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**A Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of Eugene Mikell:
Materials for a Biography**

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This document is one in a series---"Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of"---devoted to a small number of African American musicians active ca. 1900-1950. They are fallout from my work on a pair of essays, "US Army Black Regimental Bands and The Appointments of Their First Black Bandmasters" (2013) and "Black US Army Bands and Their Bandmasters in World War I" (2012). In all cases I have put into some kind of order a number of biographical research notes, principally drawing upon newspaper and genealogy databases. None of them is any kind of finished, polished document; all represent work in progress, complete with missing data and the occasional typographical error. I invite queries, amplifications, and corrections, which may be directed to plefferts1@unl.edu. The present document is a first draft of July 2016.

Francis Eugene ("Gene") Mikell (1880-1932)

Instrumentalist and recitalist (violinist, cornettist, saxophonist), conductor, composer, educator (including instruction in voice, piano, violin, guitar, mandolin, banjo, cornet, saxophone, clarinet; school and community bands and chorusses). Compositions for band, orchestra, voice. Arrangements of popular songs and tunes for band. And a photograph exists of Mikell with a curious string instrument he invented---a kind of soap box cello.

NAME

Most often Francis Eugene, but occasionally Eugene Francis (e.g., in some military records), probably because he went by his middle name (Eugene, or Gene).

Surname spelled variously as Mikel, Mikle, Mickle and Michael. How was it pronounced? Perhaps like the golfer Phil Mikelson or the actors Lars and Mik Mikkelsen, with a short "i"? No. Rather, based on alternative spellings that are sometimes found, it was pronounced like Michael, with a long "i". See, for example, the spelling in the US Census 1920, and Salem Tutt Whitney's

comment in his "Timely Topics" column, under the heading "Impressions of Musicians" (Chicago Defender, October 11, 1930, p. 5): "Professor Michaels, bandmaster, violinist and arranger. Went over the top "over there" and is still going over the top over here." One of sister Ella's young children bears the first name Mikell (with the double "l") in the US 1900 Census, which gives us another reason to think that it is pronounced like "Michael."

Education:

Mikell attended Avery, Tuskegee, the New York Conservatory, and Orangeburg, so he probably came from a relatively educated and successful family background. This supposition is only reinforced by his subsequent career in education. He taught at:

Tuskegee in 1894
 Orangeburg SC State College
 Jenkins Orphanage, Charleston, SC
 Cookman Institute, Jacksonville
 Florida Baptist Academy, Jacksonville

Bordentown School, Bordentown, NJ
 New York Music School Settlement, NYC
 Martin-Smith School of Music, NYC (acc. Southern)
 Lincoln House Settlement, NJ
 Lincoln House Settlement, NYC

328 West 52nd Street NYC home studio

His amateur bands in teh NYC area included:

Jersey City, NJ mens band: the Jersey City Welcome Band, renamed the
 Progressive Elks Band
 Riverton and Palmyra, NJ Welcome Band
 East Orange, NJ boys band
 Newark, NJ boys band
 Cadet Band of the 369th NYNG
 Mikell's Midget Orchestra

BIRTH DATE

1880, March 27: born Charleston, SC [see US Census entries, etc., etc, including obituaries]; not 1885, as gets reported in NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5, and occasionally elsewhere; one Census hit has 1878;

His NY Abstract of World War I Military Service puts his age upon enlistment in May 1917 as 35 2/12 years, making him born in March of 1882; on the other hand, a related document, the NY Abstracts of National Guard Service in WWI, puts his age upon enlistment as 38 2/12 years, so with a birth date in 1880.

FAMILY

His was one of the best known families in Charleston. acc. Indianapolis Freeman in 1910.

Parents are Edward Mikell (March 1846/1848/1849 - September 23, 1911) and Charlotte Hopkins Chisholm Mikell (1855 - 1925), married in 1871; his siblings are Ella, Nathiline (Nettie), Cornelius, Charlotte (Lottie), Rollin, Henry (Harry or Harrie), and Viola; Mikell's living siblings named in the obit of 1932 are brother Harrie and sisters Mrs. Nettie Connors, Mrs. Ella Toole, and Mrs. Lottie Harlee.

In the 1900 US Census, the family was in Charleston; his father and his brother Harry were barbers, Lottie was a cashier in the shop, and Nathiline was a music teacher in Charleston. Eugene is not there. By 1900, son F. Eugene Mikell must be already grown and out of the house, apparently, or else spending a summer vacation elsewhere (see immediately below).

In another US 1900 Census report, Eugene Mikell (spelled Mikel) is living with his mother Charlotte in the home of his sister and his brother-in-law, Ella [Mikell] Tool and Henry Tool, in Rock Hill, York Co., S.C. (about 25 miles south of Charlotte). Both Ella and Eugene are identified as music teachers. Eugene is said to be born in 1878 and age 22. Perhaps he was visiting these close relatives at the moment the census taker knocked on the door. NB: Mikell's father Edward is reported to have died in Rock Hill in 1911 (ancestry.com family tree).

STUDENT YEARS

Attended:

The Jenkins Orphanage, where he went in 1892 and remained about a year.

Avery Normal Institute [the Avery Institute], Charleston, SC (for children of Afro-American elites of Charleston; pre-collegiate); music instruction from a German teacher named Daedon (NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5)

1893, in January: a concert at the Owens Academy of Music, including "a negro lad named Eugene Mikell, violinist" (Charleston (S.C.) News and Courier, January 19, 1893, p. 2)

1893 Then at the Tuskegee Institute, where he studied with Charles Harris (NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5); Mikell took charge of the orchestra at Tuskegee in 1894 as a student, and as [student] leader of orchestra (acc. Indianapolis Freeman, 1910); "He next entered Tuskegee Institute, and after a year at this renowned institution his musical ability attracted the attention of the faculty and he was put in charge of the orchestra, then composed of forty musicians" (NY Age, June 21, 1919, p. 6)

[[1896: If "Mr. Mikell" is him, he's managing the Rutledge College Glee Club; State (SC), November 8, 1896, p. 3---but he would be awfully young; place sounds white, too; it is in Columbia, SC, and what was once Rutledge is now USC]]

1897 Then New York Conservatory of Music (NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5); New York Conservatory [1896-1897?], as "the only colored student in a class of ten" (Indianapolis Freeman, 1910); an institution at 112 E. 18th St. in 1902, it had been in operation for more than 30 years, since ca. 1870 or before [charter amended by legislature, 1866]

1898 Then Orangeburg SC State College (an historically black school, now South Carolina State University); Mikell graduates from the State College at Orangeburg, S.C. [1897-1898 school year], and then is made musical director there (Indianapolis Freeman, 1910)

A Charleston Jazz Initiative website (accessed July 7, 2011) says he was a graduate of the Aeolian School for Musical Research in NYC but I find no evidence for that; the school's name is actually the "Aeolian Hall School for Music Research" (not "musical"), located in NYC at Aeolian Hall at 689 Fifth Avenue at 54th Street, and the very few hits on it are from 1927, 1928, and 1931, or the later 1920s; newspaper advertisements announce that it opened to the public in 1928; it was housed in Aeolian Hall, and offered piano instruction to children; the Aeolian Company made pianos, player pianos, organs, etc.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER

ORANGEBURG and CHARLESTON and SAVANNAH
about seven years, ca.1897/1898-1905

In addition to teaching at Orangeburg, Mikell started his first boys' band there, which met with great acclaim (NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5); this is also the era of his first work with charity cases as an adult---i.e., the Jenkins Orphanage connection (see below).

