

A HISTORY OF MUSIC
IN
AURORA, ILLINOIS

BY
JOHN REX MCMULLEN

EDITED
BY
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April 2020

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Doctor of Music Education degree
Chicago Musical College
August 1955*

F O R E W O R D

Let me start by saying that Dr. John R. McMullen was a friend of mine and that we shared the same birth date, albeit 40 years apart – July 27. We also share the experience of having both taught instrumental music in the Aurora East School District #131; he for 25 years and myself 31 years. I met and got to know him by way of his frequent visits to Aurora, Illinois in the late 1980s as I was directing the Aurora American Legion Band. Our conversations were primarily band related, but I got to know him personally and over the years we were regular pen pals. John promoted a great deal of my music via his association with the Sabbar Shrine Concert Band and the Beavers Tucson Concert Band. These two groups operated in the Tucson, Arizona community where John made his residence and where he was also an active playing member.

My taking on the challenge of completely retyping his entire dissertation was a labor of love. After John told me about his dissertation, and that the only copy outside of his personal copy and one housed in the Chicago Musical College was in the Aurora, Illinois public library, I knew I had to find a way to read it. The only difficulty was that the Aurora library copy was designated “reference” and could not be checked out. To the rescue came a friend behind the scenes in the library who allowed me to use it for a few days. During that time I painstakingly copied every one of the 142 some pages (one-sided) contained within the binding. This was perhaps the late 1990s.

I had always said that I would eventually get around to digitizing the entire volume so as to be able to put it up on the internet for everyone to read without the necessity of having to access the Aurora, Illinois public library. This hemming and hawing took place for almost 25 years before (now retired) I had the time to buckle down to the task at hand.

It was truly a delight to revisit this all over again and in the process make some corrections / edits in what otherwise might be considered some awkward syntax.

While I could pick up where John left off in telling more of the History of Music in Aurora, Illinois seeing as how I was a part of it for 31 years myself (1984-2015), I will leave that to future generations. I would hope that they find its continued success and future to be as fascinating as John did in his telling of its beginnings.

Kevin Kaisershot - 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The present writer wishes to acknowledge with thanks the cooperation and the assistance given him by the following individuals in the consummation of this study: Alice Applegate, curator, Aurora Historical Museum; the Aurora Public Library staff; Robert Barclay, music editor, Aurora Beacon News; Ralph Blackman, English instructor; Unabelle Chitty, musician and music librarian; Vernon Derry, photographer and historian; Dr. John W. Gates, superintendent of schools, District Number 131, Aurora; Charles Gridley, musician and historian; Justus Johnson, editor, “Now and Then,” Aurora Beacon News; Richard F. Marti, musician and printer; Clifton Simmons, president, Board of Education, District Number 131, Aurora; and Dr. Merton S. Zahrt, advisor.

J.R.M.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of time, the writing and study of history has been a necessity in understanding various developmental phases of the human race. Some historiographers cover a large span of time in their writing, while others confine their investigations to a short period of history.

In order to write a history of larger areas, histories of smaller areas are needed to complete the integral picture. This is substantiated by Britton¹ who stated that more histories of smaller districts should be written before those of larger areas can be undertaken. The present study could contribute to a larger regional or sectional study of musical development.

Statement of the Problem

Aurora, Illinois, located in Kane County forty miles west of Chicago, is a Mid-western city with a population of approximately 50,000. The present writer feels that this is a typical Mid-western community located near a large metropolitan area, and is immensely rich in musical heritage. The collecting of the historical data concerning musical development in Aurora and the presentation of this information in an understandable form is the problem of the present investigator.

Nature of the problem. With this city located in the fertile Fox River Valley of Illinois, and with easy accessibility to metropolitan Chicago, it would naturally seem that a musical culture should emerge along with the

¹ Personal letter written by Allen P. Britton to the present writer on May 6, 1955.

development of other aspects of the community. The present writer wishes to show, historically, the development of that musical culture.

Need for the investigation. At the present time, no complete history of music in Aurora, Illinois, has been written. There have been many sketches or very short histories, and some organizations have written histories of their own particular musical organizations, but, as stated before, no complete history of music in Aurora has been attempted.

Importance of problem to the field and to the writer. The writer of this history will help to give to the present writer a more complete understanding of the community and its present musical needs as well as to increase his understanding of the development of music in typical mid-western American communities.² Naturally, it is hoped that this dissertation will do the same for others who may take the time to read it.

Desired Outcomes

After the present investigation is completed, it is hoped that the contents of the study will assist any writer who desires to write a complete history of Aurora. It is also hoped that some of the findings will be pertinent enough to be used by historians writing a history of music in Illinois, the Mid-West, or the entire United States of America. The present writer predicts that many interested musicians will write more complete histories of their own particular organizations. Some authors may also write more complete biographies pertaining to the lives of many outstanding personalities of Aurora who have been active in the field of music. In

² For the past eighteen years the present writer has been employed as a teacher of band music in the East Aurora, Illinois, Public Schools, District Number 131.

addition to the preceding outcomes, the development of music education in the public schools will be touched upon. This should help to consummate the attempt of the present writer to present a complete historical picture of musical development in Aurora, Illinois.

Scope and Limits of Study

If possible, this history will be written chronologically from the founding of the city of Aurora in 1834, up to and including 1948. Both vocal and instrumental phases of music will be considered, but the principal emphasis will be upon instrumental development. Music in the churches will be mentioned only slightly in the particular study, because the present writer feels that this field of music would require an investigation within itself. The frequency of mention in newspapers will help to determine the extent of the discussion of musical organizations and of various individual musicians. In other words, this history will be written about bands, orchestras, choral societies, musical clubs, small ensembles, dance music, and the most prominent musicians.

Interviews with local old time musicians will be limited to those still living in Aurora and vicinity. Also, those selected to be interviewed will be limited further by the newspaper reports of their prominence in local music. The present writer has been acquainted with most of the outstanding local musicians and knows from personal experience many of their accomplishments in the field.

Another principal consideration will be the individual contributions to music in Aurora. In doing some preliminary research, the present writer discovered that Aurora had produced some world famous musicians. At the

same time, there were many musicians who did not achieve worldwide recognition, but whose contribution to music in the Aurora area was undoubtedly greater than some of the so-called famous musicians. Short biographies will be written regarding both types of musicians.

Working Hypotheses and Basic Assumptions

The hypotheses to be tested in the present investigation may be stated as follows: (1) music in the community helped to develop public school music, (2) public school music, in turn, had an effect on music in the community, and (3) prominent musicians influenced and even hastened the growth and understanding of music in the community. It is realized that these hypotheses are not highly original, but the actual facts as to their effect in Aurora remains to be determined.

There are also several basic assumptions that will guide the present writer in this investigation. These basic assumptions are listed in the following paragraphs:

1. The coming of the railroad to Aurora. The development of any area depends upon the transportation to and from that particular area. The cultural development of Aurora seemed to be assisted by the coming of the railroad.
2. Proximity to metropolitan Chicago. The fact that Aurora is only forty miles from metropolitan Chicago led the present writer to assume that the musical culture would be influenced by the large city. This basic assumption also goes hand in hand with the transportation assumption.

3. Desire and need for music. It is assumed that the definite need for music as a physiological and psychological outlet led many foresighted citizens in the city of Aurora to accelerate the growth of music. It is also assumed that these citizens saw the need for outstanding music teachers to teach their children to sing and to play instruments with good musicianship. Whether the pioneers came from the old country or from another section of the United States, music was a part of their heritage. Some outstanding musicians saw this need; therefore, schools of music and conservatories were established at an early date.

In keeping with this line of thought it should be remembered that the schools are usually considered to be instruments of society and will reflect the needs of the society. What is really important to the citizens in matters of musical development sooner or later become an accomplished fact.

Review of Related Literature

Historical investigations in other fields will be studied and evaluated. This will tend to broaden the thinking of the present writer in the presentation of this particular study.

No community exists in complete isolation, and musical happenings in other places were certain to have affected music in the city of Aurora. Therefore, An Outline of the History of Music by Miller³ was reviewed in order to secure a comprehensive view of the history of music in general.

³ Miller, H. M., An Outline of the History of Music, 254 pp.

In an attempt to see what took place in public school music and also to view the format of writing a history, History of Public School Music in the United States by Birge⁴ was studied. The purpose of the book was an attempt to rescue from oblivion certain aspects of public school music, which were fast disappearing from the American scene. Birge reviewed all available records and interviewed many people whose relatives had something to do with early public school music. The findings showed a definite trend in the evolution of public school music. Although the book by Birge covered too much territory to be of great assistance to the present writer, one important item was of great significance. Birge stated that an Auroran, B. W. Morrill, organized one of the first high school orchestras in the United States.⁵

Our American Music by Howard⁶ was found to be impertinent to the present investigation. The book by Howard was an account of the music that has been written in America and not a history of musical activities.

Because of its setting, the History of Kane County by Joslyn and Joslyn⁷ seemed to be especially pertinent, but these volumes presented more of a political background of Kane County, of which Aurora is a part, rather than the cultural history of the county. Volume One included the early happenings in Kane County, and Volume Two presented nothing more than selected short biographies of prominent Kane County citizens. In other words, it seems that the purpose of the writers was to present a general history of the area.

⁴ Birge, E. B., History of Public School Music in the United States, 296 pp.

⁵ Ibid., p. 162

⁶ Howard, J. T., Our American Music, 841 pp.

⁷ Joslyn, R. W. and F. W., History of Kane County, 1:868, 2:911.

Battle edited a book entitled, Centennial Biographical and Historical Record of Aurora for One Hundred Years 1834-1937 and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad for Eighty-Six Years 1850-1937.⁸ The purpose of this book was to give a general history of Aurora and was published in the centennial year, 1937. This book will be used considerably in the writing of Chapter Two of this investigation.

In 1939, Sunderman completed a doctoral study, which was entitled, A History of Public School Music in the United States (1830-1890.)⁹ The purpose of this investigation was to present the general trend and development of public school music over a period of sixty years. The area that Sunderman attempted to cover was too enormous; so only brief generalizations could be given. Except for general format, this study was of little value to the present writer.

The Early Development of Music in Pittsburgh,¹⁰ by Baynham was carefully examined and found to be a thorough study of all phases of music in Pittsburgh from 1758 to 1858, inclusive. Newspaper articles, periodicals, books, scrapbooks, collection of programs, and business directories were examined which led to the following principal findings: (1) there was a considerable amount of music in Pittsburgh from early settlement days to 1858, (2) early public school music was quite extensive, (3) many existing

⁸ Battle, C.S., editor, Centennial Biographical and Historical Record of Aurora for One Hundred Years 1834-1937 and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad for Eighty-Six Years 1850-1937, 192 pp.

⁹ Sunderman, L.A., A History of Public School Music in the United States (1830-1890, unpublished doctor of philosophy dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1939, 136 pp.

¹⁰ Baynham, E. G., The Early Development of Music in Pittsburgh, unpublished doctor of philosophy dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1944, 356 pp.

artists performed in the city, and (4) an extensive account of the life of Stephen Foster was presented.

A doctoral dissertation by Nelson entitled The Sacred and Secular Music of the Swedish Settlers of the Midwest¹¹ (1841-1917) was evaluated and was found to contain the following important purposes: (1) to give an historical account of the musical life of the early Swedish-American communities, and (2) to trace the development of Swedish choral organizations. Nelson examined American and Swedish periodicals, Swedish music brought to America by immigrants, the history of Augustana College, and Swedish church reports. The conclusions that were found are as follows: (1) the customs and music that the Swedish immigrants brought with them remained a part of their life in America, (2) creative efforts found expression in texts rather than in music, (3) church music was from Sweden, and (4) early establishment of oratorio societies fostered choral singing in America.

Also reviewed was a research paper by Lowens and Britton, The Easy Instructor (1798-1891): A History and Bibliography of the First Shape Note Tune Book.¹² The problem of the investigators was to trace the methods used by various music educators in teaching students to read music at sight. The history of one particular type of instruction book was developed in this study. This study was of no intrinsic value to the present writer except to see the general format in writing a particular type of history.

¹¹ Nelson, C. L. The Sacred and Secular Music of the Swedish Settlers of the Midwest¹¹ (1841-1917), unpublished doctor of philosophy dissertation, New York University, New York City, 1950, 163 pp.

¹² Lowens, I., and Britton, A. P., The Easy Instructor (1798-1891): A History and Bibliography of the First Shape Note Tune Book, Journal of Research in Music Education, Music Educators National Conference, Chicago, Spring, 1953, 1:31.

The History and Development of Public School Music in Scioto County, Ohio, by McGowen,¹³ was also evaluated. In this study, McGowen attempted to show how and why public school music in one particular Ohio County developed. McGowen examined the school board minutes of the districts located in the county besides studying collections of music programs and interviewing music teachers, administrators, and laymen who might shed some light on the subject. This investigation by McGowen did show the trend in public school music in a section Ohio and also gave an inkling as to the trend in public school music in Ohio and the Midwest.

Methods, Techniques and Procedures

In the present investigation, the historical method will be used.¹⁴ To obtain pertinent data, a number of techniques will be utilized. These will include examination and reading of documents, newspapers, scrapbooks, program files, and published historical materials; interviews with both active and inactive musicians; and correspondence with former Aurorans who were quite active in the music field and other music historians.

Aurora is one the few cities in the United States that has a music branch of its public library. The material on music history found in this music library will certainly be examined and evaluated. Materials found in the Aurora Historical Museum will also be scrutinized.

¹³ McGowen, E., The History and Development of Public School Music in Scioto County, Ohio, unpublished master of music thesis, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, 1942, 156 pp. It is not usually a common practice to use theses on the master's level, but this study was included because no doctoral study was found which dealt with this particular type of investigation.

¹⁴ The historical method is a process supplementary to observation, a process by which the historian attempts to test the truthfulness of the reports of observations made by others. Historical research interprets past trends of attitude, event and fact.

As previously stated, the present writer will interview many old time as well as younger musicians who have been, or still are, prominent in the field. Especially the older musicians will be asked to confirm information regarding musical accomplishments achieved by themselves or their contemporaries. In most cases, the interview will be quite informal because the majority of the individuals to be interviewed are personal friends of the present writer. If necessary, the person to be interviewed will be reached by telephone, but most of the time the interviewer will visit the home of the person to be interviewed. Whenever possible, information not available in existing documents regarding individual accomplishments will be obtained by a personal interview of persons concerned rather than through the use of a secondary source.

Aurora was one of the pioneer communities to install music education in the public schools.¹⁵ Therefore, short biographies concerning a number of the outstanding public school music teachers will be included in the investigation.

Many parochial schools are still in operation in Aurora. In the past, there were some excellent music teachers in these schools who contributed greatly to the musical understanding in the community. These outstanding individuals will certainly be mentioned in this study.

Even with the increase in public school music, private music teachers have been numerous, although not in abundance, in Aurora. Their contribution to music has been notable and quite widespread, and many of them will undoubtedly be mentioned in this investigation.

¹⁵ Birge, op. cit., p. 162

This investigation will include nine chapters. Chapter One, of course, is the introductory chapter, and Chapter Two will consist of a short history of the city of Aurora. Chapter Three will include music from 1837 to 1885; Chapter Four, music from 1886 to 1895; Chapter Five, music from 1896 to 1915; Chapter Six, music from 1916 to 1928; Chapter Seven, music from 1929 to 1936; Chapter Eight, music from 1937 to 1948; and Chapter Nine will be the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

Summary

After information regarding history of music in Aurora is collected, it will first be sorted and evaluated. Then, an attempt will be made to write a history depicting the development of music in a somewhat typical midwestern city. All phases of music, except music in the churches, will be considered, but most of the emphasis will be upon instrumental music.

There are three hypotheses to be tested and they are as follows: (1) music in the community helped to develop public school music, (2) public school music, in turn, had an effect on music in the community, and (3) prominent musicians influenced and even hastened the growth and understanding of music in the community. The three basic assumptions that will guide the present writer are as follows: (1) the coming of the railroad to Aurora, (2) proximity to metropolitan Chicago, and (3) desire and need for music.

In carrying out the present investigation, the author will endeavor to test the truthfulness of the reports of others. All of the methods, procedures, and techniques mentioned will be utilized in attempting to make this work a definite contribution to music education and to the city of Aurora.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF AURORA

There were inhabitants in this area thousands of years before the first white man founded McCarty Mills, as Aurora was originally named. Their story is less familiar, for they left no written records. They are now called the mastodons, mammals approximately 25 feet long and 10 to 12 feet high with tusks nearly 9 feet in length.

For many centuries the mastodon and his kinsman, the mammoth, found food, water, and a favorable climate in what is now northern Illinois.¹ Finally, after thriving for a few thousand years after the last glacier, these great animals began to lose their prominence and became fewer and fewer in number. The last mastodons in the Fox River Valley lived about 10,000 years ago, and the remains found today are from these last remnants.²

Early Happenings

The Indians were the earliest settlers in the vicinity of Aurora. Perhaps the first known white man to come to the Middle West was the Spanish explorer, DeSoto, who discovered the Mississippi River in 1541. Others migrating to the Middle West were LaSalle in 1680, Marquette, and Joliet, who rediscovered the Mississippi in its entirety, and in so doing,

¹ Derry, V., Aurora in the Beginning, p. 5

² Ibid., p. 7

passed very close to what is now Aurora.³ Because of the French and Indian War, by 1763 the French had given up their claim to the area which is now Illinois.⁴ When Illinois became a state in 1818, very few white men lived in the northern part, although the southern section of the state was fairly well settled.⁵

Founding of the city. Joseph and Samuel McCarty founded the city of Aurora in 1834. These two McCarty brothers migrated to Aurora from Morristown, New Jersey.⁶ Their ancestors dated back prior to the Revolutionary War and were of Scotch and English decent. Their reason for coming to the Middle West was their special interest in the excellent waterpower privileges being granted by the government.

The first claim made by Joseph McCarty consisted of about 360 acres on the east side of the Fox River, on which he erected a log cabin 10 by 12 feet in size.⁷ In order to secure unquestioned rights to waterpower, McCarty later purchased a claim of 100 acres on the east side of the river, on which he built a shanty. These cabins were the first homes built by white men within the present city limits.⁸ McCarty and two helpers began construction of a dam and sawmill. At this time, there were seven inhabitants in McCarty Mills.⁹

³ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴ Ibid., p. 9

⁵ Ibid., p. 11

⁶ Ibid., p. 19

⁷ Ibid., p. 19

⁸ Ibid., p. 19

⁹ Ibid., p. 23

In the winter of 1835-1836, Joseph and Samuel McCarty laid out the original plat of the city of Aurora.¹⁰ The first sale of real estate made by Joseph McCarty occurred when he sold to R. C. Horr for two dollars, the greater part of what is now a city block downtown in the business district.¹¹ Squire Horr became the first justice of the peace in Aurora in 1835.¹²

The red men did not disappear all at once. They did very little cultivation of the soil to raise food inasmuch as there was an abundance of buffalo, deer, foxes, wolves, and many smaller animals, as well as fish in the Fox River. After the arrival of the white man, and during the early years when the permanent settlers arrived, some of the Indians remained, and quite a commercial trade sprang up between the white man and the Indians. Because of the treaty with the government for the purchase of the Indian reservation, the red men consequently had become peaceable and friendly.

The first post office. In 1836, Samuel McCarty staked out a stagecoach line from Naperville, Illinois, to Aurora, and with some persuasion, the owner of the coach line agreed to make a mail delivery to McCarty Mills, after which a post office was set up in the Adams General Store.¹³ Fort Dearborn, as Chicago was known in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, began to be a source of supply for merchandise and goods for McCarty Mills. Other small villages began to spring up along the Fox River, both north and south of Aurora.

When the post office was established in 1837, it was necessary to give McCarty Mills a permanent name. A cousin of the McCarty brothers had

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 23

¹¹ Ibid., p. 23

¹² Ibid., p. 23

¹³ Ibid., p. 23

come from near Aurora, New York, so it was suggested that the name of Aurora, meaning a rising light, be adopted.¹⁴ Many people settled in Aurora in 1836-1837. Mills, the post office, a tavern, stores, shops, and a stage route had been established, as well as a name. There were bridges built across the Fox River, and for several years after 1837, Aurora grew rapidly.

Joseph McCarty died in 1839.¹⁵ Samuel McCarty lived in Aurora until his death in 1889.¹⁶ The land on the west side of the river was platted by Theodore Lake in 1842.¹⁷ Of course, there were settlers in West Aurora as early as 1837.

