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Music as Advertising: The Story of the Armco Band

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MUSIC AS ADVERTISING:
THE STORY OF THE ARMCO BAND

A thesis submitted to the
Division of Graduate Studies and Research
of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

in the Performance Studies Division
of the College-Conservatory of Music

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Christopher L. Chaffee

B.M., University of Rochester-Eastman School of Music, 1995

M.M., Michigan State University, 1997

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Abstract

Before the emergence and subsequent dominance of professional and school-based performing ensembles in the United States, music making was the domain of community-based groups that varied in size, scope, quality, and performance goals. Throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, one of the most common musical ventures was the industrial or corporate-sponsored ensemble. Advanced for a complex web of reasons, these groups served an important and often overlooked part in introducing communities to both music-making and regular concert attendance.

Based in Middletown, Ohio, the American Rolling Mill Corporation (Armco) sponsored a concert band that serves as an exemplary case study of this phenomenon. While many community-based ensembles did not last nor had little local or national impact, the Armco Band achieved success as a regional and national entertainment act during the twenty years of its existence, 1920–40. A key factor in this success was the leadership of Middletown native Frank Simon. Dr. Simon founded the band after leaving the legendary Sousa Band. He utilized his extensive performing experience, knowledge of band repertoire, and formidable musical skills to shape the Armco Band into a professional ensemble of considerable ability.

The purpose of this essay is to present a case study of the Armco Band as an important popular entertainment phenomenon in American music. The primary function of the Armco Band was to entertain a mass audience, and this has an inexorable link to the Armco corporate agenda. This paper examines the history, personnel, programming, and community reaction to the Armco Band to explore the intertwined ideas of commercialism and music production.

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This project would not have been possible without the generous assistance and support of several outstanding individuals. For aiding the research, I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Sam Ashworth and Dr. David Simon for their generosity in opening private archives and allowing me to reproduce images of important photographs and documents. The many hours spent in casual conversation with both men also yielded invaluable information. I would also like to thank my informants, Dr. Robert Hornyak, Mr. Jack Wellbaum, Mrs. Carol Dunevant, and Mr. Bill Stabler. Their enthusiasm and diverse knowledge of Armco, Middletown, Frank Simon, and the Armco Band helped animate and enliven history.

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My family and friends played a larger role in this process than they will ever imagine. I will always be thankful that my wife and best friend, Inger Neighbours, stood by me during all the highs and lows of my DMA studies, including the long nights of constant variation between sitting at the computer and walking the floor mumbling. Finally, without the years of patience and support from my parents, including late night thesis editing help even during their vacation, I would never have reached this important point in my life. They never stopped believing in me. I dedicate this work to them in gratitude.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Imagine this typical American scene: it is a hot, humid Sunday afternoon in July, sometime in the mid-1920s. In a sprawling park in Middletown, Ohio, thousands of people begin to congregate. Well-dressed men and women arrive in shiny Model-T Fords with children and picnic baskets in tow. Other families are making the short walk up the hill from their well-groomed company housing near the steel mill. Despite the heat and the large crowd, there is a palpable sense of anticipation, a buzz of energy that runs through the crowd. Soon the Armco Concert Band will take the stage, resplendent in their military-style uniforms, and shiny new horns tucked under their arms, all under the long shadows cast by welcoming signs emblazoned with the Armco corporate logo. As the afternoon sun beats down, the crowd of nearly twelve thousand people sits enraptured, tapping toes to marches, listening with curious reverence to the exotic sounds of Beethoven, smiling knowingly during the cakewalk, finally rising to their feet and feverishly clapping along with the concluding, familiar Sousa March.

Is this synthesis of fact and fiction an icon of a long lost American innocence, pointing to a simpler time with straightforward pleasures and great community spirit? Perhaps, but it is easy to slip into nostalgia and find some comfort in this image. After all, this is an icon imbued with idealism. Prosperity is the order of the day, with the frightening shades of the Great Depression and World War II not even on the horizon. In this sea of thousands of faces, the “melting-pot” of America is present. Among many others, Polish, German, Scots-Irish, Lithuanian, and Welsh immigrants have all flocked to Middletown to find work in the booming Armco mill.

All of the musicians on stage are also part of the same American Dream, employees of Armco who will roll up their sleeves the next morning and return to work producing steel that

will help fuel a growing United States economy. To situate the Armco Band in the proper historical and social context, a broad overview of the Armco Corporation and the city of Middletown is necessary. Middletown is a small city situated on the Great Miami River in southwest Ohio, approximately halfway between Cincinnati and Dayton. Incorporated in 1802, Middletown passed through several growth phases similar to many nineteenth-century Midwestern American cities and towns.¹ The proximity to the Great Miami, a main shipping artery connected downriver to the Ohio, helped stimulate growth in agriculture and small industries. When the Miami-Erie Canal opened in 1845, Middletown had an even greater link to points both north and south, and the small town quickly expanded and became a prominent business center.² During the 1850s, the introduction of railroads also added to the overall expansion of the city. By the turn of the twentieth century, major industrial concerns such as Paul Sorg's tobacco and paper companies created a stable economy for the city, and many enterprising businesspersons and hopeful future industrialists flocked to Middletown seeking financial success.³

In 1900 George Verity founded the American Rolling Mill Corporation (Armco) in Middletown. Already a successful business manager and respected citizen in Cincinnati, Verity was attracted to Middletown by the efficient transportation options and incentives provided by local business leaders. Despite considerable competition from the dominant steel companies of the time such as Carnegie's U.S. Steel, Armco quickly began to grow and draw attention from other industrialists around the world for incorporating all the elements of iron and steel

¹ George Crout, *Middletown USA, All American City* (Middletown: Perry Printing, 1960), 21.

² *Ibid.*, 39.

³ Many industries peaked or failed during this time. For example, during a successful tobacco marketing campaign, Paul Sorg noticed the rising popularity of the bicycle in American culture. As a result, he started the Miami cycle company, a firm that produced more bicycles from 1890–1923 than any other American company. (Mr. Sam Ashworth, Middletown, Ohio, interview by author, 2 July 2003.)

production together in one location.⁴ When Verity threatened to move Armco out of Middletown for a larger site in 1909, the city leaders offered him the chance to create a specific list of incentives that would change his mind. In the spirit of paternalism that dominated the thinking of industrialists during this period, Verity produced a list of civic improvements, including a library, a Young Men's Christian Association, school improvements, and better sewers and lighting for the city.⁵ The city's leaders eagerly complied, firmly establishing Verity and Armco as the dominant economic and social boss of the community. This relationship would continue well into the 1980s, giving Armco complete hegemony in the cultural, political, and social structure of Middletown.⁶ As Middletown grew, Armco executives recommended and supported a new hospital, new schools, hotels, parks, and other community improvements.

The motivation for this community involvement is more complex than simple corporate benevolence. In the early twentieth century, many American industries used community improvements and family-oriented benefits for employees as a tool to create a perception that their company was an ideal place to work. A satisfied labor force would be less likely to organize and unionize. A perception existed that a company was a large family, and the executives or owners were caring, but distant paternal figures. In 1903 Armco formally introduced the Armco Association,⁷ establishing a vital nexus for this corporate culture. The Association was open to the entire labor force, providing social and family outlets such as athletic teams, family picnics, men's and women's minstrel groups (see figure one), motivational speakers, English lessons, and

⁴ Crout, *Middletown USA, All American City*, 113.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mr. Sam Ashworth, Middletown, Ohio, interview by author, 2 July 2003.

⁷ James M. Klein, "The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band, 1929–1939: Programming and Influence on Emerging Band Repertoire" (D.M.A. Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1981), 3.



Figure 1. Photograph, Armco “Girl’s Minstrels,” n.d.

“sick” benefits for employees in a “certain wage group.”⁸ When the newly formed factory band from the Armco Zanesville Works paid a visit for a company picnic in 1920, the Middletown community decided they needed a “bigger, better” band for their hometown.⁹ The idea caught on, and Armco added the new Concert Band to the growing list of cultural opportunities provided by the Association.

Industrial bands were a prominent feature in American culture from the 1860s to the 1930s. Town and municipal bands were also widely popular during this period. Perhaps the industrial band drew from the same Zeitgeist, but the involvement of the paternal corporate

⁸ Frank Simon, “A Brief Story of the Armco Band,” Archive Collection, Middletown Historical Society, n.d.: 2.

⁹ Mr. Sam Ashworth, Middletown, Ohio, interview by author, 2 July 2003.

culture is impossible to deny. As LeCroy suggests, the improved welfare of the workers may have been the ostensible goal, but the actual purpose of music in industry was to prevent formation of unions and maintain social regimes.¹⁰ However, the positive long-term effects of this dynamic relationship between culture and industry are many. By 1929 Kenneth Clark counts 625 business and industrial firms in the U.S.A. with active music programs.¹¹ While this number may not be inclusive, it does give some indication of the large number of amateurs participating in community-based music production. Some industrial bands did not last long or had a highly localized impact. Other bands, such as the Armco Band, became national music icons and helped ignite greater interest in music.

The purpose of this investigation is to present a case study of the Armco Band as an important *popular* entertainment icon in American Music. I intend to demonstrate that the primary function of the Armco Band was to entertain a mass audience. This function has an inexorable link to the Armco corporate agenda. During the first phase of existence (1920–1929, Middletown), the Concert Band was part of Armco’s effort to improve the quality of life for employees and raise the reputation and standing of Armco in the community. During the second phase (1929–1939, Cincinnati), the Concert Band helped spread the Armco name to households in America and abroad.

The first chapter will focus on Frank Simon, founder and conductor of the Armco Band. Dr. Simon is essential to the discussion of the Armco Band for two reasons. First, he was born and raised in Middletown. In his formative years he was an active member of the municipal band, achieving local celebrity at an early age. His leadership of the Armco Band helped bring

¹⁰ Hoyt Lecroy, “Community-based Music Education: Influence of Industrial Bands in the American South” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 46 (1998): 248.

¹¹ Kenneth S. Clark, *Music in Industry* (New York: National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, 1929), 207–8.

immediate and positive attention from the local community. The second and more important reason is to establish a link between Simon and the American Concert Band tradition by investigating his time spent as cornet soloist and assistant conductor of the world-famous Sousa Band. During his stint with the Sousa Band (1914–1919), Simon worked closely with John Phillip Sousa and absorbed a great deal of knowledge which he would later use to shape the Armco Band. This included musical aesthetics, standards of personal behavior, and a strong drive to program music that closely followed Sousa’s idea to “entertain, not educate.”¹²

I will also briefly discuss the controversy surrounding Frank Simon’s departure from the Sousa Band by analyzing conflicting historical accounts. It may not be possible to find the definitive version of the story, but I think this warrants discussion as his departure coincides with the formation of the Armco Band and shows Simon’s temerity and entrepreneurial shrewdness. I will complete this section with my conclusions about the dominance and importance of Frank Simon in the Armco story.

The second chapter will concern the fledgling first months and years of the band as Frank Simon attempted to create an ensemble out of musicians with a wide range of skill levels. Simon quickly imposed performing standards and specific instrumentation requirements to meet his goals. This chapter will also discuss how Frank Simon was able to manipulate the hiring practices of Armco to help recruit professional musicians and how he later brought in “ringers” or outside musicians to supplement and strengthen the ensemble. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the Armco Band as a Middletown community symbol, with analysis of programming and community reception.

¹² Sousa clearly defended his position on what audience he was seeking throughout his life (Harry Schwartz, *Bands of America*, (New York, Da Capo Press, 1957). Also, Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1988).

The third chapter will cover the formation and development of a strictly professional ensemble based in Cincinnati. During this period, the Armco Band made weekly radio broadcasts heard throughout North America. This chapter will consider how the radio shows served as an important advertising effort for the Armco product line and will chronicle important national tours and concerts and the additional attention they generated. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the Armco Band as an international entertainment symbol, with analysis of programming and community reception. Throughout Chapters Two and Three, I will highlight the addition of important individuals including Ernest Glover and Ferde Grofé.

The concluding chapters will organize and review the broader points made throughout the paper and will address the ultimate demise of the Armco Band in 1939. Authors Paul Bierley¹³ and Lawrence Levine¹⁴ have suggested that the pinnacle of popularity for the American concert band was around 1910. The advent of radio, phonographs, and jazz music all lead to the demise of many touring and performing ensembles. In the case of the Armco Band, this may have been a factor, but perhaps the overbearing operating costs for twenty years may have driven Armco executives to find other ways to advertise and build community spirit. By 1939 Armco was a global force in steel production, and it is possible they felt they no longer needed the Armco Band to represent them.

¹³ Paul Bierley, *John Phillip Sousa: American Phenomenon* (Miami: Warner Brothers, 2001).

¹⁴ Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

CHAPTER 2

FRANK SIMON

Frank Simon is the most important person in the Armco Band story. A strong-willed and entrepreneurial man, Simon founded and was the director of the Armco Band during its entire existence. Every aspect of the Band was under Simon's direct control, from programming to personnel. In addition to his work for Armco, he achieved considerable fame during his lifetime as a cornet soloist, composer, educator, and bandmaster. After his death in 1967, his celebrity quietly disappeared. However, a renewed interest in Frank Simon and the Armco band has emerged, including the formation of the Cincinnati-based Frank Simon Band in 2003. This new professional ensemble honors Simon's legacy and promotes education and performance goals.¹⁵

The legacy of the Armco Band and Simon's central position in this story does not garner much attention in mainstream American music history. A concise account of Frank Simon's career is elusive. He was always image-conscious and given to spinning lore and glossing over details of his life, presenting an idealized story that helped perpetuate a larger-than-life persona. Conflicting information exists in secondary sources published after his death, and his own versions of events are often contradictory or leave out important details.

Frank Simon was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on 26 November 1889. His parents, Solomon and Bertha Simon, were German Jewish immigrants who met and married in 1888.¹⁶ Solomon had tried several careers before he settled in Cincinnati, including stagecoach driving and cow wrangling in Texas, and Bertha had recently moved to Cincinnati from Dayton to work as a

¹⁵ Mrs. Carol Dunevant, Cincinnati, Ohio, interview by author, 10 July 2003.

¹⁶ Michael Freedland, *Music Man: The Story of Frank Simon* (Portland, Oreg.: Valentine Mitchell, 1994), 12.

dressmaker.¹⁷ A year after Frank was born the family moved to Middletown and opened a dry goods store. The Simon family quickly became prominent local citizens. A bustling industrial city, Middletown provided Frank with opportunities to have musical and interpersonal experiences that would shape his personality in profound ways.

Frank exhibited musical inclination at an early age. One apocryphal account suggests that Frank and his younger brother, Leo, constantly sang, whistled, and used rolled-up newspapers for instruments.¹⁸ Additional lore, already surfacing in 1914, tells of a seven or eight year old Frank cutting school to follow a circus band on parade around the city.¹⁹ At the age of nine, he “found” a flute and taught himself to play.²⁰ Despite the fact that he apparently played with incorrect hand and body position,²¹ he took flute lessons until he was eleven. He did not enjoy playing the flute and could not have made much progress given his playing technique and the dubious quality of instruction he received, so he persuaded his mother to purchase a cornet.²² At the age of eleven, he began lessons with Q. C. Buckles, the local municipal band director. Buckles was a capable cornet player and reportedly inspired a love of the instrument in young Frank. In addition, it appears that Frank’s first band experience began at this time, since Buckles invited him to play in the municipal ensemble. The local band was an informal one with flexible

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Victoria Ullery, “Frank Simon: History and Influence.” *Journal for Band Research* 23 (1988): 41.

¹⁹ Henry Fillmore, “Frank Simon,.” *Musical Messenger* 1914: 1 (Simon Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio).

²⁰ Freedland and Fillmore cite this “discovery” as an example of Frank’s serendipitous entry into music. I would argue that this is a slight exaggeration meant to add an aura of mystery to the story.

²¹ Freedland, *Music Man: The Story of Frank Simon*, 17.

²² Ibid.

personnel,²³ and when Buckles moved away from Middletown in 1903, he put fourteen-year-old Frank in charge as director.

