Kansas City Jazz: From Ragtime to Bebop—A History

Frank Driggs
Chuck Haddix

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Kansas City Jazz

This page intentionally left blank

Kansas City Jazz

From Ragtime to Bebop—A History

Frank Driggs and Chuck Haddix

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2005

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Inc., publishes works that further
Oxford University's objective of excellence
in research, scholarship, and education.

Oxford New York
Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in
Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016
www.oup.com

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Driggs, Frank.
Kansas City jazz : from ragtime to bebop / Frank Driggs and Chuck Haddix.
p. cm.
Notes: Includes bibliographical references and index.
Contents: Tales from Tom's town—Carrie's gone to Kansas City—
Get low-down blues—The territories—Blue devil blues—Moten's swing—
Until the real thing comes along—Roll 'em, Pete—Hootie's blues.
ISBN-13: 978-0-19-504767-7
ISBN-10: 0-19-504767-2
1. Jazz—Missouri—Kansas City—History and criticism.
I. Haddix, Chuck. II. Title.
ML3508.8.K37 D75 2005
781.65'09778'411—dc22
200463568

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2
Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

For the late Richard Smith, who gave so much to this project,
and Joan Peyser, for everything you are. Much love.

F. D.

In fond memory of
Milton Morris, Dave E. Dexter, Jr., and the Honorable T. J. Pendergast,
who took me to the old town, inspired me to tell the story, and made it all happen.

And for Terri Mac.

C. H.

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

THIS HISTORY OF KANSAS CITY JAZZ is decades in the making. In 1977, Frank Driggs entered into a contract with Oxford University Press to write a history of Kansas City Jazz. As the leading authority on Kansas City Jazz, he brought considerable resources to the project. Over the years, he had written extensively on the development of jazz in Kansas City and the Southwest, interviewed many of the musicians who created the tradition, and amassed a hefty collection of photos.

Driggs first heard the siren call of jazz while attending Princeton in the late 1940s. Listening to 78s of Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, Bunk Johnson, and other early New Orleans pioneers, Driggs fell under the spell of the music. After graduation, Driggs discovered Kansas City Jazz and began earnestly collecting 78 rpm discs of Bennie Moten, Count Basie, Jay McShann, and other Kansas City bands. Seeking long-out-of-print 78s, he became a regular fixture at Boris Rose's crowded studio in New York City on 15th Street east of the Third Avenue El. Rose, voluble and erudite, sold dubbed acetate discs of rare sides. More often than not, Driggs found himself standing elbow to elbow with the pale and gaunt avant-garde composer Alan Hovhaness.

Rose introduced Driggs to Marshall Stearns, whose Institute of Jazz Studies was running full blast out of his townhouse at 108 Waverly Place near Washington Square. Joining a dozen other acolytes, Driggs helped Stearns by teaching overflow adult education courses. On the side, Driggs interviewed Andy Kirk, Walter Page, Ed Lewis, and other veteran musicians from the Kansas City tradition who had settled in the New York area.

With Stearns's encouragement and financial help, Driggs went to Kansas City in October 1957 to gather more background and interviews. On the recommendation of trumpeter Ed Lewis, Driggs contacted Richard Smith, an

official with the African American Musicians Union Local 627. The two hit it off, and Smith gave Driggs entrée into the tightly knit jazz community. Driggs spent the next two weeks interviewing musicians and enjoying nightly Jay McShann's Quintet at Johnny Baker's at 55th and Troost. Driggs came away from his visit more convinced of the significance of Kansas City Jazz.

From 1961 to 1967, Driggs worked with John Hammond at Columbia Records, producing the critically acclaimed Robert Johnson reissues. Back in Kansas City in the early 1970s to review a concert of college bands for Time-Life Records, Driggs met long-time bandleader Warren Durrett and conducted more interviews. In 1974, Driggs went to work for RCA-Victor, reviving its Bluebird label. After leaving RCA-Victor in 1977, Driggs wrote several chapters on Kansas City Jazz and submitted them to Sheldon Meyer at Oxford University Press. Meyer liked what he saw and gave Driggs a contract. However, after spending the summer writing, Driggs realized he couldn't complete the book without additional research.

For more than a decade, Driggs had collected photographs and memorabilia of jazz musicians, amassing a huge collection. By 1980, the collection had become a full-time business, keeping Driggs in New York, so he put the book aside until 1987 when he returned to Kansas City for the annual conference of the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors (IAJRC) at the invitation of Duncan Schiedt. Ken Posten, a former trumpet player and head of Kansas City's Jazz Commission, picked Driggs up at the airport and squired him around town. While in Kansas City, Driggs conducted more interviews and research. Driggs enlisted Posten to help with the local research, but he soon left Kansas City for a job with KOLN in Long Beach, California. Ironically, Chuck Haddix had crossed paths with Driggs at the IAJRC conference, but the two did not meet.

Around the same time Driggs signed with Oxford, Haddix embarked on his own research into Kansas City Jazz. While working in the record business, he became friends with Jay McShann, George Salisbury, Buddy Anderson, and numerous other musicians from the golden age of Kansas City Jazz. Haddix received a crash course in the history of Kansas City Jazz from legendary club owner and raconteur Milton Morris, at his namesake club on Main Street. Inspired by Morris's stories of the glory days of Kansas City Jazz, Haddix began to explore its history in earnest. In 1984, Haddix joined the staff of KCUR-FM, Kansas City's public radio station, as a jazz and blues producer. In 1987, he became the director of the Marr Sound Archives, a collection of historic sound recordings in the Miller Nichols Library at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. Dave E. Dexter, Jr., record producer, journalist, and the first to write about Kansas City Jazz, gave his collection to the sound archives in 1988. Becoming friends, Dexter encouraged Haddix to further research and write about Kansas City Jazz.

Driggs and Haddix first met in New York during the spring of 1994. After spending the afternoon comparing notes the two decided to complete the book together. Oxford issued a new contract in 1997, including Haddix as a co-author. Haddix then proceeded to collect additional interviews and systematically make copies of coverage of the bands, musicians, and others who created Kansas City Jazz style in microfilms of the *Kansas City Call*, *Kansas City Sun*, *Kansas City American*, *Kansas City Journal-Post*, *Kansas City Star*, *Down Beat*, *Metronome*, and other publications of the day. The information gleaned from the newspapers and periodicals was then organized into a timeline that chronicled in great detail the development of Kansas City Jazz, against the background of events unfolding nationally. Working together, with considerable back and forth between New York and Kansas City, Haddix and Driggs finally finished what is the first complete history of Kansas City Jazz.

