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## **Bix Beiderbecke as a German-American**

Bix Beiderbecke symbolized the "Jazz Age" in America. His life and legend, based upon anecdotal evidence, oral history and memory, emphasizes his short life (1903–31), his great musical inventiveness, and his substance abuse. However, the influence of ethnicity has never been examined in-depth as a major source of his American musical importance. Fifty years ago, James Burnett, argued that "without his background and upbringing his talent would probably have matured along different lines."<sup>1</sup> This essay analyzes his background as a way of understanding how he became a *jazz*er, and how German-Americans played an important role in American musical history.

Bix was the first influential white jazzman in popular American culture. What made Bix stand out among so many jazz musicians in the 1920s was "the curious elusive quality of wistfulness one finds so constantly in Bix's jazz."<sup>2</sup> In the midst of a "hot" jazz band, with its members playing their lungs out, the musical clouds parted and his own lyrical melancholy shines through."<sup>3</sup> With an obvious German-American surname, his musical reputation in the aftermath of World War I, and the anti-German hysteria of 1917–18, may have been diminished at times; today his global reputation remains secure. The European context for Bix's international jazz reputation is connected to jazz music as a symbol of America. Support for this appears in the memories of Jacques Bureau, famous French co-founder of the Hot Club in Paris in 1932. While languishing in the Fresnes prison, near Paris, imprisoned as an enemy of the *Reich* during World War II, he retained "his sanity and dreamt of better times while surrounded by brick wall and barbed wire," by singing to himself "the solos from his favorite Bix Beiderbecke recordings. He knew Bix's cornet improvisations by heart, . . . , allowing him to create a fantasy world that he could travel to in his own mind, far from the Nazi jail cell."<sup>4</sup> Since Bix's death in 1931, the unique aspects of Bix's music have been overly emphasized, with historical antecedents overlooked, obscuring the powerful cultural and social forces which influenced the development of Bix Beiderbecke's music.

His early musical experiences in the Midwest depended upon the larger development of a German-American cultural region within the Midwest. The area where Bix spent the first twenty-three years of his life has been called the German Triangle: the core area defined by a triangle starting in Cincinnati, extending west to St. Louis and northwards to Milwaukee.<sup>5</sup> This is the region where 42% of the eight million Germans who migrated to America settled, and its German-American inhabitants bore the brunt of anti-German hysteria during World War I. The result for Bix's generation was a feeling of defiance, the rejection of traditional norms, and the belief in individual expression. Of particular interest is how these German-American attitudes resembled the dominant cultural norms of the 1920s for Americans in general. The decade involved not only a Middle Western regional revolt, but also contained assimilation and rejection of one's ethnic identity. The case study of Bix Beiderbecke, jazz musician, contains elements of both responses.

Bix's musical genius blossomed in an emerging Midwestern regional culture which matured and received national attention after World War I. The major emphasis in portraying this regional culture has been literary analysis with writers such as Carl Sandburg and Theodore Dreiser placed in a Chicago context, and isolated from any appreciation of their ethnicity and its influence on their writing.<sup>6</sup> Simultaneously, in the area of art history, the regional work of Tom Benton and Grant Wood, became part of a regional movement, similar to Midwestern writers. This essay argues that in this same period of time, the music of Midwestern jazz stands as an analogue: in this respect, Bix was a Midwestern regional musician who reinterpreted popular music into 1920s jazz. By close examination of the diversity of ethnic talent emerging in the early 1920s, a new historical portal can be examined, and the roots of German-American influence upon popular culture clearly established.

There was a confluence of new versions of American music after 1900. Besides traditional marches and waltzes, syncopated music was appearing in many local areas, without an agreed upon label. Both the "cakewalk" and ragtime were originally music invented by black musicians, which was slowly appropriated by white musicians. At the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, the musically unique "cakewalk" which originated in a black sub-culture, became something which white musicians performed as their own invention.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, ragtime first appeared in American popular culture, but was quickly accepted by English popular culture. Standardized ragtime arrangements were played by the ship's orchestra of HMS *Titanic* until the early morning hours of 15 April 1912 when the ship finally sunk into the North Atlantic waters. Scott Joplin, the greatest exponent of ragtime, using the race vernacular of the period, said that "ragtime rhythm is a syncopation original with the colored people. . ."<sup>8</sup> Both were overtaken by a third form of

syncopated music, which fundamentally refers to rhythmic surprise; instead of predictable musical accents, the jazz musician uses an irregular pattern of placing accents between the beats.

One of the agreed upon sources of this new form of syncopation was in the city of New Orleans, where popular music was being called "jass" by 1917; this was applied to dance music which was played with more energy. The term may have begun on the West Coast, according to the vaudevillian, William Demarest (better known as Uncle Charlie on the television show *My Three Sons*). He recalled that he first heard it in 1908 when directors wanted more energetic playing or "peppy music."<sup>9</sup> But it was also used a decade later by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in their first recordings in 1917.

As the wording of "jass" became "jazz," a type of syncopated music originating from the regional setting of New Orleans began to be transformed into a popular type of music for white consumers, throughout the country. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB) was advertised as "Untuneful Harmonists Playing Peppery Melodies," which on their first recordings sounded like as "odd shrieks and squawks emitted at furious tempos from horns held in tangled formations by grimacing musicians."<sup>10</sup> When Bix heard their recorded music in his Midwestern home at age fourteen, he began to use his musical experience with traditions of German-American classical and popular music in interacting with the new. Thus two key ingredients were involved: what mattered for Bix was "his German ancestry, and the other is that he didn't come from New Orleans."<sup>11</sup>

Careful evaluation makes it clear that by 1923 "there was a whole separate style of Midwest jazz playing, which flourished in and around Indiana and Illinois and Ohio long before the so-called 'Chicago Style' became well known."<sup>12</sup> It was Bix Beiderbecke who led in this regional innovation, developing a Midwestern version of jazz, which in turn became a nationally recorded "sound" as part of the 1920s American popular culture. It was a cultural transmission of New Orleans popular culture, ultimately derived from its infamous red light district of Storyville, but transformed into a new "sound" which was played on radio and finally appeared in Hollywood movies. It became a national version of Dixieland jazz music. Bix, along with other early jazz musicians wrote syncopated dance music which could encompass the "hot" variety. Bix's first successful band, the "Wolverines," played a style of jazz that "was in demand only where dancers wanted strong rhythmic stimulants and the excitement of fine improvising, . . ."<sup>13</sup> It was at this point that the new sound in music, became nationally and internationally defined. Besides these changes in national forms of popular culture, the 1920s was a decade of unrestrained capitalism, and monetary success was also a powerful force upon Bix. His own wealth reflected the success notions of the 1920s.

When Bix played at the Rendezvous and the Derby Café on the north side of Chicago in 1923, he made \$25 a week.<sup>14</sup> By the time he moved to St. Louis in 1925, he earned a weekly salary of \$100 and was able two years later to regularly send home a large portion of his \$200 weekly salary from Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. Richard M. Sudhalter has estimated that Bix made approximately \$25,000 from his playing during the period 1927–29, which would be equal to about \$600,000 in 1990.<sup>15</sup> From January to April 1928, Bix was at the peak of his earnings, making \$300 a week.<sup>16</sup> But all of this changed because of the Stock Market crash of October, 1929. By 1930 "Bix was broke. The considerable amount of money he had sent home to his sister through the years was lost in the crash; Bix had invested it all in bank stock, and the stockholder's double liability of those days wiped out his savings."<sup>17</sup>

The Beiderbecke family members who watched Bix use his musical gifts, realized the unsavory connotations with jazz music in the 1920s. It seemed to flourish in metropolitan areas where nightclubs or "speakeasies" flourished, and illegal liquor flowed freely. Then again it had originally been sponsored by illegal bordello money in Storyville, the Red-Light district of New Orleans. In New York City, the Cotton Club had Duke Ellington but also mob influence; in Kansas City a neighborhood of joints and jazz clubs provided sponsorship for a young Charlie "Bird" Parker but was controlled by the mobster Tom Pendergast. It was most noticeably a type of music where many of the musicians appeared to be black. The emerging stereotype was one of illegality and immorality, even though the music was played on Mississippi river boats, summer amusement parks, and dance halls. The technology of the record player made the music widely available, leading to the inevitable phrase of describing the 1920s as the Jazz Age.

The German-American background of Bix can be understood not only in the Midwestern cultural assumptions of the early twentieth century, but also by focusing on the Iowa city where he grew up. Davenport was part of an interstate metropolitan area which was unofficially called the Tri-Cities. This urban area of nearly 100,000 in 1910 included Davenport, Iowa plus a large cluster of cities on the Illinois shore, across the Mississippi River in Illinois: Rock Island and Moline. Numerous German-American social institutions, musical organizations, clubs and fraternal groups flourished.

It was within this urban area that a highly structured, German-American cultural network provided musical support to the young Leon Bix Beiderbecke, who was born 10 March 1903 into a musically proficient extended family.<sup>18</sup> His uncle had belonged to a regionally based zither club and played the cornet professionally; his grandfather was a member of the Germania *Männerchor*, and his grandmother supported the Tri-City Orchestra, which held its rehearsals in German. Bix's family consciously used

an “Americanized” approach to their community, and tried to pass this on to Bix and his two siblings. The changing patterns of collective identity meant using a “nonthreatening, low-key public stance” with reticence about any German ancestry.<sup>19</sup> This may have influenced their decision to not name him “Bismarck” after both his father, and the Iron Chancellor of the German Empire. But the last name still presented an obvious ethnic connection, which was not a problem in Davenport or the Midwest when he was born in 1903. His father, Bismarck Herman Beiderbecke (1868–1940), was a businessman who was a partner in a lumber company, and owned many rental properties; his mother was Agatha Jane Hilton (1870–1952), who had attended a local Episcopalian school, St. Katherine’s College Preparatory school for girls, before marrying Bismarck on 7 June 1893. They bought a middle-class house in the eastern half of the city in 1900, far removed from the traditional German neighborhood of his parents. Bismarck and Agatha had many American and German-Americans friends, belonged to the nearby First Presbyterian church and the socially prestigious Outing Club.

