

## Today in Columbus History:

On Saturday, February 24, 1855, an advertisement appeared in the *Times & Sentinel Triweekly* for "H. S. Saroni, Professor of Music." This small unassuming ad was placed by Herrman S. Saroni, one of the most talented people to call Columbus home. He only lived here from late 1854 to early 1856 but managed to make a lasting impression. More amazing is the variety of activities in which Saroni excelled and variety of places where he performed them.

Saroni is best known locally for his music. The Columbus Symphony Orchestra recognizes him as the founder of Philharmonic Society in 1855, which they say led to the current orchestra. His name figures on their historic marker in front of the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts.

Saroni was a German immigrant who arrived in New York in 1844 as a professor of music at the age of twenty-one. He began publishing his musical compositions shortly after he landed. He also authored magazine articles until he purchased his own magazine, renaming it *Saroni's Musical Times* in 1849. He traveled the country reporting on and critiquing music and art. After publishing his own musical handbook in 1852, he traveled South teaching music privately in Nashville, Tennessee (possibly starting their Philharmonic Society). He then taught music, drawing and painting at the Masonic Female College in Lumpkin, Georgia in 1854.

Later that year, Saroni came to Columbus to teach music. He published at least two musical pieces while here; a waltz, *La Belle Georgienne*, and a galop, *The Lover's Leap*. He also organized the Philharmonic Society and gave their first concert on April 12, 1855. Within a year, Saroni had moved on from Columbus.

He went next to Huntsville where he wrote *The Twin Sisters*, the first American operetta. During the Civil War he moved to Louisville, Kentucky. He then came to Augusta, Georgia to experiment with a waste product from petroleum refining known as petroleum vapor. We know it now as gasoline. One of several businesses he started was the Georgia Petroleum Stove and Gaslight Co. He pursued business opportunities all over the country. He appeared in the city directories of Baltimore, Philadelphia and Boston living in hotels and had patents registered in Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Paul and other cities.

In 1867, he converted a steamboat from coal to gasoline and demonstrated it on the Ohio River between Louisville and Cincinnati. In St. Paul, Minnesota he taught music and won a contract to light the town with gasoline streetlamps. He built the first automobile in Minnesota and ran it through the streets of St. Paul in 1879, seventeen years before Henry Ford drove his quadricycle on the streets of Detroit.

Saroni never patented his automobile but it appears that he used it as the basis for his traction engine that he patented in 1882. He finally settled in Marietta, Ohio around 1885 where he continued to write articles, compose music, patent inventions, and teach piano from his home until his death in 1900.

His obituary said that "he had made and lost several large fortunes." However, for all his accomplishments around the country, Saroni is almost completely forgotten. As Dr. David F. Urrows of Hong Kong Baptist University noted, Columbus is "one of the few places where the name Herrman Saroni lives on."

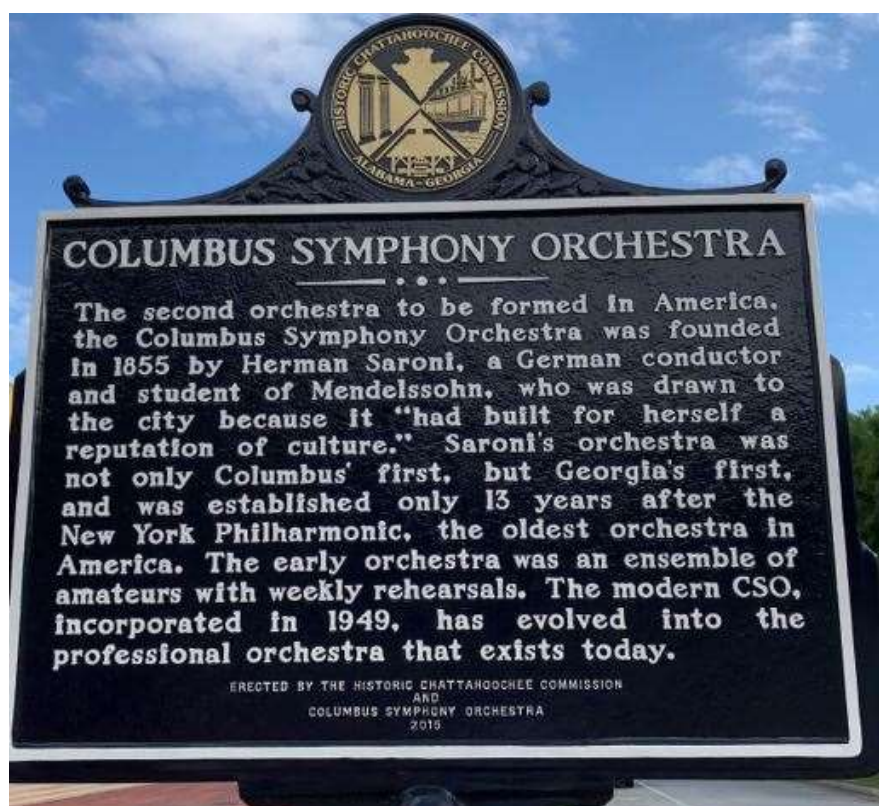
Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.



