

Story of the Yslas Brothers in the U.S.

In an article in the Alexandria Louisiana Daily Town Talk of January 5, 1916, it is said that the Yslas Brothers tell their friends that they "come from a large family, 24 children . . . of one father and one mother. And all are said to be good musicians."

The father and mother were Miguel Yslas (1845-1919) and Soledad Huerta (1863-1937). Of the children many died in infancy or childhood. Many of the surviving children were trained and practiced dentistry in Mexico. Also, they were trained in music, and after immigrating to the U.S., became music teachers.

In 1910 the Mexican Revolution started. At that time the Yslas Huerta family began to move northward. The first seems to have been Jesus Francisco, who became known as J. Frank, and Leopoldo. They were followed by Alfonso in 1911, José María in 1912. They settled in Alexandria, Louisiana, and became known as the Yslas Brothers.



By 1913 the Brothers had established a "Grand Conservatory of Music" to teach music, with "special attention given piano, violin, cello and mandolina. The pupils of this conservatory will give monthly concerts so as to demonstrate their advancement to their families."

In May of that year an article in the Alexandria Daily Town Talk that the Passtime Theatre purchased a piano "specially selected for concert use by Mr. J. Yslas (leader of Mexican Orchestra). Also reported in the article was "\$100 violin, made in 1745, for special use of Mr. L. Yslas)Mexican Orchestra). The Yslas Bros. "play every night at the Passtime Theatre."

The One and Only

“Marimba”

Now at the Pass Time Theatre

—Performance at 5, 8 and 9 p. m. —

Yslas Orchestra 4 to 5 and 7:30 to 9:30 p. m.

By 1914 the performances of the Yslas Brothers at private affairs was being reported in the society section of the newspaper.

On November 12, 1914, an ad for a "Grand Concert by Yslas Bros. Concert Band" at the Rapides Theatre. Included in the program were a number of pieces composed by José M. Yslas.

Reported in a newspaper article of October 1915, Leopold Yslas returned from a car trip from Monterey, Mexico to Alexandria, LA, with his father, Miguel, and brother. According to the article, "The elder Yslas is a splendid musician. He was for 25 years teacher of piano, and 6 years a teacher of harmony, in the Conservatory of Mexico City." His father died in Mexico in 1919.

By late 1915, José Yslas is being referred to as Professor.

In a newspaper article of May 1916, "José M. Yslas and his Famous Spanish Orchestra" . . . "formerly residence of Alexandria", were performing at the Cafe Bristol, in Los Angeles. So some of the Brothers must have relocated to Los Angeles in early 1916.

The Los Angeles Herald, of 26 August 1916, reported the Yslas concert quartet, consisting of José Yslas, pianist; Frank Yslas, cellist; Samuel Bergmand and Gernard Donatelli,

violinists, performing the Liszt's Second Rhapsody.

But, apparently, Leopold stayed behind in Alexandria, as there are a number of newspaper articles in 1917 advertising concerts by the students of Prof. L. Yslas of the Conservator of Yslas Bros. at the Rapides Theatre. The probable reason he stayed behind is because he married Annette Couvillion in 1916 in Rapides Parish, Louisiana.

In one interesting article from the July 5, 1917, edition of the Alexandria Daily Town Talk, Prof. L. Yslas "states that his teacher was the best in the world (his father?). They studied in Paris and also in the City of Mexico.

In the mean time his brothers became well established in the Mexican community in Los Angeles. In an August 1918 edition of the Los Angeles Spanish language newspaper Prensa:

"A Committee of Civic Celebrations has been organized in this city, whose purpose is to celebrate with dignity the anniversary of Mexican Independence on September 16. Treasurer, Mr. J. M. Yslas"

Through 1919, the Yslas performed at a number of functions, playing Mexican, Classical, and pieces composed by the brothers themselves.

On a border crossing document dated, March 20, 1920, José occupation is listed as musician at Blanchard Hall, where the Yslas brothers seemed to have set up shop.

In the 1922 Los Angeles City Directory the Yslas family, Frank, Jose M., J. Frank, plus Louis and Mary, were living at 1763 E. Vernon Ave, L.A. There was also a listing for YSLAS MUSIC STORY, J. Frank Yslas, proprietor. "Musical instruments, Pianos and Phonographs, 119 S. Spring."

In the 1924 Los Angeles City Directory lists Leopoldo as a musician, and his wife Annette, as a dental nurse.

An article in January 1929 in Prensa reports a dinner in honor of Mrs. Soledad de Yslas, attended by Francisco Yslas, and Prof. Leopoldo Yslas. In another article, one week later, there was a dinner held in honor of Mr. Jorge Islas on the occasion of his triumph as governor of the state of Tlaxcala in Mexico. In attendance were Francisco Islas, Professor Leopoldo Islas, "his brothers".

News of the brothers in Los Angeles became scarce after that. The Mexican Revolution ended in 1921, and the U.S. economy tanked after 1929. Many Mexicans who moved to the U.S. in the early 1900's could no longer find work, so they moved back to Mexico. Any further news of the Yslas brothers comes from Mexico, and is usually of their passing.