From one perspective, Bix was a third-generation German-Iowan: it was Bix’s grandparents who had originally migrated from the Germanic Confederation. His grandfather, Carl Beiderbecke, was born on 20 July 1835 and baptized in the Catholic church, at Benninghausen, Westphalia.<sup>20</sup> As a young man, he migrated first to Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1853 and worked in a grocery, before moving to Dubuque, Iowa, in 1856. He soon moved to Davenport and successfully went into business for himself, marrying Louise Pieper (who was born near Hamburg) on 21 April 1860.<sup>21</sup> As his partnership flourished, and their wholesale grocery company succeeded, he became accepted into the upper-class German-American segment of Davenport society. That acceptance appeared in an invitation to join the Davenport *Schützenverein*, and expanded when he was elected to the presidency of the First National Bank. His German-American success can be found not only in his position of co-organizer of the *Männerchor*, but also co-organizer of Davenport’s first public library. He died on 20 October 1901, and the funeral ceremonies symbolized the bi-cultural aspect of Davenport society: Gustave Donald, regionally recognized Speaker of the city’s Central Turnverein, gave an impressive eulogy at home; while the Swiss-American minister of the Unitarian Church, Arthur M. Judy, presided at the graveside ceremonies.<sup>22</sup> In Davenport, the *Freidenker* (“free thinker”) contingent carefully coexisted with the New England associations of the Unitarian church and its minister.

Although Bix never knew his grandfather, his grandmother, Louise Pieper Beiderbecke quietly influenced him before her death on 27 October 1922, when he was nineteen. She had been born on 18 June 1840 in the Duchy of Holstein, and migrated to America in 1859. Her father August

Pieper joined the 37th Iowa Infantry Regiment on 15 December 1862 at the age of forty-four. This became known as Iowa's famous Greybeard Regiment, composed of men past draft age who were willing to go to war. After the Civil War, he started a local business, which became successful before his death on 16 December 1889.<sup>23</sup> She was known to family members as "Lutie," and became a major supporter of community musical projects, especially the Tri-City Symphony. Bix was eight years old when his Grandma traveled with her son, forty-four-year old Carl to the German Empire in 1911.<sup>24</sup> After much planning, he and his mother, who was seventy-one, departed from New York City 4 May 1911 on the *George Washington*; this was the third largest ship in the world, and famous for its luxurious appointments.<sup>25</sup> They traveled in the safer season after the icebergs of April retreated, arriving in Bremen. They returned on the *Großer Kurfürst* steamship on 19 September 1911.<sup>26</sup>

Although part of the American dream of immigrant success, the trans-Atlantic return to Germany was also an opportunity to renew family connections, often decades after the original embarkation. Two comparable trips help to define the aspirational social goals. One example was Hans Hansen (1846–1907) who retired and took his family to Denmark in 1892. He had migrated to Davenport, Iowa, in 1866, and became successful in the wagon-making business, before retiring in 1890. He had been a member in many of the same German-Iowan organizations that Carl and Louise Beiderbecke participated in such as the *Männerchor*, Central Turners, and the *Schützenverein* which contained both a private shooting club and a hugely popular proprietary park with its own trolley car stop.<sup>27</sup> Another example can be found in the experience of Emil Geisler (1828–1910), a teacher and successful land developer who retired in 1885, moving west to Coronado, California. In 1909 he returned to the places of his youth in the northernmost German province of Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>28</sup> In both cases, there were elements of social prestige in attaining retirement status as part of the formula for success.

Bix's early musical education started at home. There were early signs of precocious musical ability: at the age of two, he could pick out "Yankee Doodle" perfectly on the piano, and the next year he could play Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody Number 2* after listening to his sister play it!<sup>29</sup> His home offered initial support for his musical talents, and "Little Bickie," as he was first called by family members, soon added the neighborhood to his audience when he entered public school. This was an easy transition for him because Tyler Grade School was across the street from his family's house. For fourteen years, Bix gained immensely from the infrastructure of professionally trained, German-American, musical educators in the public schools of Davenport, and one year at Lake Forest Academy, a private, college preparatory school

near Chicago.

At the age of six he entered first grade on 30 August 1909, and his teacher, Alice Robinson, later recalled that "Bix loved to stand by the piano and play with the class pianist, imitating on the high notes whenever she was playing. He was a dreamy little fellow and was happy finding his own niche rather than joining the larger group."<sup>30</sup> In the summer of 1910, Davenport's readers learned about Bix when a newspaper feature appeared on the 4th of July. The seven-year-old was called a musical boy wonder, "the most unusual and the most remarkably talented child in music that there is in this city."<sup>31</sup>

He was recognized as talented and gifted by Prof. Ernst Otto, director of music for the school system, 1895–1922. This first professionally trained musical educator in Davenport was born in Schönwalde, Duchy of Holstein, in 1865, graduated from the Leipzig and Copenhagen conservatories, and migrated to America in 1879, moving to Davenport in 1885. He had organized Otto's Orchestra and Military Band the previous year in Chicago, and it quickly became the most popular German-American Band in Davenport. Building upon his credentials for professional educational training, he became the chosen director of a very popular series of *Sängerfeste*. He had more than fifty songs published, and in 1895 he "was appointed by the board of education as superintendent of music instruction."<sup>32</sup> One of his duties was to go to all grade schools, and monitor the musical instruction. It was said that "whenever Prof. Otto comes to the school he plays the violin and calls upon Bix to play the accompaniment on the piano."<sup>33</sup>

He returned to school as a second-grader in Corrie Brown's class. One of his childhood friends, Mae Steffen, remembered Bix many years later "as a little boy, so small that he sat on a big dictionary to play the piano. He was a cute, dark-haired little kid and very talented. I am sure that even then Bix must have been considered a prodigy."<sup>34</sup> From many accounts he was also a normal boy, who got into scuffles and fights on occasion. One time he had a fight with Phil Adler, who was in the same class as he was. This was the son of E. P. Adler, powerful owner and editor of the Davenport *Times* newspaper. According to family stories, Phil's father "received a call from the principal one day requesting that he come to school and take Phil home. When he got to school, he found Phil with two sprained ankles, the result of a fight with a schoolmate, B[ix] B[eiderbecke]."<sup>35</sup>

He had finished second grade and by the late summer of 1911 he contracted scarlet fever and his mother took him out of school for the 1911–12 year. As compensation, his parents engaged Charles Grande, a forty-one-year-old German-Iowan music teacher who lived in Muscatine, a small city about twenty miles south of Davenport, connected by a daily interurban schedule. Grande had graduated from Muscatine High School,

and studied in Berlin for three years before returning to Muscatine, where he taught music for fifty years, well-known and respected enough, to open an additional Davenport office. One illuminating story about this professionally trained, German educator happened during Bix's weekly lessons. After a few lessons, Bix asked Prof. Grande to play the "next week's lesson" so he could see how it should be played. Prof. Grande was astonished the next week, when he heard Bix play the lesson in a much improved manner. But after carefully observing his star pupil, he realized that Bix had memorized his performance, because Bix had included the professor's minor mistakes!<sup>36</sup> This was the second German-American music educator to influence Bix, and his musical abilities continued to develop. By May, 1913 he completed third grade and the first semester of fourth grade.<sup>37</sup> By the fall of 1915, Mildred Colby, his sixth grade teacher "observed that young Beiderbecke participated in classroom singing in a rather special way, adding second or third parts by ear, even when no written parts were furnished."<sup>38</sup>

As a member of the Beiderbecke family, Bix learned at an early age what the social expectations were for socially prominent German-Americans who were attempting to blend into the more Americanized section of Davenport's upper middle class status. His parents retained some aspects of their German heritage, but lived on the American side of the city, the East Side, and spent their leisure time in mainstream church or club activities, not the traditional German-American organizations. Bix and his sister were baptized on 20 April 1916, at the Presbyterian Church, only three blocks away. One of Bix's lifelong friends, Karl K. Vollmer, lived in a higher profile neighborhood of McClelland Heights, further east.<sup>39</sup> Much of the family's social life centered around the Outing Club, a family-centered organization different from the emerging cachet of country clubs. Instead of golf, the sports consisted of a shooting gallery, bowling alleys, and tennis courts (where Bix later won the tri-city cup in 1923).<sup>40</sup> The club house building offered dining rooms and an upstairs dance floor.

The Outing Club was the most prestigious social organization for a family. Its members eschewed golf, and instead insisted upon formal dining, family sports and "coming-out" parties for its daughters who were then introduced to Davenport upper class society. The adolescent Bix took dancing lessons in preparation for future debutante balls and parties. For the Beiderbecke family, outward conformity and compliance with American culture, was always important, and their younger son was remembered by Marie Le Claire Anderson, a descendent of the founder of the city, Antoine LeClaire. Her aunt was principal of Tyler Grade School, and her parents were friends with Bix's parents. She remembered Bix "in short pants, patent leather shoes and gloves. His hair looked like patent leather, and as she recalled, "he would



come up to me wearing his white gloves, and in those days [when] the young man put his hand over his heart and bowed, the girl got up and curtsied. This meant he was asking you to dance and that you were accepting. Then during intermission, he'd gravitate to the piano and he'd improvise."<sup>41</sup> The Outing Club remained a social reference point for the Beiderbeckes.

Bix's older sibling furthered the family's goal of acceptance by the American world of Davenport. Charles Burnette Beiderbecke (1895-1972), nicknamed "Burnie," excelled in Davenport High School. He played varsity football, went out for track, was elected class president, and joined one of the secret high school fraternities, Kappa Delta. Later, after graduating from Davenport High School, he entered Iowa State University, in Ames, Iowa. In conformity with the rest of his class, he dropped out his Sophomore year to enter the U. S. Army in April 1917.

