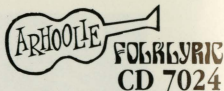


# OSCAR "PAPA" CELESTIN

## "And his Tuxedo Jazz Band"



1. SHEIK OF ARABY (Snyder, Smith & Wheeler-1921 P.D.)
2. EH, LA BAS (P.D.)
3. LIL' LIZA JANE (de Lachau-1916 P.D.)
4. JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE (P.D.)
5. BILL BAILEY (Canon-1902 P.D.)
6. MAMA DON'T ALLOW (P.D.)
7. JAZZ IT BLUES (P.D.)
8. IT DON'T MEAN A THING (Ellington & Mills-1932)
9. PANAMA (Hubbell & Hobart-1913 P.D.)
10. SAN (McPhail & Michaels-1920 P.D.)
11. SISTER KATE (Piron-1922 P.D.)
12. DIPPERMOUTH BLUES (Oliver-1923)
13. TIGER RAG (Original Dixieland Jazz Band-1918 P.D.)
14. MARYLAND, MY MARYLAND (Mygrant-1906 P.D.)
15. MILENBURG JOYS (Morton, Rappolo, Mares-1925)
16. WAR CLOUD (Original Dixieland Jazz Band-1917 P.D.)
17. WOODCHOPPER'S BALL (Herman & Bishop-1939)
18. HIGH SOCIETY (Steele-1901 P.D.)
19. EH, LA BAS (P.D.)
20. FIDGETY FEET (Original Dixieland Jazz Band-1917 P.D.)
21. BALLIN' THE JACK (Smith & Burris-1913 P.D.)
22. OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE (Cole & Johnson-1902 P.D.)
23. WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN (P.D.)

Total time: 77:00

Papa Celestin - vocals and trumpet; Bill Mathews - trombone; Alphonse Picou - clarinet; Octave Crosby - piano & vocals; Ricard Alexis - string bass & vocals; Christopher "Black Happy" Goldston - drums & vocals.

# 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 10 are from July 24 and August 22, 1950; # 12 is from April 22, 1951; # 13 & 18 are from April 29, 1951; # 14, 15, & 19 are from May 6, 1951; # 16 & 17 are from May 13, 1951; # 22 & 23 are from a studio session, February 15, 1950. All other selections from unknown dates.

Recorded in 1950 and 1951 during the weekly "Dixieland Jambake" radio broadcasts which were aired nationally over the ABC radio network. The Saturday night live program originated from ABC's New Orleans affiliate, WDSU and reached millions of listeners from coast to coast. The 30-minute program usually featured two bands: Papa Celestin's Tuxedo Jazz band and Sharkey Bonano's Kings of Dixieland, alternating tunes. I believe the program actually began in the summer of 1949, was MC'd by Roger Wolf, sponsored by US Treasury Bonds, and went on for a number of years. Anyone who has any of these wonderful broadcasts, well recorded and preserved, please contact Arhoolie Records.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz  
Cover by Wayne Pope

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# Oscar "Papa" Celestin

## 1950s Radio Broadcasts







*Oscar "Papa" Celestin in the early 1950s*

## Oscar "Papa" Celestin

*"And his Tuxedo Jazz band"*

One Saturday evening in the summer of 1949 or 1950, I sat absolutely spellbound, listening to the radio in my great aunt's home in Reno, Nevada. The music which came from the speaker seemed to come from paradise, especially every other tune which was played by Papa Celestin's Tuxedo Jazz Band! I had first encountered New Orleans jazz in 1948, when I saw the film "New Orleans" with a high school pal. It featured Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong, Barney Bigard, Ram Hall and other members of the Kid Ory band along with Billie Holiday and Meade Lux Lewis. However, I had never heard anything as dynamic and powerful as this band led by Papa Celestin. I found Sharkey Bonano's lightly swinging band (which alternated songs on the radio program with Celestin) amusing and enjoyable but sort of in the Dixieland style I was already familiar with here on the West Coast via performers like the Fire House Five, Pete Dailey, Turk

Murphy and others.

