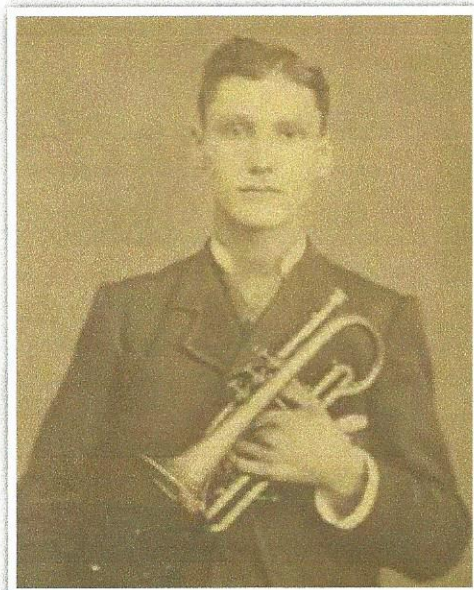


# Charles Lloyd Barnhouse – The Early Years

By Andy Glover, WJU #423

Windjammers are well acquainted with the name of C. L. Barnhouse as the founder of the music publishing firm C. L. Barnhouse Company of Oskaloosa, Iowa, a firm that produced many works associated with the circus, and which thrives to this day.

Barnhouse, born in Grafton, W. Va. on March 20, 1865, began his publishing enterprise in 1886 at the age of twenty-one. He ran the company until his death on November 18, 1929 at age 64. While his life as a music publisher encompasses the majority of his life, and is well documented, the years preceding his publishing career are not as well known.



Barnhouse was born into a blue-collar family. His father, George, was a blacksmith and railroad machinist, and his mother, Harriet, kept house, ultimately giving birth to four children, and occasionally

making the family home available to boarders. Young Barnhouse first became interested in music upon hearing the band at a circus performance, and he subsequently discovered Grafton's small town band. As an eight-year old, he was fashioning his own drums out of animal skins spread over cheese boxes. In 1878 Barnhouse's Uncle Alfred gave the lad his first cornet, a Civil War era over-the-shoulder model. Another uncle provided some early instruction. The following year, Barnhouse quit school to take a job in a furniture factory, so he could save money for music lessons.

Young Charlie wished to join the Grafton Cornet Band in 1879; however, this adult group was reluctant to admit a fourteen-year-old boy. He finally was allowed to join on alto horn; but impressed the other band members that after eight months, he was allowed to join the cornet section. In 1881, at the age of sixteen, he had risen to the post of leader of the band.



C.L. Barnhouse at far left in the 1882 Grafton band

As his interest in music grew, Barnhouse expressed a desire to join a traveling show band. His father insisted that Barnhouse learn the machinist's trade first. In 1883, Barnhouse's "*Rays of Sunshine*" Galop was published by J. W. Pepper, increasing the youngster's confidence in a music career.

That fall, he left Grafton and went on the road with Arthur Love's Musical Comedy Company. The show featured a nine-piece band, and toured from October through March, and covered parts of Pennsylvania, New York, West Virginia, and Ohio. The entire show drew fine reviews, several of them noting Barnhouse's abilities as cornet soloist.



In the summer of 1884, Barnhouse was employed as a musician at the Rawley Springs (Virginia) summer resort. This was a popular and sizeable resort which was visited by vacationers from all over the east. Music was a large part of the entertainment at Rawley Springs, and Barnhouse continued to perform notably.

At the end of the summer, Barnhouse went on the road again, this time joining the band of I. W. Baird's Mammoth Minstrels. The Baird show was well-reviewed, and during the 1884-1885 season visited Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, and Iowa. Notably, the show played Oskaloosa on December 20, 1884, and of this visit Barnhouse later remarked that it was notable due to the foot of snow on the ground. The work was good, but unfortunately the pay was not steady.

On New Year's Day 1885, Barnhouse decided he'd worked enough "for free", and quit the show in Des Moines. Remaining in Des Moines, he joined with five other musicians to appear as the "Big Six" at the Pavilion Roller Skating Rink. Roller skating was a great craze, and competing venues worked hard to earn the business of skaters.

