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### HOOLEY: GLOUCESTER'S OWN JAZZ TRUMPETER, SYLVESTER AHOLA LECTURE TRANSCRIPT

<b>Speaker:</b>	Dick Hill
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#### Video Description

In this program held at the Cape Ann Historical Museum, art professor and historical jazz collector Dick Hill, who hails from England, speaks about the life of Gloucester native Sylvester Ahola (1902-1995), a legendary trumpeter who played with many notable jazz bands in both the U.S. and England in the early 1900s. Drawing upon research for his book, *Sylvester Ahola: The Gloucester Gabriel*, Hill recounts the many amusing and amazing stories told to him by Ahola about his playing days and the people he worked with, including such greats as legendary cornetist Bix Beiderbecke. To punctuate his narrative, Hill plays tunes from several popular jazz records made by Ahola over the course of his career. Ahola spent his retirement years back in his beloved Gloucester where he continued to share his talent locally for the entertainment and enrichment of those around him.

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## Subject list

Paul Specht Band	“Static Strut”
Rhythmic Eight	“There’s a Cradle in Caroline”
Ambrose Band	“I Ain’t Got Nobody”
Rhythm Maniacs	“Rhapsody in Rhythm”
Fred Allen Show	“Somewhere a Voice Is Calling”
Savoy Hotel	“That’s a Plenty”
May Fair Hotel	“Perfection Polka”
Bix Beiderbecke	“In the Moonlight”
Frank Ward	“Love, Your Magic Spell Is Everywhere”
<i>Melody Maker</i>	Jazz Age
<i>Kalevala</i>	Dick Hill
<i>Sylvester Ahola: The Gloucester Gabriel</i>	

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## Transcript

Harold Bell 0:29

Good afternoon, everybody. I think it’s fantastic that we have an engineer here. It’s probably what we’ve needed for a long time. Actually, this is Mr. Dick Hill, who is over here from England, Suffolk, England, because he has just written a book on Sylvester Ahola. It will be published momentarily, if it hasn't been already been published?

Dick Hill 1:03

It’s on its way.

Harold Bell 1:04

It’s on its way. He has come over from his home in England five or six times already, apparently enjoys Cape Ann, and would like to live here, like to enjoy it in the same way most of the rest of us do. As you all know, there are many, many distinguished people who live here on Cape Ann, and we seem to take them for granted. Sylvester “Hooley” Ahola is certainly one of the many distinguished people who live here, have been here over the years, we have accepted him, but none of us have written a book about him, and it took somebody from England to do it. We’ve had our own experiences with Sylvester Ahola.

2:00

Our curator here in talking to Saima on the phone and who then put Sylvester on, got a fanfare from him, and she has been walking on clouds ever since, she just loved it. I remember, some years ago now, Saima and I go back a long while, we were in a public speaking class together. She just reminded me that I probably ought to have another class. The [?], [?] and his wife, lived across the quarry from the Aholas, and [?] occasionally would have a cocktail party on his side

of the quarry. And it was always very interesting. But the thing that really made the evening a complete success was when Sylvester would come up from his house and play on his side of the quarry.

3:14

And we all stopped drinking, we all stopped talking, and just listened, and it was magnificent. The other incident I remember about Sylvester, this was the early days of the Cape Ann Symphony, and I'm not a musician and I don't pretend to be, but I was part of it. And the musicians were really struggling to pull it all together and to make it alive. And they were having a lot of enjoyment in the process, but didn't feel as though they were on quite the level they should be. And at one concert Sylvester played a solo, and the audience loved it, and the orchestra loved it. And they were never quite the same after that, they had reached a new level, and went on from there. And that must have been 30 years ago at least, and the orchestra's still going strong, and I think Sylvester had a strong influence on that.

4:21

But now, let me tell you a little bit about Mr. Dick Hill. Dick Hill is an artist. He's had a one-man exhibition in England. He is now teaching in Colchester, Essex, and is Head of Faculty for Creative and Aesthetic Areas. He is a collector of jazz 78s. Those are records?

Dick Hill 4:59

Yes

Harold Bell 5:03

And he's tried to limit the number of these jazz 78s to the 3500 discs that he has. He feels that any more might be too many. The name of Mr. Hill's biography of Hooley Aloha is *Sylvester Ahola: Gloucester Gabriel* [sic]. The title of this talk today, "Hooley: Gloucester's Own Jazz Trumpeter." Mr. Dick Hill!