Papa Celestin's band of black New Orleans players, on the other hand, were a totally new experience! The driving rhythm, the leader's extroverted vocals, his frequent use of the call and response tradition common in black churches and his egging the various players on to take their solos, plus the flowing clarinet of Alphonse Picou, the rough and joyful trombone of Bill Mathews and that extraordinary swinging rhythm section, transported me to the land of my dreams! Octave Crosby was the most rhythmic pianist I had ever heard, Ricard Alexis' pumping bass and Creole vocals, all underscored and driven home by the solid, driving drums of Christopher "Black Happy" Goldston. Papa Celestin's trumpet was still strong and in command, especially on days when he was fired up and obviously feeling good. I was miserable on Saturdays when I could not be near a radio.



The program went on for several years and on a few occasions, instead of Papa Celestin, presented George Lewis and his New Orleans Ragtime Band which on two occasions included the great trumpeter Elmer Talbert. That band, led by the soulful, blues drenched clarinet of George Lewis, was already known to most of us jazz fans from their recordings with trumpeter Bunk Johnson. But to hear them "live" from New Orleans was a revelation. Since the members of that band were still in their prime, they soon became the leading and most popular touring New Orleans jazz band. Unfortunately Papa Celestin's health was soon failing and unlike George Lewis, he was never able to take full advantage of the incredible publicity derived from these radio broadcasts. Papa Celestin however did make a brief solo tour of the West Coast, played for the President in Washington, DC and made an appearance in the 3D movie "Cinerama Holiday." The band heard on these broadcasts was no doubt the best band Celestin ever had but unfortunately the old reaper soon claimed most of them!

Oscar "Papa" Celestin was one of the pioneers of New Orleans jazz. Born January 1,

1884, in Napoleonville, La., he came to New Orleans in 1906. By 1908 he had joined the Excelsior Band under the leadership of Henry Allen, Sr. and a few years later he started his own band. Celestin's new band got a regular job at the Tuxedo Dance Hall and they soon became known as the "Original Tuxedo Orchestra." In 1925 this band made their first recordings and the following year recorded perhaps their most popular number of that period, "My Josephine" which was issued in the company's popular catalog and not in their "Race" series as was the case with most recordings by African American musicians at that time. (All of Celestin's 1920s recordings are on Jazz Oracle CD 8002).

During the 1920s Papa Celestin became a very popular orchestra leader and played many debutante parties, carnival balls, and other social events for both black and white party givers. Although many blues, cajun, and country artists were recorded on location in New Orleans in the late 1920s, very few jazz bands were recorded in the Crescent City during that period. Papa Celestin's and the Sam Morgan band were the exceptions. Most of the jazz musicians who were to make names for them-

selves had moved north by the 1920s and those who stayed behind found the going rough, especially with the advent of the Great Depression. In the bleak days of the 1930s almost no black New Orleans bands were recorded (with the exception of Joe Robichaux) and Papa Celestin went into musical semi-retirement, eventually finding work in a defense plant during World War II. Hot jazz was definitely on the decline during the Swing and Sweet years of the '30s and '40s.

Even though Papa Celestin no longer played music on a full-time basis in the 1930s, he continued to make appearances with various bands which he would put together whenever the occasion arose. In 1938 he was reported to have been fronting a 14-piece band, obviously in the then-popular swing style. In 1944 Celestin was severely injured by a hit and run driver which necessitated a two-year convalescence period. In 1947 he was back playing jazz and recorded several sides for the then

new DeLuxe label, which was also releasing New Orleans rhythm & blues performers, but the balance was bad with the rhythm section under-recorded. By 1949 Papa Celestin had put together the band you hear on this CD and they were soon to become well-known all over the country via these broadcasts.

Papa Celestin made an amazing comeback during this period of the early 1950s not only via these radio programs but also on Bourbon Street where he found steady employment at the Paddock Lounge and by his appearance in the widely heralded "Cinerama Holiday" film. Even though he had lost many of his best players, Celestin and his band went to Washington, DC in the spring of 1953, to play for the White House Correspondence Association, where he met President Eisenhower. Unfortunately his comeback and new music career were short lived and on December 15, 1954, Papa Celestin died in New Orleans of cancer.