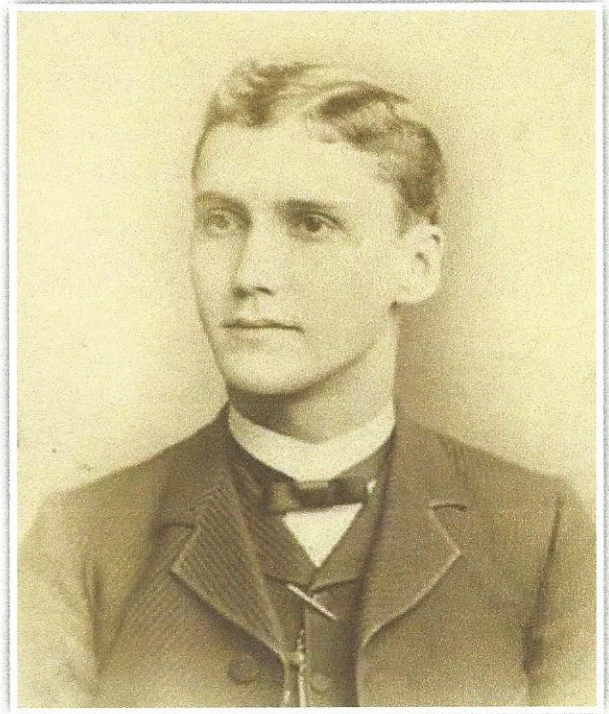
Barnhouse stayed with this venue into March, 1885 when he elected to go on the road with the W. W. Cole circus band. He joined the circus in St. Louis in April, staying only a few weeks, as he had planned to return to Rawley Springs for a second summer. His weeks with W. W. Cole marked the only time C. L. Barnhouse ever actually traveled with a circus band.

Fatefully, disaster struck Rawley Springs in June, as a devastating fire destroyed much of the facility. While the proprietors announced plans to rebuild, this never came to pass. Barnhouse returned to Grafton briefly, then back to Des Moines to perform in an unidentified orchestra.

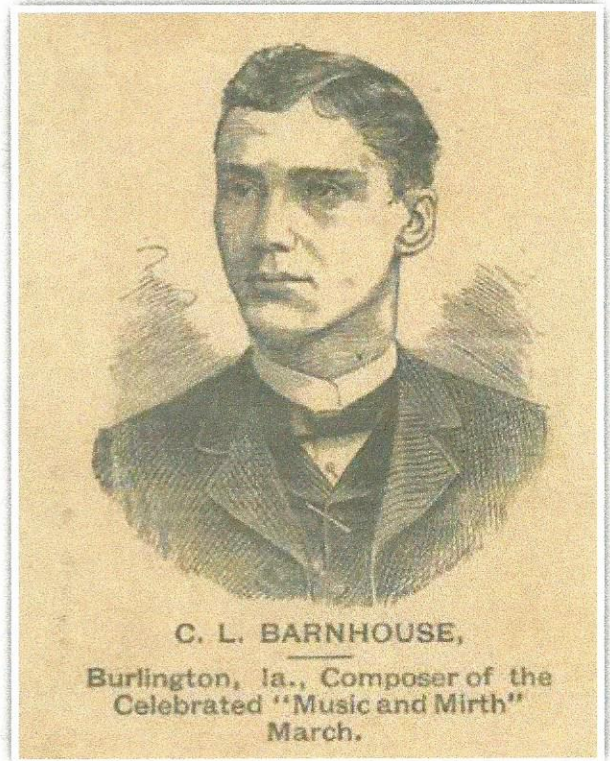
During Barnhouse's time on the road and at Rawley Springs, he had continued to compose music, and his aspirations in this area grew tremendously. He had submitted works to various publishers, but other than the galop published by Pepper, nothing else was accepted. And his dissatisfaction with unreliable pay with Baird's, and the modest profits of working as a traveling musician, got him thinking about a new line of work in music – publishing.

In 1886, Barnhouse was hired to lead the town band in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. In addition, he had plans to establish his own publishing firm there, so set about getting educated regarding engraving and printing processes.

When he discovered that the cost of a set of music engraving tools was nearly \$1,000, he realized that route wasn't affordable. Using his machinist skills, however, he was able to fashion many of his own engraving tools, and by one account, used these tools to eventually engrave his company's first 161 titles.



In 1889, Barnhouse moved to Burlington, Iowa to accept a position with the band there.



In December, 1890 he made his last move – signing a contract to lead Oskaloosa's Knights of Pythias band, for the annual salary of \$600. His duties in Oskaloosa officially commenced on May 20, 1891, and it was there his company flourished as one of the most successful music publishing companies in America.