Meanwhile, Bix graduated from Tyler Grade School at mid-year, enrolling at Davenport High School in January 1918. In retrospect, one can understand why his teachers expected great things from him: he was a publicly proclaimed "a boy musical wonder," his brother had been very "successful," and the family's social position remained unscathed by anti-German hysteria. This was an especially tumultuous time in the Midwest, affecting the important German-American cities of the heartland: St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati. For the past four years the German-American organizations of Davenport had taken a leading role in supporting the German Imperial war effort by raising money and sponsoring the sale of government bonds. Public aspects of German culture and traditions were attacked. The teaching of German in Davenport schools was dropped when the State Superintendent of Instruction announced a state-wide ban, and the Davenport Board of Education complied. The immediate suspension of classes "was greeted with applause and enthusiasm, especially by those taking German. However, when the matter of credits was mentioned, most of the eager ones came to life again."<sup>42</sup> It turned out that if a student was passing, then credit was given; but there was an expectation of patriotic work in lieu of classes.

An anonymous article in the student edited newspaper, closed by mentioning that the German teachers were fired except for Miss Behnke because she could teach French! Another article explained that all German books had been publicly burned on school grounds, with the tacit approval of the faculty and administration. On a beautiful spring afternoon, about fifty of the lower classmen who had been studying German gathered on the track field north of the building, and piling their books in a heap, saw them go up in a blaze; "the books that had given them so much pain at last vanish forever from their sight."<sup>43</sup> Apparently the rest of the students used this as an opportunity for a break from classes. The bonfire also included geography

books which contained photographs of "Kaiser Bill" (the emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II). Local newspapers described it as a celebration, endorsed by the faculty, who stood by and smoked cigarettes. Not only did more than 500 books get burned, but the students turned it into a patriotic rally with the singing of "America," the yelling of their class cheer, and general expressions of contempt for all things German.<sup>44</sup>

While this anti-German hysteria ran its course in Iowa and in the Midwest, Bix lived in a city which received repressive treatment from the national government, with the leaders of its large German-American population openly defying the United States Government from 1917 to 1918.<sup>45</sup> While Bix may have remained apart from the popular kids, he continued to live as an ordinary adolescent in high school, even though he had publicly been proclaimed the "boy wonder" in the local newspaper in 1910. The shifting perception of ethnicity changed public opinion, thus following the non-threatening public perception which Russell A. Kazal found to be true in eastern cities such as Philadelphia.<sup>46</sup> Warren Postel was two years younger than Bix, and remembered him as "sort of shy, rather quiet, nice looking and a good sand lot ball player."<sup>47</sup> Another classmate was Virginia Gansworth Stange, three years younger, who clearly "remembers ice skating at Vander Veer Park with Bix Beiderbecke who could jump over several park benc[h] es."<sup>48</sup> An older girl who graduated with the class of 1920, explained that the general student body knew very little about Bix, and before his junior year, even his jazz music remained unknown.<sup>49</sup>

Privately, high school marked the first turning point in his life, when his brother returned home from the army, and bought a Christmas present for the entire family, a Columbia gramophone in December 1918 and some popular records, including the Original Dixieland Jazz Band recording of "Tiger Rag." According to local legend, Bix set the turntable next to the piano and played along with the records and soon bought a second-hand coronet and taught himself how to play. He quickly organized his own jazz band. Warren Postel recalled that "he played the piano at parties, . . ." and now and then he played with a small combo for the Friday dances in the Davenport High School gym.<sup>50</sup> The group stayed together for the summer, playing on the *Julia Belle Swain*, an excursion boat on the Illinois river near Peoria, Illinois. The combo's composition became a template for his future musical groups: it had four members, three of whom were German-Americans (Fritz "Putsie" Putzier, Bob Struve, and Bix); this split of ethnicity in his musical groups was a pattern for Bix's jazz bands, and continued for the next decade. In many ways this was an accurate predictor for his successful period of playing. "So long as Bix found himself in congenial surroundings, with abundant opportunities to indulge his musical appetites, his confidence knew no bounds and his

happiness was complete.”<sup>51</sup>

During the next two years, he concentrated more on music than on his studies. Bix and his musical buddies were able to get paid for a variety of social “gigs” to play as a musical group for various dances. Another musician friend, Esten Spurrier, explained how Davenport was a “*very* predominant German town, whose music was *over* legitimate . . . a dotted eighth was a dotted eighth, and a vibrato was *verboten*, only excusable in a solo, and then used sparingly. . . . we punks who played jazz were frowned on and ridiculed as ‘chassers,’ German accent for ‘jazzers.’”<sup>52</sup> At the same time he followed his older brother in pursuing the family’s Americanization policy. He belonged to a secret high school fraternity at Davenport High School, Delta Theta Sigma, and played at some of their dances.<sup>53</sup> Frederick Potter who had been student at Rock Island High School, across the river in Illinois, was quoted as saying that “while in high school, he [Potter] was social director of the fraternity and frequently arranged for co-fraternity member Bix Beiderbecke to provide the entertainment for social gatherings.”<sup>54</sup>

It was during the spring of 1921, that an adolescent event happened which became the second turning point in Bix’s career. On April 21 Bix and two buddies, “Fritz” Putzier and Bob Struve, the two other German-American members of his school jazz band, were out of school for the day, at loose ends in the afternoon, and may have drunk some “hootch”: bootleg liquor. Since January they had been “hanging around” Davenport’s entertainment district, centered around the newly opened Coliseum, which was a large dance hall, with live entertainment and movies. It was here that Bix heard for the first time, and actually met jazz musicians whom he would befriend later on in his short career. As a kid he met New Orleans cornet players such as Wingy Manone and Emmet Hardy; accompanying them was Leon Rappolo, a clarinetist. This may also have been the first time that Bix smoked marijuana, which was not legally prohibited in Iowa until 1923, but was clearly associated with crime and black musicians.<sup>55</sup> Santo Pecora, trombone player, later said that the musicians smoked “weed” at a vaudeville rooming house. They were the band which supported the exciting Bee Palmer (1898-1967), the risqué “Shimmy Queen” who performed in late March at a nearby Davenport vaudeville house, the Colombia Theatre.<sup>56</sup>

On the afternoon of 21 April 1921, Bix and his friends walked a mile north of Bix’s house, laughing and rough-housing, eventually reaching the alley behind 3030 Grand. The trio saw a young girl playing in the back yard of a small house. They laughed at the little girl, and Bix said something which scared her, before leaving. This five-year-old girl told her parents (Preston Ivens (1892–1957) and Mary (1892–?) who had arrived in Iowa from Chester, Maryland, so Ivens could attend the Palmer School of Chiropractic.<sup>57</sup> The

next day, Ivens confronted the two boys who mysteriously returned to the alley without Bix, and when asked, they said their friend's name was Leon Beiderbecke. Ivens went to the police station and swore out a complaint; soon after, Lt. Frank J. Lew arrested Bix for "Lewd and Lascivious Act[s] with a Child."<sup>58</sup> Bix returned home after a bond of \$1,500 was posted. The Chief of Police, Charles Boettcher, a German-American veteran of the police force, realized the social prominence of Beiderbecke's family, and conferred with the County Attorney. All of this is important to understand its impact upon Bix Beiderbecke. From the perspective of the complainant, there was a fusion of conflicting forces. Preston Ivens was a student who would soon be graduating in less than a year.<sup>59</sup> He had registered for the draft in 1917 when he and his wife lived in Pennsylvania; his older brother had been killed in World War I.<sup>60</sup> The tide of anti-German sentiment was receding, but Ivens apparently became incensed when he learned the teenager's last name was German. The same day, he met with Dr. B. J. Palmer, president of the Palmer School of Chiropractic, who understood first hand, the pain and sorrow of the war: his best friend Elbert Hubbard, and his wife Alice, were drowned on 7 May 1915 in the sinking of the Cunard liner *Lusitania* by a German submarine. B. J. Palmer had previously stated, "the *Lusitania* lies at the bottom of the sea, and the soul of Elbert Hubbard went out with her sinking."<sup>61</sup> However, it seems probable that Palmer's considerations were complex. He was no stranger to hatred and vilification. His family and the new health care system of Chiropractic had been intensely rejected by medical doctors who regarded B. J. Palmer as a charlatan. The result seems to be caution by Palmer. The Beiderbecke family had lofty social connections in Davenport, and they belonged to the Outing Club, a stronghold of anti-chiropractic belief; an untold number of his patients in the Palmer Clinic were German-American, so his course of action was probably tempered by diplomacy. B. J. Palmer needed positive public relations in Davenport, and was not interested in another court case, since the Palmer School of Chiropractic's enrollment was growing with a huge class of new students.<sup>62</sup> Finally, he was planning for a year-long journey around the world for his family, which required stability in Davenport. He conferred with Dr. John H. Craven, an instructor at the school, and Cornelius H. Murphy, Ivens's lawyer. Afterwards, Ivens signed a letter describing the events, and closed by agreeing that it would be "best to drop the case for the betterment of the child."<sup>63</sup>

This judicial process was certainly hidden for many years and any possible financial settlement was never revealed; in the end, the trial which had been scheduled for September 1921, was dismissed. In Davenport it was viewed as a youthful indiscretion because Bix publicly played in Buckley's Novelty Orchestra from 23 March until 19 June 1921 when he joined the band on

the excursion steamboat, the *Majestic* from 21 June to 4 July. Two days later he was in the band on the excursion boat *Capitol* from 6–16 July. This meant ten days of playing the four beat rhythm of five standard songs: “Dixieland One Step,” “High Society,” “Panama,” “At the Jazz Band Ball,” and “Muskrat Ramble.”<sup>64</sup> However, his playing ended because he had failed to join the musicians’ union.