This page intentionally left blank

Kansas City Jazz

Tell us a story, and don't let it be a lie.
Let it *mean* something if it's only one note.

Gene Ramey

Introduction

Kansas City, Missouri, a cradle of jazz, along with New Orleans, Chicago, and New York, bred a distinct style of jazz that swiftly grew from ragtime to bebop. In 1921, James Scott published one of his last great rags, "Don't Jazz Me Rag (I'm Music)." Twenty years later, Charlie Parker composed "What Price Love," a bebop classic later renamed "Yardbird Suite." The golden age of Kansas City Jazz produced a legion of bands and soloists who changed the course of American music. Surprisingly, little scholarship has been devoted to the development of Kansas City Jazz.

Like Lerner and Lowe's Brigadoon, the celebrated mythical hamlet, Kansas City Jazz is an enigma, more myth than fact. Oral histories of musicians who created Kansas City jazz style relate epic tales of musical cutting contests and marathon battles of bands. Lacking context, these oral histories remain anecdotal, failing to trace the complete story of Kansas City Jazz. Generally, writers from either coast demurred spending extended stretches researching jazz in Kansas City, preferring to rely on second-hand sources. While the rise of the Kansas City jazz style and its contribution to the evolution of jazz nationally have been largely overlooked, the journey of jazz from New Orleans to New York has been well documented.

Jazz originated in New Orleans just after the turn of the century, the Creole offspring of an uneasy marriage of African-tribal and European-American musical traditions. An international port nestled on the banks of the Mississippi River, New Orleans cultivated a thriving sin industry, centered on Storyville, a city-sanctioned red-light district skirting the southwestern edge of the French Quarter. The bordellos and honky-tonks lining the narrow crowded streets of Storyville along with the dance halls scattered throughout the city provided steady work for Buddy Bolden, Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll

Morton, Kid Ory, King Oliver, Sidney Bechet, and other first-generation New Orleans jazz greats. Free from convention, they jazzed up the standard repertoire of waltzes, ragtime, plantation songs, and popular standards with blue notes, vibrato, unevenly accented 4/4 rhythm, and countermelody, creating an uninhibited mode of musical expression that at the time was indelicately referred to as "gutbucket."

Shortly after its conception in Storyville, jazz spread across the country. Pianist Jelly Roll Morton, the self-proclaimed inventor of jazz, traveled widely from California to New York, heralding the arrival of the musical upstart. Bassist Bill Johnson led the first band to venture outside of New Orleans. After traveling across the Southwest with a brass band on a vaudeville circuit, Johnson stopped off in Los Angeles, where he formed the Creole Orchestra featuring his brother Dink on drums and cornetist Freddie Keppard. In 1917, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, five white musicians from New Orleans, introduced the term jazz to the national vernacular with the wildly successful Victor recording "Dixie Jazz Band One-Step/Livery Stable Blues," recorded in New York. The closing of the Storyville district in November 1917 by the U.S. Navy hastened the exodus of New Orleans bands and musicians. New Orleans jazz, distinguished by collective improvisation from the front line featuring a cornet, trombone, and clarinet, evolved little beyond the original style but greatly influenced the development of jazz in other cities, particularly Chicago. With Storyville gone, a mass exodus of musicians journeyed north up the Mississippi and by railroad to Chicago and other northern cities.

Strategically situated on the southwestern shore of Lake Michigan near the confluence of rivers flowing west to the Mississippi River, Chicago brokered goods and services moving east and west on the national waterways. Chicago readily grew from a swampy wilderness outpost into a bustling center for transportation, commerce, manufacturing, and entertainment, becoming the nation's second largest city by 1900. Mayor Big Bill Thompson, a flamboyant, hard-drinking former Nebraska cowboy, first elected in 1915, encouraged the proliferation of cabarets and dance halls in the African American neighborhood surrounding State Street on the South Side. Protected by the Mayor's office, the clubs carried on business as usual after the enactment of Prohibition in January 1920. An astute politician, Thompson rewarded the loyalty and votes of African Americans with jobs in city government. Drawn by opportunity, African Americans from the Mississippi Delta to the Gulf Coast migrated to Chicago in droves. New Orleans jazz expatriates inspired the development of the Chicago style, which emphasized individual soloists and a freer rhythmic approach. At the center of this exciting new jazz was the extraordinary cornetist Louis Armstrong, jazz's first great soloist, whose Hot Five and Hot Seven groups revolutionized the jazz form.

Arriving in Chicago on the Panama Limited railroad with instruments in hand, King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, and other New Orleans jazz greats

stepped up to steady engagements at Lincoln Gardens, De Luxe Café, Entertainer's Café, and other top night spots. The city remained segregated into a patchwork of ethnic neighborhoods, but African Americans and whites mingled freely in the black and tan clubs dotting the South Side, known as the "Stroll." Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, Mezz Mezzrow, Jimmy McPartland, Frank Teschemacher, Bud Freeman, and other young white musicians idolized Oliver, Armstrong, Johnny Dodds, and other New Orleans musicians. Astute students of the New Orleans style, they added polished solos and rhythmic abandon, moving to an original Chicago sound. The sweep of a civic cleanup changed their musical direction. On the heels of a crackdown on the speakeasies in the mid-1920s, a host of Chicago musicians moved on to New York.

New York, the nation's largest metropolitan area, produced a number of outstanding big jazz bands, leading to the advent of arrangements orchestrating the sections and soloists that greatly enhanced jazz's popularity. New York served as the entertainment industry's hub. Film companies located on Long Island's Bay Shore captured the antics of the Keystone Cops and romantic escapades of Rudolph Valentino. In Manhattan, tunesmiths, hunched over pianos, frantically churned out catchy hits and sentimental favorites for the publishing houses lining West 28th Street between Broadway and Sixth Avenue, known as "Tin Pan Alley." Uptown in Harlem, W. C. Handy, the father of the blues, operated the Pace-Handy Music Company, the leading publisher of African American composers. Theatrical revues premiered the season's hit tunes in the stately theaters on Broadway before heading out on the vaudeville circuits crisscrossing the country. Shut out of Broadway, African American composers such as Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle, and James P. Johnson mounted their own grand productions at the Lafayette and other theaters in Harlem. "Shuffle Along," "Africana," and a string of touring African American revues gave audiences across the nation a glimpse of the exotic sophistication of Harlem, the nucleus of African American culture. Young writers and intellectuals like Langston Hughes flocked to Harlem, creating a renaissance of literature and music. At the time, the literature of the Harlem renaissance received little notice outside of the African American community, but the music created an international sensation.