Early schools. The first school was started in 1836 in a little slab shanty of most primitive character. There were fourteen scholars, all children from the east side of the river. The tuition was \$1.50 per child per term.¹⁸ An epidemic of measles closed the school after two months, but another school was established a short time later, which became the principal school for the next two years.

In 1839, it was agreed that a new schoolhouse was needed and that funds for it would have to come from contributions; however, the general feeling of the inhabitants was that if a schoolhouse were built, it could also be used for religious services. The amount needed was \$300.00 and, as a result, the first east side schoolhouse was erected, a one room structure.¹⁹ It was furnished according to the most approved school styles of the day, with

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 26

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 27

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 29

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 31

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 35

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 35

two rows of pine benches and desks for the larger pupils, and a single row of benches for the smaller children. Between the rows of seats, in the center of the room, was a large wood-burning stove. This school was supported by tuition and subscription, inasmuch as there was no law making possible the taxing of property for the support thereof. For a time, this was the only public building in the village.²⁰

Within a short period of years, the school accommodations were inadequate to educate the many children of school age. In 1851, a tax was voted for a levy of one per cent to build a new schoolhouse, and that fall the building was finished. This was the first free school district in Illinois.²¹ It was established under a special act of legislature in 1851 but the general free school law was not passed until two years later.

The first schoolhouse on the west side was a small log cabin built in 1836. A new school was opened in 1852 costing the enormous sum of \$3,200.00.²² Presently, on Galena Boulevard hill stands a small stone building where in 1842 a private school was opened for children. This is the oldest schoolhouse still standing in Aurora.²³

Jennings Seminary was established in 1855 under the name of Clark Seminary in honor of Reverend John Clark, a Methodist clergyman who first projected the institution. At first, the school was coeducational, but in 1900, it became a seminary for girls. In 1864, Elza Jennings gave \$15,000.00 toward the endowment of the seminary and consequently, the name was

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37

²² *Ibid.*, p. 39

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 39

changed from Clark to Jennings Seminary.²⁴ It is presently known as Jennings Terrace and has become a haven for older men and women, a project of the Methodist church.

Early industries. Various industries were organized and began operations, such as: the McCarty Sawmill in 1835; the Aurora Woolen Mills, which was one of the most important, in 1837; the first plow and wagon factory, owned by George McCollum, in 1837; the Woodworth factory for the manufacture of horse drawn wagons and carriages, in 1843; and in 1855, the first large industry, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad car shops which employed over a thousand men, and brought in families who built homes in Aurora, and many other ways helped to build up the small village.²⁵

The first permanent newspaper was a six-column folio, which was called the Aurora Beacon.²⁶ It is presently being printed daily in Aurora, and is now known as the Aurora Daily Beacon News. There were other publications, which sprang up from time to time, but were short lived.

Continuously from 1840 on, there were many new citizens arriving in Aurora only to take up residence and begin their business enterprises. The total population and size of the business district showed a substantial increase.

Early disasters. According to the Aurora Beacon News, in two weeks ending August 8, 1849, there had been 49 deaths in the village attributed to

²⁴ Ibid., p. 39

²⁵ Ibid., p. 41-43

²⁶ Battle, C. S., editor, Centennial Biographical and Historical Record of Aurora for One Hundred Years 1834-1937 and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad for Eighty Six Years 1850-1937, p. 19

cholera.²⁷ In March of the same year, a great flood occurred around the Fox River, which was caused by the sudden melting of the immense quantity of snow to the north. Several bridges in the Fox River Valley were damaged or destroyed.²⁸

After a number of serious fires in 1853 and 1854, which nearly destroyed the business district, it was sensed by the local citizens that a fire department was needed. In 1856, through subscription, the businessmen purchased a hand engine and hose cart for \$1,600.00, which they called, ironically enough, Young America.²⁹ The operations of the fire department were dependent upon volunteer fire fighters. The men attached to the fire engine, Young America, became highly efficient at fire fighting, and were rated champions at state contest. Their trophies may be seen in the Aurora Historical Museum.

Early banking. The first exchange bank in Aurora was established in 1847, but a financial panic swept over the country in November 1860, and caused the bank to close. Another exchange office was opened on the east side in 1850, but this bank closed in 1861. An exchange office was opened in 1861 and continued until 1864 when it was moved to Batavia, Illinois.³⁰ In 1868-1869, numerous private banks were in existence at different times.³¹ The Aurora National Bank was organized in 1883 with a capital stock of one hundred thousand dollars, and is in existence at the present time.³² Two

²⁷ Ibid., p. 21 (citing the Aurora Beacon News).

²⁸ Ibid., p. 21

²⁹ Derry, op. cit., pp. 43-45

³⁰ Battle, op. cit., p. 25

³¹ Ibid., p. 30

³² Ibid., p. 40

other banks are presently serving Aurora, namely: the Merchants National Bank, and the Old Second National Bank.

Transportation facilities. The two villages of East and West Aurora were incorporated as one in 1857.³³ As Aurora grew on each side of the river, there was a demand for better transportation to the outside world. The grain had to be marketed and transported. As a result, and with the foresight of some of the citizens, a railroad through Aurora began operations in September 1850. This railroad branch line was finally named Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy, and today the president of this railroad is Harry C. Murphy, and enterprising Aurora citizen.³⁴

Early politics. In the presidential election of 1836 in Kane County, Illinois, there were 235 Democratic votes cast and only 93 votes for the Whig Party.³⁵ When the slavery question became a problem, the tide turned somewhat. The Whigs were opposed to slavery. Many of the old timers assisted the runaway slaves, housing them and helping them to reach Canada, where they could secure freedom.³⁶

Following this uprising in politics, there were several meetings held in the general area of Kane County and Aurora. Some of these meetings were held to discuss the possibility of forming a new political party. For many years, Aurora has laid claim to the honor of being the birthplace of the

³³ Ibid., p. 24

³⁴ Derry, op. cit., p. 49

³⁵ Ibid., p. 49

³⁶ Ibid., p. 51

Republican Party. A quotation from the records of Lutz White,³⁷ reads as follows:

The Republican Party, with the first recognized declaration of creed, was born in Aurora, Illinois, on September 20, 1854. This historic event came to pass in the First Congregational Church when an authorized “Peoples” congregational convention adopted the name Republican and proclaimed to the nation the doctrines of a new political party. Among the many authorities for this statement, we have but to refer to the famous historical debates of 1858 between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas.³⁸

It was not until late in 1856, at the national convention held in Philadelphia, that the Republican and Whig parties were united and fully organized into one party.

It has been recorded that Abraham Lincoln visited Aurora on several different occasions. Lincoln was deeply interested in river navigation, and did some specializing along this line, prior to his settling in New Salem. One of the earliest Aurora pioneers, Charles Hoyt, hired Abraham Lincoln to represent him in a lawsuit over water rights in connection with his gristmill.³⁹ Lincoln won the case for Hoyt and served as an attorney for Hoyt for several years afterward. An original letter written by Lincoln to Hoyt is restored in the Aurora Historical Museum and is perhaps one of the most treasured relics in the museum.

Early churches. In early Aurora, the first settlers felt a great need for religious and Christian fellowship. The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Aurora was organized in September 1837, in the home of Samuel McCarty.

³⁷ Lutz White was an Aurora historian of a generation ago, whom all respected as being most reliable and accurate in his research into local history.

³⁸ Derry, op. cit., p. 51

³⁹ Ibid., p. 55

The first substantial building was started in 1843 on the site of the present edifice and the present structure was completed in 1872.⁴⁰ In October 1953, the interior of the present First Methodist Church was destroyed by fire and was rebuilt recently. Other churches organized were as follows: the First Congregational Church in 1838; the Universalist Church in 1842; the First Baptist Church in 1844; the Trinity Episcopal Church in 1849; the St. Mary's Catholic Church in 1850; and the St. Paul Lutheran Church in 1853.⁴¹ Other smaller churches have been organized since 1853.

The establishment of a library. The first library was established in 1852 by the Young Men's Literary and Historical Society and contained over four hundred books. As a result of this organization, the library soon accumulated six hundred books.⁴² The Civil War distracted much from the attention of the readers and the library was discontinued. The present Aurora Public Library has recently been remodeled.

Early city government. The city council of present day Aurora is presiding over the council meetings in the same City Hall used by the first city council in 1868. The pioneer council met the first and third Monday of each month with A. T. Hall as mayor. Ground was broken for this City Hall in July 1859, and it was finished in 1865, at a cost of \$69,000.00⁴³ In October 1865, the post office was moved into the City Hall and the government paid the city revenue for rent.⁴⁴ Before that time, the post office

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 57

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 57

⁴² Ibid., p. 59

⁴³ Battle, op. cit., p. 25

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 25

was on River Street, on the west side of the Fox River. The present post office was built in 1932.

Business, industry, and importance of railroad. In the early 1860's, still more new citizens became established in Aurora and many of the same names are currently associated with similar businesses now operating in Aurora, namely: Alschuler, Mall, Sencenbaugh, Staudt, and Neumann. By 1876 there were 180 business houses in Aurora.⁴⁵ At that time, there was an estimated population in the city of about 12,000. In 1876, Aurora was considered a real railroad town, being the main repair and construction division of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad and the Chicago and Iowa Railroad, which gave employment to 2,000 men. All of the other manufacturing industries in Aurora combined employed less than 350 persons. It was largely upon the railroad men that the merchants and those in other lines of trade depended for their support.⁴⁶

The characteristics of the citizens living on the East side and West side of Aurora differed. The people living on the East side were largely members of the laboring class, and the majority of them were identified with the same corporation.⁴⁷ On the West side of Aurora lived the land holders, many of whom were early pioneers, and from the wealth they were accumulating, they contributed generously in promoting and developing business and manufacturing industries.

The depression of 1893, and the three years following, wrought such havoc throughout the community that recovery was slow. It was not until

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 34

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 35

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 35

the end of the Nineteenth Century that business was restored to a normal condition.⁴⁸ Even so, Aurora was more fortunate during this depression than many other cities. The main division of the Burlington Railroad and hundreds of train and shop men made it their home, and most of these men were given part-time employment.

The Twentieth Century

The advent of the Twentieth Century was the beginning of an era of prosperity that far exceeded the expectations of the most sanguine optimist. One of the outstanding improvements was brought about through a syndicate, which was formed for the betterment of the island in the Fox River.⁴⁹ Today this island is in the business district of Aurora and is composed of large architectural structures, which house many of the leading merchants.

Today Aurora is known as the garden spot of the Fox River Valley, a city of opportunities with many churches; excellent school systems; hospitals, sanitariums, and clinics; adequate parks and playgrounds; and organizations such as the YMCA, YWCA, Woman's Club, Loyal Order of Moose, American Legion, and others too numerous to mention.

Some of the industries which were founded early in the Twentieth Century were: Lyon Metal Products, Inc.; Richards-Wilcox Company; Miller-Bryant-Pierce Company; Love Brothers; Stephens-Adamson Manufacturing Company; Barber-Greene Company, and several more.⁵⁰ There were also many business establishments too numerous to mention,

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 43

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 45

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 59

which were founded in the late Nineteenth Century and early in the Twentieth Century, many of which are still in existence.

The citizens of Aurora celebrated the Aurora Centennial September 5-11, 1937.⁵¹ During this memorable week, Aurorans celebrated with parades, exhibits, and a great night show of pioneer days, which included an extravagant spectacle of entertainment fitting to a wholehearted recognition of the greatness of Aurora in the galaxy of midwestern communities.

Summary

The early settlers in the vicinity of Aurora, Illinois, found it convenient to locate near the Fox River. In 1834, when McCarty Mills, as Aurora was then known, was founded by Joseph and Samuel McCarty, the Fox River served the village inhabitants in many useful and satisfactory ways. Also, the fact that Fort Dearborn, now Chicago, was only forty miles from Aurora could well be another good reason for settlers to establish residence in Aurora.

As Aurora grew in population, the establishment of businesses, churches, and schools became necessary. In keeping with the progress and development of northern Illinois, the advent of the railroad was evidence of the fact that the citizens of early Aurora were enterprising townspeople.

As a result of the interest shown by some of the prominent citizens of the city, Aurora has grown progressively to the present population of near

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 89

50,000. The economical, social, and educational standards of the city of light⁵² have advanced along with the increase in population.

CHAPTER III

MUSIC FROM 1837 TO 1885

There is really no known record of the first music in Aurora, Illinois, but a guess would be that it was the singing of the first settlers. Because most of the early settlers traveled as lightly as possible, they undoubtedly did not bring many musical instruments with them. At that early date the pioneers were too busy building shelters and endeavoring to eke out a bare existence to be thinking much about music. Presumably, they brought songs from their native lands and sang them while working or resting.

The strumming of guitars or the sawing away on the old fiddle certainly was a part of the musical relaxation of the old timers. A few of the pioneers probably brought music books, especially church hymnals, from their native environment, and those individuals helped teach many songs to their neighbors. It is a natural tendency to want to teach the things that you know.

First Musical Performances

⁵² Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, Second Edition, 1953, defines the word aurora as the rising light of morning.

Performances by musical organizations in the early days in the history of Aurora were certainly rare indeed. The main reason was that there were practically no musical organizations. As soon as people began to get together, however, various types of organizations were formed, and musical ones were no exception. Many early Aurorans came from some European country, primarily Germany, and quite a number learned to play an instrument and brought their instrument to the new land.

Early bands. Transportation was an enormous factor in the growth of music in Aurora as well as in other localities. In 1850, the first railroad passenger service was inaugurated in the Fox River Valley of Illinois. Music was a part of the celebration in that a brass band from Aurora furnished the entertainment for that festive occasion. That band was one organized by Thomas Sellars, and E-flat cornet player.¹

There has been somewhat of a dispute as to the exact birthplace of the Republican Party, sometimes called the Grand Old party, and Aurora, Illinois, has been involved in that dispute. Aurorans claim the Republican Party was born September 20, 1854, when crowds and delegates assembled at the historic old First Congregational Church.² History was in the making at that time when the Honorable James H. Woodworth, the first Republican candidate for national office, was nominated for Congress, and when the first recognized platform of the Republican Party was drafted and adopted. At that time the declaration of creed of the Republican Party was also formulated and was later discussed by Lincoln and Douglas in their famous debates.

¹ Aurora Beacon News, February 2, 1929.

² Ibid., July 22, 1928

What is a convention without a band, and who can estimate the height of inspiration infused in the hearts of the zealous 207 delegates in that memorable assemblage gathered in unselfish and organized protest against the revolting institution of human bondage? According to White,³ the first Aurora brass band played at that historic occasion. This disputes the fact that records show another brass band played in 1850. Perhaps this group was the first established as a musical organization.

The leader of that instrumental octet was Carl Eitelgeorge, an E-flat cornetist, who was a marble cutter by trade. The other members of the band were as follows: cornet, Carl Miller; tenor horn, Charles Hollering, painter in the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad shops; baritone horn, John Hollering; baritone horn, Christel Miller, harness maker; bass horn, John Divekey, foreman, Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad shops; bass drum, Louie Weiss, butcher and market proprietor; and snare drum, an unidentified Frenchman.⁴ **Figure 1** is a picture of the first brass band.

Not much information is available regarding Gline's Aurora Guards Band,⁵ but it must have been quite an enterprising organization. A large ballroom owned by Dunning opened formally in 1858, and Gline's Aurora Guards Band conducted a Grand Promenade Concert in the hall on Thursday evening, November 11, 1858. The tickets were three dollars and included carriage and supper. For that price, it undoubtedly was a gala affair.

³ White, L., "Aurora's First Brass Band Played at Birth of GOP," Aurora Beacon News, July 22, 1928.

⁴ Just how that Frenchman got in a German band with all the rest being German is still a mystery. There must have been a shortage of snare drummers in those days!

⁵ Aurora Beacon News, July 15, 1939.

From the nucleus of the old original German band developed the Aurora Cornet Band.⁶ This band was organized in 1866 by Carl Eitelgeorge. The band numbered fifteen members, and the directors, in order, were Sherman Wilcox, Carl Eitelgeorge, Silas Barr, and Al Huen. **Figure 2** is a picture of the Aurora Cornet Band.

Still later in 1885, Albert L. Huen organized and directed what was known as the Huen Band.⁷ Huen also directed bands in Hinckley and Big Rock, Illinois, and other nearby communities. Being a prominent musician of Aurora, Al Huen was well known for his ability as an outstanding cornet and violin instructor.

From the scrapbook of Chauncey Miller, a program of the Aurora Light Guard Band was found. This band presented a concert in the Coulter Opera House on Tuesday evening, February 12, 1876. From the program in **Figure 3**, it is possible to see the type of entertainment being presented by bands in those days.

The choir of the old First Congregational Church⁸ undoubtedly sang for the birth of the Republican Party (a distinction also claimed by Ripon, Wisconsin) because the abolition of slavery was a movement promoted and advanced by the churches of the North and meetings were usually opened and closed with prayer and singing. The Reverend Benedict, church pastor, officiated as chairman of the meeting. The choir members were as follows:

T.N. Holden, Charles Strong, Chauncey Lee and wife, Levi Isabell, James L. Holden, Katie Fuller, Henry Paddock and wife, Kinney Isabell, Mrs. M.

⁶ *Ibid.*, July 16, 1939

⁷ *Ibid.*, September 16, 1934

⁸ *Ibid.*, July 22, 1928.

Tabor, C. Wilson and wife, Helen Burroughs, Mrs. A. Annis, and the organist, Ella Huntington. This organization is pictured in **Figure 4**.

An early soloist. In 1855, Chauncey Miller⁹, a favorite Aurora old time musician, played the flute for the famous Indian Chief, Shabbona¹⁰. At the time, Shabbona was very pleased with the music and was offered a bed for the night. Not used to the luxuries of the white man, the Chief rolled up in a blanket beside the fireplace. This fine Indian was very friendly to the settlers and had done much to save the lives of many white men during his reign as Chief.

It was on August 21, 1858, that Chauncey Miller played baritone horn in the band at the Lincoln-Douglas debate in Ottawa, Illinois.¹¹ Miller rode on a float preceding that of the carriage of Lincoln and Douglas, and faced the President and Senator all the way. At the time, Miller was only fifteen years of age and was more interested in the big bass drum beside him than in either of the eminent speakers. During the Civil War, Chauncey Miller was a drummer boy for Abraham Lincoln. From that time on, Miller continued his musical career, which lasted his lifetime.

Fourth of July celebration. A celebration was held at Stolp Island on July 4, 1859. One of the first settlers in 1835, who was made president of the village board ten years later, gave the address. Naturally, there had to be

⁹ From the Chauncey Miller scrapbook located in the Aurora Historical Museum.

¹⁰ The flute that Miller played for Shabbona can be found in the Aurora Historical Museum.

¹¹ Aurora Beacon News, January 30, 1909.

music; so Nevada Sellers, a popular old settler, furnished the musical treat with his bugle cornet.¹²

Professor Stein and his orchestra. Professor E. A. Stein¹³ helped to lay the foundation of much of the culture of Aurora. Stein migrated to Aurora from Chicago, Illinois, because his physicians advised him to seek the quiet of a small town. Stein received his musical training in one of the better conservatories in Europe under the direction of his father, which undoubtedly accounts for the fact that his training was very thorough.

For many years, Stein played the organ in the old Universalist Church, and no doubt was a master of that instrument. Many times, when practicing, Stein would have heart spells, and would ask John Fauth, a tenor in the choir, to sing the old hymn, I Alone My Cross Must Bear. Professor Stein was also organist at St. Mary's Church.

Professor Stein was indubitably the first musician in Aurora to organize a concert orchestra of importance. The orchestra really developed from a small five-piece ensemble that rehearsed in the John Plain home.¹⁴

The members of the Plain family were very musical and they used their talents to develop an outstanding orchestra into which other musicians sought membership. No person could belong to this group unless his heart and soul were put into the work. The orchestra at its best consisted of about twenty-five members.

¹² Ibid., July 7, 1929.

¹³ Ibid., November 6, 1940.

¹⁴ Ibid., March 26, 1950.

Some of the old standbys and most widely known members of the orchestra were as follows: first violins, Maud Powell, May Gillette, E. B. Howell, and Earl R. Drake; second violins, Michael Plain, John Plain, Sam Clark, and Albert Staudt; viola, C. F. Bussey; cello, Charles C. Van Liew; bass, Jacob Plain; flute, Henry Plain; clarinet, Frank Plain, first cornet, Silas Barr; second cornet, Gilbert Clayton; trombones, Gerald Schneider and Stephen Brown; drums, Ed Frazier. The musical repertoire of the orchestra consisted of standard overtures such as Tancredi by Rossini, selections from operas, and standard dance compositions. The orchestra never condescended to play for dances, however.