During his formative years, Simon received a great deal of support and encouragement from his parents and extended family. His uncle Julius Simon owned a successful local store called “Noah’s Ark.” Julius constantly urged Frank to think in capital accumulation-driven business terms,²⁴ an ideology that is manifest in his activities throughout his career. On 12 April 1902, a terrible tragedy struck the Simon family. Young Leo, Frank’s constant companion, was riding his bicycle on a family errand when a steam-powered, oversized automobile lost control and ran over him. Leo died within a few hours. Considered the second automobile fatality in the United States,²⁵ this terrible event drew Simon even closer to his mother. From that point forward, Bertha Simon spent all of her time and energy nurturing and encouraging him in his musical endeavors. She carefully saved money to pay for his music lessons, lavished praise on him with every new career step, and carefully clipped newspaper and magazine articles related to her son’s activities until the day she died.²⁶

After Buckles’s departure from Middletown, Frank began taking the train to Cincinnati for weekly lessons with William J. Kopp who played first trumpet in the Cincinnati Symphony and served on the faculty at Cincinnati College of Music.²⁷ Bertha Simon initially tried to register Simon for lessons through the College, but after hearing him play, Kopp insisted that the

²³ Simon later said “When they were all there and sober, they numbered about fourteen.” (Frank Simon, “The Armco Band” transcript of November 1966 speech for Middletown Optimist Club, Middletown Historical Society Archives: 1).

²⁴ Freedland, *Music Man: The Story of Frank Simon*, 19–22.

²⁵ Mr. Sam Ashworth, Middletown, Ohio, interview by author, 3 July 2003.

²⁶ Dr. David Simon, Cincinnati, Ohio, interview by author, 2 July 2003.

²⁷ Ullery, “Frank Simon: History and Influences,” 41.

thirty-minute lesson time slot offered by the College was not sufficient and asked that Simon come to his home for hour lessons instead.²⁸ In 1905 Kopp suggested that Simon audition for Herman Bellstedt. He was also a member of the Cincinnati Symphony and had achieved international fame as a cornet soloist and composer during his tenure with the world-famous Sousa Band. As the legend goes, Bellstedt told Simon, “Young man, if you’ll do your part, I’ll do mine,”²⁹ and they began a close working relationship that would last many years and alter the course of Frank’s career in profound ways. The cost of sending Frank to Cincinnati for instruction was difficult for the Simon family, with transportation fares, lesson fees, and meal expenses totaling approximately six dollars a week, but Bertha found ways of stretching the family budget to give him this opportunity.³⁰

For the next four years, Simon continued lessons with Bellstedt and occupied himself with various musical activities. The Middletown municipal band was officially renamed “Simon’s Band,” and despite his relative youth, Simon became a local celebrity. As he developed a strong sense of professionalism and musicianship from his lessons with Bellstedt, he also grew as a teacher and bandmaster, urging, teaching, and cajoling his group of rank amateurs to greater achievement and musicianship. This early display of patience and persistence is the first evidence of a teaching facility that would become one of his personality traits.

Another of Simon’s infamous character traits emerged during this period. Built in the late nineteenth century, the Sorg Opera House in Middletown was a frequent stop for the dominant forms of traveling entertainment of the time, including Chautauqua groups, minstrel shows,

²⁸ Frank Simon, “The Armco Band” (transcript of November 1966 speech for Middletown Optimist Club, Middletown Historical Society Archives): 2.

²⁹This oft-repeated version may have originated with Simon himself, but it finds its way into nearly all accounts of his rise to fame (see Ullery, Bierly, and Freedland).

³⁰ Ullery, “Frank Simon: History and Influences,” 41.

circus bands, touring bands and orchestras, and other musical acts. Simon played shows at the Sorg two or three nights a week, earning seventy-five cents a service for over five hours of work. When the American Federation of Musicians formed local number 321 and unionized the Sorg musicians, the players demanded and received twice that amount, earning a dollar-and-a-half per service. Speaking to the Middletown Optimist Club in 1966, Simon recalled, “Boy, we did stick the old Opera House. . . .I just wanted to tell you that I came up the hard way.”³¹ There is no evidence that Simon played a role in unionization and negotiation, but from this experience he certainly learned to advocate for musicians economic rights, an incorrigible trait that would eventually land him in trouble with Sousa and later tarnish his reputation once he became a well-paid bandmaster.

In 1909 Kopp formed his own band and hired Simon to serve as cornet soloist. Comprised of many German-American musicians, the Kopp Band regularly played at the Cincinnati Zoological Garden. Through the local network of German-American musicians, Simon’s playing piqued the interest of John C. Weber, a local saloon owner and conductor of Weber’s Prize Band. Weber hired Simon to be cornet soloist with his band in 1910, giving Frank yet another venue for his budding talent. Weber’s band was deeply rooted in the German Band tradition with all rehearsals conducted in German.³² The band performed extensively for German beer-halls and family entertainment events in Cincinnati’s predominantly German neighborhood, Over-the-Rhine. Weber’s band was also an incubator for young talent, including future stars such as Henry Fillmore and Charles Stacy.³³ The ensemble made two transcontinental tours, giving Simon a taste of the barnstorming life of a traveling musician, a

³¹ Simon, “The Armco Band,”18.

³² Freedland, *Music Man*,40.

³³ Ullery, “Frank Simon: History and Influences,” 42.

taste he never quite lost. Taking place during the summer months, the tours also helped spread Simon's name as an emerging musical star.

During the winter of 1912–1913, Simon possibly performed with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leopold Stokowski. In her 1987 *Journal for Band Research* article “Frank Simon: History and Influence,” Victoria Ullery devotes an entire paragraph to this fact:

During the winters [*sic*] of 1912-1913, Simon was a member of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under the leadership of Leopold Stokowski. Playing in the orchestra was a valuable experience which provided Simon with the opportunity to expand his knowledge of symphonic music. Many of his conducting skills came from the two years he observed Stokowski. Friendships established in the orchestra were to last a lifetime.³⁴

However, my investigation of this facet of Simon's life did not lead to the same conclusions. First, according to current Cincinnati Musicians Association (A.F.M. local #1) board president Eugene Frey, personnel archives from this period do not show Simon ever playing as a contracted member of the orchestra.³⁵ Thus, if he did perform with the Symphony, they hired him as an extra or substitute player on an occasional basis only, perhaps only sitting alongside his teachers Bellstedt and Kopp in the trumpet section. Second, a shift in the climate of opinion in the professional music world took place over the course of the twentieth century. The orchestra became one of the ultimate expressions of “high” culture, leaving other forms of cultural expression behind as “low” or “common.” Contemporary musicians and scholars now tend to over-emphasize the importance of orchestral experience as the paramount musical achievement.

A survey of several promotional biographies of Simon emphasize this point about the Cincinnati Symphony. In the 1920s, Armco publicity pieces proclaimed Simon “the foremost

³⁴ Ibid., 43.

³⁵ Mrs. Carol Dunevant, Cincinnati, Ohio, interview by author, 11 July 2003.

Bandmaster in the world, and the best-known cornet soloist in the land” while emphasizing his tenure with the Sousa Band.³⁶ By 1940 promotional literature for “Frank Simon and his Famous Radio Band” featured an eight-paragraph biography that did not mention the Cincinnati Symphony experience at all.³⁷ By 1991 when the Goldman Band performed a Frank Simon tribute concert, the lead paragraph of the Simon biography read, “Frank Simon was one of the great bandmasters. A pupil of Herman Bellstedt, Simon played with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski.”³⁸ This shift in emphasis highlights the importance that contemporary thought places on the orchestra as a cultural symbol.

Unfortunately, this has caused writers such as Ullery to exaggerate emphasis on Simon’s possible orchestra experience. The emphasis on Stokowski’s influence was also indicative of the hyperbole that surrounded his importance as a twentieth-century musician. This misguided combination of cultural hierarchy led writers away from Simon’s more important influences. Perhaps Simon helped perpetuate the myth by over-emphasizing his own experience to the point of exaggerating about his time with the Cincinnati Symphony. Nevertheless, Stokowski and the Cincinnati Symphony could have played only a small role in Simon’s development. The next phase in Simon’s career, his time with the Sousa Band, was a more important period in his growth as a musician and bandmaster.

In 1914 after nearly five years building a reputation as a cornet soloist, Simon took the most important step in his career. He was still a faithful pupil of Herman Bellstedt, and this relationship was about to pay a priceless benefit for the twenty-five-year-old Simon. Herbert

³⁶ “Untitled article” *Armco Bulletin*, Spring 1921 (Sam Ashworth private archives).

³⁷ Promotional Program, 1940 (Sam Ashworth private archives).

³⁸ Goldman Band Program, 1991 (Sam Ashworth private archives).

Clarke, the famous cornet soloist and assistant conductor of the Sousa Band, had announced that he was going to retire from the band at age fifty. Bellstedt, a long-time friend of Sousa, intervened on Simon's behalf and arranged for him to join the Band with the possibility of taking over for Clarke when he retired. Simon's own version of the process, perhaps apocryphal, is that Bellstedt suddenly called him "on the only telephone in Middletown" and urged Simon to "hurry up down here [to Cincinnati]; I've got good news for you."³⁹ Bellstedt told Simon that Clarke was going to retire, and it was possible that he could take his place.

Freedland's biography highlights the fact that Simon joined the Sousa Band without an audition, but this practice was common during the period.⁴⁰ In fact, most of the job placements of the day operated through a series of networks and contacts, and if an audition were involved, it could be as simple as playing for a conductor in his hotel suite. Simon was fortunate to have the Bellstedt recommendation, since it facilitated the jump to the Sousa Band. By all accounts, he did meet Sousa's intense standards of musicianship and proved to be a superb addition to the Band. Contrary to Simon's own recollections, he was not an immediate superstar with the ensemble. Clarke remained the cornet soloist and assistant conductor until his retirement in 1917, so Simon's early solo performances with the Sousa Band, while indisputably of high caliber, were not prominent features on Sousa's programs. By taking on a secondary role next to Clarke, Frank was entering into a form of apprenticeship with the older performer, a teacher-student relationship that would help Simon learn to cope with the brutal playing routine and physical demands of the Sousa schedule.⁴¹

³⁹ Simon, "The Armco Band," 3.

⁴⁰ Freedland, *Music Man*, 48.

⁴¹ Ullery, "Frank Simon: History and Influence," 41.

While Clarke provided cornet-related mentoring and guidance for his young associate, Sousa had a profound impact on Simon's overall musical personality. When he emerged a few years later as a bandmaster, he used the legendary Sousa as his model of dress, conduct, musical standards, and programming. A thorough analysis of the Sousa approach is beyond the scope of this study, but a few general statements that illustrate his character and musical views will help illuminate the link between Sousa, Simon, and the Armco Band. The most profound influence was aesthetic. Sousa deliberately cultivated a musical sensibility that dictated that entertainment, not education, was the goal for his ensemble. He carefully took the ostentatious showmanship of earlier bandmasters like Patrick Gilmore and added a layer of respectability without losing the mass appeal. To please a broad audience, his programs featured a variety of musical selections, including solo features, marches, transcriptions of symphonic repertoire, and dance pieces.⁴²

Along with this carefully controlled musical programming, Sousa cultivated an idealized public personal image of the rugged, masculine, and patriotic American. Even after he left the Marine Band to conduct his own civilian ensemble, he insisted on military style dress and comportment from all his musicians. In the male-dominated world of Bands, his exploits as a horseback-riding, target shooting, but refined gentleman who always knew how to treat a lady were widely admired and discussed. He achieved superstar status and respect and used this power to run his ensemble in an autocratic, sometimes brutal way. Only the highest standards of musicianship and technical ability were acceptable, and Sousa would summarily dismiss any player who showed any type of weakness. Frank Simon survived within this system for a few years, apparently, just long enough for Sousa's ideology to become his dominant belief structure.

⁴² Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 292.

When Herbert Clarke retired from the Sousa Band in 1917, he took a position in Ontario as music director of the Anglo-Canadian Leather Company Band.⁴³ Sousa promoted Simon to take Clarke's place, but he did not have much time to enjoy his new position. Ever the patriot, Sousa had volunteered for military service to aid the U.S.A. in World War I. In May 1917 he accepted an assignment as the chief administrator and educator at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center,⁴⁴ with the primary mission of forming and training Navy Bands. The civilian band was suspended, and Simon went home to Middletown. At this point, he was also briefly involved with the military, serving for an unknown period as Bandmaster for the U.S. Aviation School Band at Fairfield, Ohio. The disposition of this ensemble is unknown, although a half-page advertisement appears in the October 1917 *Musical Messenger* (See figure 2).⁴⁵ Despite the effort involved, this ensemble seems to have had little momentum, and apparently lasted less than a year. The following oblique reference to the situation appears in a letter from Sousa to Simon dated 5 March 1918:

I regret to hear about your loss in the Fairfield Band scheme but the trouble comes from the fact that a lot of enthusiastic officers in the service know the necessity for music and some of the high officials realize the expense attached to it have frowned upon the expenditure of money for bands [*sic*].⁴⁶

⁴³ Freedland, *Music Man*, 69. Many other retired players joined the growing ranks of industrial band directors during this time, as it was usually a lucrative career move.

⁴⁴ Ullery, "Frank Simon: History and Influence," 46.

⁴⁵ *Musical Messenger*, October 1917, Simon Archives.

⁴⁶ John Phillip Sousa to Frank Simon, 5 March 1918, Middletown Historical Society Archives.

For the first, but not last time in his career, it appears that Simon had failed. With his strong will and entrepreneurial spirit, he would succeed many times, but there were occasions when even his personality and talent could not prevail.

MUSICIANS WANTED
— FOR —
U. S. Aviation School Band

Good Performers on all Band Instruments to Enlist for Period of War. Permanent location. New Barracks. Excellent Meals. Fine companionship. State ability and experience.

FRANK SIMON,
Bandmaster, U. S. Aviation School,
FAIRFIELD, OHIO.

43rd Squadron.

Figure 2. Article, 1917 *Musical Messenger*.

The time away from the Sousa Band did not last long. The aforementioned letter from Sousa to Simon included an invitation to join the Band for the 1918 summer touring season. Frank returned to the Sousa Band and enjoyed great success as the cornet soloist and assistant conductor. Along with greater daily responsibility, the promotion gave Frank more reasons to interact with Sousa on an individual basis. This further solidified the learning process, giving him specific ideas that would influence his own management and interpersonal style. Already a seasoned veteran and known personality on the touring circuit, Simon redefined the role of the

Sousa cornet soloist and achieved success on his own terms despite the fact that he was replacing Herbert Clarke, known to this day as one of the great cornet virtuosos of all time.

In retrospect, 1918–1920 were the best years of Simon’s Sousa Band experience. Finally coming into his own as a soloist beyond the shadow of all his mentors, from Buckles to Clarke, Simon was tasting success in his personal, musical, and financial life. While he later tried to create an image of the humble, small town boy made good that slightly stretched the bounds of truth, there is no denying that one of his greatest moments in the Sousa Band came 3 October 1919, when Sousa’s Band performed a sold-out concert at Middletown’s Sorg Opera House. The hometown audience included his family, friends, and many local admirers who had followed Simon’s rise. Reporting in the *Middletown Journal* the next day, an anonymous writer heaped praise on Sousa and Simon, with lavish statements including, “The most important musical event that ever occurred here. . .one could not help feeling that he was at the foot of genius [Sousa].” And about Simon, “Thirty year old Simon was given special ovation.”⁴⁷ Moreover, in a strange bit of foreshadowing, the following statement appeared in the same article:

As local citizens watched young Frank perform, they wondered if perhaps here was a man capable of handling a band of his own. Your scribe predicts that such a band may be formed within a few years. Frank Simon is ready for his own band.⁴⁸

In fact, Simon’s days with the Sousa Band were about to end, and the Armco Band story was ready to begin.

