

*Star Spangled Music Editions* ©2019

ALTON ADAMS MUSIC COLLECTION  
*Volume Two*



# **The Governor's Own**

**Dedicated to the People of the United States Virgin Islands  
1921**

**By Alton Augustus Adams  
1889–1987**

**First Black Bandmaster in the United States Navy**

**Edited by Mark Clague, Ph.D.  
for the Star Spangled Music Foundation**

## Composer Biography

ALTON AUGUSTUS ADAMS (1889–1987) became the first black bandmaster in the United States Navy on June 2, 1917 when his all-black Adams Juvenile Band (founded 1910) was inducted as the United States Navy Band of the Virgin Islands. At the onset of American entry into World War One, the U.S. had purchased the islands from Denmark to deny Germany a submarine base so close to U.S. shores. Adams’s band served as a cultural and social bridge between the islands’ new, all-white American administration and its mostly black native population. Adams was soon in charge of three bands, his own in St. Thomas and two groups on St. Croix. He also volunteered as Supervisor of Music for the islands’ public schools to create its first music curriculum.

In the States, Adams had become known for his informative articles about bands, instruments, and music as a means of community service in the pages of *Jacobs’ Band Monthly*—a monthly magazine published in Boston. His marches were performed throughout the U.S. and by influential bandleaders including Edwin Franko Goldman and the “March King” himself, John Philip Sousa.

In 1924, Adams’s Virgin Islands bands joined forces as a single unit to tour the eastern United States including cities such as Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Adams hoped to publicize the islands as a winter haven for American tourists to help restore the islands’ prosperity. War War I, hurricanes, and outside financial forces had devastated the island economy. The band’s concerts drew large crowds and triumphant accolades in the African American press, especially in Harlem, which had since 1917 welcomed an influx of Virgin Islanders seeking work. Due to its special status as a resident band with permanent members, the Virgin Island band became especially polished musically and its quality was compared favorably with the best military ensembles in the United States, including the Washington Marine Band.

In 1943, Adams was recalled to duty in World War II, taking over an all-white unit in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He had eight of his former bandsmen reinstated to the unit, creating the first official racially integrated navy band. Adams also worked as a journalist for newspapers such as *The Pittsburgh Courier* and the Associated Negro Press and ran two newspapers of his own. After WWII he operated the Adams 1799 Guest House (a bed and breakfast on St. Thomas) and served as president of the Virgin Islands Hotel Association. He was even active in local politics as an independent community leader and volunteer. (Note: the cover photo for this edition was taken about 1922 in New York City when Adams was touring the United States to research music education programs for the islands.)

## The Governor’s Own

**HISTORY:** Based on the bugle call to attention, the trumpets’ snappy opening four-note motif announces the beginning of the march and serves to call listeners in preparation for the arrival of the Virgin Islands’ governor. The principal theme of the march was inspired by its original dedicatee, Admiral Joseph Wallace Oman, naval governor of the Virgin Islands from 1919 to 1921. The melody seems to depict the governor who Adams described as a “short, jaunty, snappy sort of fellow” while it similarly echoes the energetic themes of Sousa’s “King Cotton” or “Manhattan Beach.” Adams felt that Sousa’s music perfectly captured the “spirit of militant vigor and courage” emblematic of the march. As a boy, Adams had imagined himself conducting Sousa’s band while listening secretly to phonograph records outside a neighbor’s home. He studied composition and orchestration in part by copying the individual parts to Sousa’s marches into full score. (At the time, conductor’s scores were provided only in abbreviated short score formats.) Originally known as “Governor Oman,” the march was renamed “The Governor’s Own” in time for its initial publication with Carl Fisher in 1922. Acknowledged as one of Adams’s best compositions, “The Governor’s Own” was among the top four best selling marches for Carl Fisher in 1924 and became the official commencement march of Howard University. In 1963, Adams rededicated the march to the people of the Virgin Islands and its status as music for government occasions on the islands was recognized by the legislature. It is the official march of the islands’ governors, akin to “Hail to the Chief” for the U.S. President, although Adams’s piece may be freely performed on occasions when the governor is not present.

