

notes precisely as they had been delivered.

Another example of his showmanship was indicated when he proceeded to play *Yankee Doodle* in B Flat with his right hand, *Fisher's Hornpipe* in C Major with his left, sang *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp* in another key; all in their respective tempo and without effort. His owners also invited members of the audience to submit requests for him to play, which he did with ease. To increase his repertory, professionals were hired to play for him.

After the death of Colonel Bethune in 1883, his son took over Tom's management. Upon his death, his widow and new husband, Albert Lerche, became Tom's agent. His last performance was in 1904. At the time of Tom's death in 1908, he had made several fortunes for the Bethune family.

ANTEBELLUM — NORTH

There was a continuing increase in the numbers of free blacks between 1790 and 1860, with roughly fifty per cent, or about 244,035, residing in the North.

Freedom guaranteed little for the black musicians for competition was keen between blacks and whites, and the latter had established themselves as professional musicians in theaters, ensembles, and the like.

After the War of 1812, the formation of black brass bands by returning veterans in major cities created an arena which they could basically monopolize.

Frank Johnson (1792-1846) of Philadelphia was a fiddler, horn player, bugler, bandmaster and orchestra leader and composer who began his career with the organization of the Third Company of Washington Guards (Philadelphia). As player/leader of this black group, his reputation as "one of the best performers on the bugle and French horn in the United States" led him to join Matt Black's Marching Band in 1818.

During the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, his band (which was formed in the 1820's) known as Frank Johnson's Colored Band, became internationally known. It was also regularly employed by white fraternal organizations in his hometown. The band played at dances, in parades, and in concerts.

Johnson's group consisted of woodwinds (flutes, clarinets and bassoons), one or two French horns and percussion instruments (bells, triangles, cymbals etc.). During parades, a drum and fife were added to give the regulars a rest, and strings were added when he was commissioned to perform at dances. He was booked well in advance of the social season, at all of the fashionable resorts along the Eastern Seaboard.

In Richmond, Virginia, he played at the Great Balls for the aristocracy, and no fete was declared a success without his services. At these dances, according to Robert Wain, a writer of the period, no better music was ever heard. Johnson's duties at these dances included being "sole director of all serenades."

inventor-general of cotillions; to which add, a remarkable taste in distorting a sentimental, simple and beautiful song, into a reel, jig or country dance." This improvisational ability reflects Johnson's heritage, and added to his popularity.

His published compositions included a collection of cotillions and marches; two being the *Recognition March on the Independence of Hayti*, and a march written expressly for a Great Ball given in General LaFayette's honor.

Johnson and his band toured Europe in 1838. The highlight of his trip was when he was presented a silver cornet by Queen Victoria after a Command Performance. Another memorable moment came in 1841 when he led a fifty-piece orchestra that accompanied the 150 member Colored Choral Society in Philadelphia in an

concerto at the African Presbyterian Church on Seventh Street, and at a white church on Callowhill and New Market Streets.

Johnson's Band continued after his death with a succession of leaders, the first of whom was Joseph Anderson. Several of his bandsmen went on to achieve some distinction. They were:

Peter O'Fake (1820-7), a flutist and violinist who was born in Newark, New Jersey and played with various ensembles; most notably the Jullien Society, a well recognized white group;

Two years before joining the Johnson Band in 1850, he achieved distinction by being the first black guest conductor of the Newark Theater Orchestra.

After leaving the Band in the 50's he formed his own group to perform at society events in and around Newark. His best known composition was *The Sleigh Ride*, a quadrille. In addition, the talented musician directed an Episcopal Church Choir in his home town;

William Appo, a violinist from Baltimore, considered by white musicians to be one of "the most learned musicians of his race." During his career, he played with Johnson's Band, conducted a small string ensemble, was one of two black musicians in The Walnut Theater in Philadelphia (the other black was his brother) and taught and performed in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York. He finally settled in New York City;

Henry F. Williams (1813-c.1893), born in Boston and studied music there. As a young man, he lived in Philadelphia while a member of Johnson's Band, but he returned to Massachusetts to teach, compose, arrange and perform in local bands and orchestras. Williams arranged much of the music for white bandmaster Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore. In 1872, he performed under Gilmore's direction in an orchestra of 2,000 musicians at the World's Peace Jubilee.

His compositions included a dance suite entitled *Parisien Waltzes* (1854), the songs *Lauriette* (1840), and *I Would I'd Never Met Thee* (1876). Williams also composed polkas, mazurkas, quadrilles, overtures and anthems.

Membership in Johnson's Band gave to scores of competent black musicians fleeting fame and secure employment during a time when classicism was gaining in concert halls that featured black performers;

Justin Holland (1816-1886), born in Norfolk County, Virginia, the son of a farmer. Early determining that farm life in the repressive South was not for him, he left for Boston at the age of fourteen. There he received his first guitar and flute lessons from two members of Ned Kendall's Brass Band. He attended Oberlin college in 1841 to further his studies, and moved to Cleveland, Ohio in 1845 where he began teaching guitar.

Holland's determination to achieve mastery of the instrument in the manner of the European artists led him to study Italian, French and Spanish in order to study in the language(s) of the acknowledged virtuosi. Further, he felt unsatisfied with the verbal and written explanations given as to the theory of the production of harmonic tones on the guitar; consequently, he did nothing for two weeks except observe the vibrations made when he plucked the strings of his instrument. His scientific research allowed him to become a widely quoted authority on acoustics.