Being a nonprofessional orchestra, the group seldom received cash remuneration for public appearances. What money they did receive was spent on music or other orchestra equipment. They seemed quite content in being a musical social service group, playing in concerts and for graduation exercises. Often the group would make trips to other towns, and would have to return late at night by freight train. Many of the members were guilty of regaling the train's men in the freight caboose with music en route.

The orchestra managed to earn enough money to purchase a xylophone, which was played by Professor Stein. This was quite an addition to this exciting organization, and helped to stimulate the interest in the orchestra of both the participants and the audiences.

At that time, Edward Howell was one of the young physicians of Aurora and was most devoted to music. The attainments of Howell on the violin, and his musical appreciation and tastes, were rare and noteworthy. Howell deserves considerable credit for the success of the orchestra. Four of

the string members of the organization often met in the Howell mansion and played string quartets and trios, the music being purchased by the doctor. This small ensemble browsed through much of the musical literature of the masters.¹⁵

Once a music lover heard the Chicago Symphony Orchestra play Traumerai by Schumann, and fell in love with the selection. This patron of the arts offered the Stein Orchestra twenty-five dollars if they would play it as well. The ensemble worked diligently for some time, played the selection for the music enthusiast, and collected the bounty. It was not really the money that meant so much to the group, but the fact that they played a composition almost as well as the great Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Another one of the many orchestral triumphs was that of accompanying Fannie Qiereau, a noted operatic soprano. Qiereau sang several arias from the opera Der Freischütz by von Weber.

Professor Stein was more than a pianist and organist;¹⁶ Stein understood thoroughly the principles of musical composition, orchestration, and orchestral direction. Personally and socially Stein was a very charming man, but was also one of those leaders who knew how to hold those under his leadership to strict, rigid standards with losing their confidence and respect. Aurorans were very fortunate in having such a man select their community as a place to continue his musical ventures. Stein was not only proficient in the field of instrumental performing and conducting, but was also quite a notable choral conductor. At one time, this musician conducted

¹⁵ Ibid., January 19, 1936, as told by Charles C. Van Liew to "Now and Then" editor.

¹⁶ Ibid., July 25, 1937

a mixed chorus of eighty voices known as the Stein Chorus. At a later date, Stein was the noted conductor of the Woman's Amateur Chorus consisting of one hundred voices.¹⁷

There was more evidence of the interest in stringed instruments since Ole Bull, one of the world's greatest violinists, presented a concert in Aurora in the year 1872.¹⁸ This great artist was assisted by Gertrude Orme, soprano; M. Candidus, tenor; and Alfred Richter, pianist and conductor. The following selections were performed by Ole Bull: (1) Allegro Maestoso by Paganini, (2) The Mother's Prayer by Ole Bull, and (3) Recitative and Carnival of Venice arranged by Ole Bull.

Music for dancing. Around 1876, Billy Jay was an orchestra leader who played violin.¹⁹ Jay was especially known for his fiddle playing at many old time dances. Not much was written about this type of music, but it certainly was a vital part of the music in Aurora and in many similar communities.

First high school orchestra. According to Birge,²⁰ one of the first, if not the first, high school orchestras in the United States was formed by B. Winfred Merrill of Aurora, Illinois. This orchestra was organized in 1878 when Merrill was then a student at East Aurora High School. The annual reports of the East Aurora School District Number 131 show that Merrill taught in the East Aurora schools from 1885 to 1897. The first year his

¹⁷ Ibid., August 12, 1934

¹⁸ From a program and notes found in the Emma Skinner Miller Scrapbook.

¹⁹ Aurora Beacon News, September 9, 1934.

²⁰ Birge, E. B., History of Public School Music in the United States, p. 162.

salary was \$280.00 and the second year it was raised to \$400.00.²¹ Merrill continued his studies and became a concert violinist as well as a composer and music textbook writer. Later Merrill became Dean of the Indiana University School of Music.²²

Coulter Opera House. One of the earliest and best-known ballrooms or concert halls in Aurora was the Coulter Opera House.²³ This building was constructed so that the main floor seats could be removed when balls, masquerades, fairs, or bazaars, etc., were held. During such events, the balcony, or gallery as it was called, was reserved for spectators.

The highest priced seats were in the gallery, while the cheapest seats were in the parquet or orchestra. Back of the parquet, in what was known as the dress circle, were the medium priced seats.

The gallery of the old Coulter Opera House was appointed with some degree of comfort, consisting of folding arm seats and padded upholstery, such as is expected in the good opera or movie houses of today. These specific seats were fastened to the floor, and were purchased mostly by the elite, or the young gallants and their ladies.

²¹ Annual Reports of East Aurora Board of Education District Number 131 dated 1885, 1886 and 1887.

²² Merrill was Dean Emeritus of the Indiana University School of Music until his death at the age of ninety in Bloomington, Indiana, on October 17, 1954.

²³ Information regarding the Coulter Opera House found in the Chauncey Miller Scrapbook and as stated by Alice Applegate, Secretary of the Aurora Historical Society, in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on January 8, 1955.

Miscellaneous later developments. Pioneer Sam Clark wrote the following letter to Lutz White, which was published in the Aurora Beacon News:

My own recollection is that sometime in the late 70's a man came from the East with a crude phonograph contrivance, which he exhibited in the parlor of Doctor Pond's cancer hospital on North Root Street. I went there with my father.

The machine was a cylinder, somewhat like the rolling pin with which, I hope; your wife occasionally bangs you over the head. Above it was a cone into which we made remarks. Then the cylinder was reversed. Pond turned the crank and the machine repeated whatever we had said. It was so weird that it made a lasting impression on my mind.²⁴

The coming of the first phonograph to Aurora undoubtedly made a lasting impression on the lives of many Aurorans. Pond should have been congratulated on buying the device, and for taking his valuable time to demonstrate it to the people of the community.

Piano music development. The name W. S. B. Mathews is synonymous with the teaching of music, especially piano music. Mathews was a familiar figure in the Fox River Valley of Illinois, spending several years teaching and also returning to lecture many times.²⁵ Alice Doty, a familiar figure in Aurora music, followed the work of Mathews quite extensively.²⁶

²⁴ Aurora Beacon News, July 10, 1938

²⁵ From programs found in the Alice Doty Wernicke Scrapbook.

²⁶ Ibid. Special note states that many Aurorans traveled to Chicago in 1880 to hear Mathews lecture on The Principal Composers of Modern Pianoforte Music. These lectures were presented at the Hershey Music Hall.

In 1884, Alice Doty, a well-known Fox Valley musician, held many of her student piano recitals. According to many reports, this grand lady of music thrilled many a heart in Aurora and vicinity with her wonderful performing and inspiring teaching.²⁷ A short biography of Alice Doty will be given in the next chapter.

Summary

Aurora was very fortunate in having so many talented musicians come to the community from other places in the United States and from many foreign countries. These early musicians helped to bring joy and entertainment in their own playing, and they also did much by teaching others how to play instruments or to sing correctly.

It is interesting to note the development of early music in Aurora from soloists to very small brass ensembles, and then to larger bands and orchestras. School music achieved a start in this era also, with one of the first, if not the first, high school orchestras being organized.

Pupils began taking piano lessons during this period of history in Aurora, and there was a decided interest in stringed instruments. All forms of music seemed to be getting a good start.

CHAPTER IV

MUSIC FROM 1886 TO 1895

²⁷ Ibid.

Many outstanding musicians and musical organizations seemed to commence reaching for a higher level of musical achievement during the period of 1886 to 1895. All of the well known, plus many lesser known but undoubtedly as important, individuals and groups helped to make music in Aurora more interesting during this period.

Outstanding Personalities

Aurora was blessed with many outstanding personalities during this period in music history. Some individuals reached fame only in the Aurora area, while others spread their musical achievement throughout the world.

Alice Doty Wernicke. One of the highlights of the latter quarter of the Nineteenth Century was the beginning of a long and colorful career of one of the most talented musicians of Aurora. Alice Doty Wernicke who was born in Plano, Illinois, on January 10, 1862, was the daughter of Hiram Faxon and Orissa Doty.¹ When Alice was two years of age, the family moved to Aurora, Illinois, and when she was eight years old, they moved to Batavia, Illinois.

Piano lessons began for Alice Doty when she moved with her folks to the upriver town of Batavia, Illinois. This was the beginning of the musical career that Alice Doty continued until her death. Her life work as a teacher began in her early twenties, and soon the name of Alice Doty was synonymous with all that was the best in music in her hometown of Aurora.

¹ This and much other pertinent information regarding Alice Doty Wernicke stated by Unabelle Chitty in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on June 20, 1954.

The early training of Alice Doty was very thorough, because of her lessons with the finest teachers available. In Chicago Doty studied piano and organ with Frederick Grant Gleason, and later studied piano with the famed Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler. Still later, the eminent organist, Clarence Eddy, was one of her teachers. Alice Doty received a degree in music from the American College of Music in Chicago, Illinois, on July 24, 1888.

While studying in Chicago, for a time Doty was organist at the Western Avenue Methodist Church and the Centenary Methodist Church. In her albums of programs and clippings are to be found many articles in praise of her ability as an organist and pianist in recitals and accompanying work in the city of Chicago.²

In 1886, Alice Doty came to Aurora to take over the position as organist of the First Congregational Church, a job that was held by her for many years. Later in her career, Doty became organist at the Galena Boulevard Methodist Church, now known as the Wesley Methodist Church.

In 1888, Doty received two diplomas from the American College of Music, Chicago, Illinois. One of these diplomas was given to Alice Doty for piano and the other diploma was given to her for organ. William H. Sherwood, Louis Maas of Boston, Massachusetts, S.B. Whitney and S. P. Warren of New York City, Clarence Eddy of Chicago, and L. M. Bowman, president of the college, of Newark, New Jersey, signed these diplomas.

² Chicago Daily Tribune, March 20, 1887.

Alice Doty was the only candidate to take examinations for both instruments.³

It was in 1890 that Alice Doty sailed for Germany to study with the famous Professor Barth in Berlin.⁴ It was there that Doty learned how the works of her beloved Beethoven should be played. After two years of intensive study, intermixed with several recitals and concerts, Doty returned to Aurora.

Alice Doty established her music studio on Broadway Street in Aurora in 1896. Doty used the very best of her ability in her work. Her name was associated with the finest in teaching.

Around 1890, Alice Doty became famous in the vicinity of Aurora for her trio recitals. For many years Doty played piano in the trio, while Frederick Henke played the violin and Arthur Heinickel played the violoncello. The trio varied from time to time with others playing the violin and cello parts, but Doty always played the piano. At most of the recitals the trio would be assisted by various vocal stars, some of them being as follows: Genevieve Clark Wilson, Hortense Coulter, Ella M, Kirkham, Lena Winter Goetz, Helen E. Buckley, T. M. Mendsen, Irene Swensen Critchfield, Herbert Gould, and others.

Ensemble music seemed to be a forte of Alice Doty. She soon discovered that the reed organ and the piano made a fine combination, and produced many arrangements for those instruments. Alice Doty also

³ Aurora Beacon News, June 10, 1888.

⁴ Ibid., October 4, 1936.

organized string trios and small string ensembles to play with her piano ensembles.⁵

Until 41 years of age, this lover of music remained Alice L. Doty, and then, astonished her host of friends by marrying Herr Frederick Wernicke. Her husband had been a distinguished teacher of botany at the University of Berlin, and when Herr Wernicke came to Aurora, this highly educated man knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and German, but no English. Herr Wernicke had a charming personality, but was never able to adapt himself completely to his new environment. Both Alice Doty and Herr Wernicke were born on January 10th, but several years apart, Herr Wernicke being the eldest. The couple married in 1907 and established residence in the home of the bride in Aurora.

About 1910, Alice Wernicke opened a series of Sunday afternoon artists' recitals. Alice Wernicke began these recitals with fear and trembling, thinking that many church people might object. The recitals scored instantaneous success, however, and continued for the next twelve years.

In 1911, the studio home of Alice Doty Wernicke became the scene of classes in grand opera. This crafty musician knew just how to impart her knowledge of the most noted grand operas to her students. This was only one of the many ways that Alice Wernicke taught the music of the masters to all those who had the desire to learn.

⁵ Aurora Democrat, March 17, 1892, and Aurora Daily Express, March 17, 1892.

The members of the well known Symphony Club who presented programs at the Alice Wernicke residence studio were her piano pupils and other young instrumentalists who were willing to work for the love of playing and studying. On these Sunday programs, Alice Doty Wernicke presented guest artists from Chicago, including many from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

For many years, Alice Wernicke held the same seat at the Chicago Symphony concerts which were conducted by Theodore Thomas. The knowledge of symphonies and chamber music gained there was passed on to her young Symphony Club.

Years after Alice Wernicke gave up her work with the Symphony Club, many of the former members stopped at her home every Sunday morning to play. They did this because they liked the work, and because they needed her wonderful guidance, inspiration, and untiring patience in working out a musical problem. Most of the students were members of the Blackhawk Orchestra, which later became the Aurora Civic Orchestra.

In her sixty years as a teacher and performer, Alice Wernicke was always an inspiration to students and music lovers of Aurora. It was during those years that she collected the finest in music, and after her retirement as a teacher, she presented her personal library to the Aurora Public Library. This was in 1936, and at the time, it was conservatively valued at five thousand dollars.

Out of this gift was established what is now known as the Alice Doty Wernicke Music Branch of the Aurora Public Library.⁶ This library laid the foundation for the extensive music library that Aurora now possesses, housing the libraries of such well-known Aurora musicians as Minnie Godard Worcester, Emma Skinner Miller, and violinist Edwin Sullivan. Of course, many Aurorans, too numerous to mention, have since donated music from time to time to this music library. There are few music lending libraries in the United States, and Aurora is justly proud of her own.

In 1935, one of the finest examples of love and appreciation was given to Alice Doty Wernicke. Through the sponsorship of the St. Cecilia Musical Club, of which she was a charter member, Alice Doty Wernicke was presented with a gift of several hundred dollars from former pupils, civic organizations, churches, and all lovers of good music. The names of all donors were printed on a scroll by the wife of Kenneth Foulke, a member of the St. Cecilia Musical Club. This scroll still hangs in the music library as a memorable testimonial of love and appreciation of the life work of Alice Doty Wernicke.

In 1936, Alice Wernicke was the recipient of the Cosmopolitan Club award presented for community service. The presentation of this award was an indication of services rendered by her.

⁶ The name of Unabell Chitty must be mentioned here in connection with the music library of Aurora. Chitty, a very popular and talented musician, spent many hours of untiring effort cataloging and sorting the music in the Alice Doty Wernicke library, as well as all other music donated to the library. The name Unabelle Chitty has become synonymous with the Music Branch of the Aurora Public Library.

In the library so generously donated by Alice Doty Wernicke, one can find several of her own compositions and many of her musical arrangements. Considered to be one of her finest compositions is The Brook, which is a setting of a poem by Tennyson. There are also the Wagnerian operas, based on the poems by Hueckel that Alice Doty Wernicke condensed for musical readings. They are comprehensive works and of great value.

Alice Doty Wernicke, a public spirited woman whose life was consecrated to music, gave herself unselfishly and without stint to the city that she loved and especially to the culture of the youth of the city. Her outstanding contribution to Aurora was not the Alice Doty Wernicke library of music, great as it was, but what was done by her for the young people of the city.⁷

Emma Skinner Miller. Emma Skinner was born in Yorkville, Illinois, on April 14, 1867, and moved to Aurora in 1889.⁸ Skinner started her piano studies at a very early age, and one of her instructors was Charles E. Watt of the Chicago Piano College. Watt was head of that school in Kimball Hall, Chicago, Illinois.

Being very versatile, Skinner played organ as well as piano, and was also the possessor of an excellent voice. When a young girl, Emma Skinner played organ in the Yorkville, Illinois, Baptist Church.

⁷ Opinions expressed by Unabelle Chitty, Herman Barnard, Robert W. Barclay, and many other Aurora musicians who knew and worked with Alice Doty Wernicke.

⁸ Aurora Beacon News, April 2, 1950.

Soon after Skinner moved to Aurora, she was engaged to play organ in the First Congregational Church. Still later Skinner was organist at the New England Church, organist and choir director at the Trinity Episcopal, Claim Street Baptist, Fourth Street Methodist, Wesley Methodist, and First Evangelical churches, and pianist at the First Church of Christ.

From 1897 to 1906, Skinner was director of the Woman's Amateur Chorus and the Men's Auxiliary Chorus.⁹ These two groups did some creditable singing while they were in existence. Certainly the members of these choral organizations must have raised their own musical standards as well as the standards of their listening audiences.

Skinner changed her name to Miller when she married Herman F. Miller in 1899. Herman Miller was a member of the famous Miller brothers quartet, Aurora Cornet Band, the Godard Military Band, and the Yoeman Band.¹⁰

Emma Skinner Miller was supervisor of music for both East and West Aurora public schools. When the position became too large for one person to handle, Emma Miller concentrated her work on the West side, supervising music there from 1901 to 1910.

Miller joined forces with Gertrude Waterhouse Parker, dramatist, and performed the H.M.S. Pinafore and the Pirates of Penzance by Gilbert and Sullivan. Both of those performances, as well as the other musicals directed

⁹ Aurora Daily Beacon, April 2, 1904.

¹⁰ Aurora Beacon News, April 2, 1950.

by Miller and Parker, were certainly a credit to the musical development of Aurora.¹¹

For several years Emma Skinner Miller traveled with the URSO quartet for the Santa Fe Railroad. This group of talented performers was an instrumental as well as a vocal quartet and they presented programs in various cities on the route of the Santa Fe from Chicago to the West Coast.

For many years, Emma Skinner Miller was in charge of programs for the Old Settlers Picnic. Emma Miller was also an active member of the Aurora Historical Society, The Woman's' Christian Temperance Union, the YWCA, and the St. Cecilia Musical Club.

Emma Miller liked literature and entertained many groups with her musical readings. This lady possessed a keen sense of humor, and retained that humor until her death in California on August 14, 1944, at the age of 77.

Maud Powell. According to all records and reports, the person from Aurora to achieve the greatest degree of fame as a concert performer was Maud Powell, violinist.¹² Powell was a product of the latter part of the Nineteenth and first part of the Twentieth centuries.

Powell was born in Peru, LaSalle County, Illinois, August 22, 1867. As her family moved to Aurora when Maud Powell was only two years old, Aurora claims this outstanding performer without contradiction.

¹¹ Ibid., October 22, 1944.

¹² Ibid., July 25, 1937.

The father of Maud was Professor W. B. Powell who was superintendent of East Aurora schools for many years, and later superintendent of schools in Washington, D.C. Professor Powell collaborated with Emma Todd and became the author of several widely known textbooks.

The mother of Maud Powell was a very accomplished musician, being a pianist and composer. She was the guiding star and the impelling force that started her daughter and kept her on the road to fame.

It is no wonder that Maud achieved the fame she did with such talented parents and close relatives. Her uncle, John W. Powell, was a distinguished ethnologist and pioneer explorer of the Grand Canyon. John Powell frequently visited the W. B. Powell home and often related stories of his adventures to Maud Powell.

As a young girl, Maud Powell was small, quick, and lively, and had a mass of ringlets flying about her head and face. Maud was a striking girl in appearance, as well as in discipline. Maud Powell was friendly and cheerful, and possessed a quality of hilarity; nevertheless, her life was one of seclusion.¹³ Powell was very interested in her studies and her music and, while popular with her schoolmates, she did not mingle a great deal with the youth of her day or in their activities. Professor Powell and Professor Fickensher would encourage Maud Powell to roll a hoop with her left hand so the right arm, which was the bowing arm, would be protected and that the muscles in her arm would be developed only in conformance with her violin work.

¹³ Ibid., March 17, 1929.

First to teach violin to Maud Powell was Professor Fickensher, a short, wiry bearded German who was never a virtuoso, but what he knew, he knew correctly.¹⁴ The professor also taught music in the old Center School located on the East side of Aurora.

According to Coon,¹⁵ she and Maud Powell were pupils together in the old Center School. Professor Fickensher was the music teacher who was mild mannered, patient, and faithful to his trust. Fickensher would enter the schoolroom with his violin tucked under his arm and would try to instill the love of music in the souls of the pupils, but naturally, some of the pupils were incorrigible. His entrance was regarded as a time for release from restraint; so during this period a pleasant time was had by all, as the regular teacher was absent from the room. The pupils indulged in the usual pranks of misconduct that were most trying to the patience of the poor, despairing professor; however, it seems that much musical foundation was absorbed which proved valuable in later years.