A further complication arose which may have been the actual reason for the firing. The owner, Captain Streckfus “insisted on regular rehearsals, and strove for perfection. . . . He would attend rehearsals . . . 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.”<sup>65</sup> This insistence on practice and predictability never fitted Bix’s style, and underscored one of his major characteristics: stubbornness. At the same time, this same approach was used by Fate Marable, the Black band leader who discovered Louis Armstrong. He held “his orchestras together with an iron hand. The musicians had to play music strictly for dancing. Marable actually set the tempos *with a stopwatch*, and that music included popular waltzes and other styles not dear to the hearts of jazzmen—but they always managed, of course, to get their jazz licks in when ever, so to speak, the boss wasn’t looking.”<sup>66</sup>

At age eighteen, with only fourteen credits from Davenport High School, about half the number required for graduation, Bix remained uncertain of his parents’s plans for him in the summer of 1921. In July, he formed the Bix Beiderbecke Five, and played a number of “casual” or one night musical dates until he learned that his parents had gotten him accepted as a Sophomore at Lake Forest Academy, thirty-five miles north of Chicago, and near Ferry Hall, a girl’s college preparatory school. During the 1921–22 school year, there were only 129 students enrolled, but there was football and other sports. Bix’s letters reveal Bix to sound like a very typical prep school student who however was almost nineteen years-old, but still taking freshmen courses. In one letter to his father on 12 October 1921, he asks “how is Oma dad? I have a letter written and mean to send it to her as soon as I can bum a stamp.”<sup>67</sup> He also wrote to his older sister who was engaged to be married; “I’m glad ‘mam’ has a cook, tell her to take it easy and let Bridget do it all.”<sup>68</sup> Apparently the family finances were in good shape, and many of the letters include a request for money. Much of the letters in the fall semester portray Bix as successful as a student, and socially involved with a number of friends. He was an active member of the orchestra, but an old pattern began to appear. Bix had his third experience with a professionally trained German-American musical educator, Prof. Richard Paul Koepke (1867–?) who may have been born in Prussia, lived in Strasburg, and had studied in Paris and Berlin; he was married in 1891 and naturalized in 1922.<sup>69</sup> One of his American friends

at the academy, Julian S. Merigold described how “Mr. R. P. Koepke, head of the music department at Lake Forest Academy, frequently grimaced in pain and agony when Bix would let some of his jazz creep into the playing. His style of playing was so infectious that the others would pick up the beat. Poor Mr. Koepke ended the session for the day.”<sup>70</sup>

A change can be noted during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, a year before his grandmother’s death. Bix received permission to go home with his friends for the holidays, friends who lived much closer to Chicago. In January 1922, he organized a “secret band” which began playing in Chicago places where the liquor flowed: the popular night club in the Edgewater Beach Hotel, the Blackstone Hotel in the Loop and at dances hosted by Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Other students remember Koepke the same way. Here then is the pattern: the three professionally trained German-American musical educators were initially sources of support for Bix, but eventually for him they represented an old-fashioned approach to music, which was strict and lacked any opportunity for improvisation; they became targets of rebellion for Bix, as had Captain Joseph Streckfus. The end of Bix’s formal education occurred in May when Bix’s group accepted an invitation to provide incidental music at a school assembly. The Headmaster was suitably impressed when Bix’s band played “Rock of Ages,” however, Bix surprised everyone with a Dixieland version of the traditional hymn in syncopated or “cut time.” He was promptly expelled the next day after a formal vote by the faculty.

How did the “musical boy wonder” become a jazz genius? Martin Williams explained that “he looked wherever he could for whatever would help him. Growing up an American of German descent in Davenport, Iowa, he heard all the jazz he could hear—Ragtime was widespread but it had already been sifted of its meaning for jazz by the early twenties.”<sup>71</sup> So Bix used this exposure, and for the next three years he established himself as a jazz cornetist in the Midwest, playing in three different bands which toured the region, appearing at college dances, working with two “house bands,” and taking dance assignments on excursion steamers, country clubs, and summer resorts. In the fall of 1923, his family pressured three board members of the Davenport musician’s union: Ben Ebeling, Prof. Ernst Otto (his former teacher!) and Frank Fich. They finally passed Bix, based upon his musical ability playing the piano, thereby assuring him a local union card.<sup>72</sup> He was awarded a card in the American Federation of Musicians, Tri-Cities (Davenport) Local 67 on 1 October 1923.<sup>73</sup> He continued to find short-term jobs in Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis. Finally, he joined a new group, the Wolverine Orchestra, which was in the vanguard of a new phenomenon—jazz and dance bands which toured by automobile and train to supplement

club dates, college events and theaters.

The Wolverines played at universities, and like other college bands, they played both dance music and "hot" jazz for their audience. "Most important to the rise of jazz, the element that put it over, was, of course, the dancers. Dance and the music are inseparable."<sup>74</sup> In 1924 and 1925 he played for periods of time in Chicago, and worked at summer resorts along the Great Lakes. Of major importance was how Bix learned to understand his audience's taste in emerging popular music; they in turn interacted with Bix and his emerging style. He appeared in formal attire, as an upper-class preppie, with publicly perceived immaculate manners; but at the same time he delivered the forcefulness of an improvisational style of music, transforming black jazz into a Midwestern version. By returning to Chicago "speakeasies," he maintained a friendship with Black musicians, such as Louis Armstrong.<sup>75</sup> Their two approaches to jazz were fundamentally different, with Bix always wanting to fit into the band, and Armstrong always dominating; Bix played the cornet, Armstrong switched to the trumpet. As an indication of that interesting friendship, Armstrong's agent had him dedicate the first volume of his autobiography *Swing That Music* to Bix, Eddie Lang and King Oliver (1936); in his second volume, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* (1954), he stated that "every musician in the world knew and admired Bix. . . . We all respected him as though he had been a god."<sup>76</sup> It seems clear that Black musicians respected Bix as unusual in the segregated world of 1920s jazz. One of Bix's New York acquaintances, a Black jazz musician, Louis Metcalf, recalled that Bix "would come uptown and blow with us, eat with us, sleep with us. He was one of us."<sup>77</sup>

Bix's creativity extended into transforming what he viewed as Classical Jazz. Very quietly Bix improved upon the basic repertoire of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band by mixing their "raucous jocularly with his poised, declarative, and harmonically advanced improvisations. . . . [He] brought a new, more contemplative artistic sensibility to an older, more slapstick repertoire"<sup>78</sup> Bix modified the first of eleven key songs in the Original Dixieland Jazz Band repertoire, including "Clarinet Marmalade" which Bix later recorded with the Whiteman Orchestra in 1927. Bix's genius was to use "a greatly expanded melodic and harmonic vocabulary."<sup>79</sup> The Wolverines, gained a reputation for a more controlled and disciplined syncopation, after Bix joined the group. After their first great recording session, Bix said "softly, 'I am not a swan," which was his way of saying 'I love it."<sup>80</sup> This session was held at the Gennett Studios in Richmond, Indiana and resulted on 20 June 1924 in a recording of "Royal Garden Blues." Years later, Charles Edward Smith selected this event as a major turning point in jazz. "Bix took an *ad. lib.* chorus in this piece, a tradition of uncertain origin in jazz bands, and this

innovation which permits of a number of bars at the pleasure of the soloist is one of the most important features of blues and jazz.”<sup>81</sup>

The third turning point in his career was a combination of “lucky breaks” which led to Bix spending a successful, productive and happy year in St. Louis. He originally had met Frankie Trumbauer, a C-melody saxophonist, in Davenport after hearing the Benson Orchestra on 24 April 1923.<sup>82</sup> More than a year later they became better friends in Detroit when Bix was briefly part of the Goldkette Band, and then mid-June 1926 Bix agreed to work in his band in St. Louis, starting in mid-August. This marked the most stable period in his adult life, and one of the most creative: he lived in three upscale hotels (miraculously the Majestic, the Art Deco styled Coronado and the Chase are still in use as hotels); had the friendship and support of Trumbauer while perfecting his musical craft; had a steady girl friend to stabilize his social life; and he was still able to continue drinking, albeit in a more hidden fashion. This was the only time that Bix he had what outsiders would have considered a “normal” life.

Bix joined with the Trumbauer (“Tram”) band in early September where they played at the Arcadia Ballroom (the name conjured up a famous New York ballroom), strategically placed near the campus of St. Louis University. There were two musical units; the house band, the “Arcadian Serenaders” (with Bix’s friend from Chicago, Wingy Manone, a one-armed musical comedian whom Bix had heard in Davenport in 1921) alternated with Trumbauer’s band. This was the better band which also played at the exclusive Racquet Club after hours, proms at the Statler Hotel, and weekend trips by train to Indiana University and Carbondale, Illinois.<sup>83</sup>

Frank Trumbauer’s background was rooted in the German-American towns in the the St. Louis metropolitan area. His father, Fred Trumbauer (1873–1943), was born in Germany, and with his family, moved to Iowa’s Linn County. After marriage, he moved his family to southwestern Illinois, but a decade later divorced his wife, so his son lived with his grandparents. His wife remarried and worked as a saxophone teacher and movie house pianist in St. Louis, while their son eventually entered the navy in 1917.<sup>84</sup> In many ways Trumbauer became a “Dutch uncle” for Bix, although only a few years older, as their careers became entwined and their national reputations grew.<sup>85</sup> Although he stayed with the Paul Whiteman Band for a few years after Bix died, he eventually retired from music. “Frank Trumbauer is unique in jazz history, for he is the only musician known to have suffered artistic death at second hand.”<sup>86</sup> His musical success and influence was primarily contingent upon working with Beiderbecke, and their later success can be dated from that one year in St. Louis. On the surface, Bix seemed to be happy when the holiday season rolled around in St. Louis. Trumbauer explained that Bix “was



saving his money, had plenty of clothes, and was playing golf and looked wonderful.”<sup>87</sup> But “Tram” lived with his family in south St. Louis, far away from the hotels where Bix lived a very carefree and alcoholic life.

