

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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THE OLD BASS VIOL



Our photo this week which was taken around 1943, shows "Monty" Montondo with the bass, Marion "Micky" Lusk with the violin and Rose Bissell Foreman with the guitar at the Corfu Grange. These were the Rhythm Ramblers, a country western group which was formed around 1939. Others who also played with this ensemble were: Joe Colby, "Pee Wee" Southcott and Jack Lacey. Years ago this popular group could be heard on both the Lockport and Batavia Radio Stations. After this group broke up in the late 1940's, another group known as the Rhythmnaires was formed in the mid-1950's with some of the same participants. For a brief year in 1955, "Micky" Lusk also played with Cy Roberts and the Troubadours. "Micky" says that both she and her mother Rose, played the bass. Her mother began by first using a bow on the bass until someone said "Oh Rose, just pluck it!" After that she just plucked, but Micky says her mother used to get some pretty sore fingers.

The old bass viol has been retired since 1955 when easier to play electric bass have been used by the Rhythmnaires who were together for about forty years.

Last week "Micky" Lusk donated the old bass viol to the Cobblestone Society Museum at Childs where it is displayed in the Ward House.

Here is what "Micky" Lusk says about its history: "Sometime in the early 1920's Frank Bissell went to the Bragg Schoolhouse Road and bought the

bass from Veteran Bragg for \$5.00. He brought it home and taught his daughter Rose to play it. It was used to play at house dances. In the late 1920's Frank sold it to Walter Lusk for \$5.00. Then in 1940 Alvie Culver had an auction and Rose and Mike Foreman saw it there. They bid on the bass and bought it for 50¢. It was brought home and taken over to Fred Hagadorn at Royalton to fix. He wanted to buy it for \$300.00. At that time it was about one hundred fifty years old. Rose told him 'no' and took it home and played it with her daughter in their orchestra. It was played until about 1955."

"Micky" says it represents "a lot of good times and a lot of tears." It is indeed, now an artifact which represents the cultural climate of a bygone era of time. The bass is unusual in that it was built with only three strings which helps to date it. Fred Hagadorn thought it may have been built by a German maker of musical instruments.

"We are the music-makers....."

On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world forever, it seems."

Correction: In Vol. XVIII No. 32, the photo did not show the gas house in the foreground. The gas house was a brick building the other side of the holder which would have been in the background.