1898/1899 to about 1905: Mikell is teaching at Orangeburg SC State College, roughly 60 miles NW of Charleston

1900: He's "the well known violinist of the South Carolina State College"

1900: reported living with family in Rock Hill, S.C. in US 1900 Census; this city is north of Orangeburg on a line from Charleston through Orangeburg, and Columbia, and Rock Hill to Charlotte

1902, in January: for Emancipation Day at the Charleston Exposition, "the music for the occasion was rendered by the State Colored College, and the Jenkins Orphanage Bands." (Richmond (Va.) Planet, January 11, 1902, p. 8)

1902: Master Eugene Mikel of Charleston is the leader of the college band at Orangeburg, and is beaten in a racial incident (Cleveland Gazette, May 17, 1902, p. 1)

1903: Mikell marries "the accomplished" Anna Marshall of Charleston (1883-1963) in May 1903, an event which merits notice in a Washington newspaper (Washington (DC) Colored American, May 16, 1903, p. 5); her father Jacob Marshall is a fireman and her mother a dressmaker, so similarly middle class. (Eugene and Anna have sons Otto Reginald [or Reginald Otto], 2/17/1904 to 5/1970 born in SC the next year; and F. Eugene, jr, 6 Oct. 1908 to 25 Jan. 1992, born in Fla.)

1904: He's teaching music, as Prof. E. F. Mikel, at the Lincoln Graded School (colored) in Sumter, SC, about 60 miles east of Orangeburg, and plays a violin solo at the annual closing exercises (Sumter (S.C.) Watchman and Southron, June 1, 1904, p. 2)

1905: He and Mr. English are doing a church benefit in Savannah (Savannah Tribune, September 16, 1905, p. 5); they are with Mahara's Minstrels in 1905-1906; Mikell is writing songs with English in 1909; and in 1910, when Mikell was in Jacksonville, he closed his studio so that he and L. V. English could go on a concert tour of the West, doing recitals in schools, colleges, and playhouses (Indianapolis Freeman, October 15, 1910, p. 6)

JENKINS ORPHANS BAND, an association from 1892 to at least ca. 1925

1891: The Orphanage itself was organized on December 16, 1891 by Rev. D. J. (Daniel Joseph) Jenkins and got underway in January 1892 (Charleston News and Courier, June 16, 1892, p. 8).

1892: By an account in a hometown Charleston, S.C. obit, Mikell "STARTED JENKINS BAND/ . . . [he] "was the original member of the Jenkins orphanage band"; "it was recalled here yesterday" [that] Mikell was brought to the orphanage as a boy by the Rev. D. J. Jenkins to start the first musical organization there Mikell was born here in 1880 and went to Jenkins orphanage in 1892, remaining for about a year and returning in the summers to help organize the band" (Charleston News and Courier, January 26, 1932, p. 2)

1892: Mikell "worked for the Jenkins Orphanage when it first started, playing the violin at the age of 12" (Charleston News and Courier, March

23, 1909, p. 5); this sounds as if he was associated with the orphanage but not necessarily with the nascent band.

1892: Mikell obituary in Jamaica (NY) Long Island Daily Press, Thursday, January 21, 1932, p. 1 says "He organized the Jenkins Orphans Band at Charleston, later had charge of the band and orchestra at Tuskegee"

1894: Though the orphanage band was first organized before Fall 1895, in Fall 1894 there are no newspaper references to the band such as begin to turn up in the spring of 1895 (when a band of 14 went to England and ended up stranded). It was not in the picture when Jenkins organized "an entertainment at the orphanage for the benefit of the building fund" which included a concert by "a number of colored amateurs" (Charleston News and Courier, January 23, 1894, p. 8). Although there is mention of the "orphan band" singing at the closing exercises for the school in July (Charleston News and Courier, July 3, 1894, p. 8), the usage might just refer to a group of orphans, as it does in the reference to "the band of little colored vagabonds saved from the gutter by Mr. Jenkins" (Charleston News and Courier, March 29, 1894, p. 8).

1895: The first solid reference to the Orphanage band comes in the spring of 1895. they played at the second annual fair in February (Charleston News and Courier, February 1, 1895, p. 8); in May, "The Jenkins' Orphanage band continues to render concerts on street corners" (Charleston Evening Post, May 8, 1895, p. 4); they played at the orphanage's fourth annual closing exercises in June (Charleston Evening Post, June 15, 1895, p. 1, p. 8); they are to play at a boating excursion benefit on June 20th (Charleston Evening Post, June 13, 1895, p. 3)

1895: Over the summer, Jenkins takes the band of 14 boys, ages 5 to 10 (or 14 boys, ages 5-17; or 14 boys, ages 6-13; or 13 boys, ages 5 to 14), up North, and then to England in late August, arriving at Southampton on September 4; they are immediately in financial straits, which makes national news in the US (Charleston News and Courier, September 13, 1895, p. 8, in part reporting from New York and London newspapers; Charleston News and Courier, September 21, 1895, p. 2, in part reporting from the London Telegraph of September 9); They sailed for

New York on October 16, they were expected to arrive back in New York on Wednesday, October 23, and returned to Charleston on October 27 (Charleston Evening Post, October 21, 1895, p. 3; Charleston News and Courier, November 3, 1895, p. 16, with long summary of entire journey)

In London the band was advertised as "the Smallest Black (Brass) Band in the world" (Charleston News and Courier, September 29, 1895, p. 3). A list of names and instruments of the band members indicates 12 instrumentalists, a musical director, and a drum major, with no sign of Mikell (Charleston News and Courier, November 3, 1895, p. 16)

It would seem that before he left Orangeburg/Charleston area for Jacksonville, Fla., Mikell had begun to work in an important adult capacity with the band(s) of the Jenkins Orphanage in Charleston. This would seem to have to be on the order of one day a week, or on the weekends, or in the summers. Very possibly his biggest role was, in fact, summer touring work, continued into his Jacksonville years. The Jenkins connection included players who ended up in his bands as adults.

1904: Jenkins Orphanage Band is claimed to have played at the St. Louis fair in 1904 but Schwartz and Schwartz do not mention this. [needs documentation] One reference, though: "A brass band of small colored boys from the Jenkins Orphanage in Charleston, S. C., left at 6:19 last evening [from Boston], en route to the World's fair at St. Louis, where they will remain till the close of the fair." (Boston Herald, August 23, 1904, p. 3). Very possibly this is a typical Jenkins venture with no backing officially from the fair, but with the intention to play on street corners.

1905: Frequently repeated claim to have played at the Roosevelt inauguration in 1905. [needs documentation]

Could the reference to a Roosevelt inauguration be confusing the failed attempt of the band to serenade Roosevelt at his home at Sagamore Hill in August 1903 with their presence at the Taft inauguration in March 1909? Or, again, might it have been an unofficial presence on street corners---drawn by the promise of crowds?

1909: The band did play at the Taft inauguration in 1909 (under Mikell) and at at least one other event in Washington before they left town (Washington Post, March 8, 1909, p. 10)

1914: The band played at the Anglo-American Exposition in London in 1914 (without Mikell---see below).

Up to five bands toured each summer and two each winter by the mid 1920s, after Mikell's time; most claims seem to go back to the Chilton book (Nursery); NYT obit for Jenkins; NB Black Music Research 2010 article on Jenkins's son

Edward Ball, in *The Sweet Hell Inside* (2001), calls Mikell “an orphan who had grown up to tutor Jenkins band #1”. I do not know where this bit about being an orphan comes from, and quite possibly his association with the Orphanage Band (the 1910 Freeman art. says he once directed it, and the NYT obit says he organized it) got altered into the assertion that he himself was an orphan.

A Charleston Jazz Initiative Website (accessed 7/7/2011) says he was “a resident of, and taught music at Jenkins Orphanage in late 1890s”; may be this means from his very earliest days at Orangeburg, in 1898/1899/1900.

The Wikipedia entry for Jenkins Orphanage (etc., etc.) explains how famous the band was, and it says Mikell was one of two local Charleston musicians hired to first get music going there; this is often repeated but no hard evidence is ever cited; however, Smith FSU thesis (p. 81) says his earliest professional gig is with Jenkins, that he leads them on US and European tour [European tour is wrong], and he leads them at Taft’s inauguration

1900s: Jack McCray, Charleston Jazz (2007), p. 27, at the beginning of Chapter Three, “The Avery-Jenkins Connection,” says Mikell led the bands in the early 20th Century, not at the same time as P. M. Logan. Amos Mordecai White, b.1889, attended at the school ca. 1903-1913; he remembers learning the alto horn at age 14 from Mikell---so in 1903---in time to play a summer tour, including a booking for one month on the Atlantic City boardwalk (Chilton, "Nursery").

