

MC Jazz Band to hold spring concert on the brick streets



Special to *The Clinton Courier*

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The soothing sounds of Glenn Miller and the Big Band Era as well as contemporary music will be in the air as the Mississippi College Jazz Band performs on Clinton's Brick Streets.

Led by director Wayne Linehan, the MC Jazz Band's Spring program in the heart of Olde Towne is set for April 26.

Presented by the Mississippi College Department of Music, the program on April 26 will begin at 6 p.m. Jazz lovers are asked to bring lawn chairs to the lively Friday evening program.

At their spring concert on February 26 at the Jean Pittman Williams Recital Hall, the MC Jazz Band performed selections like John Coltrane's "Cousin Mary" along with the George and Ira Gershwin classic "Love is Here to Stay." The group performed other selections like Henry Mancini's "Two for the Road."

The MC Jazz Band consists of musicians playing saxophones, trumpets, trombones and a rhythm section.

Mississippians stopping by can ex-

pect to hear the jazz sounds through 8:30 p.m. Music fans are also invited to sample from the various food choices at restaurants in the Jefferson Street vicinity.

MC music professor Craig Young, director of bands on the Clinton campus, usually sits in at Jazz Band programs with his saxophone.

Jazz Band members include trumpet players Anastasia Crout, David Kjellin, Levi Perkins and Jonathan Wade. Caitlin McCormick and Dalton Snyder both play the piano, while Zach Klopman is featured on guitar. Nathan Schultz, Isaac Tan, Jarissa Roach and Gary Silber all play saxophone, while Bryant Thaxton performs on the tuba.

Another major performance this Spring sponsored by the MC Music Department happens on April 28. The date is for the MC Symphonic Winds concert. The Sunday performance is set for 3 p.m. at Swor Auditorium. Craig Young serves as the group's conductor. The concert is free, and the public is invited.

Guilty of murder: Epilogue to the Sorsby murder trial

By *City Historian Walter Howell*

When the verdict in the Sorsby murder trial was announced on April 13, 1909, the courtroom was nearly deserted. Crowds had filled the courtroom every day of the trial, and few expected the jury to reach a decision within an hour of deliberations. The verdict: "We, the jury, find the defendant guilty and fix his punishment at life imprisonment in the penitentiary."

The *Weekly Clarion* captured the moment: "Every eye was on the prisoner, but if any scene was expected, there was disappointment. Sorsby heard his doom pronounced with dogged stoicism. He sat leaning back in his chair, his stare fixed on the high ceiling, apparently unconscious of what was going on around him, just as he had done since the trial began on the second day of April."

Despite the testimony of family and friends that he was insane, the jury disagreed. Six Jackson residents, three from Utica and one each from Cayuga, Terry and Learned decided Sorsby's fate. Seven were farmers, two worked for the railroad, and the remaining three were printer, merchant, and manufacturer.

County newspapers were unanimous in their judgment of the trial. The *Issue*, owned by former governor James Vardaman, referred to Sorsby as the "mad assassin" throughout the trial and thought he should be hanged. The *Hinds County Gazette* agreed: "Sorsby should have been given the death penalty." The *Weekly Clarion* reported: "outside the plea of insanity, which was not taken seriously, he had nothing whatever to rest his case on."

Sorsby began his life sentence at Parchman Farm, the state penitentiary in Sunflower County, opened in 1901. Originally a prison for black convicts, unit B was added for white convicts in 1909. Sorsby worked as a farm laborer on the plantation-style prison.

Mrs. Sorsby remained in Clinton for a year after the trial and then moved to Jackson to live with her son, Everett. Margaret Sorsby, twenty years of age, quietly divorced her imprisoned husband and moved from Clinton. Her mother, Mrs. Margaret Cabaniss, con-

tinued living at "Violet Banks" until her death in 1930. She was buried near her husband in the Odd Fellows cemetery in Clinton.

William Sorsby served ten years of his life sentence before receiving a pardon from Governor Theodore Bilbo. Family members admitted that "Miss Annie," Will's mother, gave Bilbo a large sum of money to get her son out of prison.

Sorsby became a free man in 1920, and, with the help of his brother, Everett, took a job with the Illinois Central Railroad as a telegraph operator. He worked at several stations on the railroad line. Sorsby married again and settled in Wesson, Mississippi, where he and his wife operated a grocery store. Will Sorsby died in January 1953 and was buried in the Rockport cemetery outside Wesson.

Later generations of Sorsbys knew that "Uncle Will" had killed a man and gone to prison, but it wasn't talked about among family. Eventually, the story evolved that "Uncle Will" shot and killed a man who was romancing his first wife, Margaret. Killing someone under those circumstances was tolerable and even honorable.

When the city of Clinton celebrated the sesquicentennial of the Civil War in 2013, this writer met a member of the Sorsby family while leading a tour of Provine Chapel on the Mississippi College campus. She introduced herself as the great-granddaughter of Dr. F. D. Sorsby, who is buried in the Clinton cemetery.

When I responded that the Sorsby name was well-known in Clinton's history, she wanted to know why. I related the written accounts of the murder, the trial and the conviction of William Sorsby, who was her great uncle. Her daughter said, "Mother, he's talking about Uncle Will." This led to a visit to her home, where she shared photographs of "Uncle Will" and his obituary clipping.

The murder of Charles Fitzgerald, postal inspector, by William Sorsby and the later trial and conviction of Sorsby is one of the most intriguing stories in the history of Clinton.

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The Ranch House Opry Band

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