Advertisement of H.S. Saroni from the *Times & Sentinel Triweekly*, February 24, 1855, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Historical marker for the CSO on Broadway, outside of the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts (Photo by Daniel A. Bellware). You can read more about Saroni in the Fall 2018 issue of *Muscogiana*, <https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/muscogiana/>

**CONCERT.**

**THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY,**  
**Will Give their First Concert at**  
**CONCERT HALL,**  
**ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 12.**


Tickets Fifty Cents: To be had at the Music Stores, and at the door on the evening of the Concert.

Doors open at 7 o'clock. Concert commences at 8.

Columbus, April 7, 1855. ap.8—tw2t.

Ad from the *Times and Sentinel Triweekly* April 11, 1855, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

**TO THE  
MUSICAL WORLD.**



The undersigned having concluded to make Columbus his permanent residence, takes this method of informing the public that he proposes teaching

**VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC**

in all its branches as well as its theory.

The success which has attended his efforts thus far, warrants him in promising to his pupils, a thorough knowledge of the art.

He would also offer his services to such gentlemen as wish to perfect themselves in Instrumental Music, and who, rather than instruction, need some one to accompany them on the Piano or other Instrument.

In addition to the above, he will also teach the

**FRENCH, GERMAN, AND ITALIAN LANGUAGES,**

all of which he speaks and writes fluently.

**Terms Twenty-Five dollars per quarter.**

Where two or more pupils will take lessons together, a deduction will be made. For further particulars and references enquire of the undersigned at Truax & VanderBerg's Music Store, Pease's Book Store, or at this office.

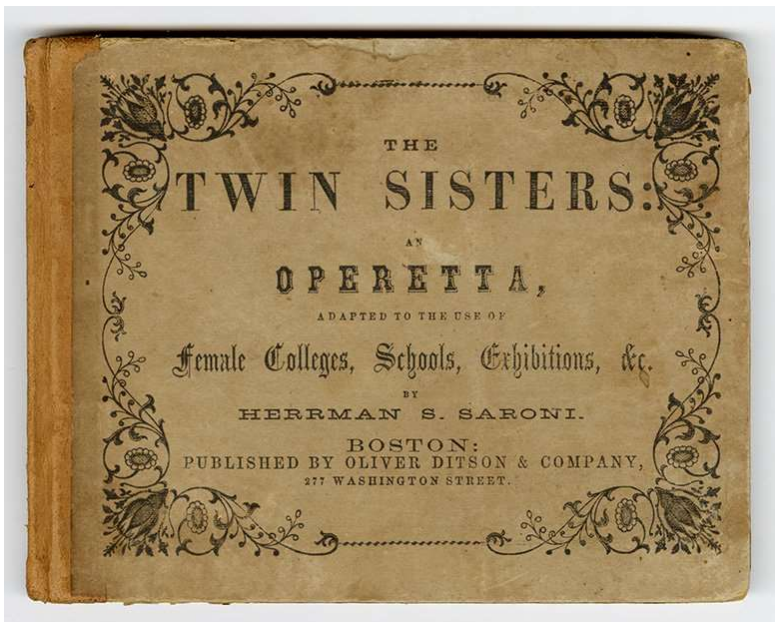
HERRMAN S. SARONI.

**TO TEACHERS OF MUSIC,**

and those who wish to prepare themselves for such vocation, Mr Saroni would specially offer his services as a thorough study of the musical theory, and the experience of teaching, has enabled him to reduce "teaching music" to a perfect system, which can be imparted to any one without difficulty.