Another perspective on this period of time comes from the memoirs of Pee Wee Russell (1906–69), who was born in the middle-class neighborhood of Maplewood, in suburban St. Louis, but had become a teenage alcoholic. He was only fourteen when he played for various society bands to support his habit including the St. Louis Club, and the Coronado Hotel Orchestra.<sup>88</sup>

Russell had attended the Western Military School in Alton for one year, and then dropped out in 1921 (as did the regionalist artist Thomas Hart Benton), much as Bix had done at the Lake Forest Academy. Also like Bix, Russell had heard great Black bands playing on the Streckfus Line excursion boats *St. Paul* and *J. S.* “I worked afternoons, . . . The ‘name’ bands worked nights. We’d go up to Keokuk and Davenport on the Streckfus Line boats. . . we hit it right off. We were never apart for a couple of years—day, night, good, bad, sick, well, broke, drunk.”<sup>89</sup> From this perspective, Bix’s time in St. Louis was a continuation of his Chicago experience. They would usually hang out at Joe Harway’s speakeasy near the Arcadia Ball Room.<sup>90</sup> He also found black night clubs in the Mill Creek Valley like John Estes’s *Chauffeur’s Club* on West Pine, the *Westlake*, or the *Tremps Bar* on Delmar.<sup>91</sup> The two of them eventually rented an apartment in Granite City, Illinois, across the Mississippi river from St. Louis where it was much easier to get booze. Pops Foster, Black New Orleans bassist, recalled that “The colored and white musicians were just one. . . We used to all pile in Bix’s car and go over to Katie Red’s in St. Louis and drink a lot of bad whisky.”<sup>92</sup>

But Bix also enjoyed a surface life of greater normality. He started dating soon after meeting another young German-American, Ruth Shaeffner until the band broke up in late May 1926. It became even more “cozy” for the band members when her sister, Estelle, started dating Pee Wee Russell, while her other sister Bessie, started dating “Bud” Hassler. Bix was able to enjoy a comfortable life style with his salary of \$100 a week and by mid-November he moved to Room 608 at the Coronado Hotel on Lindell, which was much closer to the Arcadia Ballroom. The hotel had been built in 1925 at the cost of \$4 million and was an outstanding example of Art Deco style.<sup>93</sup> An attending physician in the 1920s usually meant a safe and discreet source of liquor; an additional bright spot was an exclusive club in the basement which featured local bands on the weekends. This was the location for one of the society bands that Pee Wee Russell had played with earlier. Bix thrived and after his birthday in March 1925 moved into the Chase Hotel, even more upscale, with 500 rooms and nine stories tall. At the 29 September 1922 opening,

Paul Whiteman's Pavillion Royale Orchestra played for the festivities, which added a certain jazzy *Prunk*, or aura of panache to his new hotel apartment.<sup>94</sup>

The most important musical development for Bix was that he learned to read music. Trumbauer recalled that when he hired him for the band, "Bix had a screwy way of pecking out notes from a violin part, playing them in the key of 'C' on a 'B Flat' coronet. It was confusing to everyone, even Bix! We fixed up a book of regular trumpet parts and for hours on end, I would work with Bix."<sup>95</sup> The process worked and Bix eventually could do a workman-like job of reading music. Tram had been able to teach Bix basic note reading which he incorporated into his improvisational music. He now had a standard sound to play "against," in a way the rest of the band could follow. For Bix's music to work, there had to be a steady, driving rhythm, which resulted in the audience hearing his leaps of fancy in opposition to the basic rhythm. In his early experience with German-American march music, and the formally timed dance music of his Davenport days, Bix now created more permanently, his own personal musical language, or "rhetoric of music."

James Burnett explained that "when we listen to a typical Bix solo, in whatever mood—vigorously thrusting or romantically reflective—we are conscious of a unique and sharply personal voice expressing significant contents on its own terms. . . . we are aware of something which is autonomous, which exists in and for itself and is not simply a derivative of another style or a different technique."<sup>96</sup> During the ten months in St. Louis, Bix and Tram created a special style of jazz music, the format of the "chase" chorus. George Avakian explained it by saying the "Bix plays two bars, Tram plays two. Bix answers and so on, for the whole chorus. They keep the melodic line going in one continuous improvisation, . . ."<sup>97</sup> This brought out the very best in Bix's experimentation, which created repeat customers who wanted to come back to dance and listen to "hot jazz" variations from the last time. With greater confidence in reading music, Bix created a following of customers who loved listening to the typical "chase chorus" of the jazz band by creating an improvised "dialogue" with Tram with musical statements and response.

Besides the qualitative improvement from playing with "Tram," Bix and Russell developed in another direction. Pee Wee Russell explained this way: "The thing about Bix's music is that he drove a band. He more or less made you play whether you wanted to or not. If you had any talent at all he made you play better. It had to do for one thing with the way he played lead. It had to do with his whole feeling for ensemble playing."<sup>98</sup> Russell had talent and interacted with Bix's experimental musical language. He recalled that "we built nifty little things into our arrangements that were so risky, or better music of that time that more than one of the managers . . . came to us and said, 'For God's Sake! What are you doing?' . . . Of course we could not

explain it."<sup>99</sup> Almost ninety years ago, Bix created modern concepts of jazz, and certainly fulfilled a typical version of this: "to sustain and destabilize—that's as good a definition of . . . jazz, . . ."<sup>100</sup> By the holiday season, the band was in "full swing." Bix wrote Hoagy Carmichael a letter on 15 December 1925: "We have absolutely the hottest band in the country. We're playing at the Arcadian here nightly and are panicking the town."<sup>101</sup>

At the same time, Bix still continued his family's idea of Americanization by attending performances of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra with his friends Bud Hasler and Pee Wee Russell. Of the ten programs that trio attended on Friday afternoons between 6 November 1925 and 12 March 1926, Bix heard classical, romantic and modern composers.<sup>102</sup> The orchestra played many standard selections with excerpts from Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Bach, Beethoven, Hayden, Schubert, Brahms, Mendelssohn and Handel. These were certainly familiar to Bix from his musical childhood, but he now heard them as a professional musician, and for the first time he considered them as possibly being incorporated them into jazz. There were also performances of the Russian romantic musicians: Rachmaninoff, Borodin, Tchaikowsky and Rimsky-Korsakoff; Strauss symphonic music; and the all Wagnerian program of 5 March 1926. This was a compelling line-up of both romantic and modern music which influenced Bix for the remainder of his short career.

The nine months in St. Louis were productive for Bix and the result was the end of his regional apprenticeship. He would never again have the time and the friendship of two equally talented musicians. Tram and Pee Wee Russell "were often compelled towards a more advanced musical idiom than was the current in jazz. Only Bix and Pee Wee were gifted enough to realize the implications. . . . But Bix died before his personal development had gone far enough. . . . But the trends were there—and Trumbauer was deeply involved in them."<sup>103</sup> By May 1926, Bix intuitively made decisions which influenced the rest of his life. Probably the most profound was fitting his Chicago experiences into his brief St. Louis period: "he found that the stalest cliché at the Chauffeur's Club [a Black night club] could bring down the house at the Arcadia. Beiderbecke gained an enthusiastic following among White jazz fans for playing music that they could have heard everywhere if segregation had not limited Black artists to mostly Black audiences."<sup>104</sup> But he continued to modify and experiment with the jazz he heard, and translated it into an acceptable sound for customers wanting to dance.

At age twenty-three, the public perception of Bix became fixed as a jazz musician's musician, and his "curious individuality as a jazz musician, and his rare ability to evoke in the listener a range of emotions not so common in jazz as one thinks."<sup>105</sup> Richard Sudhalter has remarked that the legends and

stories about Bix developed out of a post-adolescent *Sehnsucht* or yearning for what was lost.<sup>106</sup> For his friends and admiring colleagues, he remained an enigma. "Introverted, sensitive, generous, shy, fatalistic, humorous and above all, scattered—these character descriptions of Bix Beiderbecke were known by the people 'who knew him well'; but even they 'have admitted that they never quite made sense out of it, except as a musician.'"<sup>107</sup> Duncan Schiedt has expressed this view of Bix as a flawed hero of the Roaring Twenties. "It was as if he were the embodiment of young idealism, the innocence that still lay deep in their own makeup, layered over as it might be with veneers of commercialism."<sup>108</sup> The opposite view by Benny Green, has stressed the sameness of the story: "a natural musician . . . becomes *déclassé* thorough his inability to ignore his own powers. He drifts into an artistic cul-de-sac, drinks too much and dies."<sup>109</sup>

There is also the continuing story about Bix's difficulties in being part of a traveling band such as Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. In the 1940 film, *Second Chorus*, Fred Astaire plays the character Dannie O'Neill, "a minor-league jazz trumpeter [who] dismisses the idea of joining Whiteman with the comment, 'Too big a band for me. If I'd've stayed with him, I'd've lost my individuality. Same thing happened to Bix.'"<sup>110</sup> Knowing his Davenport background, and educational experiences provides an important perspective on the last years of his life because "Bix remained intellectually unaware of the process that had taken hold of him, unable to rationalize its effects, unable to help the process along, unable to opt out for the simple reason he was hardly aware he had ever opted in."<sup>111</sup>

On 20 May 1926, Bix and Pee Wee left St. Louis in order to join one of Goldkette's summer dance bands, and the fourteen weeks in Hudson Lake, Indiana was the last time Bix followed the pattern of a season from September through May, following the college calendar, with a very different summer time experience. During that summer of 1926, Bix worked to incorporate modern masters into the emerging canon of jazz. In some ways this was a compromise with the Beiderbecke family's position of Americanization. The result was the Modern Piano Suite: "In a Mist" was the first of four impressionistic and lyrical pieces: "Candle-Lights," "Flashes," and "In the Dark." For the remaining five years of his life, he continued to work daily on his music. "Numerous colleagues recalled him at the piano, 'fooling around with modern stuff,' in the words of trombonist Newell 'Spiegel' Willcox, seemingly at every opportunity."<sup>112</sup>

After 1926, Bix's music, which had been a regionally defined form of popular music, called by some Midwestern jazz, intersected with a nationalized audience, and became the popular culture version of "Dixieland Jazz." It was this Upper Midwest area which "had its own identifiable style, a band sound

and rhythmic outlook [where] . . . the Midwesterners bounced; ardent fans, defined the way they played as 'sock-time,' giving the impression of being at once tight and relaxed."<sup>113</sup> Bix had his first experience with radio when the Goldkette summer band did several broadcasts on WSBT, a South Bend radio station. It was during this last "lake summer" engagement, that Bix and Tram visited Jean Goldkette in Detroit, who had several orchestras ready for regional tours. He named Trumbauer the head of one of the orchestras; soon thereafter, Bix returned to Detroit, where he joined the combined Goldkette Orchestra.