The story is often repeated in the Arthur Briggs literature that the long-lived Briggs (1899-1991) was given his earliest music lessons by Mikell,

a teacher attached to the Jenkins Orphanage (e.g., London Guardian, July 19, 1991, p. 37)

1909, in March: Mikell definitely took the Jenkins Orphanage band to the Taft inauguration on March 4, 1909; see Indianapolis Freeman art. of 1910 and Lucien White art. in NY Age in 1920 (NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5); talking with Lucien White, the Taft inauguration is the big story, and no prior association gets into the article: Mikell was sent for from Jacksonville, he got together and drilled a band of all the available boys and some of the former members now graduated; for confirming references to the band in Washington, though with no mention of Mikell, see Washington Post, February 28, 1909, p. 1; Washington Evening Star, March 3, 1909, p. 2, Washington Herald, March 4, 1909, p. 7, and Washington Herald, March 5, 1909, p. 3

1909, in March: "Trains Musicians--Eugene Mikell, a son of Edward Mikell, Charleston's oldest barber, is now living in Charleston, and after studying music at Booker T. Washington's school in Alabama and having studied at the New York Conservatory of Music, is now training Jenkins' band and orchestra. The orchestra will play at any local entertainment." (Charleston (S.C.) Evening Post, March 22, 1909, p. 7; similar text in Charleston News and Courier, March 23, 1909, p. 5)

1913, in August Mikell serenades the Whitman Sisters in Asbury Park, NJ with a Jenkins Orphanage Boys Band of 35 on tour in the East; he's formerly of the Globe (Indianapolis Freeman, August 30, 1913, p. 6)

1914: In Benjamin Franklin, Jazz & Blues Musicians of South Carolina: Interviews with Jabbo, Dizzy . . . (2008), p. 1, an interviewee remembers sons Gene and Otto there; p. 17, an interviewee remembers that Mikell was there before his time, i.e., in context, before 1914

1914: "A letter (dated 25 July 1914) from Jenkins in London to Eugene Mikell in Jacksonville, Florida, indicates that Mikell did not accompany the band to London" (Jeffrey P. Green, Edmund Thornton Jenkins (1982), p. 23, note 3); Green, pp. 39-40, prints a large excerpt from that letter, which was addressed to Mikell in Jacksonville. Jenkins's offer to Mikell to lead the band in England that fall is "one of the greatest

opportunities I have ever been able to offer you." So he had offered Mikell opportunities in the past.

The trouble with contemporaneous articles about the band is that Jenkins and the present kid drum major get mentioned, but not any adult band leader. Green, an excellent source, reports that the band in England was run by Logan and Jenkins's son. When Jenkins's son was accepted to study music in London, he needed to be replaced, and Jenkins wrote Mikell with this offer in July. The band had been in London already for two months at this juncture. See also Chilton, "Nursery."

Later:

1919: Mikell leads the Hellfighters Band in a charity concert in NYC for the Orphanage, and he is called "both a musician and a charity worker among the colored orphans of the South" (NY Times, August 3, 1919, p. 22)

1924: Chilton (Nursery) claims Mikell led the orphanage band as guest conductor at Hammerstein's Roof Garden in Manhattan in 1924

MAHARA'S MINSTRELS 1905-1906

1906, April: Mikell is finishing up a stint of one season with Mahara's Minstrels; Mikell & English are their musical team; probably still had Charleston as his home; he was their music director for a year, which likely means the 1905-1906 season (Indianapolis Freeman, April 14, 1906, p. 6; Indianapolis Freeman, October 15, 1910, p. 6; Smith FSU thesis, p. 82)

JACKSONVILLE 1906-1916

Mikell moves south with his family and begins what would be about a decade's work based in Jacksonville, Florida. [Probable Jacksonville, Florida connections include the Johnson brothers---J. Weldon and J. Rosamond Johnson---and Ralph Redmond]

JACKSONVILLE SCHOOLS, ca. 1906-1907/1908?

At the Cookman Institute and Florida Baptist Academy in Jacksonville: after a year on the road with Mahara's Minstrels, Mikell goes to Jacksonville to be musical director at the Cookman Institute and also instructor of the cornet band at the Florida Baptist Academy there (e.g., Indianapolis Freeman, October 15, 1910, p. 6). This seems to be in 1906-1907. But, as below, in 1907-1908 he is on the road for part of that season, and it is unclear how this touring would square with teaching duties.

NB: Much later, over 1923-1925, Cookman merged with Mary McLeod Bethune's Daytona Normal and Industrial School in Daytona, Fla. The new institution was first briefly called the Daytona-Cookman Collegiate Institute and then, from 1926, the Bethune-Cookman Collegiate Institute (now Bethune-Cookman College), hence the varied names for the institution Mikell first worked for in Jacksonville in later accounts of his career.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mikell was also called supervisor of music in the Jacksonville public schools (NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5): "He has served as supervisor of music in the Jacksonville, Fla., public schools and as musical director of the Globe Theatre in the same city." It is possible that he continued with the schools as his day job after taking over at the Globe, although verb tenses in the Indianapolis Freeman 1910 article suggest possibly that he gave up school teaching for work at the Globe.

BANDS AND THEATRE ORCHESTRAS, ca. 1907/1908-1916

1907-1908

1908, February: in Jacksonville, Mikell is in charge of the band and orchestra of the Marshall Plantation Comedy Company apparently wintering there, and playing Tampa in February for about three weeks, then Key West, etc.; big tour under canvas beginning April 10; Prof. Mikell directs their "Challenge

Band" (Indianapolis Freeman, January 25, 1908, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, February 8, 1908, p. 5 Indianapolis Freeman, April 18, 1908, p. 5)

1908, April: from Jacksonville, on a tour of the South with his own "famous concert band" (Indianapolis Freeman, April 7 [?], 1908, p. 5), probably meaning the Challenge Band; they return to the city in late June or earliest July "after a successful trip through the South" (Indianapolis Freeman, July 4, 1908, p. 5)

1908-1909

1908, in July: Impresario Frank Crowd runs vaudeville at the Bijou, a tiny place with seating for 218, from July 1908; and then refurbished and renamed as the Globe, from January 1910; ran it for at least 7+ years, mid 1908- late 1915

1908, in fall: Not quite sure what Mikell is up to (school teaching, most likely).

1909, early in the new year: Mikell is called from Jacksonville to Charleston to assemble, rehearse, and lead a band of 50 under the name of Jenkins Orphanage Band at Taft's inauguration

1909, in June: Mikell leads the band at the large, newly built Jacksonville "Airdome", next door to the Bijou, from June 1909 (refs. incl. Indianapolis Freeman, October 23, 1909, p. 5, Indianapolis Freeman, May 21, 1910, p. 6, and FSU thesis, pp. 75-76)

1909-1910

1909, in October: son F. Eugene jr. is born in Florida

1909, October: Mikell, a songwriter, is in Jacksonville as musical director at the Airdome, and writing songs with Mr. English (Indianapolis Freeman, October 23, 1909, p. 5)

1910, in January: the Bijou, remodelled and vastly expanded, becomes the Globe (see the long, detailed history of the Bijou/Globe in Indianapolis Freeman, May 21, 1910, p. 6)

1910, in May: Frank Crowd lures Mikell away from Airdome to play at new Globe (Indianapolis Freeman, May 21, 1910, p. 6; FSU thesis, p. 81); NY Age 1910 articles says he's music director at Globe; he is basically at the Globe from this point for five years