Dick Hill 5:55

This isn't an advert for [?] or anything. I may occasionally just need to slip one in my mouth, I've got this terrible head cold. That's no excuse for me not being able to talk to you today. But to be honest, I felt very, very humbled when I was asked, or told, by Saima that when I came over for my holiday, I will be doing a talk, I had visions of a hall with perhaps six or seven people here, at the most. I didn't realize how important Sylvester is to people around, and looking around here, I can see old friends I've seen before. And I also realized perhaps, that, not so in England, here in America, you hold on to your heritage, you have a close knit community, and things that happen to people around are very important. And it's nice to feel that there is a family on the Cape who look out for their own. Let's start—if anyone can't hear me, could you please say so, because I do speak softly. But hopefully with the aid of technology, I can speak up a little bit more. It's not always possible for each of us to do what we want in life by trying to use our talents to earn a living. For some who succeed, we say, "They were lucky, they had a

good break.” And there is often a certain [?], perhaps a tinge of a little jealousy, or that sort of failing, these people have got.

7:38

And if we aim not to be necessarily the best in the world, but to be the best that we can, then we've achieved something. Today, I want to talk about one man who achieved not only being the best that he could be, but also arguably the best trumpet player in the world. Sylvester is 90 in May. And I'm going to find it pretty difficult to cram those 90 years into one hour. So Sylvester, I know that you're going to be watching this talk on video later. Please forgive anything—or everything—I may leave out, if it was important, but I made that decision, during my talk. In England, we have a wonderful institution on the radio called “Desert Island Discs.” Famous people are asked to select their eight favorite records to take with them on a desert island.

8:41

And they talk about their lives and what they've done and so forth. I'm going to try the same format today and talk about Sylvester. And illustrate it with just 7 or 8 tunes that I think are very, very important. Hooley was born on May 24, 1902, in Lanesville, second son of Finnish immigrants, who owned a few cows, and brought up Sylvester on plain homemade food, Bible readings and a great deal of common sense. The strong Finnish community, which like many other settled ethnic groups in Massachusetts, provided Hooley with a strong musical environment. His career in music began when he was six years old, and he learned the rudiments of snare drumming from his sister's boyfriend. He progressed to a homemade bugle out of a garden hose and a funnel, and his sister, who was acting kind towards him, later bought him a \$10 B flat coronet from Hanover Street—can't remember the name of it—anyway, in his early teens, he was surrounded by local marching bands of all different cultures, celebrating important days—this is festivals, military battles, and apparently even American Civil War Veterans would dress up, but I don't want to go into that, being British.

10:18

Hooley rehearsed every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with the Lanesville Working Men's Band, and every Sunday with the Waino Band, and rehearsals were taken very, very seriously. His first musical engagement as a musician came when he was still in his early teens as a coronet player for a traveling band, which was playing at the Olympia Theatre in Gloucester, providing the accompanying music to the silent movie, *The Queen of Sheba*. And Hooley, unable to transpose the musical scores, had two coronets, one pitched in A and the other in B flat, thus being able to cover the requirements of the job. His efforts impressed the leader of the band, who suggested Hooley study music in Boston.

11:18

And so Hooley became a pupil of Walter Smith, a well-respected and excellent teacher. And it is to Smith's credit that he was able to develop Hooley's lip or embouchure, technical proficiency,

and sight reading skills to such an extent that when Hooley left after three years, he was sufficiently prepared to become a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

11:43

Or as Hooley would say, "I was all set become a longhair." However, events caused Hooley to choose another path. Hoagy Carmichael expressed it well in his autobiography, *The Stardust Road*, "The First World War had been fought, and in the backwash, conventions had tumbled. There was rebellion then against the accepted, the proper, and the old." And so the growth of the record industry and dancing across America led to many, many musicians, good and bad, preparing to follow a career in one of the hundreds of dance bands that flourished right across America.