Bandleader James Reese Europe pioneered New York's orchestral style of jazz. Europe, leading the Clef Club, a group of professional musicians and vocalists, presented a series of programs featuring ragtime, band favorites, and light classical selections at the Manhattan Casino, a spacious ballroom at 155th Street and Eighth Avenue. During World War I, then Lieutenant Europe led the legendary 369th Infantry "Hellfighter" band across France. Back in the states, Europe incorporated jazz into his sixty-piece brass band's repertoire and toured the country, until he was murdered by a deranged band member in 1919. Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington filled the void left by Europe's untimely death.

Pianist Fletcher Henderson hailed from a middle-class family in Georgia. Moving to New York in 1920, Henderson worked as a song plugger for Pace-Handy music before joining the staff of Black Swan records, a pioneering African American label. The phenomenal success of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues," recorded for the OKeh label in 1920, spawned a thriving race record industry that targeted African Americans. An in-demand session musician, Henderson became the accompanist of choice for Bessie Smith and a bevy of leading women blues shouters. Henderson fronted a series of small pickup ensembles, one of which evolved into a full-size orchestra by 1923. He carefully selected band members, recruiting Coleman Hawkins, a tenor saxophonist with a big dense tone, and Louis Armstrong as star soloists. Arranger Don Redman orchestrated the expansion of the band, voicing the sections to counterpoint Armstrong's fiery solos, creating for the first time a distinctive New York style of jazz. Henderson's recordings and long-run engagement at the grand Roseland Ballroom influenced the musical direction of orchestras across the country.

Before long, Duke Ellington eclipsed Henderson in popularity. Originally from Washington, D.C., Ellington arrived in New York in the spring of 1923 with novelty clarinetist Wilbur Sweatman's band. After initially failing to find a niche in New York, Ellington retreated to the comfort of his mother's home. Back in New York later that year, Ellington assumed leadership of the Washingtonians, a six-piece band that alternated between the Hollywood and Kentucky Clubs on Broadway. After moving uptown to the prestigious Cotton Club in 1927, Ellington expanded to a full-size band. A prolific composer, Ellington recorded for a wide variety of labels, evolving from his early "jungle music," inspired by the exotic decor of the Cotton Club, into a sophisticated orchestral expression of jazz. His music surpassed yet remained anchored in the New York tradition, and fostered a plethora of talented young jazz soloists. New York style continued to evolve from swing to bebop and beyond by absorbing musicians and bands from across the country, notably from Kansas City and the Midwest.

Influenced little by the other cradles of jazz, Kansas City spawned an original style. Bennie Moten and other early Kansas City bandleaders eclipsed the sway of New Orleans by voicing the brass and reed sections and crafting simple head arrangements, so-called because they were played from memory. Chicago's musicians union protected the jobs of local musicians by denying residency to visiting bands. Made unwelcome, Kansas City bands played only short stretches in Chicago, limiting interaction with local musicians. The arrival of Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington in Kansas City inspired Bennie Moten and Andy Kirk to create more polished arrangements and try their hand in New York. After initially emulating the New York bands, Kansas City bands led by Moten, Kirk, and later Count Basie transcended that influence to create a rawer, hard-swinging style of orchestral jazz. These so-called

territory bands crisscrossed the region from Kansas and the Dakotas through the Southwest, especially Texas, and across the Mississippi, bringing a wide variety of jazz soloists, singers, and musical sounds.

Located in the heart of America, straddling the state line between Kansas and Missouri, Kansas City at first glance appears to be an unlikely location for the development of a unique jazz style. A frontier town hunkered down at the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, Kansas City served as a crossroads for the great migration west, outfitting wagon trains headed west and brokering raw goods headed east. In 1869, Kansas City elbowed ahead of its nearest competitors to erect the first railroad bridge spanning the Missouri River. The already thriving river town became a major railway hub. After the Civil War, Kansas City became a business center for points north, south, east, and west. Commerce bred culture, and during the 1920s Kansas City blossomed into a cosmopolitan oasis of culture and entertainment, ranging from grand theaters and ballrooms to a thriving sin industry.

Kansas City's government, ruled from 1911 to 1939 by a Democratic political machine driven by Tom Pendergast, a burly Irishman with a twinkle in his eye, fostered the wanton nightlife rife with gambling, prostitution, and bootlegging. Twelfth Street, a tawdry string of taxi dance joints, bars, and gambling dens, stretched a mile east of downtown. The red-light district on 14th Street thrived in the shadow of city hall. Kansas City Jazz, a hardy hybrid, flourished in this immoderate environment. This is the story of Kansas City Jazz.

1

Tales from Tom's Town

ORIGINALLY A WILD-AND-WOOLY RIVER TOWN, established ahead of the great westward migration, Kansas City grew into a center of commerce and entertainment, becoming nationally known by the late 1930s as the "Paris of the Plains"—a comparison drawn, not for Kansas City's broad boulevards and fountains, but its immoderate nightlife and laissez-faire attitude. "Kansas City is more like Paris," syndicated columnist Westbrook Pegler observed. "The stuff is there, the gambling joints and the brothels, including among the latter a restaurant conducted in the imitation of that one in Paris, more haunted than the Louvre, where the waitresses wear nothing on before and a little less than half of that behind. But like Parisians, the people of Kansas City obviously believe that such things must be and, also like the Parisians, are proud of their own indifference."[1] Edward Morrow advised readers of the *Omaha World-Herald*, "[I]f you want to see some sin, forget Paris and go to Kansas City. With the possible exception of such renowned centers as Singapore and Port Said, Kansas City has the greatest sin industry in the world."[2] Ironically, the local government, run by a Democratic machine headed by Boss Tom Pendergast, fostered the vice and corruption. Kansas City Jazz flowered in this intemperate atmosphere. A stocky bull of a man with piercing blue eyes, Boss Tom dominated Kansas City and Missouri state politics from 1911 until his 1939 indictment for income tax evasion.

