

Tribute to John N. Klohr (1869-1956)

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The name of John N. Klohr is known to most show folk and the band world at large for only one composition. That is, of course, "The Billboard March," dedicated to "The Amusement Weekly." As Dr. Frederick Fennell rightly stated, "This march has probably 'brought on' more entertainment acts than any other single piece in music history."

John Nicholas Klohr was born in Cincinnati, OH on July 27, 1869, and died there of a heart attack on February 17, 1956. He lived his entire life in that Ohio city. On August 23, 1893 he married Alice Gleason; they had no children.

A vaudeville trombonist by profession, Klohr played in many bands, including one conducted by his friend and fellow trombonist, composer Henry Fillmore, from 1921 to 1926.

John Klohr was educated in the Cincinnati public schools. He was head of the band and orchestra department of the John Church Publishing Company. He also served as editor for this firm. Klohr played trombone in the First Regiment Band of Ohio. He also was a member of the Syrian Temple Band of Cincinnati for over 50 years. He was a member of the National League of Musicians, which later became Local 1 of the American Federation of Musicians. He was an early member of ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers), having joined in 1939.

"The Billboard March" was published by John Church in 1901. When the march was first published, according to James McBeth, the band director mentioned that he didn't think it was much of a march. Klohr said that he used the royalties from the march to buy his home at 3568 Zumstein Avenue.

In addition to "The Billboard March," Klohr wrote many other marches, and arranged music for other composers. He also wrote a number of "cake walks" and published the Apex Band Book. Of all his works, however, "The Billboard" reigns supreme, and this march by John N. Klohr will be providing music for the showman's stage, and circus ring, for years to come.

