

These venues became known as the *Chitlin' Circuit*. Some renowned night clubs on the Chitlin' Circuit in large metropolitan areas include the Cotton Club and the Apollo Theatre in New York; the Uptown Theatre in Philadelphia; and the Royal Theatre in Baltimore. Other Maryland spots along the Circuit included Carr's and Sparrow's Beaches near Annapolis.

A local story is that sometime in the 1930's, Shimmy Bond tried to have a Havre de Grace dance hall become part of the Chitlin' Circuit. Here he sought to promote a club for top notch entertain-ment. Little is known exactly when and where the venue started. What is known is that Marcus Stansbury (b. 1920) recalls that just prior to reporting for induction into the U.S. Army in Baltimore, on November 16, 1939, he visited the dance hall. On that particular night, the 19-year old Stansbury saw Cab Calloway perform.

Although the 1930's were before her time, Lois Brooks recalls hearing the stories of her father's hiring Count Basie, Louie Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and others to perform in the dance hall. Local musician Stanford Smith (Pamphlet 0055) speculates that the dance hall may have been located at the site of present day HdG Community Center.

Ms. Brooks also remembers her father's mentioning that the dance hall failed to



Cab Calloway (l) and Count Basie (r) were among the talented musicians hired by Shimmy Bond to perform locally. Camay Murphy, Calloway's daughter, has lived in Havre de Grace for the last 32 years.

turn a profit. When, however, Shimmy partnered with Johnny Jaynes and his Sports Arena on Route 1 near Darlington, business started to boom.

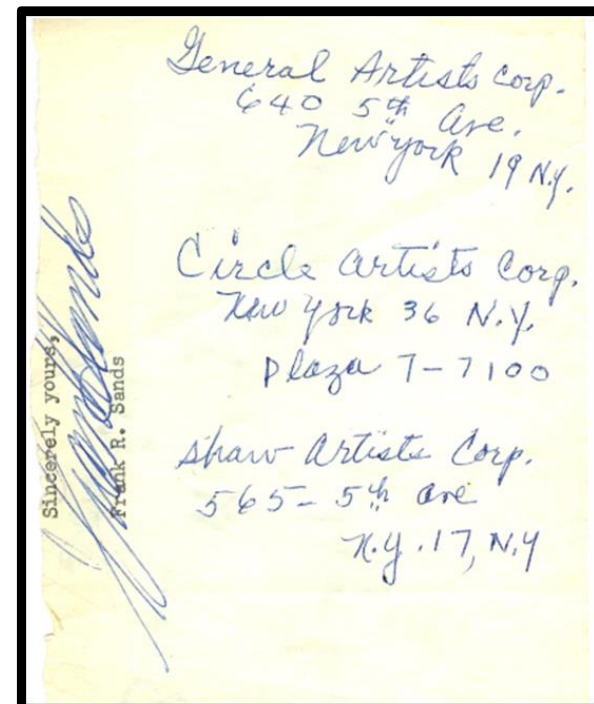
Next week, the Shimmy Bond Story will continue in the Havre de Grace housing projects at 383 Wilson Street with *"Who's Coming to Dinner"*.



Author: Lois Brooks with Jerome Hersl
Copy Editor: Jim Chrismer

Reviewers: Debbie Gibbons, Joan Wiggins,
Barbara Hersl, Margaret Ferguson,
Stephen Smith & T. Roxann Redd-Wallace
harfordcampaign42.1@gmail.com

African-American History of Harford County, Maryland A Weekly Publication



African-American Music Series From Africa to Harford County Part 7 The Norvel "Shimmy" Bond Story Pamphlet 0059 February 17, 2017

Cover: Shimmy's scratch paper showing his New York contacts. The typed name of Frank R. Sands was a person with whom Shimmy frequently dealt. Unknown at this time is whether Mr. Sands operated out of New York or Baltimore.

Introduction

The misconception is that only prominent persons impact the past and “make” history. To the contrary, it is the contributions of masses of ordinary people, persisting day-in and day-out in their lives and activities, that form the core of America’s past.

The next three pamphlets will tell the story of such an individual, Norvel “Shimmy” Bond (1903-1975). Named for the 1920s highly rhythmic dance that pre-dated the Charleston, Shimmy Bond helped spotlight in Harford County local and national African-American talent associated with baseball and, especially, secular music.

Shimmy Bond’s life story, and the music and musicians who surrounded him, constitute an interesting and significant piece of local history. As yet that story is incomplete. Shimmy’s life touched many people whose memories likely linger in documents such as letters, diaries, pictures, and newspapers stored away in basements and attics. Researchers remain hopeful that these important historical sources will be brought out and shared in order to complete the Shimmy Bond Story.

Existing Documentation

Norvel Bond was born July 7, 1903, to Joshua and Josephine (Prigg) Bond, tenant farmers in the Aldino area of Harford County. Norvel was the youngest of five sons, estimated in the 1910 U.S. Census to be six years old. A marriage record exist for Norvel and his first wife, Daisy Wright, dated January 31, 1923. In the 1940 census, Shimmy reappears and he is living with his second wife, Isabella Thompson (1907-1994), at 559 Lewis Street in Havre de Grace (HdG) along with their children at the time.

Shimmy

According to Norvel’s youngest child, Lois Brooks (b. 1942), her mother Isabella spoke of her husband’s winning a dance contest (possibly in the late 1920’s) doing the *Shimmy*. For the rest of his life Bond’s family and friends referred to him as Shimmy. Initially the family nicknamed Norvel’s oldest son, Edward (1923-2016), Shimmy, Jr. Later, despite being taller than his father, Edward was known as Little Shimmy and Norvel, the shorter man, Big Shimmy.

Shimmy Bond loved music and of, course, dancing. He always played the piano and sang Gospel music at family gatherings. “Blessed Quietness” was his favorite song, a classic gospel hymn written at the turn of the century. North Harford High School graduate and nationally known pianist, Cyrus Chesnut, released an album under that title in 1996.

Becoming a Promoter

Ms. Brooks also recalls her mother’s story of Norvel’s losing his job while working as a presser in a local laundry service. The story goes that Shimmy, on his own accord, created a special formula to get out the tough stains in clothes. The owner demanded that Shimmy share the secret formula without compensation. When Shimmy balked, he was fired. And when the young presser with the magic formula went to other laundry businesses for a job, he soon realized that he had been blacklisted.

Shimmy began working odd jobs to make ends meet. One day, wanting to make a better life for himself and his family, Shimmy walked from Havre de Grace to Baltimore in order to secure a full time job. Unfortunately, he was unable to find suitable work in Baltimore. Shimmy did, however, make a contact at the Royal Theater who provided him with the phone numbers of entertainment agencies in New York City. Shimmy made up his mind to become an entertainment promoter.

HdG on the Chitlin’ Circuit

In the early 1900’s, African-American music was making its way from churches to secular venues. During this era of racial violence and Jim Crowism, black entertainers, especially comedians and musicians in the ragtime, blues, and jazz genres, needed safe places to perform.