It was the custom for Professor Fickensher to escort young Powell home after music class for her violin lesson and quite often this little lady would rebel. Maud Powell would stomp her feet and her little head of dark curls would shake with remonstrance. However, in the following years of arduous study, Maud Powell became slavishly devoted to her art.

After studying with Professor Fickensher for some time, Powell transferred to the distinguished virtuoso, William Lewis. This famous violinist was also a partner in a well-known music house in Chicago.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, August 12, 1934.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 25, 1937, as told by Carolyn Kelly Coon to "Now and Then" editor.

Since the mother was an accomplished pianist, Maud Powell learned to play the piano quite well. The piano is usually considered to be the understanding of musical structure by budding professional musicians no matter what their special instrument might be.

Powell was very fortunate in receiving some trio experience as well. With Maud Powell on the piano, Edward Howell on the violin, and Charles C. Van Liew on the cello, some of the old masters of trio composition were studied.

Powell told of her fondness of rowing a boat or riding a spirited horse, but both of these and other sports had to be abandoned for the sake of her hands. Nevertheless, she did develop into full womanhood with a splendid figure, moved with spring and vivacity, and her cheeks were plump and rosy.

When it came time for her European training, Powell gave a farewell concert in order to obtain additional expense money. For her last number, Powell played Home Sweet Home, and mothers wept and the eyes of many fathers were moist. When Professor Stein and a sedate committee went to the home of Maud Powell to present her with the money from the benefit concert, they found her on top of the house of Matt Shoeman, her neighbor, watching him repair a chimney.¹⁶

While studying in Europe, both German and French masters were employed. Naturally, each virtuoso commented upon the inability of the rival virtuoso and would not acknowledge the system of another teacher; so

¹⁶ Ibid., March 17, 1929

Powell had to redouble a tireless application of her work. Maud Powell had abundant grit and worked diligently.

Then came the time for the appearances of Maud Powell as a professional violinist. It was a tough fight against nationwide public indifference, against rivalries and jealousies, and against certain organs of publicity. An audience had to be won, and name had to be emblazoned the country over. To Maud Powell, all of her performances had to be presented without compromise. Her programs never did indulge in anything cheap, merely spectacular, or eccentric. It was not in her make up to offer anything but high classical art, whether of selected compositions or of execution. Powell stated that her aim had been to cultivate a keener, higher, more widespread appreciation of good music. No wonder, even long before her death, musicians pronounced her, the “World’s Greatest Woman Violinist”.

Maud Powell studied a year under Shradieck at Leipzig, and took a course with Charles Dancla at the Paris Conservatory. Acting on the advice of Leonard, Powell went to London to play a concert before the Queen, and made a tour with the noted soprano, Jose Sherrington. Powell made her debut at a New York Philharmonic concert in 1885 playing the G Minor Concerto by Bruch.

In 1885, Powell returned to America and again appeared with the New York Philharmonic in concert conducted by Theodore Thomas. Also, Powell toured America yearly and in 1892, toured Germany and Austria. In 1893, she played at the Chicago World’s Fair. Maud Powell also had the distinction of being the first violinist to record for the Victor Talking Machine.

The mother of Maud Powell was part Hungarian; so perhaps that strain of Hungarian blood helped Powell to play with the fervor and warmth, which was characteristic of her art. Of course, it took years of hard work, strenuous study, and a lot of listening to good music to help bring out the great talent that Maud Powell possessed.

In private life, Maud Powell was Mrs. H. Godfrey Turner. This famous woman who had played before the crowned heads of Europe and to music lovers on every continent, admitted that the fame received was not worth the price paid for it. Indeed, the price was great for herself and for her family. For her fame and skill, Maud Powell Turner gave up childhood, could not live a normal life, worked like a slave, her father was deprived of home life, and her brother was bereft of the care of a mother when such care was most needed.¹⁷

Perhaps it did not pay for what Maud Powell herself received, but to that should be added the joy in her art, which the world received. Music speaks a universal language, and in every civilized country her wonderful music thrilled the hearts of the people.

Before her death on January 8, 1920, in Unionstown, Pennsylvania, Maud Powell Turner had received many honors and citations. It was good that the world appreciated her work and showed that appreciation while this world famous musician was still alive to enjoy the happiness it brought to her.

Choral Activities

¹⁷ Ibid., December 6, 1931

The choral activities of a community are often overlooked because they usually do not have the blatant showmanship so often characteristic of bands and orchestras. Even so, in this period of history in Aurora, choral music reached new heights.

The Apollo Club. In the centennial year of 1876, Aurora had an immense Fourth of July celebration. Under the direction of Professor G. W. Fickensher, assisted by Eugene Bowen, a children's choir of one thousand voices was trained to sing at the exercises. Also, a chorus of men composed of fifty voices took part. From this men's chorus the Apollo Club was born.¹⁸

The Apollo Club was a leader in musical circles for many years. Each year, besides presenting concerts, they would give a stage production, such as an operetta or comedy show. The organization rehearsed at least once a week, and paid the conductor twenty-five dollars each night to drill them.

One of the most popular productions with an all male cast was the burlesque opera, Romeo and Juliet. It is reported that Charlie Hackney made a great hit portraying "Juliet". Professor Stein directed the music for the Romeo and Juliet production and the costumes were from Chicago.¹⁹

The first concert given by the Apollo Club was held on November 22, 1876, in the Coulter House House.²⁰ Besides the singing of the chorus, several soloists and male quartets performed.

¹⁸ Ibid., July 21, 1929.

¹⁹ Ibid., August 12, 1934.

²⁰ Ibid., August 12, 1934.

The members of the original Apollo Club of Aurora, Illinois, were as follows:²¹ L. P. Dieterich, W. S. Todd, Frank D. James, Ed Sill, Frank Gilbrette, Dave Quackenbush, S. B. Taylor, G. W. Fickensher, J. B. Callan, George Allen, Professor W. B. Powell, Charles Pearce, M. O. Southworth, Eugene Bowen, Professor Hastings, O. Pilstrom, Val Slaker, F. H. Robinson, Charles Wegner, W. Lord, C. F. Busey, Joe Conway, Charles Hackney, J. S. Eggleston, Henry Stenger, John Fauth, Arthur and Eben Beaupre, and Willis Hoyt. The conductors over the years were G. W. Fickensher, Eugene Bowen, William Tomlins, and, of course, assisted many times by the old music master, Professor Stein.

The Peerless Quartet. After the Apollo Club had been disbanded, four men still had a desire to sing. They formed what was called the Peerless Quartet.²² The members, Charles Lietz, Charles Clark, Al Biger, and John Fauth, achieved a tremendous amount of local fame during the 1890's. This quartet undoubtedly did a lot of barbershop singing as well as other types of male vocalizing.

The St. Cecilia Musical Club. In the summer of 1889, a small group of girl playmates that were studying German decided to have a little musical club.²³ The name of "St. Cecilia Verein" was recommended, but later, at the suggestion of a very fine voice instructor, Emma Rice, the club was called St. Cecilian Club. The founders of the club were Edith Smith, Florence Daily, Edith Rice, Mary Hoag, Louise M. Titsworth, Bessie Somarindyke, Clara Minium, and Mayme McKay.

²¹ Ibid., July 21, 1929.

²² Ibid., August 12, 1934.

²³ Stuart, C. M., History of the St. Cecilia Musical Club, 50 pp.

In 1894, after a period of inactivity, the club was reorganized under the name of St. Cecilia Club. In 1912, the present name of the St. Cecilia Musical Club was adopted.

The club has had a very interesting and worthwhile history and this history has been written and published. Even so, the present study would not be complete if a few highlights of the St. Cecilia Musical Club were not included.

In 1897, the first printed calendars of the activities of the club were introduced. These calendars have been an integral part of the club ever since.

On December 4, 1899, the first complimentary concert was given at Somarindyke Hall. The program included the talents of Charles W. Clark, basso; Lucille Stevenson, soprano; and Eleanor Fisher, accompanist. These entertainers were from Chicago.

In 1903, at the First Methodist Church, the first charity concert was given. This was for the benefit of the Aurora City Hospital.

At a bazaar in 1906, a skit entitled The Old Melodeon was given. This was a patriotic skit by Frederick W. Root. The St. Cecilia Chorus also sang songs from the play O.P.R.A.

Alice Doty was honored in 1910 by the presentation of her composition The Brook. Also, the May breakfast, which has become an annual event was inaugurated.

In 1914, the Illinois Music Teachers' Association convention was held at East Aurora High School, and the St. Cecilia Musical Club did much to help with the meeting and convention plans. Several members of the club performed at this meeting.

On March 26, 1916, the club had charge of the music at a mass meeting of the Local Option party. The meeting was held at the First Methodist Church. The club also gave a dedicatory concert for a new pipe organ at the same church in 1917. The years 1916 and 1917 were also important for the club in another way, inasmuch as they sponsored concerts given by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

In 1922, the club became affiliated with the Illinois State Federation of Music Clubs. The organization began holding two competitive contests each year, one for piano, and another for songs with piano accompaniment.

In 1928, a Woman's Chorus of sixty members was organized with Carl Graven from Chicago as the director. The rehearsals were held at the YWCA. Also, the St. Cecilia Piano Ensemble, sixteen pianists at eight pianos, was formulated and directed by Alice Doty Wernicke.

Frances Groom Teichmann, a well-known Aurora musician, wrote especially for a club program, the Life of Stephen Foster. This was presented on February 19, 1929. Photostatic copies of flute solos made from original manuscripts of Stephen Foster were played by Robert Teichmann, son of Frances G. Teichmann. These photostatic copies were later exhibited at the Boston Biennial Convention of the National Federation of Music Clubs.

In 1930, Unabelle Chitty was appointed club librarian who has served continuously and efficiently, and has classified approximately eight thousand copies of piano, voice, and violin ensembles; string ensemble music; piano ensembles; duets and part songs. Many gifts of private collections were given to the club. Chitty presented her organ to the club for use in chamber music and symphony programs.

Instrumental Music Groups

There were many instrumental groups functioning during this period of history, but only a few will be mentioned in this chapter. Other groups either got their start at an earlier date and were mentioned in an earlier chapter, or were associated with some outstanding individual and are mentioned in conjunction with that individual.

The Union Cornet Band. In 1897, the Union Cornet Band,²⁴ sometimes called the German Band, was organized. This band was very well known and was directed by Philip Jones. Perhaps one of the things that attracted people to the band was their very rich and colorful uniforms. How true that is even today!

The Burlington Park band contests. In 1889, as a promotive stunt, and at the same time being a public service enterprise, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad sponsored band contests held at Burlington Park, which was located near Naperville, Illinois.²⁵ Many Illinois towns surrounded by the Burlington Railroad system, such as Aurora, Ottawa, Streator, LaSalle, Peru, Princeton, and others, would send bands to the contest. Of course,

²⁴ Aurora Beacon News, March 19, 1950.

²⁵ Ibid., May 16, 1934.

many public-spirited band supporters from the various communities followed the activities of their bands, just as they would follow an athletic event.

Besides the band contest, there would be special events, and one of them was the snare drum solo contest between Billy Brooks and Major Nevin of Chicago. They were supposed to be two of the best rudimental drummers of that time.

Another specialty, which usually climaxed the big event, was the massed band. Dwight Godard, one of the foremost musicians of this area, especially in the field of band music, conducted the first massed band of three hundred musicians. Like most massed bands, Godard had some difficulty keeping the bass drummers together. The band performed, under Godard's direction, American Bell March, Gay Old Time Medley, Sweet Bunch of Daisies March, and Aurora Two-Step, an original composition written by the conductor.

The Earl Drake Orchestra. Another one of the outstanding musicians of Aurora was Earl Drake, violinist. In 1892-1893, Earl Drake wielded the baton over a group of musicians that called themselves the Earl Drake Orchestra.²⁶ The existence of this organization was short lived and information concerning them not very exacting. The known members consisted of Edward Miller, Louis Shulte, and Lottie Huen. Drake received most of his early training and popularity while living in Aurora, but soon moved to Chicago and made his home there.

²⁶ Ibid., November 6, 1940.

Illinois Music Teachers' Association

The first annual meeting of the Illinois Music Teachers' Association was held in Chicago, Illinois, at the Central Music Hall on June 29, 30, and July 1, 1887.²⁷ Many Aurora music teachers attended this meeting and became a part of the organization. Alice Doty, from Aurora, played the organ composition Theme and Variations in A-flat by Thiele.

One of the highlights of the meeting was an address by W. S. B. Mathes on History of Music in Illinois. Although not an Auroran, Mathews had done considerable speaking and teaching in the Aurora area.²⁸

The second annual meeting of the Illinois Music Teachers' Association was held in Peoria, Illinois, on June 25, 26, and 27, 1889.²⁹ Alice Doty again performed, playing an organ solo on Tuesday, June 25, 1889. Doty was one of the outstanding music teachers at the convention and was praised by a Bloomington, Illinois, daily newspaper.³⁰

More evidence that Aurora was quite a musical town was the fact that the Illinois Music Teachers' Association held one of their meetings in the city of lights. This meeting was held on May 12 to 15, 1914, with the president of the association, Edgar A. Nelson, from Bush Temple, Chicago, presiding. Two highlights of the meeting were the demonstrations put on by

²⁷ Chicago Saturday Evening Herald, July 2, 1887.

²⁸ From a program found in the Alice Doty Wernicke Scrapbook.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Bloomington Pantagraph, June 28, 1889.

Margaret F. Pouk with students from East Aurora grade schools and Grace Wheelock with the West Aurora High School music department.³¹

Recollections

Quite often it is entertaining to take time and reminisce about a few topics of interest. Old time musicians also liked to recollect subjects and expound on those items somewhat.

We gotta piano. Ed White wrote to Lutz White

Do you remember when every mother in the gay nineties thought her child was to become a musical prodigy and saved and slaved to buy a piano and when the wonderful instrument was installed how proud she was? And do you recall the adjustable piano stool, an accessory that could be fitted to the short or tall, by a twist or two on the long screw stem?³²

Recollections of John Fauth. In a letter to the editor, Fauth wrote:

When I was a young man, and in the remote seventies, eighties, and nineties, when there were no radios, moving pictures, phonographs, and the like, Aurora was a musical town. Everybody was more or less interested in music. There were many societies, clubs, and organizations devoted to this art. Every season there would be many outstanding concerts, operettas, cantatas, oratorios, et cetera, presented by home talent. Every church supported a choir of unusual talent and we had such well-known musicians among us as Professor E. A. Stein, Earl Drake, Emma Baker Broderick, Professor G. W. Fickensher, Maud Powell, and Earl Brown et cetera.³⁴

³¹ Stated by Margaret F. Pouk in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on December 19, 1954.

³² Aurora Beacon News, September 30, 1934, as told by Ed White to "Now and Then"

³⁴ The above material could be argued both ways, but that topic will not be made a controversial matter in this investigation. It shows only the opinion of one man, but

The Matt Kusel Musical Show. One of the theatrical products of Aurora was a German comedian by the name of Matt Kusel.³⁵ In the summer of 1890 Kusel presented a tent show on the island, and it must have been an interesting exhibition. The program consisted of a dozen girls in song and dance routines, plus three or four comedians. The show changed bills every week. The girls were attired in abbreviated skirts similar to what is seen every place today, but that was in the age of the long draperies.

Numerous complaints of immodesty were received; so Kusel had to limit his shows to men only, and when the complaints and pressure became too great, later to abandon the shows entirely. It is reported that the entertainment was like a Sunday School cantata compared with the musical shows of today.

Summary

With the outstanding teaching of Alice Doty Wernicke and Emma Skinner Miller, music in Auroraland flourished extensively. Wernicke did most of her teaching in her private studio while Miller did considerable teaching in the public schools. Both of the women were also active in church music.

This era of music in Aurora also brought about a change in tradition. Because of the pioneer work done by Maude Powell, women were given

also emphasizes the fact that each generation believes they did things better when they were youngsters.

³⁵ Aurora Beacon News, March 21, 1926.

more opportunities to appear on the concert stage and in professional instrumental organizations. Maud Powell also won fame for herself and achieved the title as being the world's greatest woman violinist.

The Illinois Music Teachers' Association did a tremendous amount of work in encouraging better teachers and in stimulating the improvement of the methods of teaching music. One of the conventions of this group was held in Aurora.

In this period of music history in Aurora, both vocal and instrumental musical organizations were very active. They did much in improving the standard of music accepted by the public.

CHAPTER V

MUSIC FROM 1896 TO 1915

During the period of 1896 to 1915, all forms of music seemed to flourish in Aurora. It is a known fact that music interests almost everybody, but this era was the beginning of a period when more people participated in music than ever before. Bands and orchestras of many types and sizes were the special interest of the day, and of course, vocal music was not left out of the picture either. It was in this period of history that high school music in Aurora began to take form.

Enterprising Musicians

Many enterprising musicians and musical organizations became active during the last five years of the Nineteenth Century. These musicians and their organizations helped to raise the cultural level of music in Aurora.

Dwight Godard. Dwight Godard, a colorful musician, was born in Yorkville, Illinois, on November 15, 1864.¹ Godard had a long and eventful career as a musician and was active throughout the Fox River Valley of Illinois. Much of the work by Godard was devoted to bands, but he was well known in all fields of music, being an excellent pianist as well as cornetist, composer, arranger, and conductor.

Godard began his musical career playing the cornet when a mere youngster and took up the piano in 1880, studying with Professor Adams from Bristol Station, Illinois. Having worlds of musical talent and having received excellent training, Godard became quite an accomplished musician. Besides being an accomplished musician, Godard was an excellent conductor, because of his knack of handling musicians.

When a boy of 12, Godard was injured in an accident, which left him a cripple. Of course, that did not hamper his musical career; in fact, it might have enhanced his musical training, because it would have been difficult for him to engage in many other occupations.

According to Colwell,² Godard was certainly supreme as a dance orchestra leader and as a band director. His time and lilt were such as to make a wooden man dance or march. That gives a pretty good idea as to the feeling for rhythm Godard must have possessed, and that he knew how to

¹ Aurora Beacon News. October 8, 1933.

² Ibid., October 8, 1933, as told by E. C. Colwell to "Now and Then" editor.

instill that feeling into the minds and bodies of others, either students or listening audiences.

In those days, school bands were practically nonexistent; therefore many professional bands were organized to meet the demands for band music. Groups numbering from twenty to thirty members were the type of professional bands that usually played for most of the parades, picnics, concerts, races, ball games, and other entertainments. Of course, most of these bands received pay for the services that they rendered. Godard either played in or was a conductor of a professional band during most of his active musical career.

Before the advent of the automobile, Godard rode a white pony at the head of his band when the group marched in a parade. When autos became popular, he rode in a Brush runabout. From all reports, Godard must have had a flare for showmanship.

When the eminent violinist, Maud Powell, made her professional debut in Aurora after her European training, Godard was on hand to play for her. Maud Powell thought enough of Godard compositions to play one of his selections entitled Adagio Concetta at a concert December 3, 1888.³

The Godard compositions, especially marches, were played all over the world by bands, orchestras, pianists, and many other instruments and instrumental groups. Perhaps his most famous composition was Evans Grand March, which was written for Senator Henry Evans and the old Evans Grand Opera House.

³ From a program found in the Alice Doty Wernicke Scrapbook.

On the morning of August 6, 1898, the Aurora troops were surprised to hear the march Cosmopolitan, by Godard being played in Guayama, Puerto Rico. This march and other American selections were being played on the piano.⁴

A Godard band spent a considerable amount of time playing concerts in the old Riverview and Fox River parks, especially on Sunday afternoons and of course, at all-day holiday celebrations and political rallies. Streetcar lines formerly extended to the park in order to accommodate all the people who wished an outing and to hear some good musical entertainment. Some of the Godard compositions that were performed there were as follows: Charlemagne March, Third Brigade March, Chicago American March, Aurora Two-Step, The Cosmopolitan March, and the Evans Grand March.

To say the least, a considerable number of the musicians in the Aurora area played in the Godard bands over a period of many years. To list all of those musicians would be like listing the bandsmen who played with John Philip Sousa during the reign of the Sousa bands; however, from a picture which is located in the Aurora Historical Museum, the following musicians were members of the Godard band as of September 24, 1919: E.J. Hill, drum major; John Nelson, M. P. Schiltz, Edgar Thomas, S. H. Knuth, Howard B. Hough, Lyle H. Flanders, Edward Bowman, and Albert L. Huen, cornets; Louis P. Dieterich, John Schlicht, Jacob Feldman, Vine Raymond, Albert Benson, and James Fernley, clarinets; Roy Thompson, oboe; John Carr, Edward Knuth, Michael Seaman, and John Miller, mellophones; Arnold Olson, alto saxophone; Elmer Barnes, Frank Lowe, Herman Miller,

⁴ Aurora Beacon News, August 1, 1948.

