

***GENNETT RECORDS: THE LITTLE STUDIO THAT  
COULD***

**ANNOUNCER:**

**MISSION PHARMACAL, THE MAKERS OF CITRACAL CALCIUM,  
PRESENTS RIVERWALK JAZZ PRODUCED BY PVP-MEDIA FROM  
PRI, PUBLIC RADIO INTERNATIONAL.**

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**CUE: NIGHTSPELL: JCJB**

**DAVID**

**Welcome to The Landing on the banks of the San Antonio  
River. This is *Riverwalk Jazz*. Starring The Jim Cullum  
Jazz Band.**

**CUE: APPLAUSE**

**DAVID**

**I'm David Holt.**

**Old rugs hung from the ceilings, and the walls were stuffed  
with straw to dampen the sound from the trains passing by.  
When musicians came in to record they had to scatter about  
the studio, sitting on stools and shipping crates in order to  
strike some sort of balance between instruments as they**

**played into the primitive copper horns that served to gather the sound... but the rag tag studio in the back of the Starr piano factory in Richmond Indiana put out some of the most important jazz recordings in American musical history.**

**Today we sit in on some of those legendary recordings from Gennett records... on Riverwalk Jazz.**

**CUE: NIGHTSPELL UP TO END/APPLAUSE**

**CUE: SFX/HR**

**DAVID**

**It was a scene that played out in living rooms and parlors all across the country. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the home entertainment center was a boy... a girl... and a piano.**

**And by 1915 one of the biggest makers of pianos in America was a company based about 250 miles outside of Chicago on the Indiana - Ohio border.**

**The Starr Piano Company.**

**Sprawled out along a whitewater gorge outside Richmond Indiana, Starr piano employed 750 people in its 300,000 square foot factory. They supplied 15,000 pianos a year to stores scattered from coast to coast.**

**But storm clouds were gathering on the horizon and the entertainment landscape was about to change.**

**Thomas Edison's phonograph – invented in 1877 – and Emile Berliner's flat disc gramophone – invented a few years after that – were battling it out for superiority in a new musical marketplace.**

**Starr Piano's visionary owner and president, Henry Gennett, saw the gathering clouds and made a daring move. First, in a masterful compilation of 20<sup>th</sup> century legalese, he**

**amended the piano company's articles of incorporation to include "... every kind of instrument, machine, device, process and material necessary and suitable in and about the production, preservation, use and control of sound vibration for musical, commercial, and other economic purposes."**

**Then he mustered the resources of his piano company and went after the Goliath of the new recording industry, Victor.**

**In a series of landmark cases David beat Goliath at his own game. With this one move Henry Gennett transformed the fledgling recording industry, opening it to a level of competition, and an accompanying musical variety, previously unseen and unheard.**

**Suddenly, instead of a piano in the parlor, you could have a band like The New Orleans Rhythm Kings right there with you in your living room.**

**CUE: ECCENTRIC: W/JCJB**

**ON APPLAUSE**

**DAVID**

Back announce... **That was The Jim Cullum Jazz Band with Eccentric! We started out with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, in a recording made August 30, 1922 at the Gennett studios in Richmond, Indiana.**

**The New Orleans Rhythm Kings played in Chicago at a little place called The Friars' Inn.**

**A basement cabaret frequented by gangsters like Al Capone and Dion "The Florist" O'Banion, the Friar's Inn was also home to some of the hottest new music to hit town.**

**With Leon Roppolo on clarinet, Paul Mares on cornet, George Brunies on trombone and Elmer Schoebel on piano, this band of white musicians from New Orleans were an eccentric group of guys who adopted a whacked out stage presence that included band members serving up practical**

jokes - like covering each other's chairs in mustard oil – along with a rollicking style of jazz born in The Crescent City.

When Fred Wiggins, a store manager for Starr Piano, caught their act one night after work, it was just a hop, skip and a jump into the homes of America.

At about this same time, on the south side of Chicago, a band of African-American Creole musicians were tearing up places like The Dreamland, The Pekin and The Royal Gardens Cafe.

One long day, with a momentous train ride from Chicago to Richmond... and back... music from King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band found it's way onto home players all across America.

**CUE: CANAL STREET BLUES : JCJB**

**ON APPLAUSE**

**DAVID**

*Back announce...* That was *Canal Street Blues* from King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band performed here by The Jim Cullum Jazz Band.

This new home music machine even had the effect of propagating interest on the part of musicians in places far away from the established musical hubs of New York, New Orleans and Chicago. One day, at the first interracial recording session, while the New Orleans Rhythm Kings were teaming up with Crescent City piano virtuoso Jelly Roll Morton, another guy was in the studio tapping his foot and watching history being engraved into wax.

