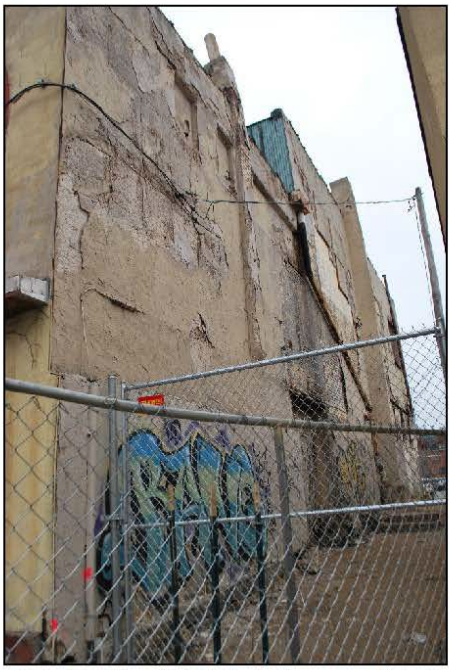


Photo 03 of 10: Side (NW) elevation, camera facing S

Photo 04 of 10: Delmar Boulevard (SW) elevation, camera facing ENE

Photo 05 of 10: Delmar Boulevard (SW) elevation, camera facing NW

Photo 06 of 10: Side (SE) elevation, camera facing N

Photo 07 of 10: Enright Avenue entry, camera facing SW

Photo 08 of 10: Lion detail above Enright Avenue entry, camera facing SW

Photo 09 of 10: Arched bay along Enright Avenue, camera facing SW

Photo 10 of 10: Exposed brickwork along Delmar Boulevard, camera facing NE

architecture + engineering + interiors
4750 New Broad St. | Orlando, FL 32814 | 407.730.8600 | rlfaei.com