12:31

And along came jazz. I'm a jazz collector, and I thought the other day, "What is jazz? I don't really know." There's all sorts of jazz—modern jazz, traditional jazz, Dixieland jazz. What is it about American music that we call jazz that is so soulful? Hooley listened to early jazz records and began to do a little work with bands in Gloucester. But by his own admittance, he "didn't really know what was going on, but my formal training helped me through."

13:16

"I did lots of band work, and concerts, Italian and French marches, just for dancing, no jazz at all." He played with Brazil's Blue Band, Marian Chase's orchestra, and it wasn't long before he was offered the first trumpet chair for the band led by local musician Frank Ward, who had the best modern territory band in New England, based in Beverly. A record session followed in Framingham, Massachusetts, and the band began to get noticed. They even went to New York to try out a recording session. They didn't make it.

13:54

Hooley also was becoming noticed. After three years with Frank Ward, Hooley left to join a band led by banjoist Lou Calabrese, but for only the summer. The promotion of dance bands countrywide involved many tours by top New York based bands, and on one particular occasion, the famous Paul Specht Band was hired to do a one-night stand in a battle of music with Lou Calabrese's band. The result was that Hooley was hired for the Paul Specht Band based in New York, and so started a hectic life of recordings, vaudeville shows, radios and broadcasts. One of the most notable records from this period is "Static Strut," written by his friend and pianist in the band, Phil Wall. Now, as some of you might know, Hooley was a great radio ham and was able to listen in to many, many other radio operators around the country, and was very important across the Cape in transmitting early messages and Morse and so on.

15:07

On this particular record, "Static Strut," he persuaded Phil Wall of the joys of being a radio ham, and Phil was so taken, that he decided to actually compose a piece of music in terms of static strut, static based on static in the atmosphere. And so on the record, Hooley is actually heard

imitating a spark transmitter on his trumpet, and he plays “Q-R-N” which means “static is strong.”

15:51 – 18:42

[Music playing]

18:44

Now, just now, I posed the question, “What is jazz?” And to me it's not necessarily the New Orleans sort of Dixieland jazz with about six people all playing different tunes at the same time. To me, I am what is called a “hot record” collector. I look for music in bands when it's “hot solos,” 16 to 32 bars of trumpet or trombone, amongst two trumpets, a trombone, three saxes, perhaps a violin, a piano, a guitar or banjo, brass bass and drums. And it is that format that quite a few people, certainly in England and America I know, regard themselves as jazz collectors.

19:32

So Hooley then in 1926, first trumpet with the Paul Specht Band. Unusual, because not only was he first trumpet, he played all the jazz solos as well. That was something that followed throughout his life—he was so good that he could do both. Most musicians who had the first trumpet parts never get to play the jazz, they're the straight lead only. He could lead and take the jazz solos, and that's important. The band travelled to England in 1926 and played at the Royal Palace Hotel in London. The *Melody Maker* in London, commented, “Paul Specht, with his famous combination, has created a great success in London. With his band, he is due to remain in England for about a month, after which he proceeds to Switzerland and Germany prior to returning to America.” Now to say that Hooley was naïve—I'm sure Saima won't mind me saying this—but when they arrived in Southampton, the band traveled to London by train.

20:40

And there are lots of advertising boardings over there, blue advertising boardings, which is similar to the town signs over here in America. And Hooley looked out the window and saw one sign saying “Bovril.” And turned to the rest of the band and said, “Hey, guys, we're going through the town of Bovril.” Which “Bovril” is just a beef stew, it's made out of a sort of a concentrate in England. He couldn't understand how they were going on and on through the town of Bovril until they reached London.

21:19

Hooley was determined to return to England at some time. Even when he was younger, much younger, he decided to go to London. We don't know why. He just decided he was going to. And he and his fiancé Saima discussed plans after they were married January 3 [sic], 1927, at the Little Church Around the Corner in New York.

21:44

Hooley left the Specht band to join the California Ramblers, a very famous dance band, then going on to Peter van Steeden's band, before perhaps joining the greatest band ever, the New Yorkers Band, with the legendary Bix Beiderbecke on coronet. An all-star cast of musicians. The respect that Hooley had for Bix was reciprocated when Bix confessed that he wished that he could play like Hooley in the mastering of the technical command of the instrument. One can only speculate on the paths each might have taken had they had time to learn from each other. But it was not to be. Hooley certainly learned from Bix as is evident on the recording, "There's a Cradle in Caroline," by the British band that came over later called the Rhythmic Eight. And Hooley says, "My trumpet playing is pitched between the styles of Bix Beiderbecke and Red Nichols. I wanted that pure tone and nice vibrato." So, Rhythmic Eight, "[There's a] Cradle in Caroline."