1910 US Census in Jacksonville with Anna, Otto (6) and Eugene, jr. (1)

1910-1911

1910, October: after just about a year in the job, Mikell leaves the Globe in Jacksonville for the Pekin in Chicago, to take charge of its orchestra, leaving a host of friends behind in Florida (Indianapolis Freeman, October 22, 1910, p. 6; Indianapolis Freeman, October 29, 1910, p. 6); Mikell gets caught up somehow in local Chicago musical politics surrounding the Pekin, and he is only in that city for about a month---i.e., the month of November; returns to Florida in December 1910; the Indianapolis Freeman, October 15, 1910, p. 6 profile may have been triggered by the move to Chicago

1910, in December: by early December he's left Chicago about a week ago, after visiting with his friend, composer William Dorsey, and Sylvester Russell saw him to the train (Smith FSU thesis, p. 88 and fn 25; Chicago Defender, December 10, 1910, p. 3); Smith FSU thesis (p. 103) says he goes to Pekin AFTER his stint at Globe ends, but this is an error

1910, in December: Mikell is back at the Globe (Indianapolis Freeman, December 31, 1910, p. 5)

1911, in spring: at Globe

1911-1912

1911, in fall" at Globe

1912, in Jan. and Feb.: at Globe (Indianapolis Freeman, January 27, 1912, p. 5; Indianapolis Freeman, February 10, 1912, p. 6)

1912 SONG

"Lackawanna: an Indian Love Song, Story From Florida," lyrics E. C. Deas, music Eugene Francis Mikell (Jacksonville, New York, and Chicago: Lackawanna Music Publishing Co., 1912)

1912-1913

1912, in August: at Globe (Indianapolis Freeman, August 24, 1912, p. 6)

1913, in June: at Globe; Mikell's 9-piece band "plays everything from Tannhauser to ragtime" (Indianapolis Freeman, June 21, 1913, p. 6)

1913, in July: Mr. Leon W. Marshall comes out of retirement to lead another minstrel show, Marshall's Mammoth Minstrels; Mikell is bandleader for a while over the summer (see 1908, above), though Geo. Smith has this duty before and after Mikell's stint; list of 14 band performers includes Herbert Wright on drums (Indianapolis Freeman, July 26, 1913, p. 6)

1913, in August: Mikell serenades the Whitman Sisters in Asbury Park, NJ with the Jenkins Orphanage Boys Band of 35 on tour in the East; he's formerly of the Globe (Indianapolis Freeman, August 30, 1913, p. 6)

1913-1914

1913, in the fall: Smith FSU thesis (p. 95) says he's still at Globe in 1913-1914

1913, November: Mikell is not at the Globe; rather, he is managing the Lincoln Theatre (vaudeville) in Jacksonville, and advertising nationally in the Freeman for performers (Indianapolis Freeman, November 22, 1913, p. 6; Indianapolis Freeman, November 29, 1913, p. 6); is something wrong at the Globe and is his relationship with Frank Crowd possibly ending?? Naah. Perhaps all that is happening is that the old Globe is closed and the new Globe is under construction.

1914, in spring: Indianapolis Freeman, April 18, 1914, p. 6 Frank Crowd and New Globe are OK; Indianapolis Freeman, May 30, 1914, p. 6 ad says the old Globe theatre is closed; Indianapolis Freeman, June 20, 1914, p. 6 ad says the

old Globe theatre is closed, but a letter says the New Globe is open under Frank Crown and has Mikell leading the five-piece orchestra.

1914 in summer: still in Jacksonville, he's invited to assist Prof. P. M. "Hattsie" Logan with the Orphanage Band on tour of England but declines (Jenkins's son could not continue with the band because he was going to study music in London, hence the approach to Mikell, who had toured with them just the summer before); A Charleston Jazz Initiative Website (accessed July 7, 2011) says he did do the tour to the 1914 Anglo American Exposition in London

1914-1915

1915, in April: Not clear where in town Mikell is working; maybe in a continuing role with the public schools?; NY Age, April 15, 1915 ref. is clear only that he is still in Jacksonville, saying that Mikell is "The Musical Wonder" of Jacksonville, Fla., and that he played for an audience in St. Augustine on classical violin and cornet solos and on a stringed instrument of his own invention, in a benefit concert for Miss Mary Langston's settlement work for girls and boys. [There is an on-line image of Mikell playing some kind of home-made soap box cello.]

1915, in July: Big advertisement in the Freeman for a song, "That Plantation Rag!" lyrics Lafayette A. Brown, music E. Francis Mikell and copyright 1915 by Brown & Mikell; Mikell is at 1228 W. Duval Street in Jacksonville (Indianapolis Freeman, July 3, 1915, p. 6)

1915, in July: a ref. (Indianapolis Freeman, July 10, 1915, p. 6) makes it seem that he's still around Jacksonville, composing songs; further, the same issue, same page refers to the Globe and it is clearly still in business.

1915-1916

The Globe theatre definitely seems to have closed for good by later 1915---in Indianapolis Freeman, December 4, 1915, p. 6 it has been closed a few weeks; seems very likely Mikell stayed around Jacksonville in 1915-1916, alternatively, he may have gone back to work with the Jenkins Orphanage, or else went to NYC and Music Settlement School as soon as early 1916. In any

event, his Jacksonville stint lasted about 8-9 years, during which time he was publicly active in entertainment music but may also have kept a private studio and perhaps also a relationship with the public schools.

NEW YORK and NEW JERSEY, 1916-1932

1916-1917

Mikell works at the Bordentown School, Bordentown, NJ. and the Music School Settlement, NYC and its satellite at Lincoln House Settlement (Saturday lessons) this year. Despite his experience, he is very much an unknown quantity for Noble Sissle and even for Lucien White when he moves up to the Northeast.

1916: Bordentown School, Bordentown, NJ. Mikell is in charge of the entire music department: bands, chorusses, glee club, etc. (William R. Valentine had become its new principal just a year before, in 1915, and he would serve in that role until 1948.)

1916: Mikell also at the Music School Settlement, NYC, 104-6 West 131st Street (and its later incarnation as the Martin-Smith School of Music, NYC, acc. Southern; when J. R. Johnson resigned, "the activities of the Settlement were transferred to the Martin-Smith School" (Southern, 3rd ed., 289), thus explaining the connection of Mikell later to this second school (Southern, 3rd ed., 290).

Jacksonville, Fla. native son J. Rosamond Johnson directed the Music School Settlement from 1914-1919, and very likely was responsible for getting Mikell to come up from the South as assistant instructor by fall 1916.

Mikell is evidently a faculty member (an assistant instructor) at the Music School Settlement in October 1916, and just then he is going to the Bordentown School as instructor in music (NY Age, October 12, 1916). Before the war, in 1916-1917, he continued to journey up to NYC on Saturdays from Bordentown to give lessons. The Trenton Evening Times, December 8, 1916, p. 18, in an article on a musicale at Bordentown that also featured Mikell's two talented sons, identifies him thus: "Eugene Mikell, instructor in music and director of the school band, was for several years instructor and director of

the Jenkins Orphanage Band, Charleston, South Carolina, and teacher in the Music School Settlement in New York City."

Mikell also taught at Lincoln House (the Lincoln House Settlement) at 202 West 63rd Street, where he gave violin lessons on Sturday afternoons (NY Age, March 8, 1917, n.p. [p. 2?], in NEWS OF GREATER NEW YORK; also acc. FSU thesis).

Note: the Music School Settlement of Mannes and Johnson in Harlem was a direct outgrowth of earlier musical activities at Lincoln House, and after it got going, the work at Lincoln House continued as a branch of the Harlem enterprise (NY Age, November 5, 1914, n.p., a long article on the history of the Lincoln House and the Music Settlement, by Elizabeth Walton)

WAR YEARS 1917-1918, 1918-1919

1917-1918

After just one school year in the North at Bordentown and at the Music School Settlement and Lincoln House, Mikell became an Army National Guard band leader.