There are conflicting accounts about Frank Simon’s departure from the Sousa Band. The definitive truth may be lost, but historical investigation at a distance of over eighty years yields interesting observations on Simon’s real image, as opposed to the manufactured and controlled

⁴⁷ George Crout, *Middletown Diary* (Middletown: Self-published, 1980) Vol 1, 9–10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

persona. It was widely accepted that Simon did not play with the Sousa Band after 1920, and the split from the Band received mention in Bierly's Sousa monograph,⁴⁹ Freedlands's biography of Simon⁵⁰, and a few other accounts. At the core of the story was a labor dispute within the ranks of Sousa's band. In early 1920 the Sousa Band was on an extended American tour. Long before professional music ensembles had support staff, members of touring groups took turns booking hotel and travel arrangements in advance. On one specific occasion, someone neglected the train and hotel arrangements, leaving the bandsmen tired, hungry, homeless, and sore when they arrived in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.⁵¹ In the stifling world of a Sousa tour, it was easy to comprehend why this would set off a chain of events that would be controversial for many years. Fueled by their indignation and growing displeasure with the ways of the "Governor" (Sousa), the men called a "gripe session" and elected to boycott the matinee concert the following day.⁵²

Simon's role in this labor strike was not clear. Given his experience with labor advocacy, and his apparent need for acceptance from those around him, he could have agitated for this unprecedented move. In addition, he found himself trapped between his loyalty to Sousa, the cold and calculating dictator who never mingled with his band socially and traveled in his own private Pullman car, and his loyalty to the bandsmen, the jocular, backslapping world of men on tour that he had first experienced in 1910 with Weber's band. When the strike was set in motion,

⁴⁹ Bierly, *John Phillip Sousa*, 50–70.

⁵⁰ Freedland, *Music Man*.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 112. Even Freedlands's misguided name of the city may be obfuscation, as no such city is listed in the 2003 Rand McNally atlas in *South Carolina*, only *North*.

⁵² *Ibid.* See also Bierly, *John Phillip Sousa*, 58.

only nineteen of the sixty-four bandsmen arrived to play the next concert, and Simon insisted for the rest of his life that he was one of the nineteen.⁵³

No matter what role Simon played in this action, when Sousa sent contract invitations for the next season, he was not included. Simon spent the rest of his life trying to put the subject to rest and create a version of the story that downplayed the gravity of the situation, to the point where he would manipulate facts to serve his goals. For example, in his 1966 Optimist Club speech, a document that formed the basis for a great deal of Michael Freedland's biography, Simon insisted that he only reluctantly took the Armco Band offer, leaving the "greatest job in the world" so that he could "be closer to his beloved parents."⁵⁴ In terms of his parting from the Sousa Band, he presented the story as a seamless transition from Sousa to Armco:

Well, it was the biggest decision that I made in my lifetime— I resigned my job with John Phillip Sousa, and I can show you letters in my file where it nearly broke his heart, if I do say so, because he wrote me that "Sousa's Band without you wouldn't be Sousa's Band." That's a compliment coming from the greatest man of his kind in the world.⁵⁵

Unless another unknown document has been lost, the "letter" Simon was referring to could only be the same 1918 letter discussed above. The actual letter reads, "I hope to start with the Band about the 29th of June and to play up to the middle of September, and of course Sousa's Band would not be Sousa's Band without you."⁵⁶

Simon's revised version of events created a comfortable story without a painful break from Sousa, but the reality of the situation was that he was unemployed, probably despondent, and living at home when the Armco offer arrived. After leaving the Sousa Band, Frank Simon

⁵³ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁴ Simon, "The Armco Band," 7–8.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁶ John Phillip Sousa to Frank Simon, 5 March 1918, Middletown Historical Society Archives.

spent a brief period trying to start a music studio in Chicago,⁵⁷ hoping that his fame would draw top students. Similar to the Fairfield Air Academy Band, this venture did not last, and little mention of this appeared in published accounts. While he would later reconcile with Sousa, the split must have caused deep personal consternation for Simon. However, by 1930 he had manipulated the facts and a newer, happier version of the departure found its way into circulation. A *Middletown Journal* article published that year presented this version: “Ten years ago, he [Simon] decided to take a much needed vacation. That was shortly after Middletown had been given the thrill of having him with Sousa at the Sorg.”⁵⁸

No matter what really happened, Simon was suddenly back at home in Middletown, eager to get married, and looking for a new opportunity when Armco executives decided to create an industrial band to add to its roster of cultural offerings. The fortuitous timing could not have been better for Armco. Ultimately, the conflict that tore Simon away from Sousa was of minor importance, and the various versions of the story that have passed into myth all point to one simple fact, Simon’s obsession with success and significant musical experience would help shape the fledgling Armco Band into one of the most important ensembles of its time.

From this point forward, the Simon story merged with the Armco Band story. Detailed information about his life beyond Sousa is included in the following chapters of this document. Along with the fame that the Armco experience generated, Simon also gained widespread attention for his influence as a college professor, clinician, cornet teacher, and all around positive force in American music education. Beyond Armco, he also deserved credit for creating the band program at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, an act that quite possibly saved the

⁵⁷ Ullery, “Frank Simon: History and Influence,” 47.

⁵⁸ Alice Lloyd, *Middletown Journal*, n.d. Sam Ashworth Private Archives.

depression-era Conservatory from bankruptcy and obscurity,⁵⁹ credit for discovering many talented high school musicians including future trumpet star Al Hirt,⁶⁰ and credit for preserving a library of thousands of band scores that have become part of permanent archives of the University of Arizona and U.S. Marine Band libraries.

⁵⁹ Even though this sounds like an exaggeration, a quick glance at the conservatory curriculum of the late 1920s suggests that Simon's new band program did indeed help a nineteenth-century relic compete with more progressive schools in the Midwest. Simon's contemporaries all agree with this, especially Bob Hornyak (phone interview, 3 July 2003).

⁶⁰ Simon not only recruited Hirt to study at the Conservatory, he paid for three-quarters of his tuition and expenses.

CHAPTER 3

THE MIDDLETOWN YEARS

By 1920 the Armco Association was offering a wide range of popular social activities. These included basketball and baseball teams, music concerts, trips to area parks, discounted theater or film tickets, dances, and family picnics. Middletown residents still recall stories of fathers, grandfathers, or other family members who spoke fondly of “the days when Armco really took care of us, and we had a lot of fun.”⁶¹ Musical activities were especially popular and were usually part of the Association-sponsored *Armco Friday Nights*. In 1917 George Verity hired Bennett Chapple to serve as Director of Publicity for Armco. One of his first tasks was to create a family-oriented program that would bring the labor force into the imposing new Armco Headquarters.⁶² The new facility was equipped with a large auditorium, so Chapple initiated the *Armco Friday Nights* entertainment series. Almost every Friday night, employees could bring their families to see local and regional entertainers, guest speakers, employee musical and theatrical acts, and many other forms of “light” entertainment. For 1920–1921, Armco formally introduced a musical “season” that would take place during the Friday night series.⁶³

The popularity of music programs for Armco employees generated interest in permanent ensembles. This interest intensified after the appearance of the Zanesville Armco Band at National Armco Day in Middletown on 25 September 1920. Armco had expanded to Zanesville earlier in the decade, and employees had formed a Band and Drum corps in 1919.⁶⁴ Only twenty-

⁶¹ Mr. Bill Stabler, Middletown Ohio, interview by author, 11 July 2003.

⁶² Bennett Chapple, *Seventy Years in Seventy Minutes* (Middletown, Self-Published, 1955), 59.

⁶³ *Armco Bulletin*, (April 1920): 1. Starting in 1914, Armco published a monthly magazine for their employees. Now preserved at the Middletown Historical Society, these documents provide a majority of the sources for this section. No author is given for most articles, so footnotes will appear in this format.

⁶⁴ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 6.

eight members strong, the Zanesville Band marched in the Armco Day parade and gave an evening concert featuring, among others, Frank Simon as soloist.⁶⁵ The enthusiastic response to the Zanesville Band sparked immediate desire on the part of the Middletown Armco Association to create a local ensemble.

Throughout the autumn of 1920 Armco management and Association officers worked together on a plan to found a band. Well-placed articles in the October and November *Armco Bulletins* generated further interest. These articles were quite possibly the work of Chapple, a known music lover who had played in a boys bugle corps as a teenager. Chapple was a staunch advocate for the Armco Band, later becoming both a close friend of Frank Simon and the creative and actual voice of the “ironmaster” on the Armco broadcasts. The first article appeared in October 1920:

National Armco Day proved beyond any question or doubt the need of a good band composed of Middletown people. There have been several attempts made in the past to organize an Armco Band, and the failure of these attempts should not prevent us from making another attempt to organize this much needed organization at this time. Armco should have a band of 100 pieces. . . . “Let’s go bandmen” and get this thing started without any further delay.⁶⁶

The next appeal appeared in November 1920 and emphasized the Armco community interest:

A high grade Armco band would be the most popular attraction not only for Armco *but for the entire community*, [italics my own], and it is hoped by the end of another year that this much needed organization will be brought together under a competent leader.⁶⁷

As it turned out, the “competent leader” was living in Middletown and was about to be named the new Director of Music for Armco.

⁶⁵ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 7.

⁶⁶ *Armco Bulletin*, 7 (October 1920): 397.

⁶⁷ *Armco Bulletin*, 7 (November 1920): 413.

In January 1921, the *Armco Bulletin* formally introduced Frank Simon, the “world’s greatest cornetist,” as the new Music Director,⁶⁸ and with great excitement and fanfare announced the formation of the Band. Events leading up to this historic announcement are difficult to document. Most accounts rely on Simon’s own version of the story. Later in his life, Simon would recall that George Handley, the Armco Association president, approached him and sought help forming a Band, asking, “I don’t know a bass drum from a clarinet, but could you help me or give me some ideas how we could have a band in Middletown?”⁶⁹ Simon agreed, and helped Handley write a questionnaire that he sent to all Armco employees, seeking interested persons and inquiring about musical experience. The response was not encouraging. Of the scant twenty-two responses, very few employees had any actual music training, and many of them were keenly interested in playing the drums.⁷⁰

Despite the tepid response, Simon and Handley somehow put together a small group of men who gathered for the inaugural rehearsal on an unspecified Sunday in December. In addition to selecting music for the group, Simon traveled to Cincinnati to locate used instruments.⁷¹ By Simon’s standards, the rehearsal was a disaster.⁷² Many of the amateur musicians could not read music, and most of them had less than adequate technical skills. Some of Armco’s executives were present for this infamous rehearsal, and despite what they heard, they still pressed forward with plans to sponsor a band.

⁶⁸ *Armco Bulletin*, 8 (January 1921): 39.

⁶⁹ Simon, “The Armco Band,” 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 7. His exact words, “it was god-awful!”

Part of Simon's disappointment may have stemmed from the fact that he was already negotiating a position with Armco and was expecting to take control of the band. His own version of events was that Charlie Hook, Armco vice-president, called him after the rehearsal and asked for his advice on how to proceed with building the band. This included a request for names of potential band directors that Simon could recommend. After some thought he could not name any, so Hook suddenly said, "What's the matter with you taking it?"⁷³ Simon turned down the initial offer, but after several days, he "reluctantly" accepted.⁷⁴ He cited personal reasons for the change, including the need to permanently be close to his aging parents, the desire to leave the demands of touring with the Sousa Band so he could start a family and have more time at home, and the desire to "do anything I could to make the town better, because man does not live by bread alone. You have to have some culture in a community."⁷⁵

In all probability, more negotiations were taking place behind the scenes than either party would admit. Simon would later say that the new position "nearly caused a nervous breakdown, since I left the world's greatest musical organization for the world's worst."⁷⁶ It is hard to determine if his circumstances surrounding his departure from the Sousa Band were a matter of public record, so perhaps he was actually able to use his prestige and fame as a bargaining tool negotiating with Armco. Knowing that Clarke and other former Sousa band members had parlayed their fame into lucrative contracts as industrial bandmasters, Simon did indeed persuade Hook and others at Armco that a significant investment in both the band and his personal needs would be necessary. Hook, Chapple and other Armco Executives promised to "support you with

⁷³ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁴ This version is widely cited, see Freedland, Ullery, and recent publicity information from the Frank Simon Band.

⁷⁵ Simon, "The Armco Band," 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.

every reasonable request you make of us.”⁷⁷ Judging by the fact that Simon later moved to a house in the “executive belt” of Middletown⁷⁸ and lived a somewhat lavish lifestyle, his idea of “reasonable” was quite generous when it came to his own salary.

The early Armco Band was not a haphazard affair for long. Somehow, the Band grew from the small handful that showed up in December to a forty-piece ensemble that gave a concert on 7 January 1921 after only five rehearsals.⁷⁹ To explain this sudden increase, Simon was probably more involved in recruiting behind the scenes than he would admit, and even at this early stage, he hired area professional musicians to perform with Armco employees. The April *Armco Bulletin* noted the progress of the Band, including the purchase of new uniforms that would debut on opening day of the baseball season. The author of the article praised the members of the Band for “serving freely for the love of music and the chance to be of service to the community.”⁸⁰

Also appearing in the April *Bulletin* was an announcement that after the Band was fully established, Simon would be starting an orchestra and choral society. Including wives and children of Armco employees and some Cincinnati Conservatory students, the orchestra did perform concerts during the next year, (see Figure 3), but seemed to have disbanded by 1922.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Mr. Sam Ashworth, Middletown, Ohio, interview by author, 3 July 2003.

⁷⁹ Ullery, “Frank Simon: History and Influence,” 48.

⁸⁰ *Armco Bulletin*, 8 (April 1921): 76.

⁸¹ In a curious reflection of the cultural values of the 1920s, the *Armco Bulletin* article demonstrates clear gender divisions. After applauding the men for their effort in the band, the appeal for people to join the orchestra mentions “Armco Ladies may find this especially appealing.” (Ibid., 76).

This ambitious project showed that Armco had a number of things planned for Simon, but the



ARMCO ORCHESTRA ON STAGE AT THE SOBCG

Figure 3. Photograph, Armco Orchestra and Chorus, 1921.

activities of the Band soon became the entire focus of his time at Armco. While the original intention was to offer many ensembles, the enthusiastic community reception for the Band eclipsed all other music activities. The Band became Armco's primary music offering for the next two decades.

Wearing their new uniforms, the Band marched in the opening day parade for the baseball team.⁸² The new uniforms, (see figure 4)⁸³ were obviously modeled on Sousa's military style apparel. Since the costs of both uniforms and some instruments were the responsibility

⁸² The Armco baseball team was considered "semi-pro," and once invited the Cincinnati Reds to play a game at Armco field. (Mr. Sam Ashworth, Middletown, Ohio, interview by author, 3 July 2003).

⁸³ Sam Ashworth Private Archives.

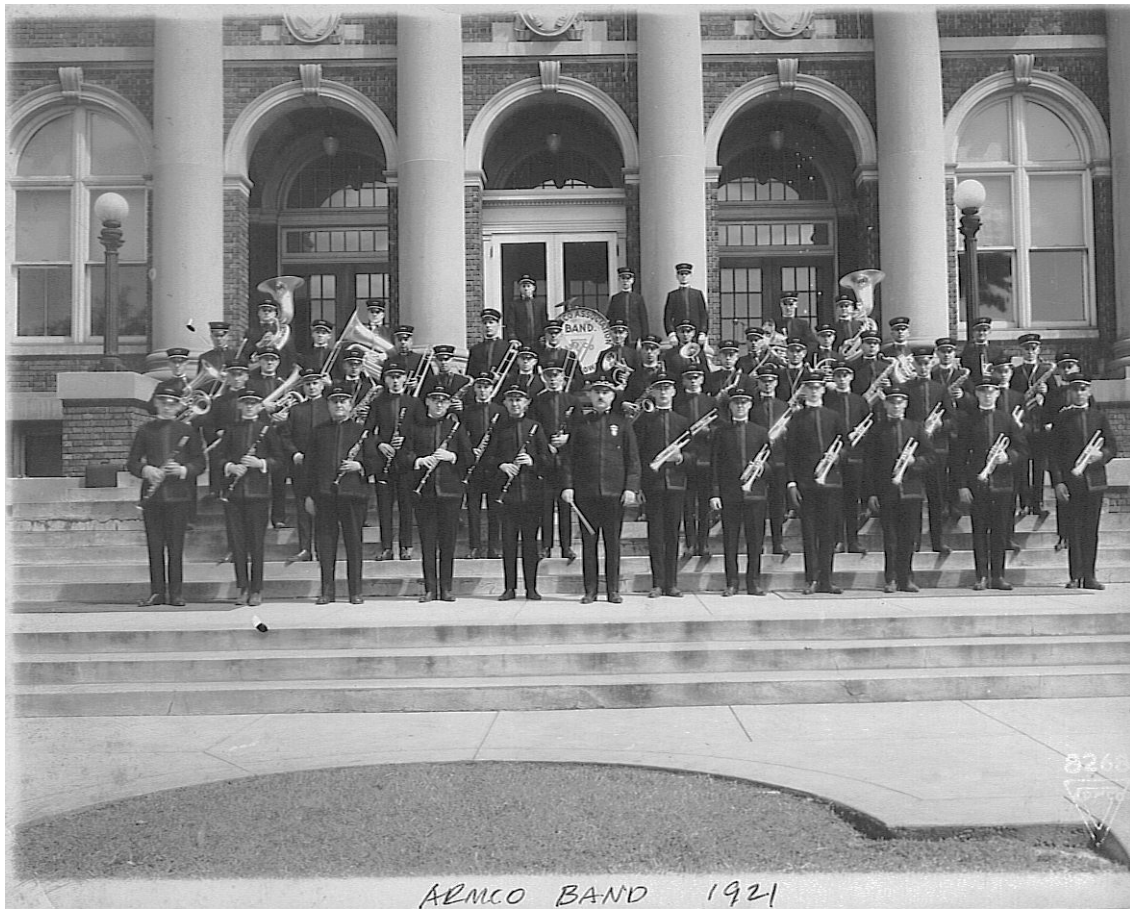


Figure 4. Photograph, Armco Band in new uniforms, 1921.

of the Association,⁸⁴ this photo suggests considerable expense had already incurred for the Band, still only in its first year. Notable in this 1921 photograph is the fact that the Band had grown into a large ensemble, including balanced sections of winds and brass. The rigid posture and carefully poised instruments showed the indelible influence of Sousa. Judging by appearance, some of the members of the Band were quite young.