Charles Miller, trombones; Roscoe Tobias, euphonium; Charles Eitelgeorge, E-flat tuba; Adolph Huen and Ira Akeley, BB-flat tubas; Daniel V. Trapp, Charles Stephenson, and Charles E. Gridley, snare drums; and Charles Ernst, bass drum. Many of those gentlemen are still living and like to reminisce about the old Godard bands and the music they used to play. Naturally, according to their stories, they had the best band in the country.

Another one of the Godard contributions to music was his invention of a march folder which proved to be a decided help to marching bands. When Godard retired from actual performing, he busied himself with the manufacture of these march folios. Many bands of today are still using this type of folder.

One of the highlights of the Older Settlers Picnic held August 30, 1934, was the appearance of a unique orchestra, a group of old timers who used to perform in an orchestra directed by Godard sometime between 1876 and 1915.⁵ Charles E. Gridley was quite instrumental in contacting the group, which was widely scattered. Eighty musicians were contacted, and they promised to be on hand, if possible. On the day of the picnic, fifty-seven musicians registered, and forty-six took an active part. The group did not have a rehearsal; they were just there with their instruments ready to perform as usual. Godard showed his unforgettable ability in directing an orchestra, but felt that he had done enough work for one day. Many of the old timers, especially the brass players, also felt that they had done enough performing, and their lips looked like rare beefsteak.

⁵ Ibid., September 9, 1934

Godard was not only a fine band conductor, but also an excellent conductor of orchestras, both in the popular and classical vein. For many years, Godard held the position as conductor of the orchestra that played for all of the performances at the Evans Opera House.⁶ Also, Godard did considerable conducting and performing in various communities in the Aurora area.

Although Dwight Godard died on March 7, 1945, his name still lives in the minds of many Aurorans, and will live on as long as bands and orchestras are a part of the community. It is hoped that such a symbol of good music will live forever.

William Eitelgeorge. When it came to the subject of music, the name Eitelgeorge was certainly very familiar around Aurora. William Eitelgeorge,⁷ son of an Aurora pioneer musician, was born in Aurora, Illinois, on April 11, 1862. When only 14 years of age, Eitelgeorge played cornet in a band directed by his father. William Eitelgeorge had the honor of playing in the Stein orchestra, and also in the Edward Miller orchestra that played at the old Grand Opera House.

William Eitelgeorge played baritone horn in the Godard Military and Yoeman bands. For several years, Eitelgeorge conducted the orchestra at the Coulter Opera House and also managed the Aurora Cornet Band.⁸ For twelve years, this prominent musician was a delegate to the national convention of the American Federation of Musicians.

⁶ Ibid., August 19, 1934

⁷ Ibid., September 16, 1934.

⁸ Ibid., November 27, 1949.

E. C. Hoffman. The son of a Lutheran minister, E. C. Hoffman, was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and came to Aurora around the year 1895.⁹ Hoffman was a violin prodigy and appeared as a soloist with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra when only 11 years of age. This talented musician attended college in Milwaukee and Watertown, Wisconsin, and also attended Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois. Hoffman could have done much more with his music, but being the oldest child in the family, it was customary to do as his father bade, and his father sent him to college to become a Lutheran schoolteacher.

Professor Hoffman and one of his sisters studied abroad in Berlin, Germany. At one of the conservatories in Berlin, Hoffman studied organ, violin, piano, and choir directing while his sister majored in piano. Hoffman mastered all of the instruments except the woodwinds, and was an authority on the pipe organ, as well as being an excellent choirmaster.

Hoffman became principal of St. Paul's Lutheran School upon his arrival in Aurora. When there was a split in the churches, Hoffman became principal of the Emmanuel Lutheran School. Professor Hoffman was very active in all circles of music and received several honorary degrees from Lutheran colleges.

A music philanthropist. Minnie Godard Worcester, a sister of Dwight Godard, was instrumental in bringing the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to Aurora.¹⁰ Worcester was a talented pianist herself, and formerly presented elaborate recitals. Several times Worcester was soloist with the Chicago

⁹ Stated by Herbert E. Hoffman, son of E. C. Hoffman, in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on January 20, 1955.

¹⁰ Aurora Beacon News, December 31, 1916.

Symphony Orchestra in Chicago, Milwaukee, or when the symphony came to Aurora. It has been stated in rumor form that Minnie Worcester was a piano soloist with the Chicago Symphony as a result of a terrific outlay of money on the part of her husband.

Many people wondered whether Worcester was trying to put her name in the limelight with money belonging to her husband or whether her motive was to try and further the advancement of musical understanding to the people of Aurora. Regardless of her motive, Worcester undoubtedly helped raise the musical standards in Aurora. If people are subjected to good music, many learn to understand its meaning.

Instrumental Music

Instrumental music continued to grow in popularity, and more people enjoyed the pleasure of playing a musical instrument. Besides the professional bands and orchestras, many churches sponsored an instrumental group.

Bands. When the Third Infantry Brigade of the Illinois National Guard was ordered to report to active duty in 1898, the Enterprise Brass Band was on hand to lead the parade for them.¹¹ This band was organized in 1897, and the conductor, S. H. Knuth, practically had a band consisting of his seven brothers, William, Nate, Frank, Jacob, Fred, Henry, and Edward.¹² Other members of the band were Charles Miller, C. Garrison, A. Houlney,

¹¹ Ibid., April 18, 1948.

¹² Edward Knuth presented his grandson, Earl Huntoon, with a cornet and also taught him how to play it. Huntoon attended and graduated from West Aurora schools playing solo cornet in the band, and is presently solo cornetist with the Roosevelt-Aurora Post Number 84 American Legion band.

William Ernst, Oscar Ament, Charles Ernst, M. P. Schiltz, W. Beede, Louis P. Dieterich, and O. Mashio. Many of those bandsmen played in several bands and orchestras during their years of active performing.

There were many musical groups organized in 1897. With E. C. Hoffman as director, the Aurora Philharmonic Band was activated.¹³ This was one of the many semiprofessional bands, which was organized during that particular era.

Andrew Domeir, an E-flat clarinet player and also a member of the Godard band, was director of the German Boys Band.¹⁴ This band held rehearsals in the schoolhouse in which Domeir was a teacher. After one year, M. P. Schiltz became the director of this band.

The membership of the Roumanian Band consisted of men from the northeast section of Aurora known as Pigeon Hill.¹⁵ Most of the people of Hungarian or Bohemian extraction settled in this section of the city. The band, also directed by Andrew Domeir, boasted of a membership of fifty-five players. They were noted for their flashy bright colored uniforms, probably fashioned after clothes in their native Hungary or Bohemia.

The Aurora Cornet Band presented the only free entertainment given in Lincoln Park during the early years of the existence of the band.¹⁶ This band undoubtedly performed many varied and interesting programs. Some of the selections performed by the band were as follows: marches, Cavalier

¹³ Aurora Beacon News, July 16, 1939

¹⁴ Ibid., May 14, 1950.

¹⁵ Ibid., May 14, 1950.

¹⁶ Ibid., September 6, 1902.

and New Colonial by Hall; overtures, Dreamy Eyes by Boettger and Night Wanderer by Mosken; Dance of the Skeletons by Hildreth and Valse Romantique by Tobani. It is interesting to note that some of the selections have been rearranged for a more modern band and are still performed by many American bands today.¹⁷

Orchestras. Curtiss Barry, a very talented organist, became the conductor of the Aurora Symphony Orchestra, which was active from 1901 to 1904, inclusive.¹⁸ There were usually thirty-six members and some of them were the following musicians: William G. Eitelgeorge, Albert Huen, Vincent Frey, Louis Schultz, Howard Sweet, first violins; Frank Barry, P.A. Johnson, Louis Dieterich, James Rush, Walter Rolfe, second violins; Charles Miller, viola; James Fernley, cello; Charles Eitelgeorge, Adolph Huen, Ira Aceley, basses; G. Burton Denney and John Schlich, clarinets; Harry Barry and Clarence Cromer, trumpets; Herbert Turner, trombone; Clifford Weston, bass drum; and Wilbur Stone, snare drum.

The Aurora Symphony Orchestra was sometimes called the Aurora Orchestral Club. This group performed the music of the masters as well as the semi-classical music of the times. The director, Curtiss Barry, was also organist at St. Paul's Church, Chicago, Illinois.

The Aurora Musical Club was formed by a consolidation of all the musical societies in the city and consisted of a chorus and an orchestra.¹⁹

¹⁷ On November 11, 1954, the Roosevelt-Aurora Post Number 84 American Legion Band marched on Veterans Day parade playing the original arrangement of the stirring New Colonial March by R. B. Hall.

¹⁸ Aurora Beacon News, March 26, 1950.

¹⁹ From Alice Doty Wernicke Scrapbook.

Professor Clarence Dickinson from Chicago was engaged to direct the organization.

The Musical Club sold membership tickets called associate memberships for a fee of two dollars. This membership card entitled the bearer entrance to the three yearly concerts performed by the club.

Besides playing orchestral selections, the orchestra of the club would accompany many of the performers at the concerts. The orchestra usually numbered twenty-five pieces, but quite often six or seven professional musicians were added to fill out the instrumentation lacking among their own players.

The Aurora Musical Club flourished for many seasons and was certainly a vital group in helping to make Aurora musical. Their list of outstanding performers and of compositions presented is much too voluminous to include here.

The Aurora Symphony Club was very popular around the turn of the century.²⁰ This small organization would study and perform the symphonies of the old masters. Martha Hobbs and Alice Doty would usually play the piano, Katherine Howard the organ, and Frederic Henke the violin. Occasionally Arthur H. Heinickel, a cellist from the Theodore Thomas Orchestra, would assist the ensemble. This group loved to perform the Beethoven symphonies, which were their best works.

At one time or another, most of the prominent churches of Aurora boasted of an orchestra. The New England Church Orchestra was one of the

²⁰ Aurora Beacon News, February 1, 1902.

first to be organized. Frank E. Barry, a violinist, was the director of the group. Barry was also a composer and the orchestra played his march, Along Near the Last, at their first concert on January 13, 1903.²¹ Barry played several violin solos, and G. Burton Denney performed several selections on the clarinet. Emma Skinner Miller and J. T. Taylor were the accompanists for the soloists.

Another group, the First Congregational Church Orchestra, directed by L.C. Schultz, presented a concert on Tuesday, March 22, 1904.²² This was another one of those church organizations that helped many to perform and to understand music, and certainly provided a way to occupy leisure time. Emma Skinner Miller played the organ at this concert and Harry A. Smith played a cornet solo entitled Violets, by Wright.

At least five other orchestras were formed or were active in the year 1897 and continued their activity in the early 1900's. Not much information is available regarding these organizations except their names and directors. These particular groups were named after their directors. The five gentlemen who organized orchestras at this particular time were A. L. Huen, Theodore Howard, Henry Much, John Stark, and C. G. Sweet.²³

Musicians Union organized. The headline of a local newspaper in 1902 was WILL FORM UNION.²⁴ The musicians were to meet that following Friday at the Trades Assembly Hall for an organizational meeting. The union was to be formed to fix a scale of prices for band and orchestra

²¹ From a program found in the Emma Skinner Miller Scrapbook.

²² Ibid.

²³ Aurora Beacon News, September 15, 1946.

²⁴ Ibid., January 15, 1902.

entertainment. Heretofore, it had been a hodgepodge of get what you could as far as remuneration for services rendered. Al Huen, leader of the Aurora Cornet Band, Edward J. Miller, musical director of the opera house, and Dwight Godard, director of the Military Band, were men instrumental in the organization of the union.

Vocal Music

Vocal music also seemed to be flourishing in this period of history in Aurora, but instrumental music undoubtedly was receiving more and more emphasis. It is imagined that the vocal music in the churches was perhaps continuing on a high level, but since this investigation is not primarily interested in liturgical music, just how high a level of achievement vocal music reached will not be discussed.

Small ensembles. Aurora was the home of a vocal group known as the Illinois Quartet.²⁵ The gentlemen who organized this ensemble were not so-called professional musicians, that is, they devoted only their spare time to music, but their training was quite intensive. Charles Lietz, first tenor and manager of the quartet, received his instruction from Professors Halle and Teddideaux of Chicago. Charles R. Clarke, bass, studied with Professor Halle of Chicago and with Emma H. Rice of Aurora. George Kuter, baritone, was the soloist and leader, and undoubtedly also studied with Emma Rice. S. J. Solbert, second tenor, received his early raining in Norway and also studied with Professor Colberg of Chicago and with Emma Rice of Aurora.

²⁵ Ibid., July 23, 1900.

Four ladies joined forces to form the Treble Clef Quartet and made a name for themselves in Aurora musical circles.²⁶ Gertrude Harris Manbeck sang first soprano, Roma Adams Lemmon, second soprano, Bessie Hanks Miller, first alto, and Harriet Fowler, second alto.

This quartet gave several concerts, but the performance on Friday, April 16, 1909, was a special one. This concert was given at the People's Church under the auspices of the reform and philanthropy department of the Aurora Woman's Club. The proceeds of the concert were used for the benefit of the old Ladies Home and the City Hospital. Katherine Howard played several piano compositions and did the accompanying. Howard also harmonized most of the selections sung by the quartet.

There were many types of musical organizations formed in the year 1897, and the Concordia Male Choir was one of those.²⁷ This choir was a vital part of the community vocal music scene and participated in several civic affairs.

The Harmonia Trio seemed to be very popular around 1898, and the ensemble consisted of Grace C. Allen, soprano, Edith Brainard, first alto, and Bessie Hanks Miller, second alto.²⁸ Many times Gertrude Godard would assist the trio with her recitations, and Frank C. Baird and Mary J. Spring would do the accompanying.

Larger organizations. On Wednesday, May 22, 1901, the Woman's Amateur Chorus and the Men's Auxiliary Chorus, directed by Emma

²⁶ Aurora Daily Beacon, April 16, 1909.

²⁷ From a program found in the Alice Doty Wernicke Scrapbook.

²⁸ Ibid.

Skinner Miller, sang the immortal Messiah by Handel.²⁹ This group was assisted by a quartet of soloists from Chicago consisting of Genevieve Clark Wilson, soprano; Sue Harrington Turbeck, contralto; Frederick W. Carbury, tenor; and Thomas B. Garst, bass. The accompanists, Alice Doty, Katherine Howard, Lillian Thorne, and Florence Daily, used two pianos and a concert organ.

For many years, the Woman's Amateur Chorus and the Men's Auxiliary Chorus were active and thrived under the stimulating direction of Emma Skinner Miller. Besides performing Messiah by Handel, they presented the Oratorio by Bach, Elijah by Mendelssohn, and many other notable works.

The Aurora Male Concert Company gave its first concert on Friday, February 17, 1905.³⁰ Not much information is available regarding this organization except that Emma Skinner Miller was the accompanist, and it is imagined that she was the director as well.

School Music

The influence of Lowell Mason finally reached the Midwest and music seemed to become a part of the public school systems. Evidence showed that public schools were presenting more musical programs, and conservatories of music were being organized to meet the demand for additional instruction.

²⁹ Aurora Beacon News, August 16, 1942.

³⁰ From a program found in the Emma Skinner Miller Scrapbook.

Memories of a song. About the time he was promoted from Room Four in Young School, then known as South School, to Room Five in Center School, White³¹ related a story of an unusual singing instructor. The public school teacher who taught in Room Five of Center School was Ada Foster, one of the most versatile instructors on the East side. Foster was talented, refined, cultured, immaculate, precise, and thorough. It was a known fact that this teacher loved music and was well known in musical circles, especially as a member of the First Methodist Church

On the last day of school, on holidays, or for any other special occasions, visitors would crowd into Room Five to hear musical numbers. Instead of using childish ditties in musical primers of that day, Ada Foster would have the class sing well-known songs of the times, such as Old Black Joe, The Old Oaken Bucket, The Little Brown Church in the Dale, and Hear Them Bells. Those songs were mostly of a sentimental nature.

Having no piano, Ada Foster would train part of the class to hum or sing an accompaniment, while the others sang the words in two parts, soprano and alto. For example, in Hear Them Bells, part of the class sang ding dong throughout the song to imitate bells, and in Grandfather's Clock, they would sing tick tock throughout the song to imitate the old clock.

It was not always the professional musical entertainer that helped to make Aurora musical, but often times an inconspicuous public school teacher like Ada Foster. Teachers like Ada Foster, then as now, were few

³¹ Aurora Beacon News, January 18, 1931, as told by Lutz White to "Now and Then" editor.

and far between. Those teachers went about doing a better than good job expecting no praise; only the personal satisfaction of a job well done.

High school music. On April 15 and 16, 1904, the Aurora Opera House was the scene of the East Aurora High School presentation of Pirates of Penzance.³² This Gilbert and Sullivan production was directed by Emma Skinner Miller and Gertrude W. Parker and assisted by some favorite soloists from Aurora. Herman Barnard, as Frederick, demonstrated perhaps the best amateur acting seen in Aurora at that time.

Emma Skinner Miller, supervisor of music for the West Aurora schools, directed the choir in a production of Merchant of Venice in June of 1907.³³ Since the school had no orchestra, the old standby, Dwight Godard, was called upon to bring his orchestra to furnish the accompaniment.

On Thursday, March 12, 1908, the East Aurora High School chorus, under the direction of Helen Cook, presented the operetta The Rose Maiden by Frederick H. DeCoven.³⁴ This performance, which was held at People's Church, was given assistance by the following Aurora vocalists: Gertrude Harris Manbeck, soprano; Emma Hopkins, contralto; Herman Barnard, tenor; and Marvin Burr, bass. Katherine Howard, Bessie Miller, and Lucille Smith all assisted with the accompanying.

³² From the Emma Skinner Miller Scrapbook.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

In the same year, the West Aurora High School chorus under the direction of Emma Skinner Miller gave a concert at the school.³⁵ A few of the instrumentalists in the school assisted the chorus with the concert.

The Columbia Conservatory. The Columbia Conservatory, located at Claim and Fourth streets, was organized in June 1903, and incorporated in January, 1904.³⁶ Professor E. Bruce Knowlton was elected musical director and teacher of piano, voice, and theory. This school was the only strictly music school in Illinois, outside of Chicago, to be accredited by the State Board of Education. The enrollment increased from seven to seven hundred, and the requirements for graduation were raised until they were on a par with those of the largest conservatories in Chicago.

Usually there were at least twenty faculty members on the roster of Columbia Conservatory, some of them dividing their time between this Aurora school and such noted places of learning as the Bush Conservatory, Chicago Musical College, and the Northwestern University School of Music. The 1904-1905 faculty list gave a good idea of the number and type of instructors at the conservatory. They were as follows: E. Bruce Knowlton, musical director, piano, voice, and theory; L. Belle Knowlton, piano and history; W.C.E. Beeboeck, piano; Oscar J. Kleimeyer, piano and organ; Alice Hitchcock, piano; Julia Calton, piano and kindergarten; Rosa Umbreit, piano and German; Mary A. Stevens, voice culture; Beulah L. Houston, voice culture; A. L. Huen, violin and cornet; Lottie Huen, violin; E.V. Hanson, cello; G. Burton Denney, clarinet, mandolin, and guitar; Mary P. Gale, normal music; Jessie Patton Millner, elocution, debate, and physical

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Aurora Daily News, June 14, 1904.

culture; William E. Brand, art; William Millner, elocution; and Hally Haight, languages.

The conservatory had an orchestra, which was organized by the musical director, E. Bruce Knowlton. The professor saw the need for this type of musical aggregation to give practical experience to the students.

The name of Harry R. Detweiler became associated with the Columbia Conservatory after that of Knowlton. Detweiler had charge of the conservatory, and it was under his direction that a new building was erected in 1920.³⁷ Still later, ownership of the conservatory was secured by Frederick Toenniges. More information concerning Toenniges and his work will appear later.

Other Activities Regarding Music

Quite often organizations are formed which use music only in certain portions of their programs. Some groups use only the literary side of music as the basis for their existence. All of these types of musical organizations, plus festivals, added to the improvement of the musical culture in Aurora.

Aurora Musical Festival. It was a big affair when the people of Aurora staged the Aurora Musical Festival on May 13 and 14, 1908.³⁸ A special Aurora Festival chorus under the direction of H. R. Detweiler was organized for the occasion. For the instrumental portion of the celebration, a part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, under the capable direction of

³⁷ Aurora Beacon News, July 20, 1924.