May 1917- February 1919: two years of army service in 15th NY. According to Sissle, Mikell turned up shortly before Europe's return from Puerto Rico recruiting trip. Indeed, Europe returned from Puerto Rico on May 11. Mikell enlisted in the National Guard on May 12, 1917 and was made Band Leader a day later, on May 13, 1917. Mikell served overseas from December 14, 1917 to February 12, 1919, becomes 2nd Lieutenant in France in 1918, and was demobilized on February 24, 1919.

Mikell joined the NY National Guard as a 2nd Lieutenant on May 29, 1919 with the 15th Infantry, N.Y.G., resigned on March 3, 1921, re-enlisted on July 20, 1922 with the 369th, was promoted to 1st Lieutenant on April 1, 1924, and resigned for the last time on June 7, 1926.

Mikell conducted the AEF band for six weeks in Paris after the war according to an obituary, but no other evidence for that claim; perhaps this refers to sharing the band with Jim Europe in August to October 1918, or to a span after

the Armistice---October 1918 to February 1919---for which there is not yet any documentation of activities.

Nine months after the regiment was established on July 1, 1916, and just after the US declaration of war in April 1917, the 15th N.Y. National Guard passed inspection and was federalized. Band leader E. E. Thompson took this moment to step aside from the regiment's band. Colonel William Hayward and his fellow senior white officers had shaken down their rich friends for contributions. Lieutenant James Reese Europe, taking over with a \$10,000 band fund now at his disposal, immediately sailed for Puerto Rico to recruit some musicians, especially reed players.

Curiously, despite all he was doing and would do for the band, Jim Europe could not be its official Band Leader. An appointment for a First Lieutenant as Band Leader would have required an unacceptable demotion to non-commissioned officer status. Instead, F. Eugene Mikell was brought into the picture; he enlisted on May 12 and immediately received the appointment as sergeant Band Leader. Despite Mikell's title, Europe was nonetheless ex officio the renovated band's primary conductor and musical director. For the next two years it was referred to as Europe's band, and at its head he became a major international celebrity.

With the band fund already seriously depleted, their first public appearance under Jim Europe and Gene Mikell was at a benefit at the Manhattan Casino on June 22, 1917 (Chicago Defender, June 30, 1917, p. 3).

New York Age, August 23, 1917, p. 6: photo of Mikell

It was Mikell, however, who led the band at several public events in the fall of 1917. The band was based at Camp Dix, where it played under Mikell for soldiers and visitors; while in camp he wrote a song for the band to words by Noble Sissle, "Great Camp Meeting Day" (Trenton Evening Times, September 27, 1917, p. 3)

1917, in September: Mikell brought the band, with soloists Noble Sissle and Frank DeBroite, to the Bordentown School for a concert and flag-raising ceremony on September 20 (Trenton Evening Times, September 10, 1917, p. 5)

This regiment served the longest overseas of any of the black units. The first to leave, it sailed for France on December 12, 1917 and began the return trip to the US on February 12, 1919. It was redesignated the 369th on March 12, 1918 in France. When the regiment returned its colors back in New York on February 17, 1919 in a giant parade through Manhattan, it was headed up by its famous band, which was directed by Europe and led by drum major Gillard Thompson.

The 15th N.Y. spent a total of thirteen months abroad, for ten of which its band was under Mikell's baton. He had substantially more podium time with the band overseas than did Jim Europe. However, it was the total of three months of concertizing away from the front before the Armistice by Europe and the "Hell Fighters' Band" that drew extensive attention at the time and has been remarked on at length by so many since. These three months began with a month in the rest area at Aix-les-Bains from mid February to mid March 1918, including elaborate concert tours by train to and from that town. Jim Europe, as a combat officer, had to have special permission to step out of his company to conduct the band at Aix-les-Bains.

When 15th N.Y. was formally re-designated the 369th on March 12, 1918, its fighting men were sent to the front under French command. Europe went with the fighters. He was away from the headquarters band for about five months, from mid March to August 1918, to lead his machine gun company in combat, during which experience he got gassed and was hospitalized in July. He rejoined the band in time for two months of concerts in Paris from mid August to mid October 1918. There the band's initial appearance was at the final meeting of the Allied Peace Conference in Paris, held in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on August 18. This signal event was followed by eight weeks of appearances at hospitals and rest camps around the city.

Europe's group is remembered principally for its instrumental performances and for the singing of Noble Sissle, but it mounted stage shows as well. For instance, during its first month away from the regiment, "The fine Army band of American Negro musicians came over from Aix-les-Bains and put Chambéry in a whirl of excitement. A concert was given in the theater under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A., and the house was crowded to the doors and every seat in the orchestra occupied by American soldiers. A minstrel show was part of the programme, and the two end men, in traditional minstrel togs, cracked jokes, danced, and sang songs, with a chorus and band to support them. The wild

applause of the audience worked the actors into a perfect frenzy of cake walks, hand-springs, and grotesque gestures, and the curtain dropped on a roar of excitement from soldiers and actors alike.”

The record of the band under Mikell is less easy to trace, and in that respect its history is quite similar to those of the other bands in the 92nd and 93rd divisions. We get a glimpse of its service through an anecdote told by a soldier of the regiment, who wrote to a friend that one Sunday the band came to play at the regimental rest camp but had to cut their concert short due to the appearance overhead of a German bomber (NY Age, November 2, 1918, p. 6).

Though Mikell tends to get snubbed in later accounts that focus on Jim Europe, he did valuable service. Indeed, in June, 1918 he was honored in his own right at a ceremony where he received a baton presented by a French regimental bandmaster (New York Age, June 15, 1918, p. 6: “Bandmaster Mikell is Presented With Baton”). On July 4, 1918, in one of its most prestigious engagements under his leadership, Mikell led the band in a concert at General Gouraud’s headquarters in Chalons-sur-Marne. In mid 1918 Mikell enjoyed the army’s boost in rank for bandleaders to Second Lieutenant, and he remained with the band---and Jim Europe came back to it--when all the regiment’s other black officers were removed later that summer.

The band was returned to its regiment and pulled back from public engagements after its stint in Paris, keeping a low profile for its last three and a half months overseas while other bands took the spotlight.

Back in the US, Europe and Mikell immediately appeared at a welcome back concert, "Arabian Nights," for the men of the 15th, arranged by the Clef Club in Carnegie Hall on Saturday, February 15, just three days after disembarking. Both men aided in directing the Clef Club orchestra, and Mikell "is expected to direct one of his numbers which is very popular in Paris" (NY Age, February 15, 1919, n.p.; Chicago Defender, February 22, 1919, p. 9). A month later the Hellfighters Band went on tour.

1919, in February: Formal discharge at Camp Upton on February 22, 1919.

1919 SONGS

"I've Come Back to You," lyrics Joseph W. Grey, music F. Eugene Mikell
(NY: The Hell Fighters Band, Inc., 1919)

"The Shell Shock Shake," lyrics Joseph W. Grey, music F. Eugene Mikell
(NY: The Hell Fighters Band, Inc., 1919)

AFTER THE WAR

1919, in April: Mikell resumed his connection with Bordentown and will be teaching there on Mondays and Tuesdays (Philadelphia Tribune, April 5, 1919, p. 4), so he is not with the Hellfighters Band on tour

1919, in April: Mikell was planning his own American band tour with colored musicians (NY Dramatic Mirror, April 29, 1919, p. 625)

1919, in June: Mikell spoke June 8, 1919 at a memorial service for Mrs. C. J. Walker, millionaire businesswoman, representing the Music School Settlement, so he is evidently resuming his relationship with them (NY Tribune, June 9, 1919, p. 9)

After Europe was murdered in Boston on May 9, 1919 the Hellfighters Band was immediately disbanded and its musicians thrown out of work. Noble Sissle turned down a suggestion that he take over the band and lead a reduced ensemble of fifteen on a vaudeville tour on the Keith circuit. (Robert Kimball and William Bolcolm, *Reminiscing with Sissle and Blake* [New York: Viking Press, 1973], p. 80.) Sissle and Blake went out on the vaudeville circuit as a duo instead.