After its successful appearance at opening day, which included an evening concert at Armco Field located behind the corporate headquarters, the Band performed at baseball games

⁸⁴ Note that the bass drum has “Armco Association Band” painted on its head. The “association” would soon be dropped from the title.

each first Sunday of the month during the summer.⁸⁵ In addition, the Band launched a summer concert series. They performed six concerts on Friday nights at Armco Field, and attendance figures demonstrated the immediate popularity of the ensemble, not only with Armco employees but also with the entire community. While slightly unreliable because they were conceived with corporate promotion in mind, articles in the *Armco Bulletin* reported figures of seven-to-ten thousand people, with the concert at the end of the summer drawing approximately twelve thousand.⁸⁶

The Band did not perform a winter concert during the coming months.⁸⁷ However, music activities continued. Simon provided free lessons and group classes to anyone interested in learning an instrument. He also continued traveling to Cincinnati to procure used instruments which potential band members could purchase. If an interested musician did not own an instrument and could not afford the purchase price, the Association would cover the initial cost of the instrument. The employee would then have weekly instrument payments deducted from his paychecks.⁸⁸

The focus of all this activity was the 1922 summer concert series. A notice in the May *Armco Bulletin* enticed readers with a “much improved” Band playing a “better quality” of music.⁸⁹ Improved and gaining in confidence, the Band played to thousands of people during the summer concerts. By early fall, a winter concert series was established. Another *Armco Bulletin*

⁸⁵ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 13.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 13. This was in keeping with corporate practice. Similar to many other large industries of the time, Armco provided housing, banking, groceries, and other services to employees, with the payments drawn from workers remuneration. Thus, a worker’s wages were often given right back to the company, usually to the profit of the corporation.

⁸⁹ *Armco Bulletin*, 9 (May 1922): 113.

notice demonstrated two ideas. First, the growing sensationalism surrounding the Band was evident in the phrase “the best musical events ever arranged by Armco.”⁹⁰ Second, Simon had already established a routine of using guest soloists in every concert, a programming device he learned from Sousa.

The same *Armco Bulletin* contained an article written by Simon himself. The following paragraph reveals his attitude about the mission of the Armco Band:

We no longer have to attend the opera, the symphony or theater to hear good music. Industry has recognized its immeasurable value as a forcible element in the intellectual, spiritual and social upbringing of any community and is now maintaining bands, orchestras, and choral societies within its organization. These activities not only provide the employees with a *clean, educational diversion* (italics my own), but they render services in their respective communities, the influence of which resolves into a more cultured place in which to live.⁹¹

Clearly, Simon saw the Band as an important bearer of culture in the Middletown community. The idea of the Band as “clean” in its character foreshadowed the spirit of the later American Band and Music Education Movement, which held, in part, the idea that youth who were involved in music were likely to excel in other academic areas and would be less likely to turn into delinquents.

In November 1922, the Armco Band took another important step. After hearing a summer concert, representatives of the Gennett Record Company from nearby Richmond, Indiana, booked the Band to record.⁹² Once the records were finished and pressed, the completed product was available for purchase with proceeds going to the Armco Association.⁹³ The November *Armco Bulletin* contained an advertisement (see figure five).⁹⁴

⁹⁰ *Armco Bulletin*, (September 1922): n.p. (Copy from Sam Ashworth Archives).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Armco Bulletin*, 9 (October 1922): 1.

⁹³ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 15.

Make Your Christmas Presents Armco Band Records

All who have had the pleasure of hearing the Armco Band in concerts during the summer and indoor concerts during the winter, can have that same privilege in their own homes, through the medium of the band records which have been made by our band. These records are very fine reproductions, and are some of the finest band records ever produced by any musical organization. In addition to the band records are four cornet solos by Frank Simon, which are wonderfully clear, and are probably the best Cornet records ever produced in America. Each record is a double faced record with the following selections.

- (a) 136th U. S. Field Artillery March Fillmore
Cornet Solo—"O Solo Mio" De Capua
 Played by Frank Simon
- (b) March—"Men of Ohio" Fillmore
Cornet Solo—"Smilin' Thru" Penn
 Played by Frank Simon
- (c) Waltz—"Three O'Clock in the Morning". Robledo
Cornet Solo—"Just a Wearyin' for You". . Bond
 Played by Frank Simon
- (d) Cornet Solo—"Drink to me only with Thine Eyes"
Cornet Solo—"I Love You Truly"
 Played by Frank Simon

These records will be on sale at the Armco Association Club Rooms about December 8th. All records will be played for you so you can make your selections of those you like best. A great many orders have been already received for these records for Christmas presents, which is a very good idea.

Armco Band Concerts

During the winter months the Armco Band will give a series of six concerts, one each month at the Strand Theater. These concerts are by far the best musical events ever arranged by Armco. Mr. Simon is bringing some of the best talent in this part of the country as soloists, and each concert promises to be better than the one previous. Season tickets are on sale, or individual concert tickets can be purchased from the Superintendent or foreman throughout the plant at 55 cents a concert. If tickets are bought at the box office on the day of the concert the price of the tickets will be \$1.10 Each.



Manager, Armco Association.

Figure 5. Article, 1921 *Armco Bulletin*.

Again, the article's enthusiastic tone showed the growing hyperbole surrounding the Armco Band. In addition, the music selections demonstrated the predilection for marches and popular music. The use of Simon as soloist, perhaps with spartan accompaniment, for five selections suggested that the Band's playing level was still rudimentary. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any copies of this early recording to verify this claim.

It was around this busy time in the Band's development that Simon began to experiment with hiring outside musicians to supplement certain sections of the ensemble. Seeing the immediate improvement, he decided to try a new approach for improving the overall quality of the band. In his own words:

⁹⁴ *Armco Bulletin*, (November 1922), n.p. (copy from private archives of Sam Ashworth).

I reversed the original idea of teaching industrialists to become musicians and began to import fine musicians, who were industrially inclined, and who were seeking the opportunity for steady employment and the vehicle that would give them expression in music.⁹⁵

The new system helped increase the size of the Band and made an immediate impact on quality. Knowing the growing influence of the Band and the potential for the Armco name to spread through positive community involvement, company executives apparently gave Simon wide latitude to continue this practice during the 1920s. By the middle of the decade, Simon was reviewing “thousands” of applicants, hiring new musicians based on talent, personality, and character.⁹⁶

Using this recruiting technique, Simon hired several individuals who found fame either as musicians or in fields related to the steel industry. Two such men were Ernest Glover and William McFee. Glover became the manager and assistant conductor of the Armco Band, a position he held until the ensemble disbanded. Although they would later engage in a dispute over personal matters and drift apart for a few years,⁹⁷ Simon and Glover were close friends and worked together organizing and promoting the Band. Glover would later launch a long career as a faculty member at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and his legacy continues at that institution in the form of an annual teaching prize named for him.

McFee spent over forty years working at Armco in public relations. When he first applied to Simon for a position, he had been touring with circus bands and vaudeville acts for a few years. His trombone audition for Simon failed to make a good impression, but Simon asked if he had any other skills that would be useful for Armco. McFee had some writing experience, so

⁹⁵ Frank Simon, “A Brief story of the Armco Band.”: n.d., 1. (Copy from Sam Ashworth private archives).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁷ Dr. Robert Hornyak, Cincinnati, Ohio, interview by author, 3 July 2003.

Simon appealed to his friend Chapple to find a place for him in the public relations office.⁹⁸

Chapple hired McFee, who became a permanent member of the Band's trombone section and often wrote publicity pieces and program notes for the Armco Band. The influence of Barnum and Bailey's "bally-hoo" aesthetic was evident in many of McFee's articles.

Armco placed new musician recruits throughout the entire workforce, with the highest concentration in white-collar or administrative positions. For example, a flutist named Charles Knight began to appear in Armco Band programs around 1925. Remaining documents and photographs show Knight as the manager of the Armco corporate switchboard.⁹⁹ The Band itself provided direct employment for others. By the mid 1920s, the group had a staff of seven. The first flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and trombone players worked as Band librarians and office staff.¹⁰⁰ While some of the Band's pecuniary support drew on Association funds, Armco management must have provided additional financial backing to maintain this support staff. Given the fact that many contemporary orchestras, bands, and other musical ensembles did not pay significant salaries, this ideal work situation attracted top quality musicians from all over the nation seeking stable employment.


The addition of talent and support staff aided musical and material expansion throughout the mid 1920s. In 1925 the Armco Band presented winter concert patrons with souvenir programs which boldly displayed the familiar Armco corporate logo, and featured advertisements from area merchants¹⁰¹ (see Figure 6). This period also saw an increase in the

⁹⁸ Simon, "The Armco Band," 15.

⁹⁹ *Armco Archives*, Middletown Historical Society.

¹⁰⁰ Klein, "The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band," 18.

¹⁰¹ I found examples in both the Middletown Historical Society Archives and the Simon archives. Interesting to note, many of these programs featured block ads from both the Cincinnati College of Music and Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.

<p>THERE IS MUSIC—</p> <p>THERE is music in Nature's garden; in the babbling of the brook — the warble of the sky lark — the whirl of the eagle's wings as he rushes from his loft on high — in the sweet, gentle plaint of the nightingale, and the sad song of the dying swan.</p> <p>There is music in a friend's voice — the joyful note of greeting — and the consoling tone of sympathy.</p> <p>All these are melodies and harmonies which move our spirits onward and upward to greater realms.</p> <p>Music — here, there, and everywhere — but where does it beat more harmoniously than in the breast of a great symphonic orchestra or band? Here is a mighty ensemble of devoted, inspired artists, who paint with deft brushes, beautiful tone pictures of life and happiness.</p> <p>The American Rolling Mill Company Middletown, Ohio</p> 	<p>4. "Scene and Gypsy Song" — Several cadenzas, the first for the trumpets, form the opening of this movement which are followed by a fiery gypsy song intoned by the clarinets and flutes. The music grows in impetuosity and splendor until it is joined by the last movement.</p> <p>5. "Fandango Asturiano" — A theme in which the opening phrase is given to the trombones and the second part to the wood-winds constitutes the material for this movement, a variation of it being played by the solo clarinet. The brilliant scoring is its feature. The "Alborada" is used as the coda with which the composition ends. Rimsky-Korsakov was born in 1844 and died in 1908.</p> <p>Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, Op. 28 C. C. Saint-Saens</p> <p>This popular Violin Solo with orchestral accompaniment is one of the earlier works of the gifted French master. It is dedicated to the Spanish virtuoso, Sarasati. The Spanish flavor which marks the composition, gives it a charm and appeal which has made it very popular with violinists. The Introduction is a slow movement, andante malinconico, which proceeds to the rondo capriccioso, the principal part of the work. This is an idealization of the popular Spanish dance, the Fandango, and its capricious rhythm is irresistible.</p> <p>Selection from the "Student Prince" Romberg</p> <p>No recent light opera has enjoyed more success than the "Student Prince." Its music is full of merit; in it you can feel the joys of college life, a touching bit of sentiment, in spite of the autocratic influence and compelling dignity of the King's Court.</p>
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Figure 6. Reproduction, Pages 8–9 from Armco Band Program, 17 January 1926.

number of performances, with eight winter concerts in 1925–26 and eighteen summer concerts in 1926.¹⁰² Simon introduced an incentive-based pay scale, allowing the musicians to earn between four and eight dollars per performance. This income was in addition to the factory salary each player already earned, and Simon later discussed how he designed the system to encourage musicians to stay in shape and learn new music quickly.¹⁰³ In less than five years, with the thorough financial support of Armco, he had turned the loosely organized group of amateurs into

¹⁰² Klein, "The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band," 18.

¹⁰³ Simon, "The Armco Band," 8.

a professional ensemble which bore striking resemblance to the Sousa Band in personnel, programming, comportment, and musical discipline.

The growing regional fame of the Armco Band attracted the attention of area radio stations. Eager to promote their own products and establish a commercial base, new radio stations in Dayton and Cincinnati contacted Armco about possible broadcasts. Seeing the potential for advertising, Chapple encouraged the early forays into radio broadcasting. Sponsored by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the first broadcast took place on 26 January 1925. The successful program included a variety of short musical numbers, including works by Fillmore, Lacombe, and von Flotow.¹⁰⁴ On both the musical and commercial levels, the experiment worked, as seen in this excerpt taken from a review that appeared in the *Enquirer* the following day:

From the throbbing industrial hive that is Middletown, Mr. Simon has welded an organization of musicians that is destined to take a unique place hereabouts and perhaps in cities out beyond and give to Middletown and the flaming hearths that have made the Armco Band possible a brighter luster.¹⁰⁵

Buried in the overuse of clever steel and metal-related metaphors, this review contains a key fact: the Armco Band was performing at a noticeably high standard, and the Armco Corporation stood to gain a great deal of positive publicity.

The city of Middletown was also celebrating its newfound fame. Simon, Chapple, and others had purposefully cultivated a positive local image for the Armco Band. They designed programs honoring local citizens, firefighters, police officers, boy scouts, and many more. By the time the Band went on the air in 1925, Frank Simon was a local celebrity. The city honored him in March 1925 with a gold medal in “recognition of all he had achieved.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 19.

¹⁰⁵ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 27 January 1925, no author given.

¹⁰⁶ Freedland, *Music Man*, 133.

The Armco Band made two more significant radio broadcasts in the following months. The first took place on Thanksgiving Day. By special arrangement involving telephone connections and other untested technology, the Band appeared on the *Dayton News* Radio Show. The music traveled through telephone wires to the WLW studios in Cincinnati, and then out to the nation by way of the station's powerful broadcast tower. WLW was called the "nation's station" since it was the only station in the U.S.A. with a five hundred thousand watt signal. On a clear day, broadcasts went out to more than half the country.¹⁰⁷ The broadcast succeeded, and Armco executives were pleased with the results.

In fact, they were so pleased that they approved another broadcast on 4 January 1926. This time the Band performed in Cincinnati, removing the need for a telephone connection. The results of the broadcast were astonishing. Two-hundred-twelve letters from thirty-four different states poured in to WLW,¹⁰⁸ commending the Band's efforts and requesting more information about Armco. Armco managers, especially Chapple and his public relations staff, were made aware of the far-reaching power of radio and its advertising possibilities.

After the broadcasts, Armco increased spending on the Band. To enhance the 1926 summer concerts, the Association ordered new uniforms. To the delight of the musicians and the community, the company built a brand new bandshell at Armco Field. Designed by the Holton Instrument Company, this structure imitated the acoustical properties of a sounding box, with "f" holes on either side of the shell's interior.¹⁰⁹ This bandshell represented considerable pride and expense devoted to the summer concerts (see Figure 7).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Dick Perry, *The Story of WLW* (London, Prentice Hall, 1971), 48–49.