By joining a jazz band which also recorded on a regular basis, Bix gained a potential source of permanence to present to a national audience the sound that Bix, Tram and Pee Wee had invented in St. Louis. Eventually the Goldkette Orchestra traveled to St. Louis for the Independence Day weekend. After a month's hiatus, they returned to New York City for a few weeks, and it was during this period that Bix sat down and played his first composition for a recording of "In a Mist." Hoagy Carmichael later described the sound as having "a grayish-white sound, a Germanic sound that colors his best work."<sup>114</sup> Soon after he joined Paul Whiteman and his national touring orchestra.

During the next year of his life, Bix experienced the apogee of his career. After some preliminary contact, an agreement was made with Paul Whiteman, and both Tram and Bix joined his band in Indianapolis on 28 October 1927. Whiteman billed himself as "The King of Jazz," and his success in the latter half of the 1920s came from his popular combination of dance music and the latest jazz numbers. A few days later, the band was in St. Louis, where Bix and Tram had many friends; the band stayed for November, before a recording session at the end of the month in New York City. When Bix became a member of the group, he successfully challenged Whiteman's long-time lead cornetist, Henry Busse. In a later recording session of 25 November 1927, Whiteman's arranger assigned solo spaces to both Busse and Bix for recording "Mary." Busse's preference for a muted trumpet initially stated the theme, and from a contemporary account, Bix took "over the brasses for the verse, delivering them and the entire ensemble into the sunshine of swing. Toward the end of the performance, Bix begins his flaming eight-bar improvisation with an important rip and, leading the brasses in contrapuntal figures, [and] all but drowns out Busse's reprise of the theme."<sup>115</sup> Matty Malneck, violinist and arranger, recalled that when Bix came into the Whiteman orchestra, "Busse didn't dig that kind of music. There was a disagreement in principle, a disagreement in thought. The diehards in the band never wanted Bix and Trumbauer."<sup>116</sup>

Underneath the myth of musical differences of opinion, there was

tension which becomes more understandable by realizing the ethnic context. Karl Gert zur Heide has made the connection that Bix's paternal grandfather came from Benninghausen in Westphalia, while Busse was born in nearby Magdeburg.<sup>117</sup> Bix understood enough German to face Busse's criticism. Heinrich Busse (1894–1955) arrived in America in 1910, and moved to San Francisco by 1917; he played the trumpet with Whiteman's Orchestra from 1918–28, specializing in mutes, fast vibrati, and playing upon a facial resemblance to Whiteman.<sup>118</sup> He had accompanied the orchestra when it went to England in 1923, the two extended American tours of 1924–25, and the tour to Germany in June 1926. When Whiteman gave the members a break from 5–19 June, Henry Busse took Paul Whiteman's sister Vanda Whiteman, to tour the area around Magdeburg where his father still lived.<sup>119</sup> A year later, Busse was the highest paid member of the band at \$350 per week.<sup>120</sup>

The recording session was followed by performances in Chicago and Cleveland by early December 1927. For the first four months of 1928, Whiteman's Band stayed on the East Coast, centered in New York City. It was on Tuesday night, 24 April 1928, that the NBC national radio network featured Whiteman's band at midnight. This was the show where Bix played his composition "In a Mist," which was carried live on WOC-AM radio in Davenport, Iowa. His mother's public comment was that "we can always tell when Bix's horn comes in. . . . The air is carried out by the other cornetist, but the sudden perky blare and the unexpected trills—those are the jazz parts, and they are Leon's."<sup>121</sup> This was followed six months later when Bix played "In a Mist" in Carnegie Hall on 7 October 1928, as part of Whiteman's the centerpiece solo for his "Third Experiment in Modern Music." Two weeks later the band was touring the southern states, appearing in New Orleans on 28 October 1928. There were two concerts at the St. Charles Theater, and at the start of the second one, Whiteman gave Bix twenty minutes to play "Dinah" and other solos; later that evening Bix met with Nick La Rocca, his childhood jazz idol from the Original Dixieland Jazz Band who was now retired, at a big party.<sup>122</sup> In the space of six months, Bix had reached his intuitionally defined life goals, which coincided with his family's view of successful Americanization.

This was emphasized by Whiteman's occasional tutorials for the young Bix, which paralleled the St. Louis experience. "Bix Beiderbecke, bless his soul, was crazy about the modern composers . . . but he had no time for the classics. One evening I took him to the opera. It happened to be *Siegfried*. When he heard the bird calls in the third act, with those intervals, that are modern today, when he began to realize the leitmotifs of the opera were dressed, undressed, disguised, broken down, and built again in every conceivable fashion, he decided that old man Wagner wasn't so corny after all

and that swing musicians didn't know such a helluva lot."<sup>123</sup>

By the end of Bix's career, Paul Whiteman remained a strong supporter of Bix and his music. The "King of Jazz" was unique in his role as an impresario who combined classical music, the semi-classical music of Victor Herbert, the latest popular music, and jazz. "Far from being the stodgy and complacent money-maker . . . [.] Whiteman was in fact a restlessly experimental musician always open to new ideas."<sup>124</sup> When he began to be recognized, an early *New Yorker* profile captured him in print as a thirty-six-year-old man who was "flabby, virile, quick, coarse, untidy, and sleek, with a hard core of shrewdness in an envelope of sentimentalism, striped ties, perspiration and fine musical instincts."<sup>125</sup> His success with the Aeolian Hall concert of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," on 12 February 1924, was based not only on the idea of "an experiment in music," but establishing himself as the leading proponent of new types of jazz and featuring a parody of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, which had been Bix's inspiration since 1918.<sup>126</sup>

It was at this high point in his career, when drinking caught up with Bix and destroyed his life. He had been a heavy drinker since 1921, and in the fall of 1922, the first independent report of his alcoholism appeared. Bix was part of a six-piece jazz band that played briefly in Syracuse, New York; Eddie Condon recalled the reaction of an old friend of Bix's from Davenport, Wayne Hostetter. Hostetter, who knew German-Iowan cultural values, accepted liquor availability in cities such as Davenport, although it had been illegal in the state of Iowa since the 1880s. Although the generally acknowledged support for Personal Freedom had been legally abridged by the Prohibition amendment to the U. S. Constitution, Hostetter was surprised at Bix's tolerance for hard liquor. The band members liked the cheap "booze" available in Syracuse, New York, where they were playing. The cost was ten beers for one dollar, but Condon explained that Bix had a fondness for the more expensive alcohol mixed with cherry pop and fake gin.<sup>127</sup> He started to become dependent upon the gin before performing. And with the exception of the "double life" he had led in St. Louis, he did little to follow a sober version of his family's career views; he became entrenched in the musical culture of alcoholism; it was certainly not a uniquely German-American behavior, but his character trait of stubbornness remained. "There was a single-minded dedication to perfecting his own concept of jazz but, working against him, a defiance of authority and accepted behavior that finally prevented Bix from attaining the artistic satisfaction that should have been his."<sup>128</sup>

The beginning of the end was not inevitable, but it cast a long shadow on the last three years of his life.<sup>129</sup> The recurring pattern was one of breakdown, rehabilitation, and brief recovery. There were still flashes of brilliance left in Bix's playing. When Bix and Tram returned to St. Louis again with the

Whiteman Band, they played spectacularly well again at the Washington University Field House on 31 May 1929. "The shock of being no longer able to hold his place in Whiteman's band" was immense; "the golden door was being slammed in his face, and for the rest of his life Bix seems not to have cared very much what else happened to him."<sup>130</sup>

During 1929, Bix's career began to recede. Otis Ferguson, the gifted reviewer of the *New Republic*, who first recognized Bix's importance to jazz in the late 1930s, commented that the drinking took a while, but eventually destroyed him. "He lacked a natural brake in that; and his constitution was so good to start with that he wasn't retarded physically until he'd blown the fuse on the whole works."<sup>131</sup>

The end of his real hopes and dreams may have occurred in the summer of 1930. He had continued to correspond with his former girl friend, Ruth Schaffner, from St. Louis. In one of his last letters, he explained that "I'm joining Paul [Whiteman] again in two weeks in Chicago from where we go to New York and then possibly London, Eng. for a few weeks to be present at the premier of the picture 'King of the Jazz Revue.'<sup>132</sup> This was mere speculation and he never went to Europe, although his parents did. It seems hard to believe that in the first year of what was known as a "business depression," Bix's parents and his aunt and uncle went on a trip to Europe, on the Hamburg-American Line SS *Cleveland*. It had been two decades since Charles had traveled with his mother "Lutie"; for his wife Adele, and his brother Bismarck and sister-in-law Agatha, it was a first-time event. In late 1929 the rate for North German Lloyd's *Bremen* was \$325 for a first class ticket.<sup>133</sup> By the next summer eastbound travel was off 18% by the end of June, when round trip tourist cabin tickets were selling for \$200–\$250.<sup>134</sup> At this time a gallon of gas cost \$.10; an approved master recording of a jazz group was about \$100.<sup>135</sup> They planned on leaving Davenport on 15 April to visit their daughter, before leaving on a tour to England, France and Switzerland arranged by a Chicago travel agency, and returned on 11 August 1930.<sup>136</sup> During the summer of 1930, Bix was in New York City, trying to find any kind of work. In the midst of this, he briefly met his family when they returned from Europe in early August. He also tried to gain some publicity with a "trial balloon." In the weekly column this news item appeared: "Bix Beiderbecke starting his own band. Formerly with Whiteman Orchestra and wants Whiteman to manage him."<sup>137</sup>

A year later Bix was dead at the age of thirty-one, and the process of editing and myth-making began to hide the importance of German-American ethnicity in his career. The trajectory of his musical development was greatly aided by the German-Iowan infrastructure which he encountered throughout his short life. The intersection of his regionally based early jazz



with the popular culture of the late 1920s suggests the continuing influence of his year in St. Louis. The result was a musical greatness which came from German-American influences.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Burnett James, *Essays on Jazz* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1961), 112. There is also the continuing influence of ideas first presented by Marcus Lee Hansen, at a regional colloquy, later developed into *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant* (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1938). According to two auditors at that presentation, Hansen remained tentative in his ideas, which have continued to influence historical writing to the present day. My thanks to Joe Fackel, and members of the Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Festival Executive Committee who invited me to present an early version of this essay on 27 July 2007 at the 36th annual festival. Karl Gert zur Heide and Dudley Priester were also helpful.