*(Cbris Strachwitz-redone in 1996)*

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## Oscar (Papa) Celestin Is Dead in South; Jazz Trumpeter Played for Eisenhower

Special to The New York Times. 1957

NEW ORLEANS, Dec. 15 — Oscar (Papa) Celestin, one of America's great jazz musicians, died of cancer today at his residence here. He would have been 71 years old on New Year's Day. The first hint that the veteran Negro trumpeter was seriously ill came in late September when his band played without him at a festival on behalf of the Crippled Children's Hospital.

Papa Celestin had been playing night club engagements in recent years. In the spring of 1953 he and his band went to Washington to play at the annual dinner of the White House Correspondents Association.

It was then that President Eisenhower said to him:

"Mr. Celestin, you are a fine gentleman and a credit to your race and our country."

This marked the most triumphant moment of his second career as a leading exponent of Dixieland music. He was the idol of New Orleans jazz lovers during the Nineteen Twenties, but later lapsed into virtual obscurity. In recent years he staged a comeback that many contend eclipsed his earlier luster.

Papa Celestin was born in the cane and bayou country of Assumption Parish and decided on a career as a musician at the age of 10. In 1911 he formed his own original Tuxedo Orchestra and received acclaim for such spirited numbers as "Bucket's Got a Hole In It," "Down Home Rag," "High Society" and "Liza Jane."

He recently said, "I figured I've played those songs a half-million times."

Many stars of the jazz world played for Papa Celestin, including Lorenzo Tio, Jimmy Noone, Shota Madison, Zutty Singleton, Abby Foster, Baby Dodds, Alphonse Picou and Louis Arm-



Associated Press Wirephoto, 1954

Oscar (Papa) Celestin

strong. It was Mr. Armstrong who dubbed him Papa.

Last summer the New Orleans Jazz Club sponsored a drive to raise funds to purchase a sculptured head of Papa Celestin by Rai Grainer Murray, to be placed at Latter Memorial Library. The presentation had been scheduled to be made tonight, but the musician's death caused postponement of the presentation indefinitely.

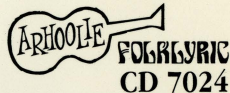
Papa Celestin leaves his wife, the former Sarah Jackson, whom he married thirty-two years ago.



L. to r.: Lizzie Miles, Louis Cotrell-clarinet, "Papa" Celestin-trumpet, George Lewis-clarinet.

# OSCAR "PAPA" CELESTIN

## "The 1950s Radio Broadcasts"



1. SHEIK OF ARABY (3:38)
2. EH, LA BAS (3:26)
3. LIL' LIZA JANE (4:45)
4. JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE (3:06)
5. BILL BAILEY (4:31)
6. MAMA DON'T ALLOW (4:37)
7. JAZZ IT BLUES (2:17)
8. IT DON'T MEAN A THING (3:13)
9. PANAMA (3:11)
10. SAN (3:11)
11. SISTER KATE (2:56)
12. DIPPERMOUTH BLUES (2:45)
13. TIGER RAG (4:25)
14. MARYLAND, MY MARYLAND (3:05)
15. MILENBURG JOYS (3:53)
16. WAR CLOUD (3:20)
17. WOODCHOPPER'S BALL (3:13)
18. HIGH SOCIETY (3:07)
19. EH, LA BAS (3:19)
20. FIDGETY FEET (2:56)
21. BALLIN' THE JACK (2:03)
22. OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE (2:55)
23. WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN (2:56)

Total time: 77:00

Papa Celestin - vocals and trumpet; Bill Mathews - trombone; Alphonse Picou - clarinet; Octave Crosby - piano & vocals; Ricard Alexis - string bass & vocals; Christopher "Black Happy" Goldston - drums & vocals.

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Trumpeter Celestin was one of the pioneer New Orleans jazz musicians who made his first records in 1925. He enjoyed a remarkable comeback in the early 1950s with this superb band. These recordings come from the weekly "Dixieland Jambake" radio broadcasts which were aired nationally over the ABC radio network. The Saturday night live program originated from ABC's New Orleans affiliate, WDSU and reached millions of listeners from coast to coast. The 30-minute program usually featured two bands: Papa Celestin's Tuxedo Jazz band and Sharkey Bonano's Kings of Dixieland, alternating tunes.

Re-issue produced by Chris Strachwitz  
Cover by Wayne Pope



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