22:03 – 26:02

[Music playing]

26:09

So the great alto and baritone on that record was done by another American, Perley Breed. And another American was playing clarinet on that as well, so it's almost an Anglo-American reliance band. But to have that playing in 1928 was incredible.

26:26

Hooley played for several more bands and made some more records in New York. Hooley heard from musicians that the band leader from the Savoy in England was looking for a first trumpet player and was putting a band together. Hooley was recommended. And the leader, Reg Batten, was supposed to hear Hooley play, but didn't, but Hooley signed the contract anyway. And it wasn't long before he and Saima said their goodbyes to America, sailed aboard the "Berengaria" for England, London, and the Savoy Hotel. The Savoy Hotel was—and still is—one of the most prestigious venues in London. Not now the music, of course, but as a hotel. There were three bands playing there alternating, Fred Elizalde's Band, the Savoy Orpheans, and the Gypsy Band, and Hooley was duly advised to go over, and so they went.

27:27

We know how jazz started in New Orleans, spread up the Mississippi to Chicago and New York. And it somehow seems that Boston gets left out of things. Not so. A great number of musicians from Massachusetts are responsible for the spread of jazz and dance music to England. The majority of musicians passing through the bands of the Savoy Hotel in London were American, and it started as early as 1924, and some say for 10 to 12 years. It's something that is not often written about. New York's tops. But Massachusetts, having close ties with England, produced some of the greatest jazz contacts that do often get neglected.

28:21

It was in London, so in England, that Hooley first noticed class distinction, something he'd never come across before. He quotes, "We never met any of the wives of other musicians, especially

when we went to eat in the restaurant. And the musicians, when they came to work, they would always go in the side entrance. I used to go straight in through the front door, carrying my trumpet case. Sometimes I'd be wearing galoshes or rubbers, and a green slicker raincoat. They didn't like it. But they never said anything." A very brief example.

29:04

Hooley was very busy off the bandstand doing a great deal of session work. The contract with the Savoy Orpheans said that he had to play on certain occasions, every night. But he could make as many recordings and freelance session work in England as he wanted to. This was something he did with great gusto. I have an example of his jazz style, this Rhythmic Eight recording, "I Ain't Got Nobody" of which he says, "That was my Bix style, my debt to him. But I had my little joke in there. I changed to my band-in-the-park style. And I put a few things in there. The rest of the band noticed and smiled. It was a musician's joke." Gentleman or not, I'm sure you'll appreciate the trumpet playing on this, especially on the coda where he holds one note for 8 bars.

30:13 – 33:11

[Music playing]

33:22

A little musical interlude now. I've asked my friend here, Scott Philbrick, who's a great trumpet player, to actually play a written part that Hooley was asked to do for the *Melody Maker*, the great trade magazine in England. And they did these sort of hot transcriptions, for trumpet, xylophone, sax, triangles or strings. And Hooley was asked to write a particular solo for "I Ain't Got Nobody." We just happen to have the band part here. So Scott, just—after you, Scott!

Scott Philbrick 34:00

I'm not going to play the whole thing. I thought, when Dick had mentioned about that Hooley did a little homage to Bix in the beginning, and then went to his "concert in the park," and I thought I'd just play the Bix part, stop, and do it again, and then you'll hear the difference when he breaks it. This will sound nothing like Hooley, believe me.

34:23 – 34:30

[Trumpet solo]

34:31

Now that was very, very much like a Beiderbecke type of solo, bouncing back and forth. Then he got a little carried away inside the break of the guys in the band, which he did very nicely.

34:44 – 34:50

[Trumpet solo]

34:54



Just an idea of the man's sense of humor, he did that to break up the band, which he did, I'm sure. And as he told us later on, if he'd known that people were going to hear that 50 years later, listening to the solo, he would have played the thing straight.