¹⁰⁸ Klein, "The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band," 20.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ *Armco Archives*, Middletown Historical Society. This structure was torn down by the mid 1940s.



Figure 7. Photograph, Armco Bandshell, Armco Field, n.d.

In addition to concerts in the new bandshell, the Band also started performing Sunday afternoons at a nearby woodland park owned by Armco that local residents nicknamed “bunny hollow”¹¹¹ (see Figure 8).¹¹² The Middletown Civic Association provided funds for these events. Beginning in the winter of 1926–27, the city of Middletown underwrote the costs of the winter concert series. Simon later explained that there had been some opposition to this idea in the community, but he had used his personal connections with city leaders to overcome it.¹¹³ This was probably not an exaggeration, as he had gained access to the elite members of Middletown’s

¹¹¹ This former Armco Park property is now the campus of Miami University, Middletown.

¹¹² Sam Ashworth private archive.

¹¹³ Frank Simon, “The Armco Band” (transcript of November 1966 speech for Middletown Optimist Club, Middletown Historical Society Archives), 14.



Figure 8. Photograph, Armco Park known as “Bunny Hollow,” n.d.

upper classes through his own celebrity and his involvement in the local Masonic temple. The result of the new funding was that all winter high school and summer Armco Park concerts were free to the public, further solidifying the Armco Band’s status as a local entertainment icon while thousands of people from all over the Miami Valley region flocked to the shows.

Billed as “The World’s Greatest Industrial Band,”¹¹⁴ the ensemble went on a three state tour in 1928, in cities like Zanesville, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Wheeling, West Virginia, where they performed for large crowds and received critical acclaim.¹¹⁵ Possibly arranged through Armco’s personal and business contacts in the region, local civic organizations or industrial concerns sponsored these events, including the Osiris Masonic Temple in Wheeling and the Pittsburgh Railway Company. Armco received many letters of congratulations and

¹¹⁴ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 2.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

gratitude, including an often-quoted letter from the Zanesville Chamber of Commerce that contained the following piece of fervent praise:

“Several of our local musical critics have informed me, however, that you are guilty of misrepresentation in your advertising. Your ad states that it [Armco Band] is “America’s Greatest Industrial Band.” These folks feel that if you are believers in the policy of “truth in advertising,” it will be necessary for you to remove the word “Industrial” from this statement.”¹¹⁶

Programs from these concerts are no longer extant, but it is likely that the Band kept their usual format of marches, dance music, transcriptions of light classics, novelty numbers, and solo features.

Later in 1928, the Armco Band achieved further fame and success with two important engagements outside of Middletown. Because of their growing prominence, the ensemble received an invitation to perform at the Canadian National Exposition in August. The only American ensemble selected to perform two concerts a day during the weeklong event, the Armco Band made headlines in the U.S. and Canada during their stay. The international crowd in attendance marveled at the musicianship of the Band, and the Armco name spread to more countries. The Band earned \$6,500 for the entire week.¹¹⁷ Arriving home in early September, the Band received a hero’s welcome. Over eleven-thousand people turned out for a special homecoming concert.¹¹⁸ Later, Glover wrote the exposition management asking for a repeat performance in 1929, but the response stated that the Armco Band was “a success at every

¹¹⁶ Bryce Browning to Ernest Glover, 16 February 1928, Sam Ashworth private archives.

¹¹⁷ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 23.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

angle,” but the policy of the exposition decreed, “an ensemble is not invited for two consecutive years.”¹¹⁹

The second important success of that summer was the Band’s appearance at the Ohio State Fair. The March 1928 *Armco Bulletin* announced this engagement with a flourish: “The Armco Band will play at the Ohio State Fair on August 26th....The Band was unanimously selected to do the musical honors.”¹²⁰ The announcement also revealed the popular, crowd-pleasing nature of the planned program: “The concert will include selections from summer concerts and novelty numbers, such as the 1812 Overture, accompanied by fireworks.”¹²¹ After the Fair, Armco received many letters of praise from all over Ohio.

The goodwill and positive Armco publicity continued well into 1929. Another experiment in radio broadcasting occurred in February.¹²² The summer concert series proceeded as planned, and thousands of people from all over southwest Ohio traveled to Middletown to see the famous Armco Band. Each concert still featured soloists from far-away cities such as New York and Chicago, and many of Simon’s famous musician friends from Cincinnati held first chair positions in the ensemble. For Armco, nearly a decade of investment was paying dividends in increased revenue as the Armco name, usually attached to “the World’s Greatest Industrial Band,” spread across the United States.

However, prosperity and success did not last. The stock market crash and ensuing panic and Depression suddenly placed Armco in serious financial trouble. Facing a large deficit and the prospect of few orders for new products, Armco released nearly half of their workforce. Due

¹¹⁹ C.W. Ross to Ernest Glover, 5 March 1929, Middletown Historical Society Archives.

¹²⁰ *Armco Bulletin*, 12 (March 1928): 6.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 23.

to a layoff policy based on seniority, the company fired many of the musicians whom Simon recruited in the mid-1920s. As he would later say, “they all went out at once, just like the tide.”¹²³ All Band activities were suspended. Suddenly the great community icon and popular entertainment force fell silent. Simon was facing failure again. The sporadic radio broadcasts from 1925–29 were about to pay off in an unforeseen way, however, as Simon and Bennett Chapple scrambled to find ways to salvage the Armco Band.

¹²³ Simon, “The Armco Band,” 8.

CHAPTER 4

THE CINCINNATI YEARS

Jack Wellbaum played piccolo and flute for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra from 1950–1990. When he was a high school student in Greenville, Ohio, in the late 1930s, his family, including parents and grandparents, would gather every Sunday afternoon and listen to the Armco Band broadcasts. As he told me, “The way we all look forward to NFL football on Sundays these days, well, that was the way that we looked forward to the Armco Band every Sunday back then.”¹²⁴ The band director at Wellbaum’s high school played in the Dayton Shrine Band under the direction of Frank Simon. During Wellbaum’s junior year, the band director made special arrangements for Simon to attend a Greenville band concert so he could hear Wellbaum perform. With his mother at the piano, Wellbaum played the Chaminade *Concertino*. Simon enthusiastically told Wellbaum that he would be a soloist with the Armco Band on the air the following season.¹²⁵ Unfortunately, it was 1939, and Armco cancelled the Band broadcasts the following year. Wellbaum’s brush with an American icon is a microcosm of the cultural phenomenon that was the Armco Band during the 1930s.

Just ten years prior, the Armco Band had been in serious trouble. The chaotic early days of the Great Depression shocked the United States, as thousands of businesses closed, banks failed, and millions of Americans were suddenly unemployed. Devastation and loss immediately hit Armco and Middletown. In this anxious environment, Simon and Chapple worked together to persuade George Verity to launch a new type of Armco Band. Pointing to the success of earlier radio programs, they proposed a band made entirely of professional musicians that would

¹²⁴ Mr. Jack Wellbaum, Cincinnati, Ohio, interview by author, 22 July 2003.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

broadcast on a regular basis.¹²⁶ While both men would later claim to have been the first to consider the concept,¹²⁷ perhaps more credit is due to Chapple for successfully persuading Verity, Hook, and the Armco Board of Directors to pursue the idea.

In 1928 Verity promoted Chapple to Armco Vice President, giving him broader control and influence in corporate policy.¹²⁸ Initiating an expensive radio advertising campaign represented considerable risk for two reasons. First, the unpredictable length of the Depression raised serious doubt that Armco could afford any advertising. Second, the products they manufactured were not consumer goods in the sense that customers could directly purchase Armco steel products. Instead, advertising had to persuade potential consumers that products containing Armco metals were of superior quality, from automobiles to kitchen counters. An avid lover of band music and lifelong patron of the arts,¹²⁹ Chapple saw the Armco Band broadcasts as the ideal vehicle for a wide-ranging campaign that would firmly establish the image of Armco's superiority with a broad range of American consumers.

The transition to a radio band was not difficult. Relying on popular and accessible music which appealed to a mass audience, Simon's programming style was easily adapted to the new format. To obtain quality musicians, Armco gave Simon the budget necessary to hire the best wind, brass, and percussion players from the Cincinnati area. He rehired some of the top players from the old Armco Band and hired the best players available from the Cincinnati Symphony. Since the Symphony of that period paid low salaries, most of the musicians divided their time

¹²⁶ I speculate that this new ensemble would have eventually replaced the factory-based band even if the depression had not happened, since the first season of broadcasts started just days after the stock market crash, indicating that plans were already laid for the transition before the onset of the Depression.

¹²⁷ See Chapple, *Seventy Years in Seventy Minutes*, 70 and Freedland, *Music Man*, 146.

¹²⁸ Chapple, *Seventy Years in Seventy Minutes*, 70.

¹²⁹ Chapple not only played in a band as a teenager, he was an amateur cellist and poet, and helped launch the singing career of opera star and Middletown native Louise Hunter.

between the Symphony, theater orchestras, dance bands, and teaching.¹³⁰ The Depression halted a number of these activities, so top players in the Symphony were readily available and probably eager to play for Armco Band broadcasts.

The first season of WLW broadcasts began in November 1929. Dubbed the *Ironmaster Hour*, each broadcast featured a variety of light band pieces interspersed with friendly chats by the “ironmaster” (Chapple) about the origins and wonders of modern metals. Speaking with a lilting, poetic voice, Chapple constructed each speech around subtle, but powerful praise of a wide range of industrial, commercial, and household goods which contained Armco steel. The most remarkable fact was that each homily mentioned the Armco name as little as possible, keeping the commercial message at a near subliminal level. When Armco later cut the hour-long program to thirty minutes, Chapple intentionally said the word “Armco” only three times per broadcast.¹³¹

While Chapple defined and designed the commercial aspects of the *Ironmaster Hour*, Simon carefully selected appropriate music. Each broadcast presented a new challenge in terms of timing and content. Reports on the number of actual broadcasts during the first season vary from thirteen,¹³² twenty,¹³³ to twenty-six.¹³⁴ By the fourth season in 1932, Simon’s extant personal records clearly show twenty-six thirty-minute broadcasts, as reproduced in Appendix one.

¹³⁰ Mr. Jack Wellbaum, Cincinnati, Ohio, interview by author, 22 July 2003.

¹³¹ Borth, *True Steel, The Story of George Matthew Verity and His Associates*, (Dayton: Central Printing Company, 1948, Reprint, 1971), 74.

¹³² Chapple, *Seventy Years in Seventy Minutes*: 70.

¹³³ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 25.

¹³⁴ Freedland, *Music Man*, 148.

Also clear on this meticulously recorded list is the fact that Simon also worked within a narrowly defined time structure. Simon had to program selections that filled no more than twenty-one minutes and thirty seconds of time to allow for eight minutes and thirty seconds of *ironmaster* chats and other commercial announcements. Common in television programming today, this timing structure was an emerging structural feature of radio during this period. As a result, Simon learned in the first season that he would have to plan each broadcast in detail and be prepared to press tempos forward or cut sections of final selections to accommodate broadcasts that were in jeopardy of exceeding the time limit.

Often working alone or with Glover, he would spend a significant amount of time every week preparing a program. In his home's basement studio, he would listen carefully to recordings or sing through entire scores with a stopwatch, keeping track of seconds while he imagined how long each musical feature would last.¹³⁵ His overall program structure followed the general pattern employed for Armco Band community concerts, with emphasis on music that appealed to a wide range of listeners. The commercial nature of the *Ironmaster Hour* dictated that alienating listeners with broadcast content meant fewer potential sales. Based on Sousa's aesthetics of mass entertainment, Simon's well-established model was appropriate for this climate.

The Armco Band's broadcast structure crystallized into a stock formula: march, "light piece," transcription of an orchestral work or featured soloist, a second "light piece," and another March.¹³⁶ The final March served a dual purpose: to end on an energetic and patriotic note, and, in case a broadcast needed more or less time, certain strains could be either spontaneously

¹³⁵ Freedland, *Music Man*, 153.

¹³⁶ Klein, "The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band," 36.

repeated or deleted.¹³⁷ In addition, Simon would insert novelty numbers or instrumental solos into this formula. Some variation occurred when broadcasts followed a theme, such as holiday celebrations, individual honors, area college specials or the ubiquitous Sousa tribute concert.

During the first season, two significant events helped bolster the growing reputation of the Armco Band. In 1930 Frank Simon received an honorary doctorate from Capital College of Oratory and Music, now part of Capital University, in Columbus, Ohio.¹³⁸ The honor bestowed a new layer of credibility on Simon as a musician and educator. Similar to another celebrated musician and innovator of the time, Joseph Maddy,¹³⁹ Frank relished his new respectability and insisted on the formal address “Dr. Simon,” despite his lack of any actual post-secondary education. Seizing the opportunity to capitalize on his new stature, Armco began emphasizing education goals as an integral part of their advertising campaigns.

In addition, the inaugural convention of the American Bandmasters Association (ABA) took place in Middletown from 13–16 March 1930. Founded one year earlier in New York City by a select group of famous bandmasters including friendly rivals Edwin Franco Goldman and Frank Simon, this new organization brought top bandmasters from professional and college bands together to promote the advance of band music in material and musical terms. Sensing the potential for positive publicity, Chapple worked with the Middletown Civic Association to formulate the initial invitation,¹⁴⁰ and ABA President Goldman accepted. Armco was the primary sponsor for the event, and Simon acted as the unofficial host. The event featured a steady schedule of luncheons, banquets, and special events, and Armco apparently shouldered a fair

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Freedland, *Music Man: The Story of Frank Simon*, 150.

¹³⁹ Co-founder of the world-renown National Music Camp at Interlochen, Interlochen Arts Academy, and Interlochen Public Radio, Joe Maddy did not finish high school but received multiple *honoris causa* degrees.

¹⁴⁰ Chapple, *Seventy Years in Seventy Minutes*, 71.

amount of the financial burden. However, the investment paid immediate dividends. Newspapers all over the country reported the convention's daily activities. In addition, Armco deliberately exposed guests to as much self-promoting commercial information as possible, including a group tour of the Armco Works, specially printed pamphlets about Armco and the steel industry, and a promotional display of Armco and other Middletown industrial products which filled the entire basement of the Manchester Inn, the convention's primary location.¹⁴¹

The pinnacle of Armco promotions was a special Armco Band broadcast which occurred during the last day of the convention. Heard on WLW and five other radio stations from New York to Kansas City, the concert featured several of the distinguished bandmasters, including the aging John Phillip Sousa.¹⁴² To honor their corporate sponsors, the Band also premiered a new march by Peter Buys entitled *The Ironmaster*,¹⁴³ further solidifying the link between the musical and commercial nature of the event. Assuming that the famous names of the bandmasters would draw a large audience for this concert, Armco invested in advance publicity. Again, their speculation proved a calculated but smart risk, as millions of listeners listened to the momentous broadcast.

Before approving a second season, Armco sent postcards to their distributors throughout the United States to determine the efficacy of their advertising efforts.¹⁴⁴ The reaction was positive, and the new season began in October 1930. Using their trade publication, *Ingot Iron Shop News*, to reach distributors and clients, Armco announced the new season and encouraged dealers to attract attention to Armco products by promoting the broadcasts. To generate interest

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Klein, "The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band," 27.