³⁸ From the Emma Skinner Miller Scrapbook.

Adolph Rosenbecker, was imported. The featured soloists were Minnie Worcester, pianist, and John B. Miller, tenor.

A musical society. The Derthick Literary Musical Society was formed in 1897, with J. B. Arnold elected president.³⁹ The number of organizations indicates that there must have been a thirst for musical knowledge about this time in the history of Aurora.

The Aurora Chautauqua Assembly. On August 14, 1903, the Aurora Chautauqua Assembly began operations at the Riverview Park, Montgomery, Illinois.⁴⁰ This park was later known as Fox River Park. It was a red-letter day for the people of the Aurora area when ten members of the Metropolitan Opera Company, accompanied by sixteen selected musicians from the Theodore Thomas Orchestra, performed. These and many other outstanding visiting musicians were featured at the Chautauqua.

Of course, a number of fine Aurora musicians were the featured entertainers in most of the shows at the Chautauqua Assembly. Harry R. Detweiler, Katherine Howard, Mary K. Amos, and Professor Peter W. Dykema⁴¹ did more than their share of the performing.

The famous Aurora Woman's Amateur Chorus and the Men's Auxiliary Chorus, trained and conducted by Emma Skinner Miller, gave several performances. Other local entertainers were as follows: Trinity Church Choir trained by Curtiss Barry; Alice B. Camper; Herman Barnard;

³⁹ Aurora Beacon News, September 15, 1946.

⁴⁰ Ibid., August 16, 1942.

⁴¹ At the time, Peter Dykema was a teacher in the West Aurora schools, and later became quite well known in the field of music education.

Emma Hopkins; the Godard Band; the Chautauqua chorus assisted by the First Methodist Church Choir, both groups being directed on this occasion by Bessie Hanks Miller.

The Music Ordinance. On Wednesday, September 30, 1903, an ordinance was presented to the city council, city of Aurora, prohibiting the playing of pianos or other musical instruments after nine o'clock in the evening.⁴² Many of the aldermen laughed when the ordinance was presented, but finally realized it could be a serious matter when certain residents would begin practicing upon musical instruments at an hour when all of their neighbors were retiring. John M. Raymond, the Mayor of Aurora at the time, stated that the ordinance was not to prevent piano playing, but unreasonable thumping. The ordinance did not pass, but the city was advised that Fort Scott, Kansas, did have such an ordinance.

Visiting Artists

Aurorans have been fortunate for many years in having so many people interested in the musical welfare of the community and who have helped to bring a number of prominent musical organizations and soloists to the city. These visiting musicians helped to improve the musical standards of the population.

Organizations. On Friday night, February 11, 1898, Aurora was honored in having the famous John Philip Sousa and his band perform.⁴³ Sousa, who has been called the March King, had an outstanding professional band that traveled around the world several times. The people of Aurora,

⁴² Aurora Beacon News, September 30, 1903.

⁴³ From a program found in the Alice Doty Wernicke Scrapbook.

being very much interested in all types of music, did much to bring such organizations to the city. One of the highlights of the concert was the trombone solo, Valse Caprice that was performed by the composer, Arthur Pryor. The band opened with the exciting overture Il Guarany by Gomez, which was new at that time.

The Aurora Opera House was the scene of a band concert on Wednesday, January 24, 1900.⁴⁴ Thomas Preston Brooke brought the Chicago Marine Band to Aurora for the evening, and opened the concert with a stirring march, Charlamagne, by Dwight Godard. A well-known cornet solo, Arbucklenian, by Hartman, dedicated to that outstanding cornetist, Arbuckle, was performed by a music perfectionist, Bohumir Kryl.

The famous Theodore Thomas Orchestra, the forerunner of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, first visited Aurora in 1912.⁴⁵ This organization played several concerts in Aurora, and stimulated the interest in good music to such an extent that many Aurorans began making weekly trips to Chicago to hear the symphony.

Soloists. On February 9, 1898, the celebrated baritone soloist, Frederick Eastman, sang to a large audience in Aurora.⁴⁶ Alice Doty was honored to be the accompanist for this famed singer on this concert. To add some variety to the program, Katherine Howard played several piano selections. While better known for her organ work, Katherine Howard still gave a creditable performance on the pianoforte.

⁴⁴ From a program found in the Emma Skinner Miller Scrapbook.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ From a program found in the Alice Doty Wernicke Scrapbook.

The audience that attended the song recital of the Negro singer, E. Azalia Hackley, on Monday, October 23, 1911, was certainly well entertained.⁴⁷ The same newspaper account of the concert stated that Hackley, with her warm coloratura voice, won over her audience with many well-known songs and then gave them several demonstrations of voice culture. After that, the soloist served the audience some musical dessert with her heartfelt rendition of many favorite Negro spirituals.⁴⁸

Summary

Residents of Aurora were very fortunate in having many outstanding musical leaders in this period of history. These leaders, along with a genuine love of music in all forms by the population, raised the musical culture of Aurora to a high degree.

Professional bands were the special interest of the day, and many of the bandmen were instrumental in promoting public school music, especially instrumental music. In this era, school music did get a good start.

The musicians union was formed, and helped the professional musician to earn a living wage. The union, along with other beginning organizations had its growing pains and troubles, which were eliminated through time and good leadership.

Chautauquas were important additions to the entertainment field, and at the same time, were attempting to raise the cultural levels of audiences.

⁴⁷ Aurora Beacon News, October 24, 1911.

⁴⁸ Ibid., October 24, 1911.

Aurora had its share of Chautauquas, and many famous performers were seen and heard at those assemblies.

Dwight Godard, Alice Doty Wernicke, Emma Skinner Miller, William Eitelgeorge, Minnie Godard Worcester and many others were instrumental in bringing good music to the people of Aurora. These individuals had one rule in mind when it came to musical performance, a rule made famous by the late H. A. Vandercook, MAKE IT SOUND GOOD. They did just that, too.⁴⁹

CHAPTER VI

MUSIC FROM 1916 TO 1928

In the year 1916, war was already raging in Europe and it seemed quite evident that the United States would be involved in what became known as World War I. Music in Europe was at a standstill, but in the United States, it kept inching forward, slowly but surely.

This period in the history of music in Aurora, Illinois, brought decided change in the music business. Exclusive of dance groups, the professional band and orchestras were bowing out, and school organizations were beginning to take their place. School bands in particular really began making promising advances at the close of World War I. The rapid stride was due in part to the effect band music had on both soldiers and civilians

⁴⁹ Interviews with musicians who were present at some of these performances seem to indicate that the standard of performance was very high.

during the war, the need for instrumental music of that type, and the straight thinking of many music educators.

The radio began to assume its share of popularity during the latter part of this historical period. The opportunity for more people to hear good music began to have a decided effect on raising the musical standards of many individuals.

Some Interesting Musical Activities

In the beginning of this particular period in the history of music in Aurora, a band, a studio of fine arts, a pipe organ recital, and a concert by a visiting symphony orchestra were in the limelight. These musical organizations and activities were useful in helping music move in a highly cultural direction.

The Commercial Club Band. During the years 1915 and 1916, the Commercial Club sponsored a series of band concerts alternately each week in McCarty and Wilder parks.¹ John M. Schmitz was the president of the club, and named the musical group the Commercial Club Band. This was, without a doubt, a public service enterprise.

The band was directed by G. Burton Denney, a well-known clarinetist and saxophonist. Denney was better known for his dance and theater work than for his conducting of bands. As a member of the Chicago Federation of Musicians, Denney played for many dances at the Fox River Park and the Country Club, and for many years taught clarinet and saxophone at the Columbia Conservatory.

¹ Aurora Beacon News, March 19, 1950.

A visiting organist recital. On April 12, 1917, the famous organist, Albert Riemenschneider, played a recital in the First Methodist Church in Aurora, Illinois.² Riemenschneider was from Wallace-Berea (now Baldwin-Wallace) College in Berea, Ohio, and was a highly recognized exponent of Bach organ music. The music lovers of Aurora were unquestionably inspired by this excellent concert.

The Kells Studio of Fine Arts. In 1917, Frank Kells and his wife established the Kells Studio of Fine Arts, located on South Fourth Street.³ The faculty of the studio offered courses in dramatic art, aesthetic and ballet dancing and languages, instruction in piano, organ, violin, and other musical instruments.

The Kells Studio gained considerable popularity with large spring studio recitals and artist's concerts, which began in the year 1920. Kells was the choir director of St. Mary's Church for many years. His son, Frank, became an outstanding clarinetist and was a member of the East Aurora High School Band while attending school. Frank Kells, Jr., graduated from college with a degree in music, taught music in the East, and later became engaged in the business of writing songs.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Being so close to metropolitan Chicago, and with excellent transportation facilities, many Aurorans were familiar with the outstanding work being done by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. However, in an attempt to raise cultural standards of the local

² Ibid., April 13, 1917.

³ Stated by Edward A, Fitzgerald in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on August 6, 1954. Fitzgerald was a very close friend of the Kells family.

people, a few thinking individuals arranged to have the Chicago Symphony play several concerts in Aurora.

On April 16, 1917, Frederick Stock conducted the Chicago Symphony in a concert at the Sylvandell Ballroom in Aurora.⁴ Margaret F. Pouk, East Aurora supervisor of music, conducted the orchestra and student audiences in a group of songs for children. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra presented many more concerts in Aurora, and, from all indications, it looks as if the orchestra had a part in helping to make the citizens of Aurora musically conscious.

The Blackhawk Orchestra and Some Outstanding Members

No other amateur organization in Aurora received so much popularity or did so much to raise the standard of instrumental music, as did the Blackhawk Orchestra. Robert W. Barclay⁵ wrote an excellent article for the Aurora Beacon News that helped tell the story of the little orchestra that was known for years as the Blackhawk Concert Orchestra. This group was organized in November 1918, by Oliver C. Anderson with the following members: Burdette Davis, piano and conductor; Curtis Davis, violin; Coit Gussler, flute; Donald Benbow, trombone; and Oliver Anderson, drums and traps. This group spent the remainder of the year 1918, and all of the year 1919, just practicing, with the exception of playing for a few church socials. In 1919, Burdette Davis relinquished his position as pianist to Earl Norris.

In the year 1920, Norris gave up the position as pianist. Cecilia Taylor, the first feminine member of the group, took his place, but, when

⁴ Aurora Beacon News, April 17, 1917.

⁵ Ibid., November 11, 1936.

Warren Burchill assumed the duties as conductor, James Pompa became the pianist. This ensemble finally decided to restrict the personnel of the orchestra to male members only.

The orchestra formerly practiced in the homes of the various members until they became connected with Blackhawk Scout Troop Number Eleven of the old Galena Methodist Church. The members held their meetings and rehearsals in the basement of the church. The group also participated in many scout activities held at the church.

On August 18, 1923, at eight o'clock, Tom and Paul Benbow, James Hall, Raymond Voreis, Harold Kinney, Curtis Davis, and Oliver Anderson, broadcast from Radio Station KYW in Chicago. At that time, this was quite an accomplishment, because the orchestra was the first instrumental group from Aurora to broadcast over any radio station. The reason the group was asked to broadcast was because of musical excellence. Before the days of professional radio entertainers, the Blackhawk Orchestra broadcast over several stations such as KYW, WTAS, WLS, WORD (Chicago, Illinois), WOC (Davenport, Iowa), and WCCO (Minneapolis, Minnesota).

This august little organization played its first public concert June 6, 1924, in the Galena Methodist Church.⁶ The personnel had grown to thirteen members, and the program included a variety of numbers, from American Patrol to a saw solo by the conductor. This group also presented another concert August 8, to raise funds for a projected trip to Devils Lake, Wisconsin.

⁶ Known now as the Wesley Methodist Church.

In the year 1924, Earl Snyder assumed directorship, but soon yielded the baton to Esther Rouse, an outstanding violinist from Aurora College. Warren Burchill returned to Aurora, and again took over the responsibility as director of the group. About this time, the group gave up its status regarding Boy Scout activities, and resumed rehearsals in the homes of the various members.

For ten successive years beginning in 1924, the orchestra made trips to Devils Lake State Park located near Baraboo, Wisconsin. The group often played engagements en route to Devils Lake, and they also played concerts in the Al Ringling Theater in Baraboo, Wisconsin. One spring this orchestra traveled to Davenport, Iowa, for a few concerts, and took its longest trip to Minneapolis, Minnesota, for a concert engagement.

In all organizations, members drop out for some reason or other, and new members must be added continually. This was true of the Blackhawk Orchestra. A new violinist, Edwin Sullivan, one of the most talented musicians in this area, took over the position as director of the Blackhawk Orchestra in 1924, when Warren Burchill accepted a position in Chicago.

In 1928, when Edwin Sullivan left the orchestra, the baton was taken over by Robert W. Barclay who had been cellist with the group since 1926. Barclay held the position as director until 1933, when Frederick Toenniges was engaged as conductor of the orchestra.

In the fall of 1935, Oliver C. Anderson organized an orchestra composed of women known as the Maud Powell Concert Orchestra. Rose Anderson was the concertmaster and Frederick Toenniges was the conductor

of this group as well as the Blackhawk Orchestra. In the year 1936, the two groups merged, keeping the name of Blackhawk Orchestra with Oliver C. Anderson as president and manager, and Toenniges as conductor.

With the sanction of all the members, the name of the orchestra was changed in the fall of 1938, to the "Civic Orchestra" of Aurora. The name, Blackhawk, was very confusing inasmuch as there were so many other organizations using that name.

Some of the outstanding soloists that appeared with the orchestra were Eloise Wilder, pianist; Helen Freund, soprano; Frederick Toenniges, violinist; Jaroslav Cimera, trombonist; Moissaye Bogulawski, pianist; Marjorie Wigton, harpist; Dorothy Sidfer, soprano; Paul Erickson, baritone; and Bruce Foote, baritone. A few of the soloists appeared with the orchestra several times.

Of course, the organization existed because of the cooperation of all the members and the love to perform good music, but much of the credit should be given to Oliver Anderson, J. Allan, Vincent Langlitz, and especially to James Pompa and Robert W. Barclay. These men were instrumental in developing the organizational as well as the musical status of the orchestra.

Edwin J. Sullivan,⁷ an outstanding member of the orchestra, was born in Aurora, April 7, 1909, and became interested in the violin when eight years of age. His first lessons on the instrument were with Louis Shultz at the Columbia Conservatory of Music. Sullivan received part of his

⁷ Aurora Becaon News, July 16, 1950.

education at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, at the Chicago Musical College, and at the Chicago College of Music. Sullivan was awarded scholarships at the Chicago Musical College and the Chicago College of Music, and was given special recognition at the commencement program in 1932.

In 1930, Sullivan became soloist with a traveling organization known as the Roberson Players. The press releases praised him for his artistic virtuosity, something this musician must have possessed during his entire very brief musical career.

His many Aurora friends, as well as the friends he made while traveling throughout the country keenly felt the death of Sullivan so early in life. Sullivan passed away on November 30, 1933, at the age of 24 years after a brief illness from acute lymphatic leukemia.

Robert W. Barclay,⁸ another topnotch orchestra member, was born in Aurora and graduated from the West Aurora schools and the Columbia Conservatory of Music. In 1923, Barclay began the study of cello with the cellist, Carmello Nastri. Barclay played in the West Aurora High School orchestra under the direction of L. W. Ellinwood.

In the year 1927, Barclay was sent to Dallas, Texas, as the West Aurora High School representative to the National High School Orchestra along with Edwin J. Sullivan, who was the representative from East Aurora High School. In 1928, Barclay played in the same orchestra in Chicago,

⁸ Stated by Robert W. Barclay in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on November 18, 1954.

when Marjorie Wigton, well-known Aurora harpist, was the representative from East Aurora High School.

Barclay enrolled in the public school music course at the Columbia Conservatory in September 1931, taught in District Number 48, Kane County, from 1933 to 1938, and has taught the cello since 1928. For many years, Barclay was on the faculty of the Columbia Conservatory and the Toenniges Conservatory. At the conservatories Barclay served as secretary-registrar, and at the same time, gave some cello instruction.

For a considerable length of time, Barclay was cellist with the Alice Doty Wernicke Symphony Club, string orchestra, and quintet. Barclay was also a member of the Aurora Symphony Orchestra under the direction Louis Zander, and of a string trio composed of Rose Anderson, violin, Frances Sherwood, piano, and himself, cello.

In 1936, Barclay became music editor of the Aurora Beacon News, giving valuable music information and covering the musical activities of the Fox River Valley. From 1941 to 1943, Barclay was business manager and assistant editor of the magazine, Music News. At that time, Hana Rosenwald was editor of the magazine.

Frederick Toenniges,⁹ the son of C. F. Toenniges, and known to the present writer as an outstanding musician, composer, and conductor, began his musical career when only three years of age. Playing a half size violin, young Toenniges made his first public appearance a year later. Frederick Toenniges received the benefit of considerable music education at home

⁹ Aurora Beacon News, November 12, 1936.

since practically all of his family were musicians. His boyhood days were spent in DeKalb, Illinois, the home of his parents.

At the age of 10, Frederick Toenniges won his first musical scholarship at the Chicago Musical College, competing in a field with over one hundred contestants. Toenniges received most of his violin instruction in both New York and Chicago, and some of his most eminent teachers were Theodore Speiring, Hans Letz, Hugo Kortschak, and Leon Sametini. Toenniges was prepared for a concert career, and at the age of 17, had memorized a repertoire of over two hundred solos and compositions.

For three years, Frederick Toenniges was a concert violinist with the Redpath Chautauqua Company, which made many appearances in the central and southern states. A few years later, Toenniges moved to Detroit, Michigan, and played in hotel and theater orchestras. One of his largest positions was director of the Fox Grand Theater Orchestra, which was composed of forty professional musicians, and on some occasions, augmented to sixty by adding members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

With the advent of talking pictures and the discontinuance of theater orchestras, Toenniges returned to his hometown, DeKalb, Illinois, and entered the teaching profession. Toenniges organized a concert band and orchestra in DeKalb, and also directed the Rochelle, Illinois, band. Shortly, Toenniges became associated with the Columbia Conservatory in Aurora, teaching violin, viola, and instrumental conducting.

When Harry Detweiler closed the Columbia Conservatory, Toenniges became the new owner and changed the name to the Toenniges

Conservatory of Music. This school stayed in existence until sold to some of the faculty who changed the name to the Aurora Conservatory of Music.

Toenniges was also music instructor at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois, and at St. Procopius College located near Lisle, Illinois. In 1941, Toenniges was chosen to conduct the 175 members of the Fox Valley Festival Orchestra in concert. This annual event was held on May 19, 1941, in Elgin, Illinois.

Since World War II, Toenniges has done very little in music, professionally. At the present time, Toenniges owns and operates a jewelry store in Naperville, Illinois, and does, on occasion, direct a large chorus, band, or orchestra.

One of the most interested music enthusiasts and spark plug of the Blackhawk Orchestra, James Pompa,¹⁰ was born in Aurora, on April 14, 1906. Nine years later, Pompa began his piano study with Cota Sprinkel, and then, with one of the sisters at the Holy Angels Parochial School. Later, Pompa studied with Alice Doty Wernicke and received much coaching from that wonderful lady when the Blackhawk Orchestra rehearsed in her studio. For about a year, Pompa also studied with Harry R. Detweiler. Pompa became active as a Blackhawk Orchestra pianist in 1920, and played continuously with the group for twenty years.

Pompa moved to Winona, Minnesota, in 1943, and in 1949, organized the civic orchestra in that city, acting as its first president. Pompa then became a resident of Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, where he purchased a

¹⁰ Stated by James Pompa in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on August 2, 1954.

drugstore. The town of Blooming Prairie is too small to have much music; so Jim Pompa travels to Duluth, Minneapolis, Chicago, and even flies to Mexico City, Mexico, in order to hear good music.

Many of the local musicians used to assemble at the home of Jim Pompa to hear his large record collection, which included all types of music.¹¹ Pompa also had a sizeable collection of miniature orchestral scores that have been graciously loaned to any of his friends who have desired to borrow them.

J. Allan Langlitz,¹² a well-known Aurora musician, began his musical studies with Anna Ahern and then with E. C. Hoffman and Geneva Johnson. Next, dance piano was studied with Harold Weighart of Chicago and then with Earl Ramon Bigelow. Classical and modern piano, theory, harmony, and counterpoint were studied with Bigelow.

While a student at East Aurora High School, Langlitz played bass saxophone in the band and piano in the orchestra. Being an outstanding pianist, Langlitz served as accompanist for many excellent high school soloists.