Dick Hill 35:20

I'd like to give a quote here from Hoagy Carmichael, "It began in New Orleans, where the black man became in time a little lighter, and the white man often a little darker." I'd be shocked to say that now. But, I think it's quite important that we understand that all musicians learn from each other, whether white or black, and I'm sure that, what with records and so on, and bands travelling, everybody learned from everybody else. Louis Armstrong learned from Bix, and so on.

35:55

The other great point in Hooley's time, apart from being in England was when he was back with the Frank Ward Band earlier on in his life, and as a debt to Frank Ward, he actually recorded with a band called Ray Starita's Ambassador's Band in London, a tune called "Rhapsody in Rhythm," which was Frank Ward's great opus. Frank Ward, Hooley acknowledged the debt to Frank Ward, he owes his early start in jazz, dance band music. Anyway, this is Hooley's tribute to Frank Ward, playing this composition, "Rhapsody in Rhythm."

36:51 – 39:26

[Music playing]

39:39

Hooley was anonymous, at least to the record-buying public. In those days, you know, you didn't have your name put out on records, it was just the band leader's name. No one knew who musicians were on any record.

39:49

They were the session men who divided their time between their legitimate evening engagements in any one of London's top West End hotels and the mid-morning or early afternoon calls as a freelance at the recording studio. However, Hooley did manage to get his name on a few records by making some classical or "longhair" trumpet surveys. In the best British tradition of brass band and military music, the records are labeled as coronet solos, but were in fact played on the trumpet, an instrument with far too many associations with jazz and modern dance music.

40:30

To many hardened jazz and dance fan enthusiasts, Hooley's honest revelations may come as something of a shock. "The best things that I ever did were the triple-tongued trumpet solos on that cold October day. I wore a felt hat, an overcoat, and kid gloves. The engineers plugged a little heater into the footlights to give us some warmth, but it had no effect in such a large place. The musicians took off their overcoats, but I kept mine on. And for the master recording,

I took off my right-hand glove only, just for fingering on the trumpet. I remember that “Somewhere a Voice Is Calling” as the best record that I ever did. But today, you couldn't give these records away with a box of cracker jacks!”

42:08 – 44:39

[Music playing]

44:57

So whenever I hear that now, I have this vision of [?], it's amazing.

Hooley joined the Ambrose Band at the May Fair Hotel. And I was fortunate to go and see their files, and it was and still is a very, very famous hotel. You can get a suite there for a thousand pounds a night, which is 15-1600 dollars, just for one night. It still has that sort of rich quality about it.

45:15

And it was a tough time, he was doing broadcasts on the radio, he was making records with Ambrose and with other bands, and it's a nice, interesting sort of feel to what London was like that Hooley records. The long, hard evening work in the May Fair was also occasionally punctuated by moments of light relief, which Hooley recalls with some humor, “I remember the May Fair when the fog would often come into the dining room. And on the bandstand, we could only see half the audience. It didn't happen that often. But those would be what they called the pea-soupers, really thick fog. It rained almost every day.”

46:01

“And those buses that came down Tottenham Court Road were nose to tail, a constant stream, often with men going in front of the buses with torches, trying to find the way in the fog. When I think of all those fumes I breathed in, it was no wonder that I get a touch of bronchitis occasionally. They used to amuse us Americans if the sun came out for a few hours in London. It would make the headlines in the newspapers. I used to go to the movies to see the Hollywood pictures, to see the contrast between sunlight and shadows.”

46:45

“After I'd finished work at the May Fair, Saima used to wait for me outside of the Embassy Club, where Joe Orlando's wife would be waiting for her husband. And they'd see me walking from the May Fair, along Piccadilly, at just after two o'clock in the morning, with my trumpet case. And there, ladies of the night, the street walkers, plying their trade, would stop and walk along with me—they never gave up. I used to talk to them.” (So he says.)

47:19

“And there was a bend in the road before the Ritz Hotel, and the Piccadilly, and Saima would see me walking along with these exotic ladies of the evening. They were all from foreign countries, all kinds of nationals, and some were Egyptians and so on. They were the nighthawks that worked the late shift, waiting for customers, with top hats and tails, coming out of the

Berkeley. Occasionally, there would be a fight on one of the traffic islands in the middle of the street, with two of the girls tearing each other's hair out. This happened quite a few times, and usually a policeman would be refereeing the fight. But once when I came by, there was Leo Kahn, the pianist, in charge of the fight, and the girls were really using foul language. I'll never forget it."

