

The Balliette Concert Family Band – brass minstrels of Pennsylvania

Gavin Holman, 29 July 2020

Charles Henry Balliette and his wife Martha Minerva Elizabeth Smith (née Watson) had eight children, four girls followed by four boys. In the mid-1890's Charles formed a family quintet, with himself and his four daughters, which spent the next eight years performing in and around Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Charles was born on 8 August 1852 in Lewisburg, PA and died on 9 March 1919 after an illness of dropsy, in Carlisle. He was a first clarinetist in Sousa's Band at one time and was also employed in the Carlisle Manufacturing Company. His wife, Martha, was born on 24 September 1856 at Beech Creek, PA, and survived Charles by 20 years.

...THE...
BALLIETTE FAMILY
QUINTETTE



In Grand Vocal and Instrumental
POPULAR  **CONCERT**
 **EVERY ONE AN ARTIST** 

Hear This Gifted Family in a Repertoire of Musically Marvelous Solos,
Duets, Trios, Quartets and Quintettes, Executed with Wonderful
Skill Upon Clarinets, Cornets, Bariffones, Alto and Bass

ONE OF THE LEADING FEATURES IS THE
Imported - Austrian - Ocarina - Band
NEVER BEFORE HEARD IN AMERICA

A FEW FEATURES
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CHAS. H. BALLIETTE, In Pleasing Solos on Clarinet
MISS HOPE, Cornet and Soprano
MISS VESTA, Alto and Reciter
MISS VIOLA, Solo Baritone
MISS ALFARETTA, Profundo Bass

The brass instrumentalist sisters who made up the band were:

- Hope Amanda Balliett (Bb cornet) – born 19 January 1879 in Lock Haven, PA. Died January 1971 in Jenkintown, PA.



- Vesta Helen Balliette (Eb alto horn) – born 4 April 1883 in Steelton, PA. Died 12 July 1939 in Altoona, PA.



- Viola Balliette (Bb baritone horn) – born 24 March 1885 in Steelton, PA. Died in April 1973, in Washington, DC.



- Alfaretta T. Balliette (Bb bass) – born 5 October 1887 in Pennsylvania. Died 11 May 1928.



There were also four brothers who were born from 1888 to 1902. These did not play any part in the “professional” musical activities of the family.

The family lived at South Bedford Street, Carlisle in the 1890’s, moving to Steelton, PA, on 18 August 1898. They were noted as being from Wormleysburg in April 1899.



Balliette Concert
Family



Their recorded public performances date from November 1895 through to January 1903. In addition to their brass musical performances, they also pioneered the use of “modern” ocarinas in concert performances (imported from Austria – where Heinrich Fiehn was manufacturing 28 sizes of the instrument for export around the world).

Vesta married in 1901 and had a son, Harold, in 1902. Hope married her first husband in 1904. Viola and Alfaretta did not marry until the 1920’s. It is not known if they continued their music in any solo fashion after the family band ceased.



The Baillette girls, c. 1889

The known performances of the Balliette Concert Family Band are:

- Friday 8 November 1895 - they performed at the “Little Folks Entertainment” or “elephant concert” at the Bosler Hall, Carlisle, as a group, duos and solos, followed by a concert at Highspire on Saturday 9 November.
- Friday 22 November 1895 - performed in Steelton, under the auspices of St Mark’s Lutheran Church Choir