Columbus, December 14, 1854. twtf.

Ad from the *Times & Sentinel Triweekly*, January 1, 1855, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



The first American operetta, *The Twin Sisters*, by Herrman S. Saroni, courtesy of the Columbus Museum, [Columbus Museum : Online Collections \(pastperfectonline.com\)](http://ColumbusMuseum.org/OnlineCollections/pastperfectonline.com).

...ount county, E. Tenn.

## Georgia Petroleum Stove AND GAS LIGHT COMPANY.

**T**HE Stock of this Company is nearly all subscribed, and persons who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity to make a small, safe and profitable investment, had better subscribe at once.

The regular Exhibition of the Stove and Light, under the Planters' Hotel, will be resumed again on **MONDAY** next, May 7th, when, at 11, a. m., a Turkey will be Roasted, Biscuits Baked, Coffee Parched, and the Stoves submitted to any reasonable tests suggested by visitors. The exhibition will continue during the week.

A two-horse power Steam Engine will be running all day, with Petroleum Vapor as Generator.

The public are invited to call, taste, test and subscribe.

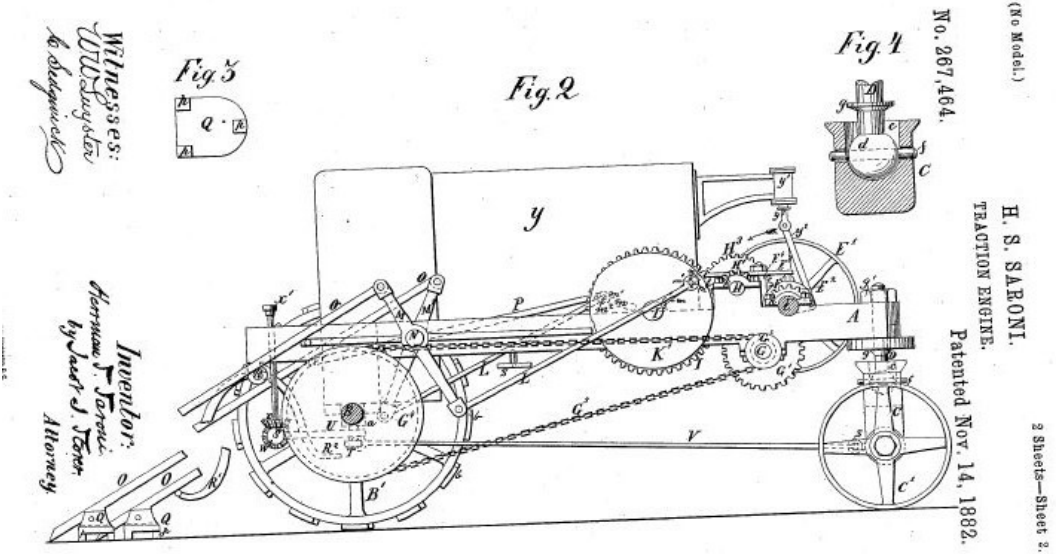
**SARONI & BOSWORTH.**

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Ad from *Augusta Tri-weekly Constitutionalist*, June 1, 1866, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

THE "CULPRIT FAY."—Mr. H. A. Saroni, who is now engaged in organizing the Georgia Petroleum Stove Company, seems to be a man of remarkable versatility. He has permitted us to read a most meritorious opera of his own composition, libretto, music and all. This opera was written at Huntsville, during the war, and likewise produced by the ladies of that city with great *eclat*, for the benefit of Confederate soldiers. Not only did Mr. Saroni write the poetry, compose the music and arrange the dramatic details, but he likewise built the stage and painted the scenery. It is not a little strange to find poet, musician and painter combined; it is passing strange to find an artist of such excellence in those departments equally skilled in the mechanic and scientific walks of every day life.

Story in Augusta *Tri-weekly Constitutionalist*, April 27, 1866, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Patent #267464 Nov. 14, 1882 H.S. Saroni's Traction Engine. A traction engine is similar to a steam locomotive that runs without tracks. You can drive it to a location and use it to power a sawmill or other equipment on a remote site like a farm or woods. <https://pdfpiw.uspto.gov/>.