Mikell stepped in at this juncture. He assumed formal leadership in June (New York Age, June 21, 1919, p. 6: "Mikell Now Leader of "Hellfighters" Band"). And he kept the Hell Fighters Band going on and off for a total of six more years in conjunction with his teaching career.

Mikell had hoped to tour in the fall with the band, but that plan never came to fruition. Rather, he began with individual concerts in New York City:

June 15 the band played under Mikell at the Mother Zion A.M.E. church, appearing in a musical program put together by J. R. Johnson, as a

benefit for the Music School Settlement (Chicago Defender, June 21, 1919, p. 5; NY Age, June 21, 1919, p. 6)

June 27 the band played for dancing at Sulzer's Harlem River Park & Casino at 127th and 2nd at a festival given by the Veterans Corps of the 15th regiment with "Music by the Original 15th Regiment Band" under Mikell (Chicago Defender, June 14, 1919, p. 4; NY Age, Saturday, June 28, 1919, n.p. [6])

July 11 at the Manhattan Casino

July 26-27 at Carnegie Hall at a benefit whose proceeds were to go towards a Harlem music school in memory of James Europe (NY Call, July 25, 1919, p. 4; NY Age, July 26, 1919, p. 6; NY Times, July 27, 1919, p. 45)

August 14 at the Palace Casino in a fundraiser for the Jenkins Orphanage (NY Times, August 3, 1919, p. 22)

September 26, 1919 at the Mahattan Casino, the Semi-Annual Concert and Dance, including new song hits by Mikell (NY Age, September 20, 1919, p. 6; NY Age, October 11, 1919, p. 5)

1919, in October: An article headlined "'Hell Fighters Band," directed by F. E. Mitchell, Now More in Demand Than Ever" in The Music Trades 58/16 (October 18, 1919): 56

Back in his teaching posts, Mikell conducted a few other events by the Hellfighters Band in 1919-1920, including:

a concert on January 25, 1920 in Providence, Rhode Island

an appearance on May 11, 1920 in NYC at the Manhattan Casino, for the Lieut. Europe Memorial Dance and Military Exhibition [i.e., for the first anniversary of Europe's death] (New York Age, October 11, 1919, p. 5; Providence News, January 26, 1920, p. 4; New York Age, May 8, 1920, p. 6).

Meanwhile, Simpson and new 15th Band are the official military voice for the old Fifteenth and the old 369th, which are no longer. Little takes over the new 15th Regiment in January 1921. In December 1921, Simpson is succeeded by a team of Will Vodery as music director and Noble Sissle as band manager (NY Age, January 7, 1922, p. 3)

1919-1920

BACK TO SCHOOL

Without fully severing ties with the Hellfighters Band, Mikell became involved with teaching again. By October the band at the Bordentown School had been organized and was making good progress under Mikell (Trenton Evening Times, October 10, 1919, p. 10).

Mikell's colleague at Bordentown this year in charge of the boys and girls Glee Clubs was Fred J. Work (c. 1878-1925) of Fiske University, now of New York (Trenton Evening Times, April 9, 1920, p. 29; Trenton Evening Times, May 7, 1920, p. 7)

1920, in May: on May 10 the Bordentown School band plays under Mikell (Trenton Evening Times, May 7, 1920, p. 7)

1920, in July: July 17, 1920 big Lucien H. White article in NY Age on Mikell (NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5): "Forming Boys Bands"; he is involved with:

Bordentown School boys' band of 25, with anticipated growth to 35 or 40

Lincoln House boys' band, 22 Jones Street, Orange, N.J. (new this summer)

Lincoln House boys' band, 202 or 302 West 63rd Street, NYC (just formed last Saturday)

Jersey City mens' band (new this summer), 49 Jewett Ave., Jersey City

Boy's Welfare Club boys' band, 4-6 West 131st Street, NYC (planned but yet to be formed)

studio in NYC at 328 West 52nd Street

studio in Trenton at the Zion A.M.E. Church

Summer courses July 8 to September 16

1920 US Census: Mikell living in Manhattan with Anna, Otto (13), Eugene jr. (10); thus he evidently reverses field and after WWI lives in Manhattan and commutes to New Jersey; they lived on 52nd Street and then moved to 207 New York Ave. in Jamaica, Queens

1920-1921

Mikell schedule in October 1920:

Bordentown, Monday and Tuesday
 Riverton, NJ Wednesday
 Jersey City, Thursday
 East Orange, Friday
 Manhattan, Saturday

NY Age, January 1, 1921, p. 5, an article with a prominent accompanying photo of "Lieutenant F. Eugene Mikell and Band Recently Organized and Instructed by Him in Jersey City, N. J." (with a drum labelled "Welcome Band Jersey City"):

"Gene Mikell is a Busy Teacher

Eugene Mikell is a busy man. He has under his direct tutelage, including members of the various bands and orchestras he is instructing, approximately 325 pupils every week. He has a band of twenty-five at Bordentown (N. J.) Institute, a band of thirty in Jersey City, one of twenty-six at Riverton, N. J., and a boys' band of seventeen at East Orange. Then at Lincoln House, West 63rd Street, New York, he has an orchestra of twelve, and another New York institution is negotiating with him at the present time for the formation of another band organization.

In addition to these bands and orchestras he has sixty-four private pupils at Bordentown, forty at Jersey City, thirty-two at Riverton, seventeen at East Orange, twenty-four at the Lincoln House and eighteen at his home studio, West 52nd street.

It is worthy of note that Mr. Mikell is achieving splendid results from the large masses of material with which he has to work. His school work is of the highest importance, and he is laying a foundation for the advancement of musical culture which will be of great value to the race's future."

How does he manage this hectic schedule? An ad that he runs in the NY Age (e.g., NY Age, September 25, 1920, p. 6; NY Age, October 16, 1920, p. 6), says he is at Bordentown on Mondays and Tuesdays, Riverton on Wednesdays, Jersey City on Thursdays, East Orange on Fridays, and with pupils at his home studio at 328 W. 52nd St. NYC on Saturday mornings.

Bordentown School, Bordentown, NJ.; the band is mentioned throughout the 1920s, but references to Mikell drop out of the Trenton Evening Times after 1921; the spring 1921 story says the next concerts will be in the 1923-1924 academic year, so he is evidently planning a kind of hiatus at Bordentown, i.e. surely a concentration of efforts in NYC

1921, February: Mikell is the instructor and director of the Welcome Band of Riverton and Palmyra, NJ (Burlington, County, NJ), which appears to be a local adult community/fraternal band making its initial appearance on February 9 (NY Age, February 19, 1921, p. 5)

1921, late April/earliest May: Mikell is elected head of NYC Clef Club; the Trenton Evening Times, May 6, 1921, p. 26, calls him the "newly elected head of the Clef Club of New York"; or at least, in fact, he was made the head of the orchestra, which isn't quite the same thing; he conducts Clef Club orchestra in the memorial for Jim Europe in May

1921, in May: On May 9 the Bordentown School band plays a concert (Trenton Evening Times, May 1, 1921, p. 5A)

1921, in May: on May 15 there is a memorial service for James Reese Europe with an orchestra directed by Mikell; i.e., for second anniversary of Europe's death (NY Age, May 21, 1921, p. 2)

1921-1922

1921, in fall: presumably working with the Clef Club Orchestra (and teaching, and running bands?)