- Thursday 12 December 1895 - performed at Bosler Hall, Carlisle, with an admission price of 15¢
- February 1896 - performed at the “King’s Daughters’ Musicale” at Carlisle
- Friday 8 May 1896 - they gave a concert at the Methodist Episcopal Church, Carlisle, on behalf of the Epworth League
- Friday 15 May 1896 - *The Sentinel (Carlisle, PA)* – “Chas H. Balliette and his family, composed of the best musical talent, gave a grand musical entertainment in the Lutheran Sunday school room on last Saturday evening. This concert was one of the best ever given in this place. The youngest in the family was a buxom little girl of 9 years who plays the bass horn.”
- Thursday 30 July 1896 – the family performed at the Assembly at Williams’ Grove as part of the afternoon’s entertainment – with the following report “There is no family in the musical world that stands higher in the estimation of the public than the Baillette family - father and four daughters. Misses Hope, Vesta, Viola and Alfaretta. As vocalists and instrumentalists this family stands in the forefront. The girls are aged from 9 to 17 years, and their work is considered marvelous by all who have heard them. A failure to hear these people is to miss a rich and rare musical treat.”
- Saturday 29 August 1896 – performed at Middlesex, Pennsylvania
- Saturday 19 September 1896 – gave a concert at Barnitz Church, admission 10¢ and 15¢
- Friday 25 September 1896 – gave a concert at Newville Methodist Church
- Thursday 22 October 1896 – gave a concert at the Knights of Malta Room, Rosedale Building, Chambersburg, under the auspices of the “Mutual Helpers”. Tickets 25¢, children 10¢
- Saturday 7 November 1896 – performed as part of the entertainment at the Carlisle Y.M.C.A.
- Thursday 19 November – concert at the band hall in Boiling Springs
- Friday 25 December 1896 – “The Balliette family, of Carlisle, rendered an excellent entertainment at the Ludwig Methodist of Bainbridge on Christmas Night. A vast audience greeted the family, which speaks very well for them as it was their second performance in the same church during the year. The large auditorium was crowded, and the adjoining lecture room being thrown open was more than half filled. After playing for an hour and a half they were about to close the evening when the audience cried more! more! and after another half hour the audience was greeted with the final. Mr. Baillette has a wonderful family. The sweet music of the little girls and their still sweeter faces have won the appreciation of the town. Miss Vesta also in recitation was exceptionally good.”
- Friday 5 February 1897 – concert at New Kingston
- Thursday 4 March 1897 – concert at the Pomfret Street Allison Methodist Episcopal Church, Carlisle
- Friday 9 April 1897 – concert at the Allison Methodist Episcopal lecture room, Carlisle
- Saturday 26 June 1897 – concert at the opening of the Cave Hill Park Pavilion, Carlisle, in place of the Union Band which could not attend
- In July 1897, Hope Balliette, returned home from Altoona, to take part in the family’s concert at Gettysburg

- Monday 6 September 1897 - *The Sentinel (Carlisle, PA)* – “A young daughter of Chas H. Balliette, of the famous Balliette family, accidentally fell off the boat landing at the creek on Saturday afternoon, but was rescued by an older sister who happened to be nearby.”
- Friday 15 October 1897 – performed at St Paul’s Lutheran Church, Carlisle, tickets 15¢
- Friday 12 November 1897 – concert at Steelton
- Saturday 20 November, and through the following week – various concerts in Adams County, Pennsylvania (around Gettysburg)
- Thursday 6 January 1898 – concert at the Mount Zion Union Church, Carlisle, admission 10¢
- Sunday 4 September 1898 – performed in the service at the Epworth League of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, Harrisburg
- Sunday 11 September 1898 – performed in the service at the Methodist Episcopal Church, Harrisburg
- Thursday 15 September 1898 – performed at St John’s Lutheran Church, Pine and Second Streets, Harrisburg
- Monday 26th September – gave concert at St John’s Lutheran Church, Harrisburg
- Friday 25th September – provided music at the literary evening of the Epworth League at the First Methodist Episcopal Church, Harrisburg
- 7 January 1899 – performed at the Steelton Y.M.C.A.
- Thursday 2 February 1899 – performed as part of the entertainments for the first anniversary of the Gem Council, No. 98, O.U.A.M., in the G.A.R. Hall, Front Street, Harrisburg
- Tuesday 14 February 1899 – concert in Middletown
- Saturday 25 February 1899 – concert at the Second Church of God, South Front Street, Harrisburg
- Wednesday 1 March 1899 – concert at Hocker’s Hall, Highspire, under the auspices of the Highspire Lutheran Church
- Tuesday 7 March 1899 – concert at the Jr. O.A.U.M. Hall, Harrisburg
- Saturday 25 March 1899 – concert at the Bainbridge Methodist Episcopal Church
- Tuesday 4 April 1899 – concert at the Mount Vernon Council Jr. O.A.U.M. Hall, 1312 Derry Street, Harrisburg
- Thursday 6 April 1899 – concert at the Methodist Episcopal Church, Harrisburg
- Friday 7 April 1899 – concert at the Methodist Episcopal Church, Halifax, which included some pieces on a new set of imported Austrian ocarinas
- Monday 24 April 1899 – concert at the Grace United Evangelical Church, Millersburg
- Thursday 22 June 1899 – concert at the Harrisburg Baptist Picnic at Williams Grove
- Saturday 24 June 1899 - Played at a cake-walk at New Cumberland
- Thursday 27 July 1899 – performed at the annual “day in the woods” at Williams Grove of the P.R.R.Y.M.C.A.
- Friday 11 August 1899 – performed at the picnic at Williams Grove for the Church of God, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches
- Saturday 2 September 1899 - Performed for Klopp’s Sunday School Picnic at Valentine J. Ulrich’s Beautiful Grove at Hamlin, PA