48:11

I used to think there was two kinds of music, jazz and the rest. Hooley made a bit of a believer out of me, that there are two kinds of music, good and bad. It doesn't matter what else, it's good and bad. And for Hooley to be able to do jazz service, and then in the next breath to do something like a polka or a waltz, a rhumba, a tango, epitomizes to me what a musician should be about. You have your ideals, but you have a job to do, and he likes to call himself a business trumpeter.

48:49

And I'd like to play a tune now. One, for the lovely, jazzy side of the pickup group called The Rhythm Maniacs, who seem to be enjoying themselves so much, in a tune called "That's a Plenty," 1929, which I don't think there were many bands in the world doing this number with such [?].

49:23 – 52:39

[Music playing]

52:45

And then there's the other Hooley, the one who plays "Perfection Polka" in the same breath. That wasn't it.

53:11 – 56:16

[Music playing]

56:23

I think you can see why it's called perfection, I mean, he didn't ruin many records at all. Every note just sings out exactly right. But at 1930, records were reaching England from America, in a special new edition called Parlophone "hot rhythm style." And the first one that was issued was a number called "West End Blues" by Louis Armstrong, and it caused many trumpet players, probably on both sides of the Atlantic, to retire prematurely after hearing such virtuosity and bravado at the opening cadenza. Hooley remembers hearing the record in England, and deciding to have a go himself, not doing West End blues, but with a pick up band called The Night Club Kings. A band organized by Ray Noble. And two tracks, quite rare. This one's called "In the Moonlight."

57:31 – 1:00:40

[Music playing]

1:00:47

The clarinet player on that was American Danny Polo who, with Hooley, worked together on the Ambrose Band and graced many, many recordings. Hooley was working at phenomenal rates. I think in November, 1929, he made about 30 record sessions, as well as taking on full time employment with the May Fair in the evenings. And sometimes he was doing two sessions a day in different places. Perhaps one in Sheffield in Chelsea, perhaps somewhere else in Paddington or somewhere. He was travelling about quite a lot, and recording with, not just bands, but Gracie Fields, Noel Coward, Paul Robeson. In fact, any and every singer, even Sophie Tucker, who ever went and recorded in England. There are hundreds of records on which he is in the accompanying band. And it wasn't until last week, I found another one. The list goes on and on and on. I wonder if we'll ever fully know how many records he really is on.

1:01:50

Hooley's professionalism is perhaps best typified by this anecdote with the [?]. "It was the only time that I was late for a recording session. I had an arrangement that the housekeeper who lived on the ground floor of my apartment would ring the front doorbell at a certain time to wake me up. I also had the telephone operator phone, as a secondary system. And finally, an alarm clock, as a last resort. All three systems failed. So on that morning, I'm sound asleep, sawing through a giant redwood, and the phone rang. It was Decca studios. Where are you? I said, sorry, but I overslept. But I'll get a taxi and be right there. In those days, I thought the cabs were rather old fashioned, usually driven by a very old man. This taxi driver was no exception, and it was winter. Very cold. And we were driving along to Buckingham Palace—by Buckingham Palace—there was ice on the road, but fortunately, not much traffic. And we skidded on the ice and spun around three times, but no accident. I didn't say anything. He didn't say anything. Not a word passed between us. He was unflappable."

1:03:17

And he just straightened the vehicle, pointed in the right direction, and carried on until we reached Chenil Gallery studios. So I rushed inside, and the band had already made a balance without me. I always kept my trumpet with me tuned to full forte, and the pianos were the same in all the studios. And so I didn't even tune up, as there was no time. So I blew cold, read the tune at sight, and we made a master. The tune was "Love, Your Magic [sic] Spell Is Everywhere," and it had a very tricky ending on C sharp. We did seven numbers that day, but I'll never forget our first one, done in cold."

1:04:10 – 1:06:48

[Music playing]

1:06:56

There was at one time a thing called British fair play. In Hooley's case, it didn't happen. He was taking too much work from the British musicians. He was making so many records that there crept in a little jealousy amongst other trumpeters. And unfortunately a petition was drawn up

by some musicians and Hooley's freelance recording sessions were curtailed by the Ministry of Labor. He stayed for another year playing on records only with the Ambrose band. And as he said in February, March, the boom came down, no more records were made.