¹⁴³ Ibid. Unfortunately, this music is no longer in print, and the original manuscript is lost.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 29.

in the shows, merchants were encouraged to place advertisements in local newspapers, and Armco provided samples.¹⁴⁵

As a larger broadcast range developed in the following seasons, Armco increased pressure on distributors, offering posters, sample ads, and stickers (see Figure 9)¹⁴⁶ to display in

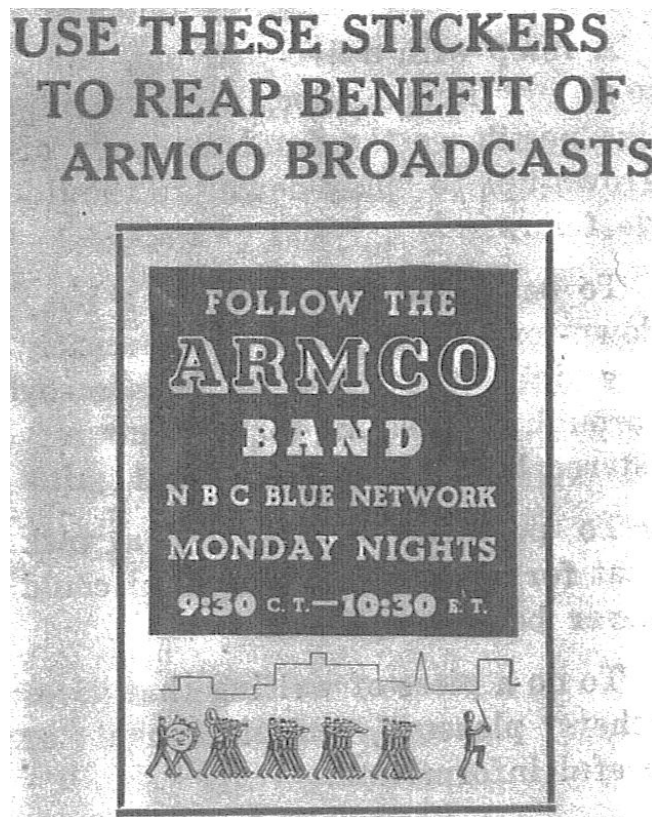


Figure 9. Reproduction, Armco Band Promotion Sticker, n.d.

shop windows. These commercial efforts always glorified the “best industrial band in the world” and prominently displayed the Armco logo or name. Articles in *Ingot Iron Shop News* gave directions to dealers in simple economic terms:

Cash in on these radio broadcasts to the fullest extent. It is a wonderful opportunity to get a jump on competition. In order to do this, make sure you are identified with this program in the minds of your prospects. Overlook no opportunities to advertise yourself as having

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ *Ingot Iron Shop News*, October 1935, 1. (Sam Ashworth private archives).

an INGOT IRON shop. The more people you tell, the greater the benefit you will receive.¹⁴⁷

A list of distributors published in the same edition of *Ingot Iron Shop News* revealed the extraordinary extent of this national effort: one-hundred-twenty outlets in eighty-two cities located in over thirty states from New York to California sold Armco products.¹⁴⁸ Even if only a fraction of these retailers participated in the full scope of the commercial effort, sales were bound to increase. The fact that Armco continued to post positive earnings, even during the lean years of the Depression, suggested that many independent dealers did take advantage of this sales strategy.

Starting in 1931, Simon programmed works from the recently developed “National Contest List” on each program. On one level, the altruistic reason was to provide a model of professionalism and musical standards for high school bands across the country. At the same time, this also provided another advertising avenue. Armco field representatives received instructions to write letters to newspapers and schools in their territory when pieces specifically mandated for that state or region were about to be performed.¹⁴⁹

Musically, the Armco Band gained a reputation for polished playing ability and programs that mixed lighter fare with transcriptions of orchestral works. Scanning the programs from several seasons, certain orchestral works appeared on a regular basis (e.g., *Poet and Peasant Overture*, *Night on Bald Mountain*, and *Finlandia*) suggesting both familiarity on the part of the musicians and popularity with the radio audience. Letters arrived at Armco from all over the country seeking information on certain pieces or requesting repeat performances of favored

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁹ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 29.

works. Part of the popularity of the ensemble and of certain pieces stemmed from the fact that Simon and the broadcast engineers worked carefully on balance and precision, seeking the cleanest possible rendering of each work. To achieve this goal, they devised an altered seating arrangement for broadcasts only, with sections arranged according to projection ability and proximity to the microphone (See Figure 10).¹⁵⁰

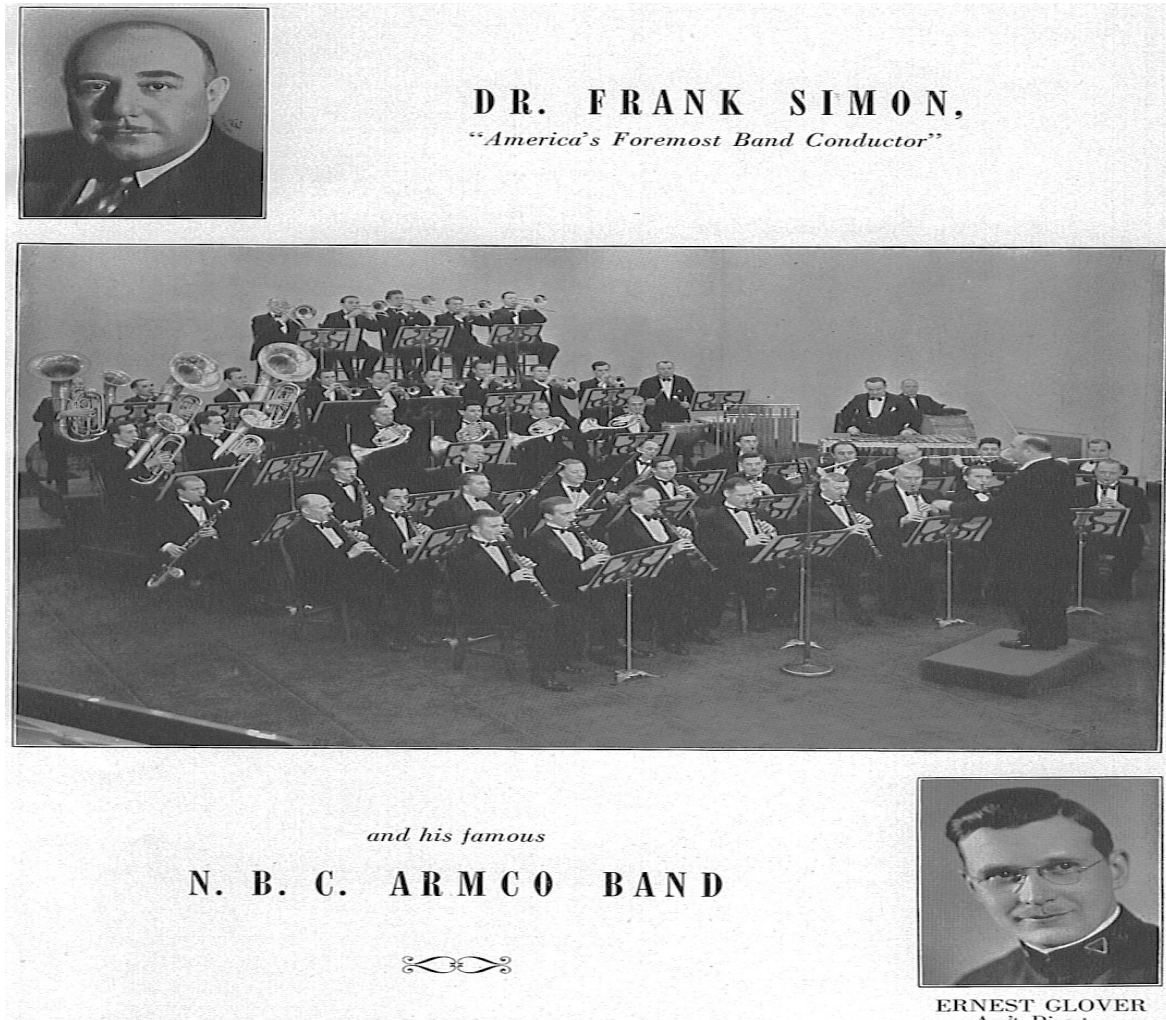


Figure 10. Photograph, Armco Band Promotional Booklet, 1938.

As the Band gained fame, the broadcast range increased. In the early stages of the fourth season, WLW started participating in network broadcasts in conjunction with the National

¹⁵⁰ Photo extracted from a 1938 promotional booklet, Simon Archives.

Broadcast Corporation (NBC). The NBC Blue network broadcast the 10 November program.¹⁵¹ WLW was a powerful station, but inclement weather or other physical barriers often interfered with broadcasts. Once the NBC stations began to air Armco shows more listeners had access to the broadcasts at a higher reception quality. During the sixth season in 1934, NBC expanded the broadcasts to their Red network, giving the Band an extensive national audience with twenty-six stations from coast-to-coast relaying their shows. The Armco Band and NBC formed an important commercial bond for the remaining years, with the group often billed as the “Armco Band of NBC radio fame.”¹⁵²

The seventh season started 28 October 1935. After successful years in time-slots on Thursday or Tuesday nights, the national broadcasts moved to Monday nights at 10:30 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time).¹⁵³ The number of broadcasts dropped to thirteen per season. Specific reasons for this profound change were not on record, but chances were that Armco had been conducting annual reviews of marketing and commercial value. Alternatively, perhaps NBC was attempting to find a time-slot that had the highest yield in popularity, since the eighth season moved to Wednesday nights at 8:30 p.m.

During the seventh season, the American Bandmasters Association once again played a part in the success of the Armco Band broadcasts. The sixth annual ABA convention took place in Cincinnati during March 1936. Part of the festivities included a special Armco Band broadcast on 10 March that featured famous bandmasters taking turns conducting the ensemble. The broadcast was long, but did not feature the entire event. The concert itself lasted over four hours,

¹⁵¹ Klein, “The Live Radio Broadcasts of the Armco Band,” 30.

¹⁵² I found this reference in a number of different promotion materials from the late 1930s in the Simon and Ashworth collections.

¹⁵³ As seen on 1935 promotional poster. (Sam Ashworth private archives).

with thirty different conductors taking a turn in front of the Armco Band. Frank Simon later admitted that the concert “was entirely too long, not only for the musicians, but for the audience.”¹⁵⁴

The ABA convention also featured a special benefit concert for unemployed area musicians which took place 8 March at Cincinnati’s Music Hall. This concert contained equal parts of corporate charity and Armco publicity. It featured the world premiere performance of Ferde Grofé’s *Rhapsody in Steel*, later known as *Symphony in Steel*. Now out of print and extant only in a piano reduction found in the private collection of Simon’s son, David,¹⁵⁵ this unusual work required the addition of many extra musicians and featured atypical auxiliary percussion including pneumatic hammers and anvils. Grofé served as the Armco Band arranger for three years, producing popular arrangements and original compositions, especially for holidays. A manic-depressive given to bouts of anti-social behavior, Grofé often lived with the Simon family for extended periods.¹⁵⁶ When composing the *Rhapsody*, he divided his time between the Simon home and sleeping at the Armco Works for inspiration.¹⁵⁷

Broadcasts continued for the next few years, gaining in popularity and increasing the fame of Simon and the Armco Band. The ensemble toured on occasion, performing concerts in cities throughout the Midwest. During the eighth season, a legendary broadcast took place which served as an excellent example of both Simon’s strong will and the pressure that Armco must have been placing on the ensemble to perform and maintain advertising dominance. A devastating flood unleashed on Cincinnati, 1 February 1937. The Crosley building, home of the

¹⁵⁴ Freedland, *Music Man*, 181.

¹⁵⁵ I found this score in a box in David Simon’s basement. Prior to this discovery, it was believed lost.

¹⁵⁶ David Simon, Cincinnati, Ohio, interview by the author. 3 July 2003.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

WLW studios, filled with water past the first floor. When NBC engineers from Chicago arrived with their equipment the next day for the scheduled Armco Band broadcast, they faced a dilemma.

In a display of bravado, the engineers somehow found a boat and moved the broadcast equipment into the building by way of a second story window. From that point, they carried the equipment up seven flights of stairs. Their load included a large generator to supply power since the building was without electricity. Simon called all first chair players and instructed them to contact their section members, urging, “Get down here, we are going on.”¹⁵⁸ With blatant disregard for safety, the musicians climbed from an adjacent rooftop into a fifth story window to access the building. Just two minutes before airtime, WLW employees heard a police radio broadcast indicating that two nearby gasoline tanks had overturned, and the Crosley building was in serious fire danger.¹⁵⁹ Fearing the loss of the critical national broadcast time slot, Frank Simon and NBC engineers gave the order to proceed.¹⁶⁰ Wearing heavy coats to combat the lack of heat, the musicians shivered their way through the entire broadcast. The publicity Armco received for this daring (or foolish) broadcast certainly added to their mass appeal.

Throughout the 1930s, Frank Simon traveled extensively to guest conduct high school, college, and municipal bands. In the early part of the decade, he founded the Band program at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, so he used his travels to scour the country for promising students. Some students received scholarships from the school, and Simon personally paid tuition and expenses for others. Some of these students filled the ranks of the Armco Band

¹⁵⁸ Freedland, *Music Man*, 198.

¹⁵⁹ Article from Richmond, Indiana Newspaper account, April 1940. No date or author given, Middletown Historical Society Archives.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

during radio broadcasts or regional concert tours. Many of them went on to distinguished careers in professional music.

One such student was Chris Christensen. After one audition, Simon purchased a brand new \$350 baritone saxophone for Chris.¹⁶¹ He later hired him to play for Armco Band broadcasts, and one of his contracts remains in the archives of the Middletown Historical Society. Christensen received a fee of twenty dollars for a rehearsal and broadcast,¹⁶² commonly accepted as the normal fee for Band members during the late 1930s. However, Simon earned one thousand dollars a week during later broadcast seasons.¹⁶³ Again, following a pattern of behavior reminiscent of his mentor John Phillip Sousa, Simon obviously thought of himself as something far beyond a music director.

Capitalizing on Simon's national reputation as an educator, in 1938 Armco introduced the innovative "Parade of Prodigies."¹⁶⁴ Each broadcast featured a talented student soloist. Simon selected some performers during his travels, and others earned invitations based on success in state and national solo competitions. The Armco Association paid all travel expenses, and each student earned a gold medal and recognition as a "championship musician."¹⁶⁵ Once again, this publicity effort paid dividends in positive press coverage. Hometown and regional newspapers received press releases announcing the broadcast dates, generating local excitement in a different region of the country each week. For example, the following article about Eugene Frey appeared,

¹⁶¹ Freedland, *Music Man*, 184.

¹⁶² Original contract signed by Christensen and Ernest Glover, Middletown Historical Society Archives.

¹⁶³ Frank Simon's 1938 Armco contract, David Simon Archives.

¹⁶⁴ Evidently, the Armco public relations staff referred to the new season as such in press releases, but the official name of the broadcasts remained *Ironmaster Hour*.

¹⁶⁵ Freedland, *Music Man*, 202.

with some slight variation, in newspapers in several states including Ohio, Alabama, California, and New York (see Figure 11).¹⁶⁶



Figure 11. Reproduction, Newspaper articles promoting Armco Band high school soloist, n.d.

¹⁶⁶ Undated newspaper clippings, David Simon Archives.

Each innovation of the broadcast years had a link to Armco's ongoing publicity efforts. However, the long-term effects in terms of advances in music education and interest in music performance were positive, and should not be underestimated. Other corporate sponsors, especially the band instrument-manufacturing sector, joined with Armco to bring widespread publicity to the Band. Before the Armco Band's rise to fame, Simon used his eminence as a cornet soloist to establish commercial relationships with several instrument-makers, from Holton in the 1920s to King in the 1930s. Large advertisements in a broad range of music and trade magazines featured Simon's personal endorsement of specific cornets.¹⁶⁷

Once the Armco Band established a presence as a national broadcasting icon, the same kind of sponsorship deals supplied the ensemble with instruments and endless advertising. In conjunction with several of their major distributors, the King Band Instrument Company published glossy posters that appeared in high school and college band rooms throughout the nation. On the surface, these posters were unabashed advertising (see Figure 12).¹⁶⁸ However, through the ubiquity of these posters, an entire generation of future bandleaders and instrumentalists learned to admire the Armco Band and idolize them for impeccable musicianship and technical proficiency. Professor Robert Hornyak, retired University of Cincinnati band conductor, colleague of Simon in the 1950s, and founder of the Simon Winds in the early 1980s, testified to this fact. When he was an Alabama high school student in the late

¹⁶⁷ His image and name were an integral part of brass instrument advertisements well into the 1960s. His extensive collection of "free" instruments, including a stainless steel cornet Armco built for him in 1935, has spread out to many owners, so that I could only identify one extant example. Phillip Collins, current principal trumpet with the Cincinnati Symphony, owns one of Simon's historic cornets.

¹⁶⁸ Framed poster, no date, David Simon archives.

1930s, his school band room proudly displayed Armco Band posters, and his teachers often urged him to listen to broadcasts.¹⁶⁹



Figure 12. Reproduction, “Kings of the Air,” Armco Band Poster, n.d.