During the 1920s and 1930s, musicians from across the country flocked to Kansas City, drawn by the easy ambience and plentiful jobs in the dance halls and nightclubs sprinkled liberally between 12th and 18th Streets. Arriving in 1929, pianist Mary Lou Williams found Kansas City to be a "heavenly" place, with "music everywhere in the Negro section of town, and fifty or more cabarets rocking on 12th and 18th Streets. . . . Most of the night spots were run by

politicians and hoodlums, and the town was wide open for drinking, gambling and pretty much every form of vice. Naturally, work was plentiful for musicians."[3]

Gambling dens, nightclubs, and taxi dance halls lined 12th Street, extending a mile east from the heart of downtown. Journalist Dave E. Dexter, Jr., estimated that one stretch of 12th Street "boasted as many as 20 illegal saloons and niteries in a single block."[4] The clubs ranged from rough, bucket-of-blood joints with sawdust on the floor and a stomp-down piano player, to elegant nightclubs, presenting elaborate floor shows accompanied by full bands. Club owners christened new clubs by giving a cab driver five dollars and the key to the front door with instructions to drive as far as he could and throw away the key.[5] "The clubs didn't close," recalled bandleader Jay McShann. "About 7:00 in the morning the cleanup man would come and all the guys at the bar would move out of the way. And the bartender would serve them at the table while the place got cleaned up. Then they would go back to the bar. The clubs went 24 hours a day."[6]

Downtown, at the Chesterfield Club on 9th Street, waitresses clad only in shoes and see-through cellophane aprons served up a businessmen's lunch. For adornment, they shaved their pubic hair in the shape of playing card pips. Briskly circulating among the tables crowded by cigar puffing politicos, businessmen, and shy high-school boys on a lark, the waitresses skillfully picked up tips without using their hands. The State Line Tavern on Southwest Boulevard sat astride the state boundary between Kansas and Missouri. A white line down the middle of the floor marked the border between the two states. When agents from one state raided the joint, customers just stepped across the line to the safety of the neighboring state. At Milton Morris's Hey Hay Club in the North End at 4th and Cherry, patrons sat on bales of hay in a converted barn decorated by corn shucks. Musicians decked out as work hands topped by red bandannas performed on a crude bandstand fashioned out of the flatbed of a hay wagon. During Prohibition, a hand-lettered cardboard sign posted behind the bar advertised twenty-five-cent whiskey shots and marijuana joints. Perched behind the bar, puffing on his signature cigar, owl-like Morris nonchalantly reasoned since both were illegal, "Why not?"[7]

At the Sunset Club situated on the southwest corner of 12th and Woodland, pianist Pete Johnson effortlessly rolled chorus after chorus of boogie-woogie, accompanying Big Joe Turner, apron clad, hollering the blues while dispensing drinks from behind the bar. The manager of the Sunset, Walter "Piney" Brown, a trim, dashing gambler well-known for his generosity to musicians, lorded over the nightly festivities upstairs, while number runners congregated in the basement, counting up the day's take and picking the lucky winners. "Piney was like a patron saint to all musicians," recalled saxophonist Eddie Barefield. "He used to take care of them. In fact, he was like a father to me. . . . Most all the playing and jamming happened at Piney's place. Piney

was a man, he didn't care how much it cost; . . . if you needed money to pay your rent, he would give it to you and take you out and buy booze. He was a man you could always depend on for something if you needed it, as a musician."[8] In turn, musicians repaid Piney's generosity by lining up for the after-hours jam session at the Sunset. Often by sunrise, as many as fifteen musicians crowded the bandstand at the Sunset. Across the street, passersby gawked at sporting men in high-waisted gambler stripe pants intently shooting craps in the front window of the Lone Star. A short walk east, past a riot of neon signs and the clanging of trolleys lumbering down the center of the street, Count Basie and the Barons of Rhythm held court at the Reno Club, a nondescript storefront tucked away just a few blocks east of city hall. The weekly "Spook Breakfasts" at the Reno beginning at 4:00 Monday morning continued all day. Scores of musicians, instrument in hand, milled around in the alley behind the Reno, waiting to lock horns with tenor saxophonist Lester Young and other star soloists of the Basie band. The wildly popular early morning sessions sparked the famed tradition of "Blue Monday" parties. Musicians, not bound by state closing laws, gathered in clubs across the city in the wee hours of Monday morning, jamming until the people went home late the next day.

Gambling parlors scattered throughout the city offered action for high rollers and scratch gamblers alike. Local officials kicked off the horse-racing season on Memorial Day weekend at the Riverside Park Jockey Club, an illegal track operated by the Pendergast machine. Pendergast's crony, Judge Henry McElroy, the flinty city manager, gleefully cut the ribbon on opening day, an unofficial city holiday named in his honor.[9] Special streetcars and buses departed every few minutes from 7th and Grand, ferrying gamblers to the track located just north of the river, where they "invested" in their favorite nags, running seven races daily. On Memorial Day 1935, 17,000 spectators packed the stands.[10] The *Kansas City Journal-Post* splashed national race results across its front page. The cry "they're off in Texas" drifted across hotel lobbies, where racing windows stood shoulder to shoulder with courtesy desks. Bored matrons from the country club set, properly attired in stylish hats and white gloves, whiled away their afternoons lounging in bingo and tango parlors clustered around the busy intersection of 39th and Main. Policy writers swarmed the 18th and Vine area, stopping at each house as punctually as postmen. Slot machines vied for space with soda fountains on drugstore counters. City Manager McElroy dismissed complaints about the ready availability of one-arm bandits, stating flatly, "Nobody but a sucker would put a nickel, dime or quarter into a slot machine." As an afterthought, he added, "If the slot machine didn't get the sucker money something else would."[11]

The red-light district stretched blocks east from downtown on 14th Street. The brazen display of flesh in the large windows of the "dreary flats" lining 14th Street amazed journalist Edward Morrow. "In every window, upstairs and down, were women. Some knitted, some read, some sewed. Bright lights,

in some cases bordering the windows, lighted the women's faces . . . when the cab drew near, the women dropped what they had in their hands, seized nickels and began to tap them furiously on the window pane."[12] Journalist Westbrook Pegler compared the sound of tapping on the windowpanes, accompanying his departing cab, to "hail."[13] Police Chief Otto Higgins defended the civic sanctioning of prostitution, explaining, "[W]hy, if you bother the girls you just push them into the back room. Then you don't know what's going on. This way we can maintain control over them."[14] Years later, President Harry Truman surprised club owner Milton Morris during a visit in the Oval Office by inquiring, right off the bat, after the welfare of the "whores on 14th Street."[15]

During Prohibition, liquor flowed freely in old Kaycee. Johnny Lazia, head of the North Side Democratic Club and an associate of Al Capone, lorded over an estimated $5 million-a-year bootlegging operation.[16] Dapper and soft spoken with wireless rim glasses that gave him the air of a clerk, Lazia exerted considerable control over the police department, hiring new recruits, and fielding phone calls at police headquarters. Journalist John Cameron Swayze recalled walking past "an alert waiter, attired in stiffly-starched white jacket, sitting primly in the front seat of a police car parked outside a 'speak' [speakeasy]. He was listening for calls on the police radio as the so-called officers of the law tarried at the bar within."[17] The climate of lawlessness gave safe haven to Harvey Bailey, the Barrow gang, and other gangsters on the lam. The Union Station Massacre established Kansas City's national notoriety for lawlessness.