**PERFORMANCE SUGGESTIONS:** The tempo should be a quick 124–28 beats per minute, with the trio strain performed in the same tempo. Articulations should be crisp and short. Melody and countermelody should predominate in the texture.

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## Sources

This edition is based on a copy of the composer's holograph manuscript under the original title "Governor Oman" held in the Alton Augustus Adams Collection (AAC: ser. 8, box 1, item 19) at the Center for Black Music Research Chicago. As the band score makes reference to an earlier and now missing full orchestral score, this edition uses the related orchestra parts (AAC: ser. 8, box 1, item 16) as a concordant source as well as a revised piano version of the march (AAC: ser. 8, box 1, item 20) and the original band parts (AAC: ser. 8, box 1, item 18).

## Suggestions for Further Reading and Research

Alton Adams was rediscovered by musicologist Samuel Floyd for a 1977 article titled "Alton Augustus Adams: The First Black Bandmaster in the United States Navy" in *The Black Perspective in Music* 5:2 (Fall), pp. 173–87. By 1999 when Mark Clague's article on Adams appeared in Floyd's *International Dictionary of Black Composers*, the Alton Augustus Adams Collection of archival documents had been deposited at Columbia College Chicago's Center for Black Music Research. Such documents along with islands newspapers provided additional evidence about Adams's life. The story of the band's 1924 tour is reported in Mark Clague's article "Instruments of Identity: Alton Augustus Adams, Sr., the Navy Band of the Virgin Islands, and the Sounds of Social Change," *Black Music Research Journal* 18:1/2 (Spring/Fall 1998), pp. 21–65. The University of California Press has also published *The Memoirs of Alton Augustus Adams, Sr.*, edited by Mark Clague and with a preface by Samuel Floyd. Additional information is available on the web through Wikipedia and the website [www.starspangledmusic.org](http://www.starspangledmusic.org).

## Acknowledgments

This edition would not have been possible without the assistance and support of many people. Professor Richard Crawford and the American Musicological Society helped me to learn the craft of scholarly editing on the job as executive editor of the Music of the United States of America (MUSA) editions project. Kyle Grosyk, an undergraduate student working in the University of Michigan's Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program, did the initial data entry from the edited score. University of Michigan composition graduate student Lembit Beecher provided a professional polish to the parts for publication. The United States Navy Band of Washington, D.C. performed the world premiere of this edition in the Virgin Islands on May 12, 2006. The University of Michigan School of Music (Dean Christopher Kendall) and the University's Office of the Senior Vice Provost (Lester Monts) offered needed financial support to fund research and typesetting. Finally, a special thanks goes to the descendants of the composer as members of the Alton Augustus Adams, Sr. Family Trust, especially Alton Augustus Adams, Jr., for their encouragement and support.

# The Governor's Own (1921)

Alton Augustus Adams  
(1889-1987)  
Edition by Mark Clague

March (♩ = 138)

This musical score is for the march "The Governor's Own" by Alton Augustus Adams, composed in 1921. The score is arranged for a full band and is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 138 beats per minute. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is divided into three systems, each containing staves for various instruments. The dynamics range from fortissimo (ff) to mezzo-forte (mf). The percussion part includes a cymbal (cym.) in the third system.