<sup>2</sup> Benny Green, *The Reluctant Art: the Growth of Jazz* (New York: Horizon Press, 1963), 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Essays on Jazz*, 113.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Dregni, *Django: The Life and Music of a Gypsy Legend* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 181.

<sup>5</sup> This concept was first explored by Hildegard Binder Johnson, "The Location of German Immigrants in the Midwest," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 41, no. 41 (March 1951): 1–41.

<sup>6</sup> *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001). Vol. 1 covers the region's writers in depth.

<sup>7</sup> James Gilbert, *Whose Fair? Experience, Memory and the History of the Great St. Louis Exposition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 146

<sup>8</sup> Howard Reich, "Invisible Man?," *Chicago Tribune* (24 January 2010), Sect. 4, p. 4. Karl Gert zur Heide has developed an interesting ragtime thesis pertaining to Oriental influences in the period 1894–1904. See Rainer Lotz, "Black Music Prior to the First World War: American Origins and German Perspectives," in *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe*, ed. Neil A Wynn (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 68–69.

<sup>9</sup> Richard M. Sudhalter, *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contributions to Jazz, 1915–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8. Sudhalter (1938–2008) wrote the standard biography of Bix Beiderbecke in 1974, which has established the major timeline for Bix's short career.

<sup>10</sup> John S. Wilson, *The Collector's Jazz: Traditional and Swing* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1955), 7.

<sup>11</sup> James, 111. One of the earliest expressions of this idea was described by Chadwick Hansen, "Social Influence on Jazz Style: Chicago, 1920–1930," *American Quarterly* 12, 4 (Winter 1960): 493–507. Originally it was a Black English expression for the vagina, and also sexual intercourse; therefore it meant anything exciting or stimulating. Eric Townley, *Tell Your Story* (Chigwell, England: Storyville Publications, 1976), 173. The book is a useful

compendium with brief descriptions of 2,700 recordings between 1917 and 1950. The most famous definition came from Fitzgerald: "the word jazz in its progress towards respectability has meant first sex, then dancing, then music." "Echoes of the Jazz Age," in *The Crack-Up* (New York: Scribner's 1931), 16.

<sup>12</sup> Merrill Hammond, quoted by Sudhalter, *Bix, Man and Legend* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1974), 106.

<sup>13</sup> Duncan Schiedt, *The Jazz State of Indiana* (Pittsboro, Indiana: privately printed, 1977), 131.

<sup>14</sup> Wingly Manone and Paul Vandervorter II, *Trumpet on the Wing* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), 57.

<sup>15</sup> Sudhalter, *Lost Chords*, 802. Additional information is presented by John Pierre Lion, *Bix: the Definitive Biography of a Jazz Legend*, trans. Gabrielle Page-Fort, Michael Heckman, and Norman Field (New York: Continuum, 2005), 234–35.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Wareing, *Bugles for Beiderbecke* (London: Sedgewick and Jackson, 1958), 195.

<sup>17</sup> George Avakian, "Bix Beiderbecke," *The Art of Jazz*, ed. Martin T. Williams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 40.

<sup>18</sup> The name Bismarck was given to his father in honor of the Iron Chancellor who had created the German Empire. See Jean Améry, *Im Banne des Jazz: Bildnisse großer Jazz-Musiker* (Stuttgart: Albert Müller Verlag, 1961). His brother Burnie recalled that in 1920 "when the phone rang and someone asked for Bix, we would have to ask, 'Do you want the coal man (which was Dad), or the soldier (me) or the musician?'" Quoted by Sudhalter, *Bix, Man and Legend*, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 211.

<sup>20</sup> *International Genealogical Index*, vol. 51, 39N and 15E. This information was kindly provided by David Dreyer to the author. Family stories provide an even lengthier musical tradition. His great-grandfather (1799–1851) Heinrich Christoph "Bei-der Becke" (by the creek) not only fought in the Battle of Waterloo, but later became a professional organist, and settled near Paderborn in Westphalia.

<sup>21</sup> Henry Downer, *History of Scott County* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1910), 2:565–66.

<sup>22</sup> Davenport *Democrat* (20 October 1901).

<sup>23</sup> Downer, Vol. 2: 794.

<sup>24</sup> "U. S. Passport Applications, 1906–1925," <http://search.ancestryinstitution.com>, accessed by Constance Potter, Archivist, 1 July 2010, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D. C.

<sup>25</sup> Karl Gert zur Heide Collection; Potter, "Index to Trans-Atlantic Vessel Arrivals at, and Departures from, Eastern U. S. and Canadian Ports, 1904–1939," 201.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Harry Hansen, "Davenport Boyhood," *Palimpsest* 37, 4 (April 1956): 162–64, 169; "Hansen," *Davenport Times* (13 December 1907).

<sup>28</sup> William Roba, "Forgotten German-Iowan Alternatives," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 38 (2003): 99, 109.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted by Richard Hadlock, *Jazz Masters of the Twenties*, 76.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* The official enrollment appears in the Davenport Public School, *Annual Register, 1919-1913*, unpaginated. Former teacher, principal and school board member Robert McCue was very helpful in providing information from the Davenport Schools Museum.

<sup>31</sup> "7-Year Old boy Musical Wonder," *Davenport Democrat* (4 July 1910), 8

<sup>32</sup> *Davenport Illustrated* (Saengerfest Souvenir, 1898).

<sup>33</sup> *Davenport Democrat* (4 July 1910).

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted by Jim Arpy, Bix Special Section, *Quad-City Times* (26 July 1988).

<sup>35</sup> Wilbur Cross, *Lee's Legacy of Leadership* (Essex, Connecticut: Greenwich Publishing, 1990), 64.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Davenport Schools Museum, letter (20 November 1985), *Annual Register*.

<sup>38</sup> Hadlock, 76.

<sup>39</sup> Dudley Priester conversation with the author, 21 August 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Sudhalter, *Bix*, p. 41. In men's doubles, Bix and Dick Von Maur lost to Harold Bechtel and Lawrence Hill, Davenport *Democrat* (13 August 1924). Family members Arlene and Richard Bix Beiderbecke were members in the 1950s; Connie Heckert, *More Than 100 Years of Fine Traditions: The Outing Club, 1891–1999* (Privately printed, 2000), 54.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted by Julie Jensen, *Moline Dispatch* (19 July 1987).

<sup>42</sup> Davenport High School, *Blackhawk* 1, 12 (17 May 1918).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> *Davenport Times* (8 May 1918).

<sup>45</sup> More detailed analysis appears in William Roba, *German-Iowan Studies: Selected Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 45–60.

<sup>46</sup> See note 20.

<sup>47</sup> Letter (20 November 1985), Davenport Schools Museum.

<sup>48</sup> Davenport High School Classes, 1924 & 1925, *Newsletter* (February 1991), [4].

<sup>49</sup> Velma Frick (1892–1990), in a telephone conversation with this writer.

<sup>50</sup> Sudhalter, *Bix*, 38–39.

<sup>51</sup> Wareing, 157.

<sup>52</sup> Sudhalter, *Bix*, 48.

<sup>53</sup> Davenport High School, *Bulletin* 4, 9, showed that his brother was a Kappa Delta; by the time he was in high school, many of his friends had pledged KD. This was suggested by Dudley Priester who was familiar with the high school fraternity. By the 1930s the group met monthly at members's houses to play craps!

<sup>54</sup> *Rock Island Argus* (6 May 2001), obituary.

<sup>55</sup> Sudhalter, *Bix*, 49–51.

<sup>56</sup> Sudhalter, *Lost Chords*, 53.

<sup>57</sup> 1910, 1920 U. S. Census. The Ivens lived there from 1919–1922, but Mary O. was living at 1703 Farnham Ave. in 1920. This may have been her mother (*Davenport City Directory*). This event is difficult to analyze; this part of the essay has been aided by the timely comments of Brendan Wolfe, an editor in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the author of "Finding Bix," a forthcoming book about the Beiderbecke legend, to be published by Speck Press. Some of his difficulties in researching Beiderbecke appear in "When Scholarship Meets Wikipedia," *Los Angeles Times* (15 January 2010).

<sup>58</sup> *Police Blotter*, 302, Special Collections, Davenport Public Library; this was first discovered in 2002 and first referred to by Richard M. Sudhalter, *Lost Chords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 803, n. 31. There is no basis for knowing exactly what was said, although it has been asserted that Bix asked her "to lift her skirt." See Lion, 111.

<sup>59</sup> Palmer School of Chiropractic *Yearbook* (October 1921).