1921, August 18, he conducts the Jersey City Welcome Band (colored) of 22 members at a picnic (Jersey City Journal, August 19, 1921, p. 11)

1922, January 23: Mikell conducts a rejuvenated Clef Club Orchestra at a Carnegie Hall concert that also featured the Clef Club chorus under William C. Elkins, in a varied program from Rachmaninoff to Irving Berlin; "the first of a series of concerts to be given throughout the country, the proceeds from which will be used for a Clef Club building to be dedicated to the memory of its founder, the late Lieut. James Reese Europe" (New York Tribune, January 24, 1922, p. 7; NY Age, January 28, 1922, p. 5; Chicago Defender, February 4, 1922, p. 5)

1922, February through May: Beginning Sunday, February 26, Mikell and Elkins lead Clef Club forces of fifty in a series of Sunday concerts under the management of Mack Hilliard, first at the Selwyn, then to the Republic, then to the Lyric---running at the Lyric for six Sunday nights from April 2 to May 7 (Billboard, February 25, 1922, p. 9, Billboard, April 1, 1922, p. 45, etc.)

1922, June 10: NY Age column: Lucien White has just only recently heard that Mikell is returned from the Reserve List to active duty and will take over the band from Vodery (NY Age, June 10, 1922, p. 5)

1922 "the unemployment problem had made necessary some action to keep the musicians together"

1922, in July: On July 20, 1922 Mikell enlisted as 2nd Lieutenant in the 369th Infantry N.Y.N.G.

BACK AGAIN WITH THE HELLFIGHTERS BAND, 1922-1926

In 1921-1922 Mikell, cutting back on his teaching, had become more visibly active professionally with the Clef Club. In the spring of 1922 it was to Mikell that Colonel Little turned to see if the band of the 369th could again be a professional operation that could provide significant, steady income to its players. Mikell agreed, and returned to active duty from the Reserve List (NY Age, June 10, 1922, p. 5)

Summer 1922 in NYC in NYC in July and August, in 3 different theatres; and Fall/Winter tour with Hellfighters Band in Chicago and with Keith circuit for about seven months

1922, June 22: Played at City Hall as bids are opened for the new Armory for the 369th

1922 June: From Saturday, June 24, the Hell Fighters Band started full-time work with daily afternoon concerts in Manhattan's Park Avenue Hotel; runs 3 weeks to July 14 (NY Times, June 22, 1922, p. 8).

1922, in July: the band began a vaudeville try-out with the B. F. Keith organization, playing first at a theatre in the Bronx, then at one in Harlem, and then on to a Broadway debut at B. S. Moss's Franklin Theatre on Broadway, playing "several of the newest jazz songs as well as a stirring march and a classical operatic selection." It finished out August in vaudeville at Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre:

1922: Monday, July 24 "Europe Band Returns with New Leader," begins vaudeville debut at B. S. Moss's Franklin theatre [the Franklin is not on Broadway, but in the Bronx; this relatively new theater opened on September 5, 1921]---a one-time, first trial engagement as a Keith Vaudeville Circuit act 1922 Thursday, July 27, another one-time trial engagement for Keith's, this one at Keith's Hamilton, on Broadway at 146th in Harlem; big picture of Mikell with caption about new engagements, appearing in New York Age, July 29, 1922, p. 6

1922: The band of 35 seems to have work for at least three weeks at B. S. Moss's Broadway Theatre (ca. July 30-Aug 5, August 6-12, 13-19) with Keith acts [NY Evening Telegram, July 30, 1922, p. 13; NY Morning Telegraph, August 2, 1922, p. 14; NY Evening Post, Saturday, August 12, 1922, p. 000]; they will be retained another week (NY Morning Telegraph, August 13, 1922, p. 2); two weeks ago they were such a hit that they are returning "with a new repertoire of jazz and classical selections" (NY Evening Telegram, Tuesday, August 15, 1922, p. 3);

Returns again as chief vaudeville feature; Variety reviews the band at the Broadway as a new act, 31 performers, running 25 minutes on the full stage

(Variety, Friday, August 4, 1922, p. 13; repr. in Chicago Defender, August 12, 1922, p. 6)

1922: August 20 at Proctor's Fifth Avenue at W. 28th St. from Sunday, August 20, 1922 [to 26th, if for a week]

(See NY Evening Telegram, July 24, 1922, p. 3; NY Age, July 29, 1922, p. 6; NY Evening Telegram, July 30, 1922, p. 000; Variety, August 4, 1922, p. 000; NY Age, August 19, 1922, p. 6; NY Evening Post, August 12, 1922, p. 3; Chicago Defender, August 12, 1922, p. 6; NY Tribune, August 20, 1922, p. 3; NY Evening Telegram, August 22, 1922, p. 3)

1922, in September: Mikell brought thirty men to Chicago for a four-week engagement [September 3-30] as part of the enlarged cast and orchestra playing with the new Creamer and Layton show Strut Miss Lizzie; they were not part of original season from June 19 in NYC at the Times Square Theatre

1922, in September: On September 3, "Bessie Coleman, the only negress aviatrix, made three short flights" at Curtiss Field, Garden City, L. I., an exhibition in honor of the 15th NY, and the band of the Fifteenth Infantry played (NY Times, September 4, 1922, p. 9) but clearly not all the band was there, with Mikell on the road in Chicago

1922 October, through 1923, January: The Strut Miss Lizzie engagement was followed by a stint as a headline attraction on the regional vaudeville circuit from October 1922 through January 1923 with the Keith organization that took the band from New York (including an appearance at Loew's State (NY Tribune, November 12, 1922, p. 3) to New Jersey and Philadelphia (November 23, 24, 25 in Trenton; December 2 in Long Branch, NJ; Philadelphia in the week of December 19, 24---possibly Sun 17 to Sun 24---an ad on Saturday, December 16 speaks of "next week"), and then north to Proctor's theatres in Amsterdam, Albany and Schenectady (opening January 4 in Amsterdam, NY "for the last half of the week"; Albany; opening January 18 in Schenectady "for the rest of the week")

The band also made appearances at other events:

In October, on October 12 and 13 in Jersey City, the Hell Fighters Band under Mikell will play for a block dance for the benefit of the Jersey City Postal

Auxiliary of the National Disabled Soldiers league (Jersey City Journal, October 12, 1922, p. 4; Jersey City Journal, October 14, 1922, p. 3).

And in November, it played at a "Great Mass Meeting" under the auspices of the Central Republican Club and Womens Roosevelt Republican League at the Palace Casino (NY Age, November 4, 1922, p. 000)

Full-time work could not be sustained beyond these seven months (late June 1922 through late January 1923), but the unit continued to play prominent individual engagements, most memorably when it provided the music for a grand ceremony in Manhattan on August 13, 1923 paying tribute to French general Henri Gouraud. In 1923 the band also played at an international polo match out on Long Island, and took a vaudeville engagement for a week at the Loew's Theatre at 9th Avenue and 110th (New York Age, October 13, 1923, p. 6).

After Mikell's effort to sustain the Hell Fighters Band as a commercial concern came to an end, he continued to lead it as a National Guard band for two more years, from 1923 through 1924 and through most of 1925, until he retired from the guard shortly after Colonel Little. Late that fall the band was put into the hands of Mikell's current second in command, Warrant Officer Jacob W. Porter. From this point forward, for at least the next 17 years or so, the history of the 369th NYNG and its band is merely local or parochial history in NYC and esp. Harlem, part of a set of interlocking fraternal organizations including the National Guard, the Elks, and the VFW. Mikell began an association with the New York Times African-American employees at this time.