1:07:42

The following year, Saima and Hooley said goodbye to England. And to many people, the departure marked the end of a musical era, on both sides of the Atlantic. The Depression was just around the corner, or it had started, and Hooley was anxious to find work back in America. And he was in the curious position of being almost stateless, certainly alien, undesirable, having been ejected by the deliberations and scheming of one group of musicians in England, to find himself almost excluded from contract work by a similar group in his own country. However, his reputation still carried the same authority, and many band leaders were anxious to secure his services. Peter van Steeden, Jacques Renard, even the Casa Loma Orchestra who asked him to go on tour, but he wouldn't, Vincent Lopez, who had offered him work.

1:08:45

And Hooley started doing a lot of radio work. And I suppose we could say that the thirties were the era of the radio. So Hooley worked for NBC and CBS, and as he says there was no demand for jazz anymore, it's just punctuation music. The growth of commercial radio across America changed the accessibility and popularity of bands, which hitherto had been virtually dependent on record sales alone. New financial demands, popular opinion, and sponsorship were all tied up in the success or failure of an orchestra. And very few station managers, mindful still of the Great Depression and economic considerations, were prepared to lose listeners, or worse still, patronage by sponsors, to contentious or outrageous orchestras. And jazz went underground and hibernated until it reemerged on 52nd Street some years later.

1:09:46

Network radio had initially attracted advertisers eager to promote bands with which their products could be associated, and the word "sponsorship" entered the vocabulary of mass entertainment in a big way. A new era of sponsor censorship came into existence to the lowest common denominator of mass consumption. And musical output began to be dictated by the advertisers who were, after all, paying for the program. And popular music changed direction as it became a case of the tail wagging the dog. It was the era of surveys and popularity polls introduced to ensure that products were sold over the airwaves. Catchphrases and jingles subliminally entered homes in coast to coast radio, and the American Dream machine moved up a gear, helped indirectly by Hollywood, which pushed out visual images of modern sophistication on the screen. If anyone doubted the credible potency of radio, one could look no further than the panic generated by Orson Welles' convincing broadcast based on H.G. Well's "War of the Worlds" in 1938.

1:10:59

Images were sought by sponsors which reflected their products. And the early association of the American Tobacco companies with dance bands was a curious but effective partnership.

The Casa Loma Orchestra, the Camel Caravan, Lucky Stripe, and Old Gold were very actively promoting the top dance bands of the day. And Hooley's diaries recall many broadcasts made for Lucky Strike, Peter Stuyvesant, and Cremo Cigars. Saima and Hooley now set up their first and only home in Lanesville, and in 1934, the house was finished. But Hooley often stayed over in New York to complete the radio dates.

1:11:44

There are a couple more record dates in New York with Al Bowlly and Ray Noble, who were touring over here, and Hooley stayed to find work on the Fred Allen Show with guests Gene Autry, Jack Benny, John Barrymore, Dorothy Lamour, and Tallulah Bankhead. And the guests on many later radio shows reads like a who's who of 1930s and 40s entertainment. But by the time of the beginning of the Second World War, it was all over in New York. Hooley worked at Sylvania for the war effort. And for a few years, sort of retired from music. When the war was finished, he formed his own small band called Sylvester's Music— we do happen to have one of the former singers here as well today. I hadn't realized until I saw her— doing work around Cape Ann.

1:12:35

He then realized that he had a natural inclination for entertainment as a solo performer, and in various one-man shows, for associations and schools, on the history of the trumpet, and he got to be known as "The Poor Man's Victor Borge." So I should read you—we're actually at the end of the manuscript.

1:13:01

Whatever the occasion, the relaxed atmosphere and conviviality of the assembled audiences gave to Hooley the confirmation that music is, and always has been, the property of the people. And that one of its principal functions was to give expression and celebration to the society which created it, and Hooley has certainly achieved that and more. For who can count the many thousands of people to whom Hooley has given pleasure over his lifetime? From the local boys to whom he gave free trumpet lessons to the patronage of English Royalty and aspiring American Presidents, his playing touched everyone. Possessed of the golden tone, Hooley's trumpet playing was a gift not given to many.