¹⁶⁹ Dr. Robert Hornyak, Cincinnati, Ohio, interview by author, 3 July 2003.

CHAPTER 5:

THE DEMISE OF THE ARMCO BAND

Despite the cultural, commercial, and musical successes outlined above, Armco unexpectedly cancelled the Armco Band broadcasts before the launch of the tenth season in 1938. George Verity had moved up to the Board of Directors, and Charles Hook, his son-in-law, replaced him as Armco President. After close inspection of the corporate profit margins and expenses, Hook decided that the Armco Band Broadcasts were no longer necessary. Michael Freedland's 1994 biography of Simon claimed that the cancellation news was devastating to Frank Simon, especially since he was powerless to negotiate an agreeable end because no written contract existed.¹⁷⁰ However, extant sources now in the possession of David Simon document hints of long term legal wrangling.¹⁷¹ Enraged and disappointed, Simon and Glover appealed for one more season, citing contracts with young soloists and the potential for shattered public expectations. Finally, Armco, Simon and Glover apparently reached a compromise. In exchange for a substantial corporate buy-out reminiscent of the severance packages offered to modern executives, Simon and Glover agreed to a final, truncated 1939 season.

Perhaps in his heart, Simon thought his old friends Chapple and Verity would intervene and overturn the cancellation after the abbreviated 1939 season. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Hook prevailed. Jack Wellbaum, one of millions of Armco Band fans and an emerging musician who aspired to earn the Armco Championship Musician Gold Medal never appeared on an Armco Band radio broadcast.

Charles Hook's decision to cancel all future Band activities enraged Frank Simon to the extent that he changed the name of his popular "Camp Hook March" to "March of the

¹⁷⁰ Freedland, *Music Man*, 211.

¹⁷¹ Contracts and other documents, Simon Archives.

Majorettes.”¹⁷² Articles and editorials appeared in Middletown, Cincinnati, and other regional newspapers condemning the move, citing the popularity of the Band and the positive effect on youth in their communities. In retrospect, Hook’s decision is yet another example of what has become an American stereotype: the corporate leader, out of step with popular sentiment, callously making a decision for economic purposes. The actual situation was considerably more complicated, but the economic growth of Armco was almost certainly the basis of Hook’s controversial conclusion.

By 1939 Armco had comfortably moved past the insecurity caused by the Great Depression. Unemployment was no longer a threat for the workforce. On account of a constant flow of new orders from around the world, Armco Works provided plenty of opportunities for steady employment, including better-paying overtime hours. With expanded capital, Armco annexed smaller steel companies in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Profit margins further increased as they attained greater control of necessary natural resources by purchasing iron mines, shipping lines, and other key components of the steel-making process.

World War II stimulated an even greater demand for Armco products. Rolled steel was an important component of the ships, tanks, and airplanes that fought on both sides of the war.¹⁷³ Armco was experiencing a period of rapid growth that would extend until the slow collapse of the company in the 1980s. Facing this complex web of growth and undoubtedly under prodigious pressure from the Board of Directors and Armco shareholders to increase profits, Hook possibly only saw the Armco Band as a popular, but expensive, advertising campaign that

¹⁷² Freedland, *Music Man*, 211.

¹⁷³ Armco was serving a global market by the late 1930s, so despite their public patriotism, it is likely (although still unpopular to discuss, as I discovered by mentioning the idea to Middletown residents) that Germany, Japan, and other Axis powers used Armco products in their military build-up.

had served its purpose. Before cancellation, the Armco Association still paid for local summer concerts and other regional events, but corporate funds paid for all major activities. As demonstrated throughout this study, Armco's risky investment in the Band for publicity and advertising purposes paid immediate and long-range dividends. Acting as an agent within a capitalistic, profit-driven system, Hook decided that curtailing investment in the Band would diminish operating expenses and free more funds for other types of development.

Beyond the basic economic components of the situation, other larger and more intangible cultural forces may have precipitated the demise of the Armco Band. Trends in American popular culture do not conform to simple boundaries. To suggest that the Armco Band was one of the last vestiges of a trend (i.e., the famous concert band playing a pleasing blend of European-derived music forms) which was already in decline starting in 1910, ignores the fluid boundaries of taste in American society. Jazz and other non-European genres were rising in popularity during this period, and Sousa, Simon, and the other luminaries of the great concert bands largely ignored this movement.¹⁷⁴ Throughout the lifespan of the Armco Band, Frank Simon tenaciously stuck to a programming formula that was not adaptable to emerging trends. Perhaps this alienated the more progressive elements of American tastes, but the simple fact is that millions of people, especially those who lived in non-urban areas, still idolized and admired the Armco Band well into the late 1930s. As an institution, the Armco Band would not have remained dominant in later decades, but the sudden end of the Armco Band in 1939 seemed to arrive sooner than necessary. Highly polished concert bands became the province of high school

¹⁷⁴ Sousa, however, embraced ragtime as a typical part of his programming.

and university programs,¹⁷⁵ and would no longer hold a prominent position as American entertainment icons.

¹⁷⁵ In fact, Fennel and other bandleaders would take the concert band to new levels of performing standards and attempted to elevate the status of smaller “wind ensembles” to equal footing with orchestras and chamber ensembles. Their success in this regard did stimulate the growth of a significant repertoire of “serious” band music, but eliminated a steady, stable audience at the same time. I played more than one concert as a member of the famous Eastman Wind Ensemble, puzzled by the fact that despite the accomplished playing and significant repertoire presented there were more people on stage than in the audience.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study began with a detailed biographical sketch of Frank Simon, with special attention paid to his musical development. Despite his brushes with failure and occasional examples of bending the truth to protect his public persona, Simon deserves copious merit as an American entertainment icon. After absorbing a musical and personal belief system from John Phillip Sousa, Simon used his strong will and entrepreneurial skill to build the Armco Band into a well-disciplined professional ensemble which bore striking resemblance to Sousa's famous band. "The Armco Band without Frank Simon would not have been the Armco Band" echoes through its simplicity and directness one of the key episodes of his life.¹⁷⁶ The delicate balance of cultural arbiter and mass entertainer that Simon maintained proved an ideal aesthetic for Armco's local and national publicity agenda. However, a limited number of scholars have thoroughly explored the intertwined story of Frank Simon and the rise and fall of the Armco Band, and his lasting legacy as an educator and inspiration to countless numbers of future musicians is an area that deserves further investigation.

In the 1920s, residents of Middletown, Ohio, and surrounding areas embraced and celebrated "their" Armco Band. Other industrial music ensembles in the area certainly existed, but the reputation of Frank Simon coupled with the resources Armco supplied to the early Band quickly advanced the ensemble to superstar status. By the late 1920s, the "Greatest Industrial Band in the World" was not a community-based music ensemble in the traditional sense, since Armco had given Frank Simon the authority to invert hiring practices to facilitate the recruitment of highly skilled musicians. Given the popularity of the Band in the community, this evidently did not matter. Attendance figures for this period were staggering by any standard. Perhaps

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter 1.

Armco did not envision the potential for mass entertainment when founding the Band, but increased spending throughout the decade demonstrated the fact that Verity, Chapple, Hook, and others in Armco management quickly realized what they were sponsoring. Middletown, Armco, and the Armco Band became nearly synonymous during the 1920s.

The often-overlooked persistence and creative genius of Bennett Chapple saved the Band from extinction at the onset of the Great Depression. By creating the *Ironmaster Hour* for radio broadcast, Chapple fused the popular appeal of Frank Simon's music programming with innovative advertising ideas and helped the Armco Band ascend to new heights of popularity and influence. On the surface, the *Ironmaster Hour* was little more than a subtle thirty-minute commercial. However, the long-term consequences and lasting impact of the broadcasts were wide-ranging, even if unintended. Radios were becoming fixtures in millions of American homes, and listeners in all states, especially in remote areas previously isolated from the rest of the world, suddenly gained access to music from far beyond the compass of their daily lives. The amateur bands in their hometowns were not consistently playing a wide range of repertoire at a highly proficient level, but the Armco Band certainly was.

In addition, schools seeking to add progressive courses to their curriculum were turning to music as a positive learning experience. Armco executives wasted no time utilizing this burgeoning education culture to further their commercial goals, giving powerful corporate impetus to the growing band movement. The exact number of future musicians inspired by the Armco broadcasts in the 1930s was inestimable. The testaments of musicians such as Jack Wellbaum and Robert Hornyak, arguably two of Cincinnati's most enduring professional musicians and leaders in their own right, prove this point on a specific and highly personal level.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the dynamic relationship between commercial interests and cultural development, using the Armco Band as a case study to explore how this complicated affiliation shaped the ensemble into a legendary local and national entertainment icon. Largely forgotten today, the Armco Band provided entertainment and local pride for the overwhelmingly working-class city of Middletown, Ohio and later earned national fame through radio broadcasts heard throughout America. After launching the Band in 1920, Armco used the ensemble to advance a complex web of corporate goals, and the focus on only one narrow piece of this web (i.e., expanding markets through advertising and bolstering community spirit to prevent workforce unionization) does not signify that other motivations or goals were somehow less important. I did not intend to present a comprehensive narrative or cultural history of the Armco Band. Instead, I analyzed the role of corporate music sponsorship, its commercial efficacy and some of the consequences of this venture. Specifically, I focused on Simon and his link to other famous entertainers, and how the Armco Band used well-established programming formulas to appeal to a broad audience.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, large corporations played a significant role in shaping American culture. Music and other forms of cultural expression was often the domain of local industry. In the case of Armco and Middletown, the paternalism of George Verity and his associates made a significant impact on the local community in terms of opportunities for their employees and local citizens to explore the performing arts, even if on a rudimentary level. Despite the complex and perhaps oppressive reasons for their interest in creating cultural opportunities, the Armco Band is an example of one outlet that had an enduring positive effect on the local, regional, and national community.

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Appendix 1: Reproduction of Frank Simon's personal 1932-33 program list.

RADIO PROGRAMS SEASON 1932-1933 ARMGCO BAND, FRANK SIMON, CONDUCTOR			
<u>OCTOBER 25, 1932 (AMERICAN COMPOSERS)</u>			
MARCH	"CAMP HOOK"	SIMON	2 - 45
	"TARTAR DANCE"	WOODIN	3 - 40
	"TO A WILD ROSE "	MACDOWELL	1 - 50
OVERTURE	"IN BOHEMIA "	HADLEY	9 - 20
	"ENDURING MELODIES "	HERBERT	2 - 35
MARCH	"CENTURY OF PROGRESS "	SOUSA	2 - 00
<u>NOVEMBER 1, 1932</u>			
MARCH	"COMARIONS"	BENNER	2 - 45
WALTZ	"TORONTO BAY"	GAGNIER	4 - 00
FANTASIE	"FANICULLI FANICULLA"	BELLETEDT	4 - 30
CORNET SOLO	"TREES"	RASBACH	2 - 10
MOORISH SUITE	"COURTS OF GRANADA"	CHAPI	
	1. March to the Tournament		3 - 55
	2. Serenata		1 - 50
	3. Finale		3 - 40
<u>NOVEMBER 8, 1932</u>			
MARCH	"LONG BRACH IS CALLING"	CLARKE	2 - 20
	"NARCISSUS"	NEVIN	2 - 35
COWBOY etc.	"TURKEY IN THE STRAW"	GUION	2 - 30
	"IN FORM OF HABANERA"	RAVEL	2 - 00
MARCH	"THE MAN OF THE HOUR"	WOODS	2 - 20
<u>NOVEMBER 15, 1932 (FRENCH COMPOSERS)</u>			
MARCH	"REGIMENT DE SAMBRE ET MEUSE"	TURLET	2 - 20
VARIATION	from ballet "CALLIRHOE"	CHAMINADE	1 - 45
	"SUNDAY EVENING IN AN ALSACIENNE VILLAGE"	MASSENET	5 - 30
	"BOLERO "	RAVEL	3 - 50
SCENES FROM	"SAMSON AND DELILAH"	SAINT-SAENS	5 - 25
	"SCHOOL OF LITTLE FAUNS"	PIERRE	1 - 30
HUNGARIAN MARCH	from "DAMNATION OF FAUST"	BERLIOZ	2 - 15
<u>NOVEMBER 22, 1932</u>			
MARCH	"AMERICAN ARMY"	IASSILLY	2 - 20
BALLET MUSIC	from "HENRY VIII"	SAINT-SAENS	
	1. A Scottish Idyl		3 - 50
	2. Dance of the Gypsy Girl		2 - 00
	3. Jig and Finale		3 - 00
CORNET TRIO	"THE THREE KINGS"	SMITH	4 - 00
VALSE	"ESPAGNOLE"	MASCHERONI	4 - 25
	"MOMENTS MUSICAL"	SCHUBERT	1 - 30
MARCH	"PRIDE OF THE ILLINI"	KING	2 - 05
<u>NOVEMBER 29, 1932 (ENGLISH COMPOSERS)</u>			
MARCH	"THE VANISHED ARMY"	ALFORD	2 - 45
INTERMEZZO	"FIFINETTE"	FLETCHER	1 - 55
SCENE ESPAGNOLE	"IN SEVILLE"	ELGAR	4 - 30
GEMS FROM OPERA	"PINNAFORE"	SULLIVAN	5 - 20
	"IN A MONASTERY GARDEN"	KETELBEY	4 - 05
	"TARRANTELLE FRETILLANTE"	COLERIDGE-TAYLOR	2 - 20
MARCH	"SOLDIERS OF THE ENTENTE"	J. ORD HUME	2 - 15

10 PROGRAMS 1932-33

DECEMBER 6, 1932

MARCH	"THE FLOWER PAGEANT"	DAVIS	2 - 10
	"TAMBOURIN CHINOIS"	KREISLER	3 - 50
BALLET SUITE	"SYLVIA"	DELIBES	
	1. Les Chasseresses		4 - 10
	2. Valse Lente		1 - 55
	3. Cortage of Bacchus		4 - 35
CORNET SOLO	"TREES"	RASBACH	2 - 15
ENGLISH FOLK DANCE	"COUNTRY FARENS"	GRAINGER	1 - 55
MARCH	"THE CHARLATAN"	SOUSA	2 - 40

DECEMBER 13, 1932 (GERMAN COMPOSERS)

FESTIVAL MARCH from	"TANNHAUSER"	WAGNER	4 - 20
	"TWO HUNGARIAN DANCES 5 & 6"	BRAMMS	4 - 25
OVERTURE	"ROMONT"	BETHOVEN	6 - 20
WALTZ	"WINE, WOMEN AND SONG"	STRAUSS	4 - 00
	"MOMENTS MUSICAL"	SCHUBERT	1 - 30
MILITARY MARCH	"HOHENZOLLERN RUHM"	UNRATH	2 - 25

DECEMBER 20, 1932

MARCH	"THE PALMYRA SPECTATOR"	MILLER	2 - 10
	"A SPANISH DANCE"	SCHMELLING	2 - 30
	"AMERICAN INDIAN RHAPSODY"	OREM	2 - 00
FLUTE SOLO	"THE BEE"	BOHM	2 - 10
	"HUMORESQUE"	DVORAK	3 - 15
DESCRIPTIVE PIECE	"HUSH!"	DOUGLAS	2 - 40
MARCH	"HANDS ACROSS THE SEAS"	SOUSA	2 - 30

DECEMBER 27, 1932 (SCANDINAVIAN COMPOSERS)

SUITE NO. 1.	"SWEDISH CORONATION MARCH"	SVENDSEN	2 - 55
	"PEER GYNT"	GRIEG	
	1. Morning		3 - 35
	2. Antras Dance		2 - 10
	3. In The Hall Of The Mountain King		2 - 05
TONE POEM	"FINLANDIA"	SIBELIUS	4 - 25
CHARACTERISTIC	"RUSTLE OF SPRING"	SINDING	2 - 50
	"Valse Triste"	SIBELIUS	3 - 25
	"MARCH OF THE BOJAREN"	HALVORSEN	2 - 50