1923 January 26: the 369th Cadet Band in its first public appearance, which apparently slips to February 2, so Mikell must have organized the Cadet Band of the 369th Regiment NYNG in later 1922 or earliest January 1923 (NY Age, January 13, 1923, p. 1; NY Age, February 10, 1923, p. 7)

1923, February: a February 10 NY Times announcement of formation of colored employees club, with orchestra and band and glee club under Mikell (NY Age, February 10, 1923, p. 8)

1923, April 22 Huge march in Harlem with 369th Band and also the Cadet Band (NY Age, May 5, 1923, p. 7)

1923, in May: Lafayette Theatre had a Midnite Benefit, Tuesday night, May 1, for The Katy Ferguson Home for Unmarried Mothers and the Boys' Cadet Band and Drum Corps of the 369th Infantry; the Boys Band played under Mikell's direction and there were big-time vaudeville acts, and Col. Little was there with distinguished white guests (NY Age, May 5, 1923, p. 6)

1923: Sunday May 20: third annual Jim Europe Memorial Service, with Clef Club Orchestra and the 369th Band under Mikell, etc. (NY Age, May 19, 1923, p. 6; NY Age, May 26, 1923, p. 6)

1923: band of 369th plays at international polo match, military reception, and Loew's vaudeville in NYC at the Loewe's Theatre at 9th Avenue and 110th Street

1923: August 13 colored citizens celebrate visit of Gouraud; Mikell leads 369th band and Sissle sings in recap of July 4, 1918 event; delay while waiting for Cadets, who do not show!! (NY Times, August 14, 1923, p. 30; NY Age, August 18, 1923, p. 1, 2)

1923-1924

1923 after summer vacation for children's groups, starting up again in September; October and November articles on the cadet band and the midget orchestra (e.g., NY Age, October 13, 1923, p. 6; NY Age, November 24, 1923, p. 6)

1924, in April: on April 1, Mikell is honored by promoted to First Lieutenant N.Y.N.G. and made "conductor of Music", while Jacob W. Porter is promoted to be warrant officer and bandleader; Mikell leads the Cadet Band at ceremonies marking the anniversary of the Appomatox surrender with the unveiling of memorial tablets at the Plaza, 59th and 5th Ave. (NY Age, April 12, 1924, p. 8)

1924, in June: Lieut. F. Eugene Mikell and Warrant Officer Porter headed the band at the annual sermon of the Non-Commissioned Officers Association of the 369th Infantry on June 8 (Chicago Defender, June 14, 1924, p. A4)

1924 Smith FSU thesis (p. 105) says he led the Jenkins Orphan Band at an appearance at Hammerstein's Roof Garden

1924-1925

1925-1926

1925, in the fall: Mikell is still in the 369 N.Y. N.G., acc. 1926 Muster Roll; he leaves the band between October and December 1925; by December, 1925, his former Warrant Officer, Jacob W. (Jake) Porter has taken over the band; Mikell led the band from ca. June 1922 to ca. December 1925, or three and a half years. Jacob ("Jake") Porter leads it for the next eight years, late 1925 to late 1933; Arthur W. Phillips is conducting it in 1935 [NY Age, February 9, 1935, p. 4]; technical sergeant Russell Wooding takes the reins in 1936 [he's conducting it in May; see NY Age, May 9, 1936, p. 2].

1926, in June: Mikell officially leaves service with the N.Y.N.G. for the last time on June 7, 1926

AFTER THE BAND: WORKING WITH NEW YORK TIMES EMPLOYEES

1926-1928 Mikell drops out of sight (e.g., no hits in "Fulton postcards"); could be health issues, or more likely just teaching quietly under the radar and running the NY Times "colored employee" musical organizations; his sons are becoming active as professional musicians in their own right

1928-1929

References to Mikell as conductor of NY Times Colored Orchestra and Glee Club (Brooklyn Eagle obit), a.k.a. the NYT Negro Glee Club, occur in the press for about two years from around April 1929 to June 1931, though he had been connected to the group since 1923 (see above); the group concertizes and does radio broadcast; his obit mentions NYT chorus, orchestra, band, and an anthem by Mikell in honor of publisher Ochs.

1929, in April: A special broadcast from NY Times Studios to explorers in the Antarctic, with performers including the New York Times colored Glee Club

under Mikell (Amsterdam (NY) Evening Recorder, April 6, 1929, p. 12; Schenectady Gazette, April 6, 1929, p. 13; NY Times, April 17, 1929, p. 1; NY Times, April 14, 1929, p. 159); see also Jerome S. Berg, The Early Shortwave Stations: A Broadcasting History through 1945 (2013), p. 74

1929-1930

1929, in September: Mikell leads the NY Times Glee Club at the Lafayette on Sunday, September 22 on a midnight show for two charities that features guest of honor Mayor James Walker (NY Age, September 28, 1929, p. 2)

1929, in October: another short-wave transmission to Admiral Byrd and his party in the Antarctic, including the Colored Glee Club (NY Times, October 5, 1929, p. 10; NY Times, October 6, 1929, p. 28)

1930, in May: He's bringing the NY Times Glee Club to Harlem for a June 1 concert of "Popular Gems" at Grace Congregational Church, 308 West 139th Street (NY Age, May 31, 1930, p. 7)

1930: in the US Census he is in Queens with Anna, Otto (26), and Eugene jr. (20)

1930, in July: Mikell plays a violin solo at a church event (NY Age, July 30, 1930, p. 5)

1930-1931

1931, in February: The New York Times Glee Club under Mikell will give its annual reception and dance at the Renaissance Casino on February 19 (NY Age, February 21, 1931, p. 7)

1931, in February: the NYT Colored Glee club is on the air at 9:30 pm on February 24, together with the NYT Choral Society and Pressroom Band (NY Times, February 24, 1931, p. 34)

1931, in March: The New York Times Glee Club, directed by Mikell, gives a gift of \$100 to help Harlem's unemployed; "they have become quite populare on

the concert stage and over the radio. Recently they gave one of the most successful concerts and receptions of the season at the Renaissance Casino" (NY Age, March 21, 1931, p. 10; see also Pittsburgh Courier, March 28, 1931, p. 5)

1931, in June: The Central Printing Trades School, operated jointly by the Publishers' Association of NYC and the Printing Pressman's Union, held graduation exercises on June 22, with a program that included musical selections by the NYT orchestra and choral society under Gershenson and Evbans, and the NYT Glee Club under Mikell (NY Times, June 23, 1931, p. 23)

1931-1932

1931, in fall: illness

1932, in January: Mikell dies on Tuesday, January 19, at the Navy Hospital in Brooklyn at age 51 after a long illness and final long hospitalization of several weeks, so 1931 is his last year of real activity. His home is at 207 New York Avenue, Jamaica, Queens at the time of his death, and he is buried in Cypress Hills National Cemetery on Jamaica Avenue in Brooklyn.

1932, in February: "Navy Men Honor the Late Lieutenant Mikell in Cuba," memorial events held by Bandmaster Alton A. Adams of the United States Navy stationed at Guantanamo Bay (The Virgin Islands Daily News, February 18, 1932, p. 2)

Compositions

"Lackawanna: Indian Love Song," lyrics E. C. Deas, music Mikell (New York: Lackawanna Music Publ. Co., 1912)

"That Plantation Rag," lyrics, Lafayette A. Brown, music E. Francis Mikell (copyright 1915 by Brown & Mikell)

"Great Camp Meeting Day," lyrics Noble Sissle, music Eugene Mikell (Trenton Evening Times, October 9, 1917, p. 1)

"I've Come Back to You," lyrics, Joseph W. Grey, music Mikell (New York: Hell Fighters Band, Inc., 1919)

"The Shell Shock Shake," lyrics, Joseph W. Grey, music Mikell (New York: Hell Fighters Band, Inc., 1919)

Obits say he "was the composer of several songs, one of which, "Father, to Thy Dear Name," was dedicated to Adolph S. Ochs and The New York Times Choral Society." Several marches were dedicated to the 369th N.Y.N.G.

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Newspaper profiles:

Indianapolis Freeman, October 15, 1910, p. 6

NY Age, June 21, 1919, p. 6: "Mikell Now Leader of "Hell Fighters" Band"

Lucien White, NY Age, July 17, 1920, p. 5

Obituaries:

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, January 21, 1932, p. 17

New York Times, January 21, 1932, p. 21

New York Evening Post, January 21, 1932, p. 2

Jamaica, NY, Long Island Daily Press, January 21, 1932, p. 1

Charleston, S.C., News and Courier, January 26, 1932, p. 2

New York Age, January 30, 1932, p. 7; see also p. 8

Chicago Defender, January 30, 1932, p. 5

Baltimore Afro-American, January 30, 1932, p. 13