During World War II, Langlitz served with the United States Air Force in many musical capacities. Most of his time was spent at the air force base located near Merced, California, serving as arranger, pianist, drummer, French hornist, string bassist, librarian, and orchestra conductor.

¹¹ The present writer has had the pleasure of being a member of a group that visited the home of Pompa to listen to good recorded music.

¹² Stated by J. Allan Langlitz in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on July 29, 1954.

The all-around musical training and outstanding musical ability of Langlitz enabled him to carry on all of those positions with a great deal of efficiency.

Langlitz has been playing professionally for over twenty-five years, playing on the radio, in dance bands, theater pit, and show orchestras. For many years Langlitz was also in the Civic Orchestra of Aurora.¹³

According to musical leaders in the city, Aurora has been very fortunate in having Marjorie Wigton, harpist, as a member of the community. Wigton was born in Canton, Illinois, but her parents moved to Aurora when she was an infant.¹⁴ When 12 years of age, this young lady started the study of the Italian harp under the tutorage of Alberto Salvi, world-renowned harpist and teacher in Chicago.

Marjorie Wigton appeared on several engagements with the Chicago Harp Ensemble, and this ensemble played several times at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933 and 1934. On February 2, 1936, Wigton was soloist with the Blackhawk Orchestra, Aurora, and on March 8, 1936, was soloist with the DeKalb Symphony Orchestra, both groups being under the direction of Toenniges. Wigton has also appeared as soloist on many other civic programs.

¹³ Langlitz is presently a commercial teller at the Old Second National Bank, Aurora, Illinois, and still continues his dance work and the job of tuning and repairing pianos in his spare time.

¹⁴ Stated by Marjorie Wigton in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on May 8, 1954.

Being the grandson of Peter Andrew Johnson, a famous Aurora violinmaker, James (Jimmy) McGlaughlin¹⁵ seemed destined to become a fine violinist. McGlaughlin began his musical career at the age of six taking violin lessons from his grandfather. A short time later, lessons were taken from Paul R. Hippensteel, who was an assistant to Harry Dimond,¹⁶ of the Dimond School of Music in Chicago.

For many years, Hippensteel would travel to Aurora every weekend, teaching at the home of Peter Johnson and at the Alice Doty Wernicke studio. McGlaughlin studied with this noted teacher for eight years, and at the age of 11 created a sensation by playing the Concerto by Accolay and Spanish Dance by Redfeld at a recital on June 27, 1927, given by the faculty of the Dimond School in Hutter Vocal Studio in Chicago.

Jimmy McGlaughlin did much playing in and about the Aurora area, playing solos, and as a member of small ensembles, church orchestras, the Aurora Symphony Orchestra, and the Blackhawk Orchestra. McGlaughlin was active in all types of civic affairs that had anything to do with music, and for many years was a judge in the East Aurora grade school solo contest.¹⁷

¹⁵ Stated by James McGlaughlin in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on May 8, 1954.

¹⁶ Harry Dimond was considered one of the greatest violinists and teachers in America in the early 1900's and was concertmaster of the Theodore Thomas Orchestra for many years.

¹⁷ The city of Aurora lost a truly Christian musician with the passing Jimmy McGlaughlin in October of 1954. His premature death was felt by everyone, but his kindly spirit and deeds will be remembered by all.

Oliver C. Anderson¹⁸ was born in Aurora, Illinois, and became one of the finest music organizers in the history of the city. Anderson started taking drum lessons from Daniel V. Trapp, who was a drummer at the Old Fox Theater. In December 1918, as has been mentioned before, Anderson organized the Blackhawk Orchestra.

Through the years, Oliver Anderson has also been manager of the Columbia Conservatory and the Maud Powell Orchestra, and is credited with the organization of the Powell Orchestra. For several years, Anderson managed the Civic Orchestra, which was an outgrowth of the Blackhawk Orchestra, and has been a faithful and enterprising president of the Civic Music Association for a considerable length of time. Aurora has been fortunate in having such an organizer helping to keep musical activities on such a high level.

When the name of Charles E. Gridley is mentioned, the people of Aurora immediately think of all forms of instrumental music. Gridley was born in Streator, Illinois, in September of 1875, but did not become a citizen of Aurora, until May 20, 1905.¹⁹

Charlie Gridley earned his musical education the hard way, learning by hit or miss methods and paying for his music lessons with money earned as a performer. Gridley began playing the snare drum quite by accident, on a hot July Fourth back in 1885. While sitting in a barber shop owned by his father located in Streator, Illinois, George W. Little, snare drummer of the Fourth Regiment Band, entered after a big parade and handed his sticks to

¹⁸ Aurora Beacon News, November 1, 1953.

¹⁹ Stated by Charles E. Gridley in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on December 1, 1954.

the brother of Charlie, asking him to play. This brother was shy, so Little asked young Gridley to play a bit. Gridley took the sticks and pounded away on the drum for a few minutes. Little commenced teaching Charlie Gridley, and in a short time had him playing the daddy-mammy roll, seven stroke roll, flams, and other rudiments concerning the routine of playing drums. Gridley made life miserable for the neighbors by practicing almost continuously on a drum that Little had fixed for him.

When only 11 years of age, Gridley had learned enough drumming to take over the snare drum position in the Streator Juvenile Band, which was directed by Willard Bay. At the age of 13, Gridley was playing trap drums in the Plumb Opera House Orchestra in Streator. After four years of playing in the orchestra without remuneration, Gridley asked for some pay and was promised fifty cents per show. John E. Williams, manager of the opera house, suggested that this performer take up another instrument since drums were not used much in theater orchestras at that time.

A short time later, Gridley bought a violin and began taking lessons. After a year of study, he got the so-called trouper fever and went on the road with the George W. Paige Repertoire Company which produced such plays as LaBelle Marie, The Carmencita, Lightning Rod Agent, The Private Secretary, East Lynn, and Mrs. Partington. Gridley was drummer in the band and orchestra that played a street parade about noon every day, a concert on a prominent corner of the town, a short concert in front of the opera house before show time, plus playing the overtures, incidental music, and the music for specialty acts included in the performances.

In 1895, Gridley joined the W. S. Cleveland Greater Massive Minstrels, one of the largest minstrel companies ever on the road. In the following season, Gridley was with the McCabe and Young Minstrels, playing drums in the band and orchestra, as he had done with the Cleveland Minstrels. Because that company went broke, Gridley returned to Streator to work in the barbershop belonging to his father and to continue studying the violin.

While back in Streator, Gridley studied violin and viola with Fleming D. Hupp for five years, and, at the same time, took up the mellophone to play in the band. Gridley played with the Mills Military Band, later to be known as the Illinois State Band.

In 1901, Gridley moved to Chicago and obtained a position playing in the Alhambra Theater Orchestra. Later, Gridley transferred to the Bijou Theater Orchestra and did considerable playing for concerts, dances, picnics, and other social events.

Gridley came to Aurora on May 20, 1905, to play drums with the Godard Band and with the Edward Miller Orchestra at the old Grand Theater. Gridley stayed only four months this time, moving back to Streator until October 1906, and then returning to Aurora. Gridley stayed in Aurora until October 1912, when a musical organization in Boise, Idaho, asked him to join their group.

Gridley traveled about for several more years, and then in 1915, decided to return and make Aurora his permanent home. Since Gridley was a very proficient drummer, violinist, violist, and mellophone player, many bands and orchestras asked for his services. Some of the groups were: the

Commerical Club Band, the Denney Dance Orchestra, the Lewis C. Miller Exposition Band, the Aurora Symphony Orchestra, the Blackhawk Orchestra, plus many more small ensembles and church orchestras.²⁰

Aurora, Illinois, unquestionably benefited by having Charlie Gridley become a member of the community. The hard work, sacrifices, and the attainments reached by Gridley are guiding lights for those who are attempting to follow their particular calling.

More Band Music and Special Concerts

Until school bands reached a high grade of proficiency, many professional, civic, and fraternal bands sprang up around the country. These bands did their share of offering entertainment and relaxation for the members and their listening audiences.

On Friday, September 5, 1919, the Godard Band gave a concert in Lincoln Park. The St. Cecilia Quartet assisted the band and the people certainly enjoyed the concert because \$125.00 was realized from a free will offering. An article in a local newspaper stated that despite the fact that counteracting influences in the way of fire alarms, cool breezes, et cetera, and the constant shifting of automobiles with mufflers gaily open driving around the park during the most earnest efforts of the band, the concert was a success.²¹

²⁰ Charlie Gridley, at the age of 79, still plays the violin and directs a small orchestra at the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Gridley has said many times that the playing for church services has been his greatest pleasure in the realm of musical activity.

²¹ Aurora Beacon News, September 7, 1919.

The combined bands of Sandwich, Somanauk, Plano, and Sheridan, small villages in the Aurora area, gave a concert at Phillips Park in Aurora on September 2, 1921.²² These bands played in a parade in the downtown area and staged a tag day, collecting \$231.00 from the music loving public. Years ago, most all of the small towns or villages boasted of a good band, and the Aurora area had its share of them. They did their part to help make Aurora musical.

With A. L. Wainwright as director, the Aurora Masonic Band presented a concert in the Strand Theater on April 19, 1923.²³ The program was a varied one with vocal selections by Mrs. William McArthur, accompanied by Ruth McArthur. Henry Welton also sang and was accompanied by Carrie Doetschman. The comedy was furnished by Melvin (Dutch) Keil and Charles (Chuck) Boehner, who presented a song and dance act.

On June 24, 1924, the band concert season opened with the Central States Exposition Band presenting a concert in Exposition Park.²⁴ Lewis C. Miller, director of the band, included such numbers as Officer of the Day by Hall, Parade of the Wooden Soldiers by Jessel, and E. Pluribus Unum by Fred Jewell, in this program.²⁵

²² Ibid., September 2, 1921.

²³ Ibid., April 19, 1923.

²⁴ Ibid., June 23, 1924.

²⁵ Thirty years later these selections are still being played by thousands of American bands.

Vocal Music

In this period of history, vocal music still flourished, but was overshadowed somewhat, because school instrumental music was gaining popularity. Church music still reigned as the highest type of vocal music and many oratorios, cantatas, and choir concerts were given.

Outstanding vocalists. For many years, according to popular opinion, the dean of Aurora music has been the tenor soloist, teacher, and organist, Herman W. Barnard. Barnard was born in nearby Oswego, Illinois, and at a very early age started taking piano lessons from Ansaletta Seeley.²⁶ After moving to Aurora, Barnard studied piano with Hattie Cutter and Alice Doty. Curtis A. Barry gave Barnard his first organ instruction and later he studied with Peter C. Lutkin, Dean of Northwestern University School of Music, and Arthur Dunham, of Chicago. When 20 years of age, Barnard began studying voice with Fannie Allen of Aurora. A few years later, Barnard studied voice with Frederick W. Carberry of Chicago; Emma Rice, Aurora; Frederick Root, Chicago; L. A. Torrence, Chicago; William Thorne, Paris and Chicago; and J. C. Cooper, Chicago. Besides his continued service as a private voice, piano, and organ teacher, Herman Barnard has been organist in the First Baptist Church, the First Congregational Church, the Trinity Episcopal Church, and the First Methodist Church.²⁷

Loyalty to artistic talents and willingness to participate in endeavors to assist musical development marks the career of Ruthanne Bennett

²⁶ Stated by Herman W. Barnard in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on September 20, 1954.

²⁷ Herman W. Barnard was organist of the Trinity Episcopal Church for thirty-seven years and at the present time, is organist for the First Methodist Church.

Farrell.²⁸ Naturally, years of study preceded the work of Farrell as teacher, director, soloist, and part owner of a music school.

Ruthanne Bennett Farrell began studying piano at the age of six, studying with L. Belle Knowlton, the wife of the originator of the Columbia Conservatory. Soon after, Farrell studied piano and organ with Harry R. Detweiler and graduated from the Conservatory in 1915, with a major in piano. Later, Ruthanne Farrell studied voice with Rollin Pease and also with Burton Thatcher of Chicago and with Franz Prowschosky at the McPhail School of Music in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Farrell taught in the Columbia Conservatory and continued there as a teacher when Frederick Toenniges gained ownership. In 1944, Ruthanne Farrell, Geneva Johnson, Frances Sherwood, and Herbert Weichel purchased the school, soon to move it to a new location and give it the name, Aurora Conservatory of Music. For several years, Farrell was soloist with the New England Congregational Church and also directed the Wesley Methodist Church choir.

East Aurora can claim Esther Cook Weiss²⁹ because she was born on the East side and was educated in the East Aurora schools, graduating from high school in 1916. Esther Cook Weiss started studying piano and organ with Clara R. Wilson and continued studying with her for ten years. At the age of 15, Esther Cook Weiss commenced taking voice lessons from Professor Baird who had been accompanist for the famous vocalist, Jenny Lind. Still later, Weiss studied with Harry Detweiler, Lemuel Killey, Burton

²⁸ Aurora Beacon News, January 21, 1951.

²⁹ Ibid., January 20, 1952.

Thatcher, Rollin Pease, and William Lester, and received a bachelor of music degree from the Columbia Conservatory.

Weiss sang in the New England Congregational Church choir for several years and also directed the Galena Boulevard Methodist Church choir. This outstanding woman has done much accompanying for Aurora musicians and certainly has done her share of creditable teaching in the field of vocal music.

One of the most beautiful soprano voices in Auroraland is that of a very gracious woman named Helen Manning Meiers.³⁰ Meiers did much professional work singing with the New Bostonian Opera Company of New York City, the Robin Hood Opera Company in Chicago, and also sang in vaudeville and for the movies before the advent of sound pictures. Meiers is also a very capable pianist and often accompanies her own vocal renditions. Helen Manning Meiers has been heard considerably at social functions, church services, weddings, funerals, and at functions sponsored by the St. Cecilia Musical Club.

An outstanding musician, C. Edmond Hoepe,³¹ moved to Aurora from Chicago in 1912, at the age of 10, and immediately started to study the cornet. In 1918, Hoepe played cornet in the first West Aurora High School band and orchestra. Hoepe started studying voice with Herman Barnard and was active in church quartets and choirs, and in singing bass solos in cantatas and oratorios. In 1923, Hoepe enrolled in Aurora College where choir directing was studied under the supervision of Leon Corliss. In 1926,

³⁰ Ibid., October 28, 1951.

³¹ Ibid., March 16, 1952.

Hoepe transferred to Shurtleff College located in Alton, Illinois. Since returning to Aurora, Hoepe has either been featured soloist or choir director at the following churches: First Presbyterian, Wesley Methodist, Fourth Street Methodist, Bethel Methodist, and First Methodist.

Presentation of oratorios. On May 8, 1923, the Aurora Community Church, under the direction of Harry Detweiler, presented the operatic form of Elijah by Felix Mendelssohn.³² This group was assisted by Maud Meyers and by the drama department of the Columbia Conservatory. The soloists were Rollin Pease and W. E. Jones of Chicago, and Blance Ramer, Ed Davis, Grace Parmele, Viola Wilson, Maud Bouslough, and Marvel Morlock from Aurora. Hugh Porter skillfully did the accompaniment.

A few years later, a group also directed by Harry Detweiler presented the Messiah by Handel.³³ The soloists were Stella Trane, soprano; Alvene Resseguire, contralto; LeRoy Hamp, tenor; and Burton Thatcher, baritone. William Lester was the pianist, and the Aurora Symphony Orchestra organized by Leonard W. Ellinwood and assisted by Margaret F. Pouk did the accompaniment.

Opera talks. Alice Doty Wernicke and Gertrude Waterhouse Parker joined forces to present some very interesting talks on grand opera.³⁴ These women discussed Lohengrin and The Mastersingers of Nuremberg by Wagner, as well as many other famous operas.

The Civic Music Association

³² Ibid., May 8, 1923.

³³ From a program found in an unsorted box of music notes located in the Aurora Public Library.

³⁴ Ibid.

Many of the music lovers banded together to form an organization known as the Civic Music Association in order to bring outstanding music artists to Aurora. This group was organized in 1927, but the concerts did not get under way until 1928. In 1935, the Aurora chapter of the National League of Community Concerts was formed to carry on when the Aurora Civic Music Association discontinued. These organizations were practically the same and intended to serve the same purpose. Still later, the organization returned to using the Civic Music Association for a name.³⁵

Many outstanding artists were brought to Aurora, and the musical standards of the community were certainly raised somewhat. A partial list of the artists tells the story of the wise judgment of the association committees in selecting performing talent: Cyrena VanGordon, civic opera star; Alberto Salvi, harpist; Erna Rubenstein, violinist; Moissaye Boguslawski, pianist; Margherita Salvi, soprano; Antonio Cortis, tenor; the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Henry Verbrugghen; Marion Claire, soprano; Henry Weber, conductor and pianist; Gladys Swarthout, mezzo-soprano; Boston Woman's Symphony under the direction of Ethel Leginska; Mary McCormic, opera star; Alfred Wallenstein, cellist; Paul Kochanski, violinist; Glenn Drake, tenor; the New York String Quartet; Jose Echaniz, Cuban pianist; the Don Cossack Chorus directed by Serge Jaroff; Kayla Mitzel, violinist; the Barthel Woodwind Ensemble; Maria Matyas, soprano; Harold Van Horn, pianist; Eve Jessye Choir, Negro vocal ensemble; Tito Schipa, tenor; Storm Bull, Norwegian-American pianist; Virginia Haskins, soprano; Lucille Meusel, coloratura soprano; Ennio Bolognini, cellist;

³⁵ Aurora Progress, June 4, 1927.

Tomford Harris, pianist; Mish Mischakoff, violinist; Alex Templeton, pianist; Edward Vito, harpist; Gina Vanna, lyric soprano.³⁶

The association, like most civic groups, had varied problematical situations. At one time, a concert had to be postponed in order to extend the time limit in raising money. On the whole, however, the Civic Music Association groups were a service to everyone involved, including the performers as well as the public.

School Instrumental Music

Since B. Winfred Merrill organized the first high school orchestra in Aurora in the year 1878, increased enrollment, number of concerts, and honors won in contests indicate that instrumental music in the public schools has been climbing the ladder of success and popularity. The real forward push of instrumental music, especially band music, began during this era, but did not reach its highest peak as far as contests were concerned until the next historical period.

East Aurora High School had good orchestras during this period in history, because they were under the capable direction of Margaret F. Pouk.³⁷ This inspiring teacher came to East High School in 1913, and was placed in charge of the high school orchestra, high school vocal groups, and also served as supervisor of grade school vocal music.

³⁶ Stated by Unabelle Chitty in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on June 20, 1954.

³⁷ State by K. D. Waldo in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on October 15, 1954. Waldo was superintendent of the East Aurora schools from 1928 to 1950, inclusive.

East High was the first Aurora high school to have a band. This band was organized in 1918, by Louis H. Condy. In 1919, the veteran professional cornetist and violinist, Albert H. Huen, took charge of the band. Huen taught the bands for only a couple of years, resigning because the musicians union would not allow him to march with the school band in various parades involving the high school band. It seems that the union was afraid of the growing school bands.

West Aurora High School enjoyed good music instruction also. Harry Nigro, really the guiding force of West side instrumental music, did not start his public school teaching career until 1927.

Maurice W. Rosenbarger (now M. W. Day) came to Aurora in 1921, and really started the East Aurora bands out on the right foot. In 1924, Edward A. Fitzgerald was hired to assist Day, and with these two excellent musicians working together, the band movement certainly began to function properly. More will be written about these and other music educators later on in this investigation.

Summary

All types of musical activities were in existence during the period of 1916 to 1928. Aurorans had the opportunity to see and hear many famous visiting artists, and were fortunate enough to have many outstanding musicians and organizations in their midst.³⁸

³⁸ State by prominent Aurora musicians in interviews with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois.

Perhaps the greatest organization in this particular era was the Blackhawk Orchestra, which later became the Civic Orchestra. This outstanding group consisted of many civic-minded members who did much to spread the gospel of good music to the people of Aurora and surrounding communities.

Bands were still the fad of the day and the public schools were beginning to assume the leadership in that particular field. Orchestras and vocal groups were still functioning, but the band movement overshadowed their endeavors.

The Civic Music Association was born and seems to have served the community well. All in all, it appears that this period in the history of music in Aurora was one of the greatest of all times.

CHAPTER VII

MUSIC FROM 1929 TO 1936

In 1929, the country was engulfed in a depression, but that did not seem to hamper the activities of school music. In fact, research will undoubtedly bear out the belief that the depression really helped to encourage school music. Many students who were really interested in music had no other outside activities and would spend a greater amount of time practicing. Of course, part time jobs were just not to be had so that conflicting item was eliminated.

