

Strike Up The Band!



Speaking of immigration stories... here's one attached to my wife's paternal great grandparent, who immigrated to the United States in the late 1800s.

This came at a time when America was enthralled by the entertainment provided by military brass bands. Gilmore's Salem Band proved to be very popular with the general public and that popularity fueled a fire that burned in the hearts of other musical entrepreneurs. John Philip Sousa, who was given the lead of the Marine Band, was certainly a force at this time. But when Giussepe Creatore burst on the scene with his Italian band, his insane popularity with the ladies, (who reportedly would swoon at his energetic performances), started a flood of Italian musicians heading across the Atlantic for the promise of fame, success, riches, and perhaps romance that was to be found in America.

Now, as our family story was told to me, Erminio was discovered by John Philip Sousa during one of his tours and, being in need of a euphonium player, encouraged Erminio to move to the United States to join him. I haven't been able to document that this exact scenario ever took place. We do have evidence that Erminio did indeed play in the Sousa band in the early 1900s but before that, there are reports of him playing for one of Sousa's contemporaries and competing bandleaders,

Alessandro Liberati and his Grand Military Band, where he was often featured as a soloist to considerable acclaim.

Whatever brought Erminio to the shores of New York, what is clear is that he and his euphonium had a long and successful musical career. He also managed to pass his musicality on to his two sons, Arthur and Frank, both of whom became working professional musicians in the NY theater and symphony halls. In fact Arthur landed a seat on what was to become the New York Philharmonic playing with and for Arturo Toscanini.

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