The institution of slavery had, of course, divided the nation, and on opposite sides in the Civil War were the states of Wisconsin and Texas, both of which sent troops into the bloody, decisive battle of Gettysburg. Little could the brave men of the Wisconsin 6th who defended or the determined Rebels of the Texas Regiments who assaulted Cemetery Ridge have suspected that one day, musicians of their two states would join to produce the harmonies of jazz that have depended so often on the blues form that was native to the Lone Star State yet was loved and played by men from such Wisconsin towns and cities as Fox Lake, Madison, Milwaukee, Waukesha, Brillion, Monroe, and Kenosha. Around the world, jazz has proven a force for the meeting of minds and the free exchange of musical ideas, whether through melancholy and fast-paced blues or the swinging, bopping, driving rhythms that have appealed to players and listeners in every corner of this country and those perhaps in every nation on earth.

By defeating the South in the Civil War, Wisconsin and the other Union states helped make possible in many ways the rise of blues, ragtime, and boogie-woogie, forms of black music whose origins have been traced in part to the migration of freed slaves to Texas. The railroad lines in East Texas provided employment for men who had been able to do little more than labor away relentlessly as sharecroppers on the same southern lands where they essentially remained in bondage during the post-Reconstruction. As Texas folklore scholar Alan Lomax has pointed out, more American music has referred to or been related to the railroad than any other form of musical inspiration. Certainly the railroad as a source of sound and sorrow is at the root of blues rhythms and lyrics and the chugging, swaying patterns of boogie woogie, as well as such a sophisticated jazz composition as Duke Ellington’s “Daybreak Express.” Songs with their constant reference to a honey or momma going away or a singer’s need to leave in the face of lost love are standard blues fare.

However, more important to the emergence of jazz was the fact that the railroad gave to blacks in Texas relatively more freedom to travel, to work at jobs that allowed for greater economic well being and the ability to purchase instruments, to hear radio and phonograph records of blues and the chugging, swaying patterns of boogie woogie, as well as such a sophisticated jazz composition as Duke Ellington’s “Daybreak Express.” Songs with their constant reference to a honey or momma going away or a singer’s need to leave in the face of lost love are standard blues fare.

As jazz critic Gunther Schuller has commented, it is surprising to discover the “diverse regions of the country” from which jazz musicians have hailed. It is especially surprising that such musicians, with differing geographical, political, social, religious, ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds, have been able to come together to perform a music that requires a very particular spirit, peculiar technical skills, and a sensitivity to and an appreciation for musical forms and traditions that owe their origins to conditions rarely endured by the musicians themselves. Few, if any, of the first black jazzmen, and certainly none of the early white jazzmen, had ever known the often inhuman servitude borne by those who sang the chants, spirituals, and blues that would form the basis of jazz from its beginnings right up to the present time.

The Wisconsin-Texas Jazz Nexus

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University's anthem, "The Eyes of Texas," and "Yankee Doodle Dandy," the latter quoted by the trombonist; jazz techniques like flatter tonguing by the cornetist and smears by the trombonist; and some swinging group improvisation.

The breaks in this piece are taken by cornetist, saxophonist, trombonist, and pianist, with each contributing a brief solo or a quote from another tune, and such breaks derive largely from the blues, since at the end of each line of verse when the blues man or woman is not singing, an instrument fills in the remaining beats in a bar with comments on what has been sung, which is the origin of jazz player Red Callender quotes from the same song, which struck me as either a strange coincidence or some type of connection between the notes in "Bugle Call Rag" and those in "Yankee Doodle Dandy." The musical link between the two pieces may be part of the explanation, but in fact on the first recording of "Bugle Call Rag," made in 1922 by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings (NORK), trombonist George Bruns quotes from "Yankee Doodle Dandy," and it is clear that much of this 1922 jazz version was copied by Jimmie's Joys the following year.

However, why would an advanced group such as the JATP in the same year of the first Bebop recording session (reportedly organized by Texas Budd Johnson), resort to quoting a rather corny flagwaving tune such as "Yankee Doodle Dandy"? It seems unlikely that Callender would have imitated the NORK recording, since so much early jazz tended to be rejected as out of date by later practicing musicians. However, this could be unfair to Callender, who may well have been aware of a tradition established by NORK and carried on by Jimmie's Joys.

In terms of the Wisconsin-Texas nexus, more to the point is the solo electric guitar work of Les Paul, who would later achieve his greatest fame in 1941, when he and guitarist Mary Ford on their version of "How High the Moon," which pioneered the use of overdubbing. Paul would prove to be a touring legend, but Callender, who was his contemporary, would continue to tour with his own group, the Red Callender All Stars, which included Benny Goodman on clarinet and the Rollini brothers, Adrian and Arthur, on bass and tenor sax, respectively, take their turns at soloing. Berigan only appears briefly as a soloist, whereas Teagarden returns for a full-blown chorus, before the side ends with his opening theme statement plus a few variations that show off his inimitably tossed-off lip turns. On "Riverboat Shuffle," Berigan can be heard ably leading the ensemble, but here again Teagarden enjoys the lion's share of the solos, demonstrating as he does his virtuoso handling of his horn.