On June 17, 1933, triggerman Verne Miller, bank robber Charles Arthur "Pretty Boy" Floyd, and Adam Richetti, a psychopathic alcoholic, converged on Union Station determined to free convicted bank robber Frank Nash, who was being escorted from Hot Springs, Arkansas, to the Federal Prison in Leavenworth, Kansas, by two FBI agents and an Oklahoma sheriff. Two Kansas City FBI agents and a pair of trusted local policemen met the law enforcement officers and Nash, as their Missouri-Pacific train pulled in the cavernous, limestone Union Station. Miller, Floyd, and Richetti got the drop on the lawmen, hastily loading Nash into a Chevrolet sedan parked right outside the arched entrance of the Station for the quick trip to Leavenworth. The ambush went awry, and when the smoke cleared, Nash, a federal agent, the Oklahoma sheriff, and two local policemen lay dead on the plaza in front of the bustling station. The national publicity ensuing from the bloody incident cemented Kansas City's reputation as a safe harbor for criminals. In the wake of the infamous Union Station Massacre, the national press designated Kansas City as the "Crime Capital" of the United States.[18]

THE TRADITION OF VICE AND LAWLESSNESS, as typified by the Union Station Massacre, stemmed from Kansas City's roots as a frontier town. Originally a humble wilderness settlement, in a forest of giant sycamores at the confluence

of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers, Kansas City, Missouri, quickly grew into a bustling hub for transportation and business. In February 1831, Gabriel Prudhomme purchased 271 acres of land, later known as Kansas City, for $340. He farmed the fertile soil and operated a ferry from the natural rock landing on the Missouri River. When he died later that year in a barroom brawl, the land passed to his pregnant wife and six children. In July 1838, his heirs auctioned off the land. When the guardian of the estate awarded the land to a friend for a song, the courts, suspecting collusion, stepped in and voided the sale. The following November, a corporation formed by fourteen civic and business leaders purchased the land. After much discussion, they decided to name the new burg the Town of Kansas after the Kansas Indians who lived just west near the Kansas River.[19] The name proved an apt choice considering the Kansas Indians' love of feasting, drinking, and gambling.[20] Serving as a port of entry to the nation's westward expansion, Kansas City prospered, selling goods to the forty-niners rushing to the gold fields of California and wagons of families lumbering westward across the Kansas Territory, a dusty prairie known as the Great American Desert, on the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails. Kansas City developed into a regional center of commerce, moving furs and raw materials east and goods from river boats to points west, south, and north. During the mid-1850s, road crews cleaved the towering clay bluffs above the teeming river bottom, and the city moved up the hill away from seasonal floods.

During the Civil War, border strife between Kansas free staters and southern sympathizers in Missouri engulfed Kansas City. Jay Hawkers from Kansas and Missouri Bushwhackers exchanged bloody raids across the state line, wreaking havoc on the area surrounding Kansas City. Abolitionists led by John Brown raided Missouri farms, liberating slaves. In retaliation, the Bushwhackers burned farms and terrorized towns just across the border in Kansas. In August 1863, passions boiled over after four female relatives of southern sympathizers, imprisoned in Kansas City by federal authorities, died when their makeshift prison collapsed. Bushwhackers led by William Quantrill, a former schoolteacher, descended on Lawrence, Kansas, fifty miles to the west, slaughtered 150 men and boys, and then burned the town to the ground. Four days later, Union Brigadier General Thomas Ewing issued his infamous Order No. 11, commanding the displacement of all persons located outside of a mile radius of union outposts in Jackson, Cass, and Bates Counties, bordering Kansas. Those who could prove their loyalty to the Union cause were allowed to move to Union posts or Kansas. Twenty thousand residents who refused to sign the loyalty oath fled east and south in a chaotic exodus, carrying what they could. The Union army then looted and destroyed their farms.[21] Missouri's leading painter, George Caleb Bingham, commemorated the horrific event in "Order No. 11," portraying aristocratic women begging Ewing for mercy as the surrounding countryside burned. After the war, with little

love lost between local and federal authorities, Kansas City became a haven for the James brothers and other outlaws. A boisterous frontier town, Kansas City attracted scores of gamblers, con artists, and prostitutes intent on making a quick buck off the suckers heading west. The legions of vice engaged in a running battle with the forces of reform, with vice ultimately prevailing in the war for the soul of the city.

Sanctioned by the city fathers, gambling and prostitution grew into major civic undertakings. In his history of the Pendergast machine, *Tom's Town*, William Reddig recounted how gambling permeated the social fabric of Kansas City.

> The faro banks at Marble Hall and No. 3 Missouri Avenue were famous throughout the West. Scholarly gamblers like Canada Bill, who kept himself solvent betting on Webster's spelling and definition of words, and colorful plungers like Wild Bill Hickok, the two-gun marshal of Abilene, made the town their headquarters. Jesse James found relaxation in the gambling halls during periods when he lived incognito in Kansas City and was not molested. When they were not figuring on deals in lots, grain, hogs and cattle and other matters of commerce, the citizens exercised their financial genius at chuck-a-luck, faro, three-card monte, roulette, high five, keno, poker and, occasionally craps. They bet on horse races, dog fights, free-for-alls with rats, cock fights and in extremity, they played fly-loo. This last game called for rare judgement, the players placing their money on common houseflies and guessing which one would move first, in what direction and how far.[22]

Kansas City's notorious gaming parlors eventually caught the attention of the Missouri state legislature. In 1881, the legislature, dominated by farmers, pushed through the Johnson anti-gambling law, triggering a mild depression in Kansas City's gambling industry. Reddig described how one indignant gambler met his demise in a grand gesture of objection.