JANUARY 3, 1933

FRENCH MARCH	"PARADE OF THE GENDARMES"	LAKE	2 - 10
	"THE BELLS OF ST. MARYS"	ADAMS	2 - 55
OVERTURE	"RIENZ!"	WAGNER	7 - 25
	"CLOCK OF THE DRESDEN FIGURES"	KETILBEY	3 - 45
DUET FOR OBOE & BASSOON	"TERZETTO"	LALLIET	3 - 45
MARCH	"SOUNDS OF PEACE"	VON BLON	2 - 40

JANUARY 10, 1933 (ITALIEN COMPOSERS)

MARCH	"ROYAL ITALIEN"	GABBETTI	1 - 55
INTERMEZZO from	"CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA"	MA-CAGNI	2 - 45
GRAND SCENE FROM THE OPERA	"AIDA"	VERDI	6 - 50
CORNET SOLO	"MAMA MIA"	NUTILE	2 - 00
BALLET	"DANCE OF THE HOURS"	PONCHIELLI	6 - 10
FINALE from	"WILLIAM TELL"	ROSSINI	3 - 10

JANUARY 17, 1933

HUMORESQUE	"MARCH LORRAINE"	GANNE	2 - 30
	"COMIN' THRU THE RYE"	BELLSTEDT	4 - 20
CEMS FROM COMIC OPERA	SUCCESSSES OF	VICTOR HERBERT	5 - 50
XYLOPHONE SOLO	"THE WITCHES DANCE"	MAC DOWELL	3 - 40
FRENCH DANCE	"RIGAUDON"	LACOMBE	3 f 15
MINATURE PATROL	"PARADE OF THE TINKER TOYS"	GRABEL	1 - 50

10 PROGRAMS 1932-33

MARCH 17, 1933 (IRISH PROGRAM)

MARCH	"EXPERHARY"	FULTON	2 - 05
	"AN IRISH TUNE FROM COUNTY DERRY"	GRAINGER	3 - 45
TONE POEM	"IRLANDIA"	DRUMM	7 - 45
CORNET SOLO	"KILLARNEY"	BALFE	2 - 00
MELODIES FROM	"ELLEN"	HERBERT	4 - 10
MARCH	"I'M ON MY WAY TO DUBLIN BAY"	LAMPE	2 - 00

MARCH 24, 1933

GRAND MARCH	"POMP AND CHIVALRY"	ROBERTS	3 - 50
	"AIR DE BALLAT"	HERBERT	2 - 15
RAPEODY	"ESPAGNA"	CHARRIER	6 - 35
TUBA SOLO	"CARMEN FANTASIE"	BIZET	4 - 30
	"GOLLIWOGG'S CAKE WALK"	DEBUSSY	2 - 30
MARCH	"LEGIONAIRES OF THE U.S.A."	WALKER	2 - 45

MARCH 31, 1933 (CANADIAN COMPOSERS)

MARCH	"UNITED EMPIRE"	HUGHES	1 - 55
SERENADE	"TO THIS I SING"	HAYWARD	3 - 45
	"SOUVENIR OF QUEBEC"	O'NEILL	3 - 10
OVERTURE	"THE GALLANT ARTILLERYMAN"	VENZINA	4 - 40
WALTZ	"TORONTO BAY"	GAGNIER	4 - 00
BARYTONE SOLO	"WORLD IS WAITING FOR SUNRISE"	SEITZ	2 - 20
MARCH	"CA - NA - EX"	GAGNIER	2 - 30

APRIL 7, 1933

MARCH	"GAME PRESERVE"	MEYERS	2 - 20
A BUDDHIST PROCESSIONAL	"BY THE RIVER GANGES"	SCHINKE	5 - 00
SAXOPHONE SOLO	"VALSE VANITE"	WINDOEBT	3 - 00
SCHERZO FROM	"MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM"	MENDELSSOHN	5 - 05
IDYL	"THE GLOW WORM"	LINCKE	3 - 25
	"A MUSIC BOX"	LIADOW	1 - 35
MARCH	"A TRIBUTE TO SOUSA"	GOLDMAN	1 - 35

APRIL 14, 1933

MARCH	"GAME PRESERVE"	MEYERS (Out)	2 - 20
MARCH	"WHO'S WHO IN NAVY BLUE"	SOUSA	1 - 55
	"TWO HEARTS IN THREE FOUR TIME"	STOLZ	4 - 10
SOPRANO SOLO	"I'M FAIR TITANIA"	THOMAS	5 - 00
	"TORCH DANCE" from "HENRY VIII"	GERMAN	1 - 30
OVERTURE	"WILLIAM TELL" (FINALE)	ROSSINI	3 - 10
SOPRANO SOLO	"VILLANELLE"	DEL ACQUA	3 - 45
SOPRANO SOLO	"COMIN' THRU THE RYE"		1 - 25
MARCH	"THE GLORIOUS 26th"	MISSUD	1 - 55

APRIL 21, 1933

MARCH	"ARMCO GREET'S YOU"	BELSTEDT	2 - 10
PAS DE FASCINATION	"FAIRY DREAMS"	WOOD	2 - 25
OVERTURE	"OBERON"	VON WEBER	3 - 40
CORNET SOLO	"WILLOW ECHOES"	SIMON	3 - 50
HUMORESQUE	"PICCOLO PIC"	SLATER	2 - 15
MARCH	"THE IRON MASTER"	BUYS	2 - 15

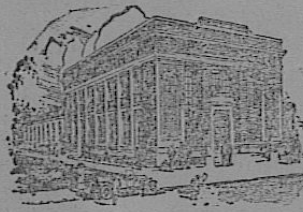
Appendix 2: Late 1930s Publicity Photograph of the Armco Band



THE MIDDLETOWN JOURNAL
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Published Every Evening Except Sunday and Holidays by
THE MIDDLETOWN JOURNAL PRINTING CO.
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Frank B. Pauly.....Editor and Manager

OUR POLICY



To support such measures as are unquestionably for the good of Middletown as an entire community, rather than such propositions as are in favor of individual interest, or of one section as against another. And likewise to earnestly and conscientiously oppose all things that are not for the good of the community as a whole.

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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MONDAY, JULY 25, 1921.

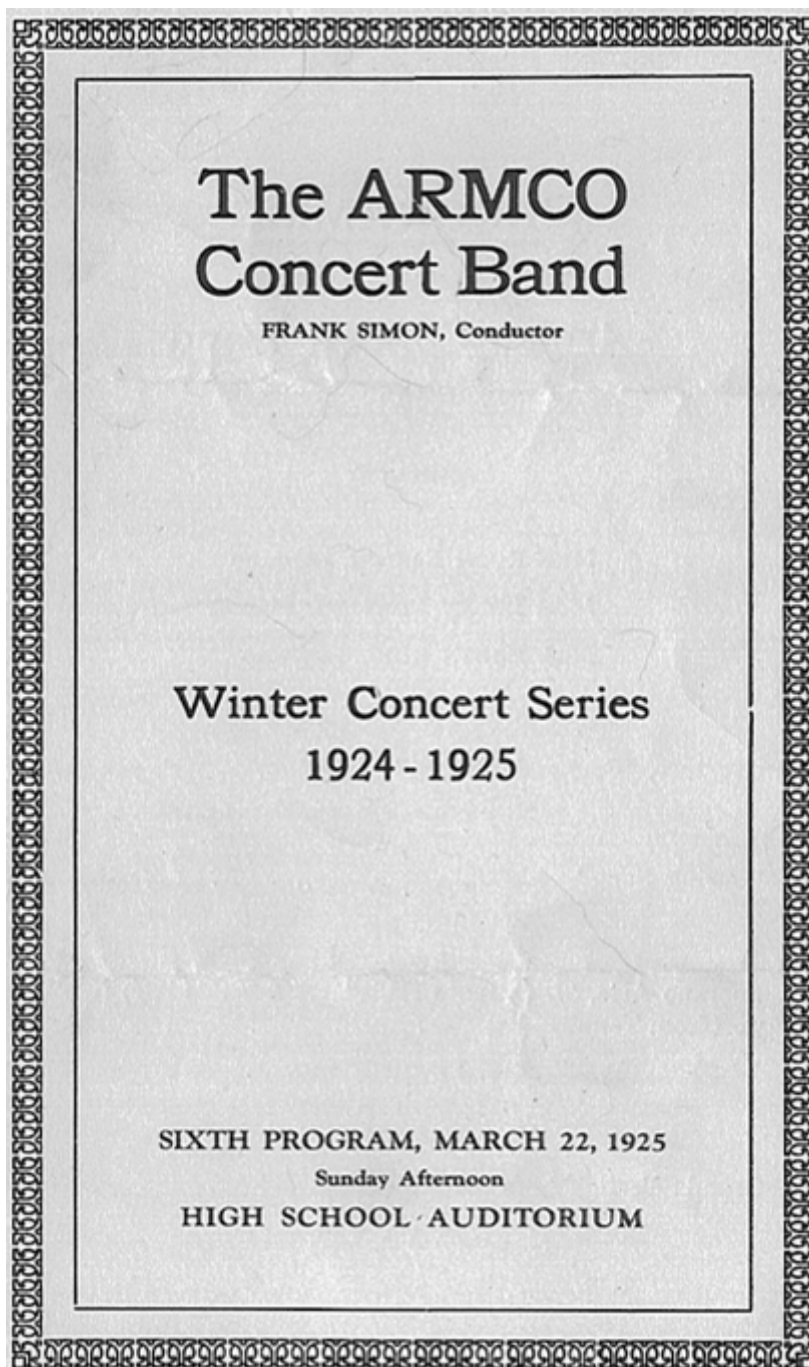
Popular Community Event

THE concert given every Friday evening by the new Armco band has become a community event. These open air affairs fill a niche in the activities of Middletown that has been empty, although probably the people were not aware of that something which was lacking.

Now the weary populace can turn from the workaday world and in the cool of the day assemble at Armco field, lounge upon the greensward of the natural amphitheatre and in relaxation listen to the soothing, soul-inspiring symphony of worth-while music under the direction of the nation's premier cornetist—our own Frank Simon. And from time to time the progressive leader adds a pleasing feature that contributes to the popularity of the event.

These weekly concerts are appealing to the people of the entire Miami valley, and they are looking to Middletown as the center of wholesome, unselfish community intercourse, where the intermingling of community life is making for the development of a happy and contented citizenship.

Appendix 4(a): Reproduction of 22 March 1925 program



PROGRAMME

Armco Concert Band

FRANK SIMON, Conductor

ASSISTED BY

MISS RUTH BARDEN, Soprano

MISS HELEN DOWLING, Pianist

MRS. ERWIN RUEHL, Soprano

1. Overture, "Poet and Peasant" *F. von Suppe*
2. "Spring Song" *Mendelssohn*
3. Soprano Aria, "Dich teure Halle" (Elizabeth's Air)
(from Tannhauser) *Wagner*
MRS. ERWIN RUEHL
4. Grand Selection from the Ballet "Sylvia" *Delibes*

Interval

5. Scenes from the Opera "Cavalleria Rusticana" *Mascagni*
6. First Movement "Concerto in D Minor for Pianoforte"
(Op. 40) *Mendelssohn*
MISS HELEN DOWLING
7. Soprano Aria, "Depuis je Jour" (E'er since the day
when unto thee I gave me) (from Louise) *Charpentier*
MISS RUTH BARDEN
8. Favorite Melodies from "It Happened in Nordland" *Herbert*

TO OUR PATRONS

We desire to take this opportunity to thank our patrons of the Winter Concert Series just closing for their loyal interest, patronage and encouragement.

We have given you our best efforts.

Our aim is to continue in the work we are engaged in—to develop our organization into a finer and more proficient musical body—in order that we may better interpret the inspirations of the masters.

To bring to you the best artists in the land.

To encourage, develop and present our local musicians.

To present musical entertainment and educational programs.

To bring to Middletown fame and honor as a musical center.

To spread happiness and good will over our entire community through the love of good music.

To play these concerts at a price within reach of all.

The Armco Band.

PROGRAMME

ARMCO CONCERT BAND

FRANK SIMON, CONDUCTOR

ERNEST N. GLOVER, MANAGER AND ASS'T. CONDUCTOR

ASSISTED BY

ARTHUR WILL, Cornetist
HAMILTON MORRIS, Cornetist
ELIZABETH O'BRIEN, Soprano


CHARLES MUNGER, Cornetist
DON BASSETT, Clarinetist

FIFTH CONCERT

THURSDAY NIGHT JULY 23, 1931 8:15 P.M.


SUNSET PARK

1.	Overture "RAYMOND"	THOMAS
2.	(a) Nocturns "DREAMS OF LOVE"	LISZT
	(b) American Sketch "BY THE SWANEE RIVER"	MYDLETON
3.	Trio for Cornets—"FLIRTATIONS"	CLARKE
	MESSRS. WILL, MORRIS & MUNGER	
4.	Melodies from "NO! NO! NANNETTE"	YOUMANS
INTERVAL		
5.	Waltzes "TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS"	STRAUSS
6.	Clarinet Solo—VARIATIONS ON AN AIR FROM "LA SONAMBULA"	BELLINI
	DON BASSETT	
7.	(a) Patrol—"I'M ON MY WAY TO DUBLIN BAY"	LAMPE
	(b) Humoresque—"COMIN' THRU THE RYE"	BELLSTEDT
8.	Soprano Aria—"I AM TITANIA" from "MIGNON"	THOMAS
	ELIZABETH O'BRIEN	
9.	March—"UNDER THE DOUBLE EAGLE"	WAGNER



UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE PARK BOARD
OF THE
CITY OF MIDDLETOWN

ROBERT GIBBS MARK E. DENNY LESLIE RAINE



NEXT CONCERT JULY 30

F I F T H S U M M E R S E A S O N
A R M C O C O N C E R T B A N D
FRANK SIMON, Conductor

Mr. C. L. Taylor, Bass
Miss Edith Grimes, Soprano
Mr. Paul Blagg, Cornetist
Mr. Judson Bauer, Cornetist
Mr. Wilbur Crist, Cornetist

E I G H T H C O N C E R T
THURSDAY NIGHT ARMCO FIELD August 6, 1925

1.	"Pageant March"	Finck
2.	Melodies from the musical play "Rose Marie"	Friml
3.	Bass solo "The Holy City" Mr. Chas. L. Taylor	Adams
4.	Overture "Poet and Peasant"	Suppe

ATTEND THE GARDEN PARTY
F O R T Y M I N U T E S I N T E R M I S S I O N

5.	Grand Scene from the Opera "Carmen"	Bizet
6.	Cornet trio "Flirtations" Messrs Blagg, Bauer & Crist	Clarke
7.	Soprano solo "Villanelle" (The Swallow) Miss Edith Grimes	Dell' Acqua
8.	"Reminiscences of Scotland"	Godfrey

The Symphony of the Machine

THE machine lends its sonorous voice to the great songs of the day. It sings merrily at its work, happy in the thought that its tireless arms of steel lift oppressive burdens from the backs of men.

Never ceases the music of the machine. Now a drone, now a solemn chant, as it goes seriously about its important work.

The joyous notes swell and gather in volume. Machines in other industries blend in the theme. And always the baton of man directs its mighty voice.

Here is music that sings of prosperity . . . of the satisfaction of buying and selling that which is good . . . of giving and receiving . . . of mutual understanding and good will among men. Contentment is its key, peace its theme, and progress its pulsating cadence.

It is to the interpretation of this all-pervading spirit of the age that the ARMCO Concert Band is dedicated.

The American Rolling Mill Company

Executive Offices: MIDDLETOWN, OHIO



Ingot Iron

RESISTS RUST

The Song of Industry

Whirring wheels! Singing motors! Contented workmen! The air is filled with a thousand voices that blend into the glad song of Industry.

Go into the plant, the mill, the factory, the office. You will hear this song rising from the hearts of happy people. Its inspiring melody is woven into the warp and woof of toil.

Industry's song is universal. It knows no bounds. Wherever man labors its joyous presence is felt. It lightens the burden. It speeds the day. It illuminates the path ahead.

So it is that the composers turn to Industry for themes. With minds attuned to its melody and rhythm synchronized with its rumbling cadence they echo and re-echo the glad refrain. So, too, the worker from the ranks of Industry finds joy in interpreting these themes of the masters, that all may hear and understand.

In this lies the spirit and purpose of the ARMCO Concert Band.

The American Rolling Mill Company

Executive Offices
MIDDLETOWN, OHIO