A more impressive coupling of Berigan and Teagarden occurred five years later when they formed part of an All Star Band that consisted of Benny Goodman and Arthur Rollini. Here, on a piece entitled "Blue Lou," which is not really a blues but a very popular riff singer string number written by black saxophonist Edgar Sampson, Berigan solos first with some of his spectacular high register work, after which Big T follows with one of his powerhouse breaks full of his robust but always relaxed swing. Berigan then returns for a second solo with more of his skyscratching high notes. Both of these soloists were certainly virtuosos on their instruments and influential on all subsequent jazz musicians who aspired to mastery of the trumpet and trombone. No matter what state they came from, each had learned the art of jazz and could "talk" the same musical language that would become universally understood and admired.

In 1935, Berigan joined forces with another Texas-born jazzman, pianist Teddy Wilson of Austin, for a recording entitled simply "Blues in E-Flat." This piece is a classic blues with fine extended improvisations, first by Red Norvo on vibes, then Bunny Berigan on trumpet, followed by Cha Berry on tenor, and finally Teddy Wilson on piano. Almost ten years before the JATP live recording, this studio performance is an example of a mixed black and white group creating together beautifully and movingly thirty years before the advent of racial integration. Berigan proves on this piece that he possessed a true feeling for the blues and could express it through his impeccable control of his horn in every register. Likewise, Teddy Wilson, who rarely recorded the blues, demonstrates his deep identification with the form and its somber state of mind, even as he exhibits his piano artistry with its rippling runs and ringing tones. Both of these instrumentalists were better known for their renditions of pop songs, in Wilson's case when he worked with the Benny Goodman Trio and with singer Billie Holiday.

Berigan's most famous recording came in 1937, with his sitar version of "I Can't Get Started," which featured both his technically secure trumpet playing and his romantic vocal treat-ment of the song's fetching lyrics. A 1936 film clip with Benny singing and playing the trumpet on the tune "Until Today," with the Freddie Rich Orchestra, does not make the same impact as hearing his rendition of "I Can't Get Started," but it does furnish a close-up of the handsome young musician in action, only five years before his premature death at age 33. Teddy Wilson would live until 1986, recording widely, including a session with bebop giants Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie in 1945. However, the 1935 date with Berigan and Wilson stands as an early example of the superlative, sophisticated jazz playing of two musicians, one from a Wisconsin farming community and the other Texas-born and Tuskegee educated.

On the 1937 recording of Berigan and his orchestra performing "I Can't Get Started," star trombonist at the time was "the great Sonny Lee" of Houston, Texas, who played both lead and jazz trombone. Since this piece was a feature for the trumpet-leader, Lee did not take a solo, but he would on two other tunes recorded by the Berigan orchestra in the same year. On "The Prisoner's Song," Berigan opens with a type of wa-wa mute, and later solos without the mute, bending, rippin', and shaking his notes in a typical jazz style, as does Sonny Lee on trombone, whose open solo shows that he had been listening to his fellow Texan, the "Big T." Lee's entrance is assertive swing of the kind that Teagarden trademarked from the late 1920s, with Lee romping and riding, just as Teagarden did, and echoing the latter's patented lip turns and some of his flexibility on...
what, prior to Teagarden, had been considered a rather difficult instrument to manipulate. Also in 1937, the Berigan orchestra recorded “Mahogany Hall Stomp,” and again Lee takes a fine solo, although this time using a mute, which soothes his sound, even though it still maintains his swing and shows off his considerable technical skill.” Both of Lee’s solos demonstrate that he was a real pro, and obviously for this reason, he was spotlighted by the Wisconsin trombonist-leader in what at the time was one of the more popular swing-era orchestras. 

In 1936, before Sonny Lee joined the Berigan orchestra, he was a member of the first band—an eight-piece group—led by Woody Herman. On a number entitled “Take It Easy,” Lee plays an obligato to Woody’s singing of the pseudo blues lyric, with nice lip turns and a mellow sound, and then takes a short break toward the end of the song. A fuller example of Lee’s blues playing is found on the tune entitled “I’ve Had the Blues So Long,” where he works within a true blues groove. Here Herman again sings the lyrics and also takes up his clarinet for a few tasteful licks. On a piece entitled “Slappin’ the Bass,” Lee contributes a driving break on this up-tempo tune, with a driving groove. Here, once again, a Texan plays a central role on this first recording of a tune that ultimately sold five million copies, “one of the biggest big band monster hits ever.”