> The Kansas City protest against this interference with freedom was registered in melodramatic fashion by Bob Potee, the elegant Virginia gentleman who was proprietor of the faro bank at No. 3 Missouri Avenue. Potee saw the Johnson law as the ominous dawn of a new era and decided he didn't want to be around to witness all the changes that were coming. One day he put on his high silk hat and gloves, picked up his gold-headed cane and took a walk down to the Missouri River. He kept walking majestically until the muddy waters swirled over his head. His body was recovered and the town staged an appropriate ceremony of farewell to a great man and his age. His funeral service was held in a Grand Avenue church and the Reverend Samuel Bookstaver Bell, a popular preacher of the day, delivered an impressive sermon over his casket. Literally, as in the words of the "Cowboy's Lament," six tall gamblers bore the casket into the church and carried it out for Bob Potee's last journey to his Virginia home.[23]

Unfortunately, Potee died in vain. Local authorities thumbed their noses at the state anti-gambling law, so the gaming continued unabated.

Prospectors flush from the Colorado gold fields and wealthy Texas cattlemen thronged to Kansas City's wealth of brothels, considered the finest in the Southwest. Annie Chambers's stately resort set the standard for other houses in the district. Located on the corner of 3rd and Wyandotte, the plain facade of the three-story brick building belied the opulence within. Patrons entering through massive metal doors framed by a portico supported by six bamboo columns encountered Chambers's name spelled out with blue tile in the colorful mosaic in the foyer floor. The letters A and C highlighted by red lights woven in the intricate brass filigree framed the entryway. A self-contained pleasure palace, the twenty-four-room estate lavishly decorated with gilt, marble, fine art, and massive mirrors featured a ballroom, barbershop, and wine tasting room. Miss Annie, a tall, handsome, dignified woman, cut a striking figure in the community. Local bankers eagerly lent her money, and the police department often helped at her parties, taking tickets and maintaining crowd control.

Cultured and well educated, Miss Annie instructed her girls on manners and ladylike behavior. "You should have seen some of them when they first came here," Miss Annie exclaimed. "Bless you, they looked worse than homely. They were down and out. I made them attractive. I bought them fine clothes. I showed them how to do their hair; I taught them manners. You wouldn't have known they were the same girls. It wasn't always the most beautiful girls who were the most popular. Manners and personality count more than looks, you know . . . I taught them manners and charm. The men who patronized my house demanded that. They wanted the girls to be feminine at all times."[24] Miss Annie's charges often wed clients, occasionally marrying into local high society. Like the booming city, Miss Annie, the other madams, and their girls all prospered, taking in an estimated one and a half million dollars a year.[25] Attracted by the thriving economy and tolerant atmosphere, waves of immigrants and first generation Americans flooded Kansas City.

The completion of the Hannibal Bridge in 1869, the first railroad bridge spanning the Missouri River, brought large populations of Irish, Germans, English, Canadians, Swedes, and African Americans to Kansas City. Hunkering down in the West Bottoms, they worked in the teeming stockyards, meatpacking houses, and railroad yards. Jim Pendergast, a big burly Irishman with a handlebar mustache, arrived in 1876 from St. Joseph, Missouri, located 70 miles upriver. Equipped with more ambition than means, Pendergast immediately found work as a smelter in an iron foundry. According to local lore, Pendergast's fortunes turned when his bet on a long shot at the horse-racing track paid off big. Big Jim prudently invested his winnings in a saloon, naming it Climax after the horse that arrived in the money. He expanded his operation in 1881, purchasing the American House, a combination saloon,

boarding house, and hotel, strategically located near the bustling train station, Union Depot. Setting up shop among the battery of hustlers, gamblers, pimps, and whores surrounding the depot for blocks, Pendergast prospered.[26] A hale and well-met fellow, he acted as a banker, cashing payroll checks for his uncouth clientele. In turn, Big Jim relied on those he helped to deliver votes for the local Democratic party.[27]

In 1890, Pendergast expanded his sphere of influence, opening a second saloon at 508 Main Street, a block south of Market Square. The new saloon promptly became a popular gathering spot for businessmen, high-roller gamblers, lawyers, and politicians from city hall. While rubbing elbows with the elite, Pendergast continued cultivating his interests in the West Bottoms. In 1892, his unwashed constituents elected him alderman of the "bloody First Ward," known for settling political disputes with the business ends of pool cues and bare-knuckle brawls. Moving easily into his role as political boss, Pendergast delivered large blocs of votes for the Democratic party, monopolizing Kansas City politics. "I've got lots of friends," Pendergast bragged to a sympathetic journalist. "And, by the way, that's all there is to this boss business—friends. You can't coerce people into doing things for you—you can't make them vote for you. I never coerced anybody in my life. Whenever you see a man bulldozing anybody he doesn't last long. Still, I've been called a boss. All there is to it is having friends, doing things for people, and then later on they'll do things for you."[28] As Pendergast devoted more and more time to politics, he recruited his brothers and sisters to help run his businesses.

Jim's youngest brother Tom arrived in late 1894. Barrel-chested with a thick neck and jutting jaw, young Tom proved to be an astute student of saloon-keeping and politics. Tom, a whiz with numbers, helped keep the books for Jim's enterprises. Athletic and quick with his fists, he earned respect in the rough-and-tumble First Ward. A natural politician, Tom understood the spirit of compromise and mixed well with the crowd of politicos haunting the Main Street saloon. Impressed by his younger brother's promise, Jim groomed Tom to succeed him as boss, establishing a political dynasty.

After Big Jim's death in 1911, Tom took charge of the family's businesses and political faction, known as the Goats, named after the numerous goats roaming the back yards of the Irish families recently settled on the West Bluff, a working-class neighborhood adjacent to the mansions on Quality Hill. The Goats' main political opposition, the Rabbits, headed by the wily Uncle Joe Shannon, dwelt over the hill in the southeast part of town. Shannon's followers were named after the rabbits that frolicked around O.K. Creek meandering through the nearby wooded valley. As William Reddig explained in *Tom's Town*, "In the heat of a campaign an opposition orator called the Pendergast partisans Goats after their numerous animal pets. Jim Pendergast liked goats and happily accepted them as a symbol of his faction's devotion to freedom

and other liberal ideals. Leading his delegation on a march to a convention for a battle with the Shannon boys, he roared: 'When we come over the hill like goats, they'll run like rabbits.' When the contest was over the Goats had seized control of City Hall, ousting the Shannon men from their easy jobs."[29]