- Monday 4 September 1899 – performed at a reception to welcome the return of Rev. Dr. I.W. Bagley at the First Baptist Church, Harrisburg
- Friday 6 October 1899 – gave a Grand Musicales concert at the Baltimore “One Price” Store, 304-306 Market Street, Harrisburg
- Monday 30 October 1899 – concert at the Jr. O.A.U.M. Hall, Oberlin
- Thursday 23 November 1899 - played at the Trindle Springs Church
- Thursday 15 February 1900 – concert at the Literary Hall, Harrisburg
- Thursday 22 March 1900 – concert at the Good Will Fire Company Hall
- Thursday 28 June 1900 – accompanied the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and their families on their outing from Harrisburg to Mont Alto, in eight coaches
- Wednesday 4 July 1900 – took part, with the Bloserveville Band, in the celebration parade at Newville (for which they received \$7.60)
- Saturday 25 August 1900 – provided music at the Mt Nebo Union picnic at Cameron’s Grove, near Mt Nebo
- Saturday 29 September 1900 – concert at the Odd Fellows Hall, Mt Holly Springs
- Saturday 13 October 1900 – participated in a concert at the Y.M.C.A., Carlisle
- Thursday 25 October 1900 – concert at Watt’s school house, Carlisle
- Saturday 3 November 1900 – two concerts at the Salvation Army headquarters, Market House Hall, Verbeke Street, Harrisburg
- Thursday 15 November 1900 – concert at Reservoir Hill
- Thursday 22 November 1900 – concert at the Pomfret Street Allison Methodist Episcopal Church, Carlisle
- Thursday 20 December 1900 – concert at the Pomfret Street Allison Methodist Episcopal Church, Carlisle
- Friday 21 December 1900 – concert at Bowmansdale
- Saturday 26 January 1901 – concert at the Empire Hall, Carlisle
- Saturday 9 February 1901 – concert at Shepherdstown
- Friday 22 March 1901 - played at the Evangelical Church, Carlisle
- Saturday 30 March 1901 – participated in the entertainment at the Edith Rebekah, Carlisle
- Saturday 6 April 1901 – gave concert in the Ladies’ Waiting Room at Plank’s Store, Carlisle
- Saturday 17 August 1901 – concert at a picnic and festival at Idaville
- Friday 23 August 1901 – left Harrisburg en route to Buffalo, New York to provide music for concerts on the midway at the Pan-American Exposition, through to November 1901, whence they would leave on a tour through Canada
- Saturday 7 September 1901 – concert at Mount Zion Church, Littlestown, PA
- Friday 22 November 1901 – concert at the Reformed Church, Littlestown, PA
- Friday 5 September 1902 – still reported as performing locally to Carlisle
- Wednesday 14 January 1903 – performed at a surprise party at the home of A.L. Bierbower, in North Middletown