The trumpeter who soloed using a wa-wa mute with hand effects to produce some excellent growls and percussive accents is Horace “Steady” Nelson, who was born in Jefferson, Texas, in 1913, the same birth year as that of Woody Herman. Like much of Herman’s early material, “At the Woodchopper’s Ball” was built on a blues pattern, and in fact Herman’s outfit was known during this period as The Band That Plays the Blues. By this date, the Herman Herd was already a very swinging band, even before its more famous period after the war in 1945. The roaring open trumpet solo on “Big Wig in the Wigwam” is not identifiable. Also, the combination of black and Mexican-American musicians was another first for the band, with a later version of the Herd briefly including black alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges and Cuban trombonist Juan Tizol, both from the Ellington Orchestra. Another tune on which Bud Johnson performs admirably is entitled “It Must Be Jelly (’Cause Jam Don’t Shake Like That).” Although Herman and vocalist Frances Wayne sing the novelty lyrics for fun, Johnson’s tenor is not fooling around, as he once again digs in for some beautiful, serious jazz, filled with swooping phrasing, bent notes, and a conversational style, followed by Herman’s pure, penetrating tone on clarinet. Instrumentally, the contrasting sounds and approaches of the two musicians complement one another and make for a fully satisfying performance.

Next to “At the Woodchoppers’ Ball,” probably the most famous number Herman recorded was “Four Brothers,” a composition and arrangement by Texas multi-reed musician and composer Jimmy Giuffre of Dallas. Giuffre’s arrangement for three tenor saxophones and a baritone established an identifiable bebop-era sound for the Herman Herd, which continued to employ the same saxophone set-up for several decades to come. The first recording of “Four Brothers,” made in December 1947, featured the four brothers of the title, which refers to saxophonists Zoot Sims, Serge Chaloff (on baritone), Herbie Steward, and Stan Getz, who solo in turn and conclude the piece with cameos breaks. Giuffre was not a member of the Herd at the time of this recording but would appear as a tenor saxophonist in the Herman band during 1948 and 1949.

One tune recorded in July, 1949, is entitled “Really the Blues,” of which it has been observed that the piece “happens to be one of the few jazz compositions with a totally apt title. It is the blues, but spread out over sixteen bars instead of the usual twelve.” One of the trumpeters in the 1949 Herd was Shorty Rogers of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and it was through the association of Giuffre and Rogers as alumni of the Herman band that they later worked together in Los Angeles, recording under the name of Shorty Rogers and His Giants. In 1955, Rogers and Giuffre recorded a stirring quintet version of “Not Really the Blues,” with Giuffre soloing to wonderful effect on
Bunny Berigan, courtesy of CLASSICS RECORDS.

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Another Herman alumnus from Texas was bassist Harry Babasin of Dallas, who was in the Second Herman Herd of 1948, along with Giuffre and Rogers. Babasin participated in a recording session on May 12 that produced another version of Giuffre’s “Pee Wee Blues,” apparently written by his pianist, Nat Pierce.

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music on Niehaus's album marked by the clean lines and crisp execution of so much of the West Coast music of this period. paired with drummer Shelly Manne, Clark drives the group with a round, full tone quality, and on the blues entitled "Elbow Slip," he takes an extended solo that shows off his warm sound and flowing notes. The pairing of Clark and Guiffrée comes particularly on the tune entitled "Three of a Kind," a type of jazz fusion in which at one point the combination of just string bass and baritone sax together achieves a rich tonal quality. Without wishing to minimize the effect of different solo by Fort Worth native Clyde Hurley, some of the students that they responded so enthusiastically to the jazz that I played for them. On hearing Glenn Miller's "In the Mood," with the trumpet sounds were not necessarily regional in nature but merely the recognized "Yankee Doodle Dandy," since the student that I heard yell the title was a young man just down from where I was speaking. Robert Botello of the school's Fine Arts Department and Texas, but one young man on the front row yelled out "Yankee Doodle Dandy." I am also indebted to a student at the T exan Jazz word, regardless of instruments, backgrounds, or personal style. In listening to the jazz recordings discussed here, one cannot necessarily identify the players as either from Wisconsin or Texas. Perhaps with a musician such as Jack Teagarden, whose trombone sound was so particular to him and has been described as similar to a Texas drawl, one may recognize a regional intonation or technique. However, in making jazz musicians from these two regions of the country played the same notes, the same tunes, the same kind of syncopated rhythms, and with the same or at least a similar type of swing feel. If Texans learned more towards northward, this could be an identifying mark, as in the case of Buddy Johnson of Dallas. Yet as we have seen, Woody Herman and his early unit was billed as The Band That Plays the Blues, and Joop Visser even asserts that Herman had "...music that predated the 1945 "Caldonia" that the famous Third Herd recorded with such instrumental stars as trombonist Bill Harris and has play Chubby Jackson; and "Yarnell, Knowe, Knowe." Instead of those tunes that Nelson sings is included on The Woody Herman Story, although the 1945 "Caldonia" is. Robert Kriebel also credits Nelson with a vocal on "Rosetta." In the case of Budd Johnson of Dallas. Yet as we have seen, Woody Herman and his early unit was billed as The Band That Plays the Blues, and Joop Visser even asserts that Herman had "...music that predated the 1945 "Caldonia" that the famous Third Herd recorded with such instrumental stars as trombonist Bill Harris and has play Chubby Jackson; and "Yarnell, Knowe, Knowe." Instead of those tunes that Nelson sings is included on The Woody Herman Story, although the 1945 "Caldonia" is. Robert Kriebel also credits Nelson with a vocal on "Rosetta."