Tom immediately expanded the family's political influence and business interests, establishing the T. J. Pendergast Wholesale Liquor Company, and purchasing the Jefferson Hotel at 6th and Wyandotte.[30] A six-story brick European-style hotel, the Jefferson sported a smart cabaret in the basement. Entertainers strolled from table to table, singing torch songs, as sharply dressed waiters dashed among the tables serving food and drinks. A reporter, covering the cabaret's disregard of closing laws for the crusading *Kansas City Star*, painted a lurid portrait of the lively nightlife emanating from the basement of the Jefferson. "Cabaret entertainers wandered from table to table, singing sensuous songs. . . . Midnight passed and the crowd of underworld habitues became hilarious. At one o'clock, the hour required by law at which to stop selling liquor, the orgy was at its height. The hours passed and the waiters were busier than ever dispensing drinks, for the Jefferson hotel has police protection and is free to ignore the closing law, observed by other cabarets. Outside the cabaret, motor cars and taxis were lined against the curb and there was a babble of song and laughter in the grill in the basement."[31] Ironically, Pendergast rarely participated in the late-night revelry, preferring to retire early for a good night's sleep. Like his brother Jim, he favored betting on horses for entertainment. As a political boss, Pendergast worked tirelessly to advance the interests of saloons and the gaming industry. Pendergast held potential forces of reform in check by forming an uneasy alliance with local civic and business leaders from the affluent Ward Parkway area on the southwestern edge of Kansas City. For their part, social leaders generally shied away from politics, striving instead to elevate the rabble by supporting the performing arts. Setting an example, the local gentry flocked to the bright lights of Kansas City's theaters for opera, drama, minstrel shows, melodrama, and vaudeville.

From the beginning music played an important role in Kansas City's social life. Arriving in 1821, the first permanent white settlers, thirty-one French fur trappers led by Francois and Berenice Chouteau, brought music with them. Two of the trappers, the Rivard Brothers, played fiddles. According to Father Bernard Donnelly, the area's Catholic priest and first historian, during the winter months when the river froze, bringing traffic to a standstill, the community threw parties where old and young danced to music played by the fiddlers. Years later, Berenice Chouteau brought in the city's first piano from St. Louis on a keel boat with supplies for the trading post.[32] Over the next five tumultuous decades, the area of the first white settlement became Kansas City.

A railroad hub for the Midwest and points west, Kansas City attracted top artists and touring companies along with appreciative patrons to pack the the-

aters. Built in 1870, the grand Coates Opera House at 10th and Broadway presented leading opera companies and stars. Patrons slogged through the muddy unpaved streets to attend nightly performances. Built in 1883, the ornate Gillis Theater located on the prestigious corner of 5th and Main featured stage productions by national theater companies. Intricate woodcarvings and colorful frescos adorned the lobby of the Gillis. Inside the spacious auditorium, lace curtains veiled the boxes overlooking the broad stage. Opened in 1887, the Ninth Street Theater brought theater's plebeian cousin, vaudeville, to Kansas City audiences. By 1920, Kansas City sported nine grand theaters, complete with pit orchestras.[33] The host of musicians working in the theaters, saloons, and cabarets dotting Kansas City created a ready market for instruments and sheet music.

Music stores multiplied, growing from five in 1871 to two dozen by 1916. The Kansas City Talking Machine Company, J. W. Jenkins & Sons, Carl Hoffman, and other music companies, specializing in instruments, phonographs, and sheet music, soon branched out into music publishing. In 1897, Harriet Woodbury, the co-owner of the Kansas City Talking Machine Company along with her husband, published "The Letter Edged in Black" under the pseudonym Hattie Nevada. The sentimental southern ballad about the narrator receiving a letter edged in black bearing news of his mother's death became a national success, selling 300,000 copies at fifty cents each.[34] Inspired by the success of "The Letter Edged in Black," local music stores readily ventured into publishing, just in time to capitalize on the ragtime craze sweeping the nation.

In 1899, Carl Hoffman published Scott Joplin's "Original Rags." After a dispute with Hoffman over publishing credits to "Original Rags," Joplin switched to John Stark & Son of Sedalia, Missouri, for the publication of his renowned "Maple Leaf Rag."[35] The popularity of Charles L. Johnson's "Dill Pickles Rag," published by Hoffman in 1906, helped establish ragtime nationally. In 1916, J. W. Jenkins Music, a massive six-story music store located at 1013-15 Walnut, published Euday Bowman's "12th Street Rag." Cutting a deal to make the gamblers in the faro parlors in the old town proud, Jenkins paid Bowman a mere $50 for "12th Street Rag," one of the biggest ragtime sellers of all time.[36]

The easy availability of sheet music, musical instruments, and band orchestration books spawned a number of top-notch white dance bands, during the dawn of the "Jazz Age." Leading the way, the Eddie Kuhn Band, Paul Tremaine's Aristocrats of Rhythm, and the Coon-Sanders Original Night Hawk Orchestra further established Kansas City's national reputation as a music center.

Organized in 1917, the Eddie Kuhn Band brought Loren Dallas McMurray, the first in a long line of great Kansas City saxophone players, to national prominence. Pianist Kuhn, slim and dapper with aquiline features, began his

career as a composer of popular songs and ragtime. J. W. Jenkins Music Company published his "Cornshucks Rag" (1908), "Some Pumpkins" (1908), and "Pickled Beets Rag" (1909). Building on his early publishing successes, Kuhn opened a full-service music shop at the busy intersection of 12th and Main. Kuhn formed his first band during World War I, when conscription depleted the ranks of local musicians, leaving musical contractors unable to fill engagements. Kuhn stepped in to fill the void, assembling a crack seven-piece band, specializing in dance music. Facing little competition, he garnered a lion's share of hotel and country club jobs throughout the Midwest. In early 1920, the band embarked on a tour of ballrooms, auditoriums, conventions, and a relatively new phenomenon, auto shows, a circuit leading to the East Coast. Operating in and out of New York City that summer and fall, the band recorded for the Pathé and Emerson labels. Kuhn, a better businessman than bandleader, deferred on the bandstand to saxophonist McMurray, the band's star soloist and defacto musical leader.

A child prodigy, Loren Dallas McMurray cut his musical teeth performing popular standards, marches, novelties, and light classics with his father's saxophone band in their hometown, McPherson, Kansas, located 200 miles southwest of Kansas City. McMurray left home in 1917, crisscrossing the Midwest with a concert band and male quartet on the Redpath-Horner Chautauqua circuit, based in Kansas City. Inspired by the popular lyceum societies in New England, Chautauquas were traveling troupes of entertainers, musicians, and elocutionists who delivered uplifting messages and brought entertainment and culture to small towns. At the end of the season McMurray settled down in Kansas City. He worked briefly with violinist Emil Chaquette's society orchestra before joining the newly formed Eddie Kuhn Band. McMurray, stout with a lantern jaw and slicked-back brown hair parted down the middle in the style of the day, readily established a reputation as an innovator and outstanding soloist. Clarinetist Cy Dewar remembered McMurray as "one of the finest hot men" in Kansas City and the "first . . . to play the A-flat alto, while everyone was playing the C melody, also the first to start the slap tongue vogue."[37] The tour with the Kuhn Band spread McMurray's fame far and wide.

