

HALL OF FAME

WTSBOA 2018 HONOREE

Captain Charles Harrison

Charles F. Harrison was born in Canton, Mississippi on January 8, 1895. At the age of ten Charles toured the United States with a concert band, performing on cornet. In 1917 he performed on baritone at Mississippi A&M, now known as Mississippi State University. In 1919, Charles Harrison directed a student band on the campus until completing his undergraduate degree in engineering. During World War I, he was assistant director of the army band stationed at Muscle Shoals.

In 1928 the Harrison's moved to Memphis and the following year Charles Harrison, Sr. was employed by the Melody Music Shop, a music store owned by Saul Blustein at 13 South Main Street. Harrison's job at the Melody Music Shop was to organize new bands throughout the tri-state area and serve as a traveling band director. He was director of the band at Southwestern College (now Rhodes College) in Memphis and high-school bands in Marks and Lambert, New Albany, and Lula, Mississippi; and Memphis, Rosemark, Covington, and Millington, Tennessee. During this time, he also played lead trumpet in Malcolm Burk's Dance Band.

In September of 1931 the Christian Brothers Band was reorganized under the direction of Lieutenant Charles Harrison. The group rapidly developed into the largest and finest student organization in the school. The Christian Brothers held a great respect for Lieutenant Harrison. The Memphis high school band tradition for the 1920's was that of the Jazz Orchestra in the style of Jimmy Lunceford, and not one of marching or concert bands. Harrison encouraged his bands to follow the instrumentation



of the modern high school band. Christian Brother's student Lawrence Patrick Cooney, who would later become the Superintendent of Music in the Memphis City Schools, was a student of his during this time.

In the 1930s, the Cotton Carnival Parades were becoming the largest parades the city had ever seen. The largest band, of one hundred high school students, was led by Charles Harrison and was titled the Memphis Cotton Carnival Official Band.

Harrison also hosted a two-week summer band camps at the Memphis Fairgrounds with nightly public concerts. The camp eventually grew to over 300 students participating. He served as a bandmaster in the Mid-South until 1943 when he left Memphis, to serve in World War II. He returned a Captain to Memphis after the war and he conducted the ROTC Bands in Memphis. After 1947 he moved to Atlanta where he died on April 11, 1983.