1:13:53

And in a quote, I believe from Wordsworth, "But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear." His role in life has always been that of a communicator, whether by trumpet or by radio, and the skills of his art have increased our vocabulary considerably. And we are richer for the experience. For Sylvester Ahola, to whom comedian Fred Allen happily designated the epithet "Gloucester's Gabriel," and is known respectively as "Vesteri" to the Finns, "Hooley" to musicians and friends, and "W1PU" to ham radio operators, and the "Square Squire of Cornball Man" to just about everyone else, had, like the many returning adventurers of folklore, arrived back home.

1:14:39

He was once again part of the community of Cape Ann, or “Kiipin Niemi,” (sorry about my Finnish pronunciation!), as it is known to first generation Finns, in the place where it all started, as a member of the Waino Band, which had been so aptly named after the mythological home of the heroes of Kalevala, the Finnish national legend.

“May you not, O friendly people,  
As a wondrous thing regard it  
That I sang so much in childhood,  
And when small, I sang so badly.  
I received no store of learning,  
Never travelled to the learned.  
Foreign words were never taught me  
Neither songs from distant countries.  
Others have all had instruction,  
From my home I journeyed never,  
Always did I help my mother,  
And I dwelt forever near her,  
In the house received instruction,  
‘Neath the rafters of my storehouse,  
By the spindle of my mother,  
By my brother’s heap of shavings,  
In my very early childhood,  
In a shirt that hung in tatters.  
But let this be as it may be,  
I have shown the way to singers,  
Showed the way, and broke the tree-tops,  
Cut the branches, shown the pathways.  
This way therefore leads the pathway,  
Here the path lies newly opened,  
Widely open for the singers,  
And for greater ballad singers,  
For the young, who are now growing,  
For the rising generation.”

1:16:07

Finally, I’d like to introduce the person without whom all this would not have been possible. Gutsy, kind, unselfish, loving, and sympathetic, Saima Ahola.

Saima Ahola 1:16:55

I’m sure I can convey good wishes from Sylvester, and we just love Dick Hill and [?]. And I wish you would tell them how you happened to get into this mess. I just want to thank you all for coming. It's very, very heartwarming. You’re wonderful, love you all.

Harold Bell 1:17:23

Thank you, Mr. Hill. Thank you, Saima. If any of you would like to stay and listen to the music for a while, we will have a little music playing, and have some refreshments. You're all invited. Did you want to say something to Dick?

Saima 1:17: (?)

Well, I wondered how he discovered—how he started.

Dick Hill 1:17:53

I have here a magazine called "Storyville" published in 1968. And it's a junk shopper's guide to records. And here, we have the check-listing of records that are worth finding in junk shops that've got jazz solos on them. Every single one has got a name down here, in brackets: Ahola, Ahola, Ahola. And way back in '68, "Who the hell's Ahola?" And they're basically [?] to rust. And, go out and discover them. And a good friend [?] from New York, he actually said Sylvester Ahola's still alive, I went to see him last week.

1:18:38

And I couldn't believe this, because here was almost the encapsulation of American music, of popular music, and the man's still alive who remembers everything from The Depression. The start of American culture to me, is the start of jazz music. It's an independent source, it's something that America is proud of. And I remember from my first letter, [?] to Saima and Sylvester, which intrigued me. [?], but in fact a warm and friendly letter. "I am amazed that anyone as young as you (I was young then) is interested in my playing 50 years ago. I have the [?] now on the original 78, I played it after receiving your letter. It was the first recording we made with three trumpets and two trombones." And I thought, no, no, they're not three trumpets on there and two trombones, but Sylvester could remember, not only how many musicians were there, but the names of them all as well.

1:19:42

Now, to British discographers, that is an absolute gem, because we had assumed that it was just two trumpets and one trombone, but here, straight from the horse's mouth, three trumpets and two trombones. And so it went—that was a nice [?], and from there on Sylvester has provided me with access to his files, letters, everything. Train tickets, airplane tickets, everything, programs. And he's given me free access to this. I'm very, very grateful that here is a cornucopia, an actual volume of American history, still there. And I'm just grateful that I'm still able to pass it on to other people as well who shall share it in some way.

[Applause]



