

## **2003 JOSEPH GORTON AND "LEW" BADER NAMED TO THE HALL OF FAME**

*During the 2003 annual convention, Charles Conrad, chairman of the Windjammers Hall of Fame Award Committee announced that the committee had named Joseph Gorton and Lewis "Lew" Bader to the Windjammer Hall of Fame. The following is information on Joseph Gorton as published in the Circus Fanfare. Lewis "Lew" Bader can be found in a separate article.*

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### **Joseph Gorton (1835 - 1916)**

Joe Gorton was born on 21 February 1835 in Friendship; a small town in the western part of New York. He trained as both a concert pianist and a cornet soloist, and assumed the directorship of the John Stowe Circus Band at the tender age of 15 in 1850. He remained with this entourage until 1868 and returned for the 1870 and 1871 seasons. Gorton, a Mason, lived his entire life in Friendship where he died 21 November 1916 and was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery. (Gorton's son, Joseph Jr., became a prominent soloist and composer, but died suddenly in 1908 at the age of 30.)

Advertisements for the John Stowe Circus proclaimed:

*Professor Joe Gorton's Silver Cornet Band - the Biggest and Best in America, 24 musicians in the Golden Chariot drawn by 10 Arabian Steeds*

and

*Professor Joe Gorton's Gold Band of 11 pieces - the instruments are of the celebrated Besson make, beautifully engraved with mythological scenes, and are just as we state, gold instruments, cost \$13,500*

He also directed the bands of the J. A. Wallace Circus in 1871 and the Great New York Circus in 1879. Gorton was even more famous as the founder and Music Director of the Gorton's Minstrels, a show he created in 1867 and which toured until at least 1914.

News of the show from 1891: Gorton's Minstrels, now on their second Pacific coast tour, report business to be uniformly good and the entire company enjoying good health [Editors note - it seems odd to report on the health of the company, but in the late 1800s, it was not uncommon for small pox to be spread by traveling shows, and it was a common ploy for a press agent to spread health rumors about rival shows.] The company numbers 25 people. The uniformed street parade, led by Corporal Johnson, the musket drills and accompanied by Gorton's Gold Band, is a strong outdoor feature. The program embraces six end men: the Crescent City Quartet; comic songs by Hughey George, Eddie Marks and John Elliott; Tom Sweeney and Eugene in Ballads; and J. Walter Wilson in bass solos. The first part concludes with the Brothers Elliott in their *Colored Swells*. This is followed by an excellent cornet solo by Prof. Sam H. Lee. The second part is opened by a plantation song and dance by six good dancers, introducing Griffin and Marks, and is followed by the beautiful costume novelty *The March of the White Hussars*, in which Corporal Johnson does some clever work with rifle and bayonet. After this comes Hughey George in his budget of absurdities, Dewitt Cooke in Indian club exercises and a neat song and dance arranged by Eugene Elliott. The show closes with *Fun in a Chinese Laundry* by Griffin and Marks. The company is going over the Northern Pacific and will play two weeks in 'Frisco and return East in time for the early Fall business."

Gorton's Gold Band, so named because of their gold uniforms, attained some national renown. Gorton wrote a series of eight pieces that C.L. Barnhouse published from 1895 to 1897 known as "Gorton's Gold Band Series."