A local newspaper in Springfield, Illinois, heralding a 1920 appearance of the Kuhn Band at an auto show, highly praised McMurray. "In these days of jazz music no orchestra is complete without the 'moan of the saxophone' and when one has once heard Loren McMurray, the general consensus of opinion is that his saxophone has the 'moanin'est' moan of them all. He discloses in his performance individual ideas which enables him to interpret all phases and styles of music. He has a wonderful personality, snap and dash, and brilliancy characterize Mr. McMurray's playing among all lovers of music."[38] Audiences marveled at McMurray's prodigious technique. Feeling his oats, McMurray confidently challenged saxophone virtuoso Rudy Wiedoeft in advertisements for the Kuhn band, immodestly billing himself as "McMurray

who beats Wiedoeft on the saxaphone [*sic*]."[39] At the end of the tour, McMurray returned to Kansas City with the Kuhn band.

In June 1921, McMurray moved to New York, then the undisputed capital of the entertainment industry. An in-demand soloist, McMurray, in short order, worked with Bailey's Lucky Seven, Markel's Orchestra, Eddie Elkin's Orchestra, and the Society Orchestra before joining the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, then a rising dance band. A star soloist with the Whiteman band, McMurray led the Saxophone Sextette, featuring an array of saxophones ranging from the toy-like shrill soprano to the thundering bass, standing almost as tall as a man. A versatile soloist, moving easily between concert music and hot jazz, McMurray joined the front line of the Virginians, a small hot unit drawn from the larger Whiteman band. The C. G. Conn musical instrument company recognized McMurray's growing stature by featuring him along with a handful of top players in print advertisements, touting Conn saxophones as "The World's Best."[40]

While working with Whiteman, McMurray freelanced around New York's busy recording scene, participating in five to twelve sessions a week for the Victor, Columbia, Emerson, Pathé, Gennett, OKeh, Cameo, Aeolian, and Brunswick labels. In the summer of 1922, McMurray made his debut as a leader during two recording sessions for the Gennett label. McMurray assembled a nine-piece group dubbed the California Thumpers, featuring trumpeter Phil Napolean and trombonist Miff Mole. The band recorded five selections, "Haunting Blues," "Just Because You're You," "That's Why, I Love You," "Oogie Oogie Wa Wa," and "Blue." McMurray's elegant solo on "Haunting Blues," spiced with flatted thirds and bent notes, illustrates his advanced technique and ideas. Shortly after the last Gennett session in September, the Victor Talking Machine Company offered McMurray a recording contract. Around the same time, Conn presented him with five gold-mounted saxophones for concert work. The opportunity to record for Victor and continued affiliation with Conn bode well for McMurray's career. Tragically, he did not live to fulfill his great promise.

A severe case of tonsillitis nipped McMurray's brilliant career in the bud. Despite the best efforts of a team of doctors, McMurray died on October 29, 1922, at the age of twenty-five. News of his death sent shock waves through the music community of Kansas City. The Rock Island Line train, bearing McMurray's casket home to McPherson, paused in Kansas City long enough for a 150-piece band, composed of friends and admirers, to salute his genius. McMurray's meteoric rise illuminated the path to success for Paul Tremaine's Aristocrats of Rhythm and the Coon-Sanders Original Night Hawk Orchestra.

A MUSICAL HYBRID, Paul Tremaine's Aristocrats of Rhythm specialized in orchestral arrangements of hymns. Born and bred on a sprawling cattle ranch near Canon City, Colorado, perched on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains near

the mouth of the Royal Gorge, Tremaine learned music technique and theory from his father, Robert C. Tremaine, an accomplished multi-instrumentalist. A quick study, Tremaine mastered the saxophone and advanced music theory. Facing few musical opportunities in Colorado, Tremaine toured the Midwest before settling down in Kansas City in early August 1920. An accomplished soloist, Tremaine handily edged out the local competition and joined D. Ambert Haley's Orchestra, one of Kansas City's leading society bands. The rotund Haley, socially well connected and the business manager for the musicians union, fielded several bands under his banner for Kansas City's hotels, amusement parks, and country clubs. Haley retained a stable of top-notch musicians by paying well, sometimes as much as time and a half. Given ample musical latitude by Haley, band members formed smaller hot units. The Haley band "played as much jazz as any white group in Kansas City," reported saxophonist Floyd Estep. "We had several Dixie groups . . . at Fairyland Park, Haley had a big group in 1923, twelve pieces. We had two pianos and a good jazz group. Our outstanding sax men in the early years were Tremaine, McMurray, and myself."[41]

In 1922, Tremaine signed on as music director for radio station WHB's studio orchestra, led by Louis Forbstein. Radio bugs from coast to coast picked up WHB's 500-watt signal, introducing Tremaine to the national audience. In 1926, Tremaine struck out on his own, forming the ten-piece Aristocrats of Modern Music. Local dance fan Cliff Halliburton characterized Tremaine as "a musician of fine execution who liked to play solos out in front of his band. His father, Robert C. Tremaine, played cello, bass violin, and tuba with the band and also acted as its business manager. . . . The style of the group was set by Paul Tremaine and by pianist-arranger Charlie Bagby, who was a member of Phil Harris's orchestra in later years. They opened the Midland Theater in Kansas City early in 1926 and were presented mainly as a stage orchestra. . . . They played all kinds of music, including standard hymnal music arranged in a contemporary style, which went over very well. Banjoist Eddie Kilanoski made many of the band's jazz-style arrangements and wrote the tune 'Four Four Stomp,' which Victor recorded at the peak of their popularity."[42]

During 1927 and 1928, the Aristocrats of Modern Music barnstormed across Oklahoma, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois, with summer engagements at the Crystal Palace Ballroom at Coloma, Michigan. The versatile sixteen-piece band, modeled after the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, featured a vocal trio singing hot and sweet selections, a saxophone octet, a violin sextet, a brass quintet, and a piano quartet. Tremaine's father, a savvy promoter, published a 5,000-run magazine, *A Tempo*, marketing the band to amusement park, ballrooms, and theater managers. From 1929 to 1930, the band played at Yoeng's Chinese Restaurant on Broadway in New York City and recorded for the Victor and Columbia labels. Tremaine's personal and professional fortunes declined following his father's death in 1930. Without the steady leadership of