Holland arranged over 300 pieces for the guitar; most of which were sent to him, unsolicited, by publishers.

The work for which he is chiefly noted is *Holland's Comprehensive Method For The Guitar* (1874); a standard for many years. Accolades came to him from Europe and America, and it was judged to be the best prepared manuscript on the guitar. His second work, *Holland's Modern*

Method For The Guitar, was published in 1876. These two books made him the authority on the guitar until recent times; in music catalogues, he was the expert most often cited under the heading of *Guitar/Music*.

Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield (1809-1876) was born a slave in Natchez, Mississippi, but was adopted by a kindly Quaker family and taken to Philadelphia as a youth. There her mentor, Mrs. Greenfield, discovered the remarkable beauty and purity of tone that her word possessed in a clear, sweet soprano.

Although her religion forbade the inclusion of secular music in the home, or the pursuit of such a career, Mrs. Greenfield gave to Elizabeth as much support as she could without compromising her principles. Upon her death, she left Elizabeth a bequest that enabled Miss Greenfield to pursue her studies with renewed and

insatiable vigor. Labeled "The Black Swan," she began to acquire some stage presence and professionalism by singing in concert halls throughout the North and Canada. After performing for the Buffalo Musical Association in 1857, she was favorably compared to the greatest sopranos of that time: Malibran, Sontag, Grisi, Parodi and Jenny Lind - The Swedish Nightingale. Her tremendous range of 3 1/2 octaves surpassed Lind's.

Before embarking for Europe in 1853, the artist gave a farewell concert before 4,000 enthusiastic listeners. While in Europe, she sang under the patronage of the English nobility and performed at a Command Performance before Queen Victoria in Buckingham Palace on May 10, 1854.

Upon her return to the States in the summer of 1854, she opened a voice studio in Philadelphia, where she occasionally

performed in concert until her death in 1876.

Thomas Bowers (c.1836-1885), was the second son of free parents who were natives of Philadelphia. His father was warden of St. Thomas' AME Church and had his eldest son, John, tutored at the organ and piano. John then taught Thomas. At the age of eighteen, he succeeded his elder brother as St. Thomas' organist.

Although sought after by Frank Johnson to join his band, his promise to his parents to play or sing only classical or religious music prevented him from accepting Johnson's offer.

He made his debut as a tenor and went on tour. Upon his return, he was accepted as a pupil by the Black Swan, and occasionally toured with her.

Bowers' magnificent artistic ability accorded him the title of *The American Mario* or, *The Colored Mario* after Conte de Candia Mario, the most

famous Italian tenor of that period. His repertoire consisted of standard arias, oratorios and ballads.

Bowers strongly resented the caricature of the black race that white minstrelsy presented, and he wrote to a friend, "What induced me more than anything else to appear in public was to give the lie to 'Negro Serenaders' and to show the world that colored men and women could sing classical music as well as the members of the other race by whom they have been so terribly vilified."

He refused to perform at a concert in Hamilton, Canada unless the management seated a group of blacks to first class seats who had been refused admission to that section. Their yield to his demand probably marked the first time that one of his race used his artistic appeal to protest discrimination.

Bowers' rejection of white minstrelsy, in fact, all minstrelsy, was shared by many blacks. These shows were initially composed of a group of white who performed in black face.

It wasn't until the early 1860's that a black group, Lew Johnson's Plantation Minstrel Company, came into being. They, too, blackened their faces and exaggerated their mouths with makeup. The greatest difference, however, is that the whites imitated the blacks. Since the "genuine article" could not be truly duplicated, the whites specialized in slapstick humor and buffoonery.

Langston Hughes wrote that blacks, the "genuine article," in their inimitable ability to use syncopated time and beat, introduced new dances, songs and routines that the whites had not appropriated. The stop-time taps, the 'Sand' and the 'Virginia Essence'

(soft-shoe) were introduced. Some early stars were Wallace King, a falsetto specialist who was billed as "The Man with the Child Voice." The Boone Brothers, who accompanied their soft-shoe dance with their banjos, and Charles Cruse, a "stand-up" comedian.

To Be Continued Next Week
★ Save This Section

MOST BLACK ALL-STARS AREN'T IN THE RECORD BOOKS.

Long before black Americans made headlines on the playing field, they were making history. Lots of it. In fields like medicine, exploration, industry, and on the field of battle.

The names of these early "all-stars" probably aren't on the tip of your tongue. That's because they aren't in most history books either.

A black man was the first to reach the North Pole. Matthew Henson, a member of Commodore Perry's expedition, raised the flag there in 1909.

Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, a black surgeon, performed the world's first successful heart operation almost one hundred years ago.

In 1761, Benjamin Banneker designed and built the first striking clock. It was also the first clock made entirely in America.

And, on a September morning in 1864, thirteen black soldiers earned Congressional Medals of Honor. They led the Union Army's successful assault on Chaffin's Farm, a Confederate stronghold on the outskirts of Richmond, Virginia.

There are thousands of stories like these. Enough to fill a library.

And, thanks to efforts like Black History Month, someday they will.