<sup>60</sup> 1920 Census extended on-line information.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted by Glenda Wiese, "Head, Heart, and Hands: Elbert Hubbard's Impact on B. J. Palmer," *Chiropractic History* 23, 2 (2003): 34. It is an interesting "coincidence" that his son, Dr. David Palmer, Vice President of the Palmer School of Chiropractic and President of the Davenport Chamber of Commerce in the 1950s, was on the National Memorial Committee which created a public celebration for the birth date of Bix in 1953. *Moline Dispatch* (4 March

1953). A more complete compilation of primary documents appears in Rich Johnson, *Bix: The Davenport Album* (Barnegat, New Jersey: Razor Edge Press, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> *PSC Yearbook* (October 1921).

<sup>63</sup> Criminal Docket No. 4188, "No Bill filed" in State of Iowa vs. Leon B. Beiderbecke, 26 September 1921.

<sup>64</sup> Dolores Myer Williams, "Music on the Streckfus Steamers," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 24, 3 (April 1968): 247.

<sup>65</sup> *S & D Reflector* (September 1965): 247; Sudhalter, Bix, *Man and Legend*, 344–45. The Streckfus family migrated from Bavaria, and the Captain's attitude certainly affected "the kids" of the 1920s, based upon contemporary accounts!

<sup>66</sup> Ralph Berton, *Remembering Bix: A Memoir of the Jazz Age* (New York: Harper, 1974), 23–24.

<sup>67</sup> Philip R. and Linda K. Evans, *Bix: The Leon Bix Beiderbecke Story* (Bakersfield, Connecticut: Prelike Press, 1998), 78.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>69</sup> U. S. Census, 1880, 1920, Ancestry.com, accessed 26 January 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Letter of 14 August 1973, quoted by Evans, 85. See the earlier article by Merigold, "Bix at the Academy," *Jazz Journal* (September 1960), 19.

<sup>71</sup> *The Jazz Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 69.

<sup>72</sup> Rich Johnson, *The Davenport Album* (Barnegat, New Jersey: Razor Edge Press, 2009), 562.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 597; Sudhalter, 348.

<sup>74</sup> Schiedt, vii.

<sup>75</sup> The classic source for their friendship, conducted primarily in Chicago speakeasies is captured by Mezz Mezzrow, *Really the Blues* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1946), 93, 104, 136 and 314. They first met on 12 July 1921 in Louisiana, Missouri. Armstrong was playing in Fate Marables band on the *St. Paul* excursion steamboat, and Bix was cruising on the *Majestic* in the vicinity and heard the band.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Meckna, *Satchmo: The Louis Armstrong Encyclopedia* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 209.

<sup>77</sup> *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya: The Story of Jazz by the Men Who Made It*, ed. Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1955), 183.

<sup>78</sup> William Howland Kenney, *Jazz on the River* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 116–17. A brilliant discussion of ODJB appeared in Launcelot Allen Pyke II's "Jazz, 1920–1927: An Analytical Study," 2 vols. (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1963).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 276, 785 n. 6. Sudhalter explained that "The master-disciple relationship is even more discernible in La Rocca's work in the ODJB's May, 1921 version of 'Jazz Me Blues.' The cornet lead, on the beat, prefigures Bix's own 1927 record of the same number." (799, n. 14).

<sup>80</sup> "Jazz Masters," Prologue, 4, MS, Archives of Music, University of Indiana. In the Carmichael Room on campus, staff member Megan Glass pointed out the original copy of Bix's later composition, "Candlelight," autographed by Bix, with the 1920s college slang, "I am not a swan."

<sup>81</sup> "Jazz: Some Little Known Aspects," *The Symposium* (October 1930): 509.

<sup>82</sup> The C-melody saxophone was one whole step above the tenor sax which had almost replaced it in the late 1920s.

<sup>83</sup> Six members of the ten piece Arcadian House Band were German-Americans.

<sup>84</sup> *Carbondale Daily Press* (29 January 1926). 1917 was the same year that an Austrian coal-miner, Robert Prager, was lynched in nearby Collinsville, Illinois, by a large mob motivated by the anti-German hysteria.

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<sup>85</sup> “Trumbauer for many years nurtured an ambition to write a book on his music career. It also was to be the definitive text on Beiderbecke. He tantalized jazz historians with the statement that he was saving all his musical lore, . . . for his own book,” *Down Beat* (25 July 1956). Trumbauer entitled his unpublished book, “Twenty Years in the Music Business,” *Down Beat* (15 April 1942).

<sup>86</sup> Benny Green, *The Reluctant Art: The Growth of Jazz* (New York: Horizon Press, 1963), 32.

<sup>87</sup> *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 150. He probably played at the Normandie Golf Course, which was the closest to his hotel.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Hillbert, *Pee Wee Russell: The Life of a Jazzman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 34.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* An older classmate, Lowell N. Johnson, attended high school at Western Military Academy

in Alton from 1913–17 and remembered the required basic training. *Moline Dispatch* (11 March 2006), obituary.

<sup>90</sup> Hilbert, 35–37.

<sup>91</sup> George Lipsitz, *The Sidewalks of St. Louis: Places, People and Politics in an American City* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 82.

<sup>92</sup> George Foster with Tom Stoddard, *Pops Foster: The Autobiography of a New Orleans Jazzman* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 157.

<sup>93</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (19 July 1964). Kathleen J. Smith, Librarian for the History and Genealogy Department, St. Louis Public Library, was very helpful in retrieving information on the three hotels that Bix lived in St. Louis, 1925–26. From a contemporary account, “the Hotel Coronado has become an authentic setting, for the social activities and day-by-day life of most exclusive St. Louisans and their visiting guests. A house physician is constantly in attendance for our guests.” Quoted by Patricia Treacy, *The Grand Hotels of St. Louis* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 97.

<sup>94</sup> Lion, 108; *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (14 September 1989), 1B, 7B.

<sup>95</sup> Phillip R. Evans and Larry Kiner, *Tram: The Frank Trumbauer Story: A Bio-Discography*, *Studies in Jazz*, no. 18 (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 54.

<sup>96</sup> *Essays on Jazz* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1961), 129.

<sup>97</sup> Avakian, 72.

<sup>98</sup> *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 153.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 381–87.

<sup>100</sup> Dave Kehr, “Popcorn Reverie,” Review of Gary Giddens, *Warning Shadows*, *New York Times Book Review* (22 August 2010), 17.

<sup>101</sup> Archives of Music, Indiana University.

<sup>102</sup> St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, *Programs, Season 1925–1926*. Archives—Missouri Historical Society. Theoretically it would have been possible for him to get some idea of the modern works even if he had remained in Davenport. The Spring Festival Tour of the symphony included Davenport, Iowa on 24 March 1926.

<sup>103</sup> James, 71.

<sup>104</sup> Lipsitz, 82.

<sup>105</sup> Green, 41.

<sup>106</sup> *Lost Chords*, 217.

<sup>107</sup> Arrigo Polillo, *Jazz: Geschichte und Persönlichkeiten* (Munich: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 1981), 383.

<sup>108</sup> Schied, 130.

<sup>109</sup> Green, 46–47.

<sup>110</sup> Benny Goodman and Irving Kolodin, *Kingdom of Swing* (New York: Stackpole and Sons, 1939), 82.

<sup>111</sup> Green, 25.

<sup>112</sup> Sudhalter, *Chords*, 429.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

<sup>114</sup> "Band Masters," unpublished ms. by Hoagy Carmichael, University of Indiana Archives, XII-8.

<sup>115</sup> Giddins, 168–69.

<sup>116</sup> Quoted by William H. Youngren, "Paul Whiteman in Transition," *Bennington Review* (November 1978): 32.

<sup>117</sup> Electronic message to this author, 4 October 2006.

<sup>118</sup> Don Rayno, *Paul Whiteman: Pioneer in American Music*, vol. 1, 1890–1930 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 347. Paul Whiteman (1886–1967) lived on the West Coast before joining the U. S. Naval Reserve (which Frank Trumbauer also joined), while playing in the San Francisco Orchestra from 1915–1918. He organized a band which played popular dance music at the new Fairmount Hotel until 1923, so he experimented in playing a popular version of syncopated music, or "peppy music" in other words, jazz. When he moved east in 1923, he created a band to play dance music, but also numerous satellite bands from 1923–1928.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 188. See also *Variety* (28 March 1928); he finished out his contract which lasted until September, and appeared in the movie, "The King of Jazz" (1930).

<sup>121</sup> Davenport *Democrat* (25 April 1928).

<sup>122</sup> Bruce Raeburn, Bix Beiderbecke Festival Educational Seminar, 26 July 2007.

<sup>123</sup> *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 153.

<sup>124</sup> Rayno, xii.

<sup>125</sup> "The Pied Piper," *The New Yorker* (27 November 1926), 26.

<sup>126</sup> Sudhalter, *Lost Chords*, 191.

<sup>127</sup> Condon, 88.

<sup>128</sup> Hadlock, 77.

<sup>129</sup> Bix's alcoholic addiction is traced in greater detail in a chapter by Frederick J. Spencer, *Jazz and Death: Medical Profiles of Jazz Greats* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 99–106. Brendan Wolf has discussed this at some length in his forthcoming book.

<sup>130</sup> Benny Green, *The Reluctant Art: The Growth of Jazz* (New York: Horizon Press, 1963), 42.

<sup>131</sup> "Young Man With a Horn Again," *New Republic* (18 November 1940), 593.

<sup>132</sup> Bix Beiderbecke Museum, special archives, Putnam Museum, Davenport, Iowa.

<sup>133</sup> *New York Times* (22 October 1929).

<sup>134</sup> "Ocean Travel Off: 18% Less than 1929," *New York Times* (23 July 1930), 42.

<sup>135</sup> Quoting Randy Sandke, at the Bix Beiderbecke Jazz Festival Educational Seminar (24 July 2010).

<sup>136</sup> Bismarck's letter to his daughter (4 April 1930) and an undated letter, *Bix: The Davenport Album*, 560, 562; Potter and Gert zur Herde sources.

<sup>137</sup> *Variety*, 100, 4 (6 August 1930).