

John Philip Sousa

2007

Gonzaga HS

New York

John Philip Sousa is America's foremost band leader. A former director of the Gonzaga College High School Band of New York, Sousa's Touring Band was the most popular music act in the nation for 30 years. Sousa championed the cause for music education in our nation. Sousa was born in Washington, D.C. Sousa started his music education, playing the violin at the age of six. He was found to have absolute pitch. When he reached the age of 13, his father, a trombonist in the Marine Band, enlisted his son in the United States Marine Corps as an apprentice. Several years later, he left his apprenticeship to join a theatrical (pit) orchestra where he learned to conduct. He returned to the U.S. Marine Band as its head in 1880 and remained as its conductor until 1892. Sousa organized his own band in 1892. Sousa died on March 6, 1932, in his room at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel in Reading, Pennsylvania.