Bix Beiderbecke had been playing for some of the mob boys from Chicago over at The Stockton Club... a rowdy speakeasy on the side of the road just outside of nearby Hamilton Ohio... when he heard about the recordings being

**made at the Starr piano factory in Richmond and he wanted to check it out.**

**Standing off to the side of the room while The New Orleans Rhythm Kings made history recording with Jelly Roll Morton, Bix caught the recording bug, and he headed back to Hamilton to spread the word.**

**Just a few months later, on February 18, 1924, Bix grabbed Jimmy Hartwell, Al Grande, George Johnson, Dick Voynow, Min Leibbrook, Bob Gillette, and Vic Moore and hit the road.**

**The boys piled into a car, tied their instruments on the side, and headed for Richmond to lay down some of their own tracks in wax.**

**By the spring of 1924, the music of the Wolverine Orchestra was flowing out of players and into living rooms all over America.**



CUE:**MR. JELLY ROLL**: JCJB

ROLL INTO

CUE:**FIDGETY FEET**: JCJB

ON APPLAUSE

DAVID

*Back announce... Mr. Jelly Roll* from Jelly Roll Morton and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and *Fidgety Feet* from Bix Beiderbecke and The Wolverine Orchestra, both performed live at the Landing by the Jim Cullum Jazz Band.

Coming up we'll visit the factory in Richmond and sit in on some of those historical recording sessions in the little studio that could.

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citracal.com. That's c-i-t-r-A-c-a-l.**

**This is PRI, Public Radio International.**

**CUE: TAG: PIANO (20 SECONDS)**

**(PAUSE)**

**DAVID**

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Dick Hyman and Topsy Chapman perform classic jazz on  
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a catalog, the number to call is 1 800 41 RIVER. That's 1-  
800-41-R-I-V-E-R**

**(PAUSE)**

**Thanks for listening.**

**DAVID**

**Now back to our show.**

**SFX/HR – STREET SOUNDS/PIANOS**

**DAVID**

**Just off The Loop in Chicago, right around the corner from a little club called The Friar's Inn. Fred Wiggins held his post as manager of the Starr Piano store on South Wabash Avenue. As it happened, Fred was also the childhood friend of another Fred, Fred Gennett, youngest son of Henry Gennett and secretary of Gennett Records.**

**One evening, Fred closed up shop on Wabash and stepped around the corner to hear The New Orleans Rhythm Kings. After that... everything changed.**

**CUE: TIGER RAG: W/JCJB**

**ON APPLAUSE**

**DAVID**

Back announce... **That was The Jim Cullum Jazz Band with Tiger Rag!**

**Fred Wiggins was a sort of 1920s version of American Idol's Simon Cowell. He couldn't play an instrument or carry a tune, but he had a pretty good idea of what would sell.**

**When he heard the New Orleans Rhythm Kings that night in Chicago, he called up Richmond and insisted that his boss and friend come up to Chicago to hear this new sensation.**

**Fred Gennett was delighted with what he heard and since Gennett had only recently won their case against the Victor Recording Company, he was anxious to boost production and sales and he quickly had the New Orleans Rhythm Kings scheduled for a session in the Richmond studio on August 29, 1922.**

**The band arrived in Richmond early on a Tuesday morning, in a dusty, bumpy, over loaded car. Wiping the**

**sleep and dust from their eyes they made their way to the back of the huge piano factory to the makeshift studio.**

**The studio itself was about 125 by 30 feet, with monk's cloth draperies, and a large Mohawk rug that had once hung in Henry Gennett's house, hanging on the walls to deaden the sound. It was a makeshift system, but the sound dampening worked so well that once inside the studio, people standing just twenty feet apart had to yell at each other to be heard.**

**The studio was connected to a tiny control room where engineer Ezra Wickmeyer oversaw all the sessions through a double pane of glass.**

**There was no ventilation in the room and even in the winter the place was kept warm in order to keep the wax masters for recording soft and pliable.**

**On a summer day like August 29, it was like recording in a sauna.**

Nevertheless... in that one session engineer Wickmeyer and the boys of The Rhythm Kings laid down twenty takes of Rhythm Kings originals, covers, and commercial dance tunes and a few weeks later, the label released seven sides with the band billed as the Friars Society Orchestra to play off their connection to the Friars Inn.

CUE: FAREWELL BLUES: W/JCJB ONLY  
ON APPLAUSE

ROLL INTO

CUE: SONG: W/JCJB

DAVID

*Back announce...*

CUE: SONG: W/JCJB

ON APPLAUSE

DAVID

*Back Announce...*

**Performed here by The Jim Cullum Jazz Band. That's Jim Cullum on cornet, Ron Hockett on clarinet, Kenny Rupp on trombone, Howard Elkins on guitar and banjo, Jim Turner on piano, Michael Waskiewicz on drums and Don Mopsick on bass.**

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**This is PRI, Public Radio International.**

**CUE: TAG: PIANO (20 SECONDS)**

**(PAUSE)**

**DAVID**

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Thanks for listening.



**DAVID**

Now back to our show with The Jim Cullum Jazz Band

**CUE: SONG: W/JCJB**

**ON APPLAUSE**

**ROLL INTO**

**CUE: SONG: W/JCJB**

**ON APPLAUSE**

**DAVID**

*Back Announce...*

**CUE: SONG: W/JCJB**

**ON APPLAUSE**

**DAVID**

**Wrap up**

**CLOSER CREDIT: SONG: W/JCJB**

**ADD NEW FINAL CREDITS HERE:**