**Instrument List:**

- Piccolo
- Oboe
- Clarinet in E♭
- Clarinet in B♭ 1
- Clarinet in B♭ 2,3
- Bassoon
- Soprano Saxophone
- Alto Saxophone
- Tenor Saxophone
- Baritone Saxophone
- Trumpet in B♭ 1
- Trumpet in B♭ 2, 3
- Horn in F 1, 2
- Horn in F 3, 4
- Trombone 1, 2
- Trombone 3
- Euphonium T.C.
- Euphonium B.C.
- Tuba
- Percussion

**Dynamic Markings:** ff, mf

**Tempo:** March (♩ = 138)

**Key Signature:** Two flats (B-flat and E-flat)

**Time Signature:** 2/4

12

Picc. *f*

Ob. *f*

E♭ Cl. *f*

Cl. 1 *f*

Cl. 2, 3 *f* a 2

Bsn. *f*

S. Sax. *f*

A. Sax. *f*

T. Sax. *f*

B. Sax. *f*

Tpt. *f*

Tpt. 2, 3 *f* a 2

Hn. 1, 2 *f*

Hn. 3, 4 *f*

Tbn. 1, 2 *f* a 2

Tbn. 3 *f*

Euph. *f*

Euph. *f*

Tba. *f*

Perc. *f*

24

1. 2.

Picc. *mf* *f* *ff*

Ob. *mf* *f* *ff*

E♭ Cl. *mf* *f* *ff*

Cl. 1 *mf* *f* *ff*

Cl. 2, 3 *mf* *f* *ff* a 2

Bsn. *ff*

S. Sax. *ff*

A. Sax. *ff*

T. Sax. *ff*

B. Sax. *ff*

Tpt. *mf* *f* *ff*

Tpt. 2, 3 *mf* *f* *ff* a 2

Hn. 1, 2 *ff*

Hn. 3, 4 *ff*

Tbn. 1, 2 *ff* a 2

Tbn. 3 *ff*

Euph. *ff*

Euph. *ff*

Tba. *ff*

Perc.

36

Picc. *mf* (2x, *f*)

Ob. *mf* (2x, *f*)

E♭ Cl. *mf* (2x, *f*)

Cl. 1 *mf* (2x, *f*)

Cl. 2, 3 *mf* (2x, *f*)

Bsn. *mf* (2x, *f*)

S. Sax. *mf*

A. Sax. *mf*

T. Sax. *mf* (2x, *f*)

B. Sax. *mf* (2x, *f*)

Tpt. *mf*

Tpt. 2, 3 *mf*

Hn. 1, 2 *mf* (2x, *f*)

Hn. 3, 4 *mf* (2x, *f*)

Tbn. 1, 2 *mf* (2x, *f*)

Tbn. 3 *mf* (2x, *f*)

Euph. *mf* (2x, *f*)

Euph. *mf* (2x, *f*)

Tba. *mf* (2x, *f*)

Perc. *mf* (2x, *f*)

47

Picc. *f*

Ob. *f*

E♭ Cl. *f*

Cl. 1 *f*

Cl. 2, 3 *f*

Bsn. *f*

S. Sax. *f*

A. Sax. *f*

T. Sax. *f*

B. Sax. *f*

Tpt. *f*

Tpt. 2, 3 *f*

Hn. 1, 2 *f*

Hn. 3, 4 *f*

Tbn. 1, 2 *f* a 2

Tbn. 3 *f*

Euph. *f*

Euph. *f*

Tba. *f*

Perc. *f*

60

Picc. *ff*

Ob. *ff*

E♭ Cl. *ff*

Cl. 1 *ff*

Cl. 2, 3 *ff*

Bsn. *ff*

S. Sax. *ff*

A. Sax. *ff*

T. Sax. *ff*

B. Sax. *ff*

Tpt. *ff*

Tpt. 2, 3 *ff*

Hn. 1, 2 *ff*

Hn. 3, 4 *ff*

Tbn. 1, 2 *ff*

Tbn. 3 *ff*

Euph. *ff*

Euph. *ff*

Tba. *ff*

Perc.



80

Picc.

Ob.

E♭ Cl.

Cl. 1

Cl. 2, 3

Bsn.

S. Sax.

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

B. Sax.

Tpt.

Tpt. 2, 3

Hn. 1, 2

Hn. 3, 4

Tbn. 1, 2

Tbn. 3

Euph.

Euph.

Tba.

Perc.

*f*

*f*

*a 2*

*a 2*

*a 2*