Many students took private lessons, and some of them studied with the best teachers. Some of the older and more experienced students would take a lesson from an outstanding teacher; then they, in turn, would give lessons to several younger students at quite a reduced fee.

During this period, school bands definitely gained momentum in an endeavor to achieve popularity and fame. In Aurora, both East and West side school bands met with a great deal of success and brought fame to their respective schools and the community as a whole.

Orchestras and chorus music did not sit still during this period either. Both types of organizations presented some creditable performances, and the performers undoubtedly gained an excellent musical education. Naturally these two groups were not in the limelight as much as the bands, because the bands were doing a terrific amount of promoting in their attempt to reach new heights.

Professional music in this period was not at a standstill either. Although no professional bands or orchestras were in existence at this time, the dance band business was flourishing extensively, and there were many prominent large dance bands playing quite regularly in the many dancing spots. Of course, some of the theaters specialized in presenting a vaudeville show; therefore, a professional orchestra was employed to play for the various acts.

School Music

Aurora has been quite fortunate in having outstanding music teachers who inspired their pupils into putting forth a considerable amount of effort

in order to achieve success in the field of music. The teachers in this period of music history certainly laid a solid foundation enabling musical culture to be enriched. The history of music in Aurora for many years evolved around several valuable teachers and their numerous musical accomplishments, many of them being achieved under adverse conditions.

East Side school music. When Margaret F. Pouk¹ came to Aurora in 1913, there was no band or orchestra, and very little vocal work. Yes, there had been some vocal music and an attempt had been made to organize an orchestra. The orchestra started by B. W. Merrill in 1878 existed when Merrill was a student at East High, but no music teacher was employed to direct such an organization. Mary P. Gale and Helen M. Cook preceded Margaret Pouk in teaching vocal music, but they did not accomplish much. W. C. Guy, a teacher of commercial subjects, even attempted to start an orchestra, but failed.

Margaret Pouk worked very diligently attempting to raise the musical standards of her students, and, as a result, the standards of the community. Pouk not only taught all of the high school vocal music, but also was supervisor of all the vocal music in the elementary schools. In 1914, a year after Pouk came to the East side school system; she organized an orchestra. This teacher directed that group until 1937 when Vincent Langlitz took over.

Presenting operettas was certainly a forte of Margaret Pouk. During her many years as music teacher, she coached and directed numerous soloists, choirs, and orchestras in presenting such operettas as The Mikado,

¹ Stated by Margaret F. Pouk in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on February 1, 1955.

Pirates of Penzance, H.M.S. Pinafore, Tea for Two, Marriage of Nannette and many other well-known productions. The funds derived from the presentation of The Mikado by Gilbert and Sullivan helped to purchase the Hamilton grand piano used in the high school auditorium.

Margaret Pouk was instrumental in bringing the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to Aurora, especially so the school children of the community would have the opportunity to hear a live symphony orchestra. On one concert, one thousand students sang while the Chicago Symphony played the accompaniment arranged by Northwestern University students. The concerts were presented in the Sylvandell Theater, later to be known as the Paramount.

For several years, Margaret Pouk conducted the Glee Club of the Women's Business and Professional Club. This outstanding vocal group traveled to Portland, Maine; Des Moines, Iowa; and Cleveland, Ohio, to participate in contests and brought back gold trophies every time. Pouk also conducted a glee club at the Young Women's Christian Association.

Noting that many students were going on to college, Pouk created a course in beginning harmony so the music students would not be lost when they took college harmony. Pouk also instigated a class in music appreciation, which was open to all students in the high school.

The Fox Valley Music Festival owes its existence to Margaret F. Pouk, Emma Knudson, and Elizabeth Campbell. These three women organized a festival consisting of participating groups from the Fox River Valley. Each school would send an allotted number of students to the festival to sing in the choir or to play in the band or orchestra, and

outstanding directors would conduct these groups. These festivals gave the participating students some thrills and musical treats never to be forgotten.

The East side grade school music festival was another idea of Margaret Pouk. The various grade school vocal groups would assemble in the high school auditorium every spring and present a concert, and each year a different theme would be carried out. Sometimes the East High School orchestra would present a concert for children in lieu of the festival, and the youngsters would sing a few songs accompanied by the orchestra.

At one time, Grace Erickson and Shirley Bell assisted Margaret Pouk with the string work in the grade schools. Sylvan Ward of the Chicago Teachers College also did some teaching in the East Aurora High School.

Margaret Pouk retired from the teaching profession in June of 1954, giving forty-one years of her life to her chosen profession. She stated that everything done in the Aurora schools, musically speaking, was a downright fight, even to the presentation of concerts. The Aurora schools will certainly miss the inspiring spirit and guiding light behind much of its musical activities.

After the first World War, a band was organized at East Aurora by Louis H. Condy, and the directorship was turned over to Albert L. Huen in a couple of years. Huen did some good work, but Maurice W. Rosenbarger, who had a college degree, was hired to teach, starting with the fall term in September of 1921. Rosenbarger, who was affectionately called Rosie by all

of his friends, changed his name to Maurice W. Day; so from now on this individual will be referred to as M.W. Day.²

Day was born in New Albany, Indiana, and began his music education by taking cornet lessons when only seven years old. A few years later, Day commenced taking lessons on the clarinet, and was quite proficient on both instruments when only 18 years of age. Day attended the University of Chicago, studied four years with Paul Blanchard and J.B. Cragin, and become student director of the University band in his senior year.

While in Chicago, Day worked for the Cope-Harvey booking agency, and many times performed with James C. Petrillo, now president of the musicians union. From Chicago, Day moved to Divernon, Illinois, where both a band and orchestra were organized and directed by him.

For four years, Day handled both the East Aurora grade and high school bands and helped both organizations to get a good start. For several years, Day gave at least forty private lessons a week besides his regular teaching load. His dynamic drive and musicianship were certainly factors that led to the building of top-rated bands. They won a first division high school national rating in 1933 at Evanston, Illinois, ranking first with Mason City, Iowa, and Urbana, Illinois. In May of 1936, the band competed with seventy-five bands at Cleveland, Ohio, and won a highly superior rating. The East Aurora High School band won a second rating in competition at Council Bluffs, Iowa, and won first in the marching contest at Tulsa, Oklahoma.

² Stated by M.W. Day in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on June 10, 1954.

Under the direction of M.W. Day, many outstanding pupils won national recognition in solo and ensemble contests. Perfecting trombonists seemed to be a habit with this man, because three of his trombonists won first in the national contest continually for several years. Keig Garvin, now solo trombonist with the United States Army Band; Homer Phillips, now solo trombonist with the United States Navy Band; and Glenn Smith, now trombone instructor at the University of Michigan, were those three trombonists. The musicians in the band of the early 1930's are still talking about the way the East High national championship cornetist, Rostelle Reese, played the Carnival of Venice.

The bands under the baton of Day were always on hand to play for parades, dedications, or any other civic or community function at which they were asked to perform. The bands of Maurice Day played at least a fall and spring concert for a good many years, and the music they played was always of the highest quality. Naturally, the band played and marched at all home high school football games.

During the early years of the band, money was desperately needed for the purchase of uniforms, music, and new instruments; so Day conceived the idea for the band and the boys club of East High School to stage a minstrel show. Since the personnel of the bands consist only of boys, the members of the show were all boys, and the show became an immediate hit. From one performance a year, it grew to two, and recently the auditorium has been filled to capacity three nights in a row. Band directors from all over the world have written to East High School asking how to stage such a minstrel show, and that alone tells the story of the fame the show has spread.

Besides conducting the high school band, Maurice Day taught at least two American History classes every day. Being a veteran of the United States Marine Corp of World War I, Day spent a considerable time in Europe and, with his inquisitive mind; much was learned from that experience. It is common knowledge that every member of the M. W. Day history class knew how Rosie won the First World War.

M.W. Day suffered a severe heart attack in 1945, which made it necessary for him to give up his duties as band director, but he continued as a history instructor. In 1952, Day retired from the teaching profession, bought a trailer, and moved to St. Petersburg, Florida. Maurice Day and his wife, Jeanette, have become the fishing champions of that city.

Another factor that made the high school bands highly competent was the fact that the East side had a director of the grade school bands by the name of Edward A. Fitzgerald.³ This talented musician was born in Aurora and started teaching in the school system in the year 1925.

Fitzgerald was educated in the East side schools and received his higher instruction at Aurora College and Northwestern University. Fitzgerald began his musical training by taking piano lessons from Hattie Cutter, and later studied piano, organ, and voice with H. B. Bartholomew of Batavia.

While still in high school, Fitzgerald played piano at the Old Dreamland Theater on South Broadway and later played at the Lyric, Princess, and Aurora B theaters, and the Grand Opera House, which were

³ Stated by Edward A. Fitzgerald in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on January 14, 1955.

showing silent movies before the advent of the talkies. Fitzgerald gave piano lessons after finishing high school and led his own popular dance band, which was on the road for several months in 1922.

According to many teachers, soloists, and contest adjudicators, Fitzgerald was, and still is, one of the finest accompanists in the business. This teacher has accompanied many outstanding soloists and even since his retirement, spends long hours practicing with the soloists. This is done graciously without a cent of remuneration.

During the Fitzgerald years of service in the school band work, the East Aurora grade school band enrollment rose from a membership of 50 to 350. The caliber of bands as well as the membership must have risen because the grade school bands won several state superior ratings.

One of the highlights of the career of Eddie Fitzgerald as grade school band director was his organization of the East Side Grade School Solo Contest. Every member of the band had to learn to play a solo, and play it in the annual contest held every spring in one of the larger grade schools. The judges were selected from local music teachers and musicians, and they joyfully gave their time, talents, and efforts endeavoring to make the contest a success and to help the budding young musicians to improve their playing. Three judges were selected for every room having a contest, and half as many medals as there were contestants were given to the participants. The contestants performed, scores were added, and medals were given out the same night; so that was quite a night for the contestants as well as for their parents and teachers.

The bands of E.A. Fitzgerald participated in parades, contests, and were always presenting concerts as a single organization or in conjunction with the high school band concert. For many years, the grade school bands presented a grade school band festival with each band playing three or four compositions, and the combined bands playing a few selections.

For several years, Fitzgerald was pianist, choir member, and orchestra director at the First Congregational Church. Fitzgerald retired from the teaching profession in 1947, and was replaced by the present writer.

Aurora has had, and still has, its share of outstanding trombonists. During the reign of national contests, this city was well represented for many years. For several years, Kieg Garvin, Homer Phillips, and Glenn Smith ranked either one, two, or three, in the national contest, and in those days the judging was done by one, two, or three, not by groups as is done in many contests of today.

Homer E. Phillips,⁴ a product of the East side, started his musical career in the public schools, and continued his musical experiences by taking lessons from Jaroslav Cimera. Phillips graduated from Northwestern University and then toured the country with many outstanding professional bands. Before joining the United States Navy Band, Phillips was a schoolteacher for a short time at Crystal Lake, Illinois.

Keig E. Garvin,⁵ also a product of East Aurora, began his musical education in the public schools, and studied with Jaroslav Cimera. Garvin graduated from North Central College in 1937, and enlisted in the United

⁴ Aurora Beacon News, April 13, 1951.

⁵ Ibid., April 13, 1951.

States Army Band in 1938, and has been their featured soloist since that date. Garvin is married to the former Elfrieda Whitson, of Aurora, a clarinetist who played in the West side bands and in the Aurora Symphony Orchestra.

Glenn Smith,⁶ also graduated from East High School and was national high school champion in 1930. After graduating from college, Smith taught music for a time at Tribune, Kansas, and then joined the music faculty at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Just to mention a few, some other trombonists who have been active in the musical circles of Aurora are: Ray Robinson, Martin Bonesteel, Jack Creviston, Eugene Stephens, Ray Wagner, Bud Johnson, Dean Denler, Eugene Lye, John Neumann, Harold Osman, Dean Miller, James Trotto, and others too numerous to mention. Some of the named trombonists are in the music field while others play only as a hobby.

West Side school music. Since the early days of Aurora, there have been two school systems in the city. The Fox River separates the two systems and was the natural boundary and reason for the dual system in the first place. The West side district has been noted for its fine musical organizations and for the excellent training given to the pupils of the district by their outstanding music teachers.

The senior teacher of the West side music department is Harry H. Nigro,⁷ who has been, for several years, the supervisor of grade school

⁶ Ibid., April 13, 1951.

⁷ Stated by Harry H. Nigro in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on November 1, 1954.

bands and orchestras. Nigro was born in Necedah, Wisconsin, but spent most of his early life and received most of his training in Chicago, Illinois.

At the age of nine, Harry Nigro began the study of the violin under Professor Massey, and when 11 years old, started taking cornet lessons under the tutorage of Professor Pompellio. When 16 years of age, Nigro started musical training at the Chicago Musical College, studying theory and composition with W. J. Faulk; violin with Harry Dimond; cornet with Emil Kopp and William Bickett. Later, Nigro enrolled at Northwestern University and earned a bachelors degree in music education.

While attending school, Nigro played miscellaneous musical engagements, especially for vaudeville and motion pictures. In 1913, Nigro accepted the position at Mooseheart, Illinois, teaching music and directing the Mooseheart band as well as the Moose Lodge band. Nigro stayed at Mooseheart until 1917, when called to serve in the United States Navy during World War I. While in the Navy, Nigro was cornet soloist with the great Navy band, directed by John Philip Sousa.

At the termination of World War I, Nigro moved to Gary, Indiana, and taught for one year. Then, Nigro moved on to Grand Rapids, Wisconsin, (now Wisconsin Rapids) to become supervisor of the music department at Ferris College.

Nigro returned to Aurora, Illinois, in 1927, and was given the position as supervisor of all West side school bands and orchestras. Under the direction of Nigro, the West High school bands won state and national prominence, and the West side grade school bands also achieved a great deal of success.

Harry H. Nigro and his wife, Laura Ann, reared three daughters who are musicians in their own right. The Nigro family undoubtedly did much to increase the musical culture of both young and old alike in and about Aurora.

Mooseheart school music. Aurorans and other Fox River Valley folk take great pride in being associated with Mooseheart, which is also known as the Child City. The Loyal Order of Moose has located its home for children between Aurora and Batavia, Illinois, on the West River Road. The beautiful Child City of many fine buildings, schools of various educational vocations, its wonderful new church and high school with a spacious auditorium, assuredly are great moments dedicated to the children.

Harry Nigro was the first band director at Mooseheart, and his first studio consisted of a small tent under a large oak tree on top of a hill. Two small brass cornets, two banged up alto horns, and two squeaky clarinets were secured to start the nucleus of the band. Each student was given a half hour private lesson each day besides practicing with the band during the summer months, and on Thanksgiving Day, 1914, the band presented its first public performance.⁸

In 1915, new instruments were purchased, and the band had progressed so much that it made its first concert tour, which lasted six weeks. The band traveled approximately 7,000 miles, passed through eighteen states, and played twenty concerts in as many cities.

When Nigro was called to the colors in May of 1917, ten members of the Mooseheart band also enlisted. At that time, L. B. Reeder, director of

⁸ Aurora Beacon News, April 15, 1951.

the Rock City band at Batavia, Illinois, was secured as the new director. The band made several nation-wide tours under the capable direction of Reeder. While in New York City, the band made some recordings for the Columbia Phonograph Company.

G. Burton Denney, prominent Aurora musician, was appointed band director in 1925, and served in that capacity until 1929. Then Jesse Ora Ballinger was made musical director of the Loyal Order of Moose Child City.

J. O. Ballinger⁹ was born and reared in Elgin, Illinois, and started studying violin at the age of four under Carl Hecker, concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Later, Ballinger studied with Joseph H. Chapek, noted Chicago violin instructor. Before coming to Mooseheart, Ballinger was vice president and head of the violin department of the Chicago Conservatory of Music.

Other band directors who have served since Ballinger became musical director were Theodore Harris, George Sallade Howard,¹⁰ and Frederick Schwarz, the present director. Thomas G. Strong was assistant band director and teacher of stringed instruments from 1935 to 1940, inclusive.

Frederick N. Schwarz graduated from Harrison High School of Chicago and from Northwestern University. Schwarz also studied trombone with the fine teacher, Jaroslav (Jerry) Cimera, and clarinet with Domenico DeCaprio. F. M. Schwarz has conducted several bands, and also has been a performing member of several bands in the Chicago area. The Mooseheart

⁹ Ibid., April 22 1951.

¹⁰ G.S. Howard is the present Chief of Music and Bands for the United States Air Force, and holds the rank of Colonel.

bands have continued to be excellent organizations under the superb direction of Frederick Schwarz.¹¹

A list of winnings by the Mooseheart band is enormous. Better still, a list of Mooseheart band alumni and those who received orchestral and vocal training is still larger. Three Mooseheart graduates who are still carrying on their musical training locally are Jerry Conner, Hugh Van Doran, and Robert Hendry.¹²

Aurora College music. Aurora has been and still is, justly proud of its college which is known as Aurora College. This school of higher education has endeavored to help the people of the community to gain the education that they might desire and need.

The Aurora College choir was organized in 1933, through the untiring efforts of Maude Bouslough Naden,¹³ and has constantly been a guiding light for the higher type of vocal music in the community and wherever the choir might present a concert. The choir has made numerous concert tours throughout the country, and has inspired many musically minded students to come to Aurora and enroll in the college.

Maude Naden came from a very musical family, and that background inspired her to choose a musical career. Her grandfather, Samuel Bouslough, taught singing school at Shabbona, Illinois; her aunt taught voice; and the families of both her mother and father all had exceptional musical ability.

¹¹ Aurora Beacon News, May 5, 1951.

¹² Conner and Van Doran are currently busy with dance work as a side line, and Hendry is a member of the clarinet section of the Roosevelt-Aurora Post Number 84 American Legion Band under the direction of the present writer.

¹³ Aurora Beacon News, September 10, 1950.

The teaching career of Maude Naden began, at the suggestion of Harry Detweiler, as an assistant to Lemuel Kilby who taught at the Columbia Conservatory. Later, she studied at the Bush Conservatory in Chicago; with the eminent Prochowski in New York; and with the well-known John Dwight Sample and with Mrs. Samuel Wright, and coached with Edgar Nelson.

Maude Bouslough Naden has been soprano soloist and conductor of many church choirs in the Chicago and Aurora areas. This thrilling lady of music has inspired many with her outstanding voice and understanding of music. The music appreciation classes taught by her at Aurora College are interesting and understandable because of her knowledge of the music of the masters and her ability to impart that knowledge to her students.

The Aurora Symphony Orchestra

The Aurora Symphony Orchestra¹⁴ made its debut at the New England Congregational Church on May 17, 1931, under the direction of Louis Zander. The orchestra was assisted by Frances Sherwood, pianist; Hermanus Baer, baritone; and Eldon Sellers, 10 year old boy wonder violinist accompanied by Ruth Drake Zander. This organization functioned for several years and included the following members: violins, Mary Rasmussen, Irene Grumshaw, Rose Anderson, Thomas Strong, Jimmy McGlaughlin, Joseph Riemenschneider, Harold Niersbach, Willard Cooke, Arzeal Peo, Adele Schomig, Ruth Schomig, Kathleen Garrison, Katherine Skoglund, and Zoe Kroeger; violas, Lewis C. Schultz, Ruth Parker Lillen, P. A. Johnson, Kathleen Richert, and Charles Gridley; cellos, I. J. Leins, Betty

¹⁴ Ibid, March 26, 1950.

Wade; bass, R. C. Tobias, R. J. Frisch; flute, Francis Rue; oboe, Dwight Foster; bassoon, Harold Brown; clarinets, John Neitz, Wayne Mason; French horns, Edgar Thomas, Harold Benson, Walter Johnson; cornets, Jack Seargeant, Bruce Kinney; trombone, B. L. Palmer; drums, Arthur Skinner, tympani, Willy Bergmann; and piano, Bessie Todnem.

A Radio Star Vocalist

As a singer of popular songs, Annette King (Charlotte Thompson), now the wife of Frank Reid, Jr.,¹⁵ made friends all over the world by singing at the Breakfast Club and various other NBC radio programs from Chicago, Illinois. Although born in Kankakee, Illinois, this talented performer has lived in Aurora most of her life. Until reaching stardom, the only formal musical training Charlotte Reid received was from her mother who had a very lovely voice and was a member of the Park Place Baptist Church Choir. Of course, Charlotte Thompson Reid sang in the public school choirs and glee clubs, and was one of the few girls ever to be permitted to play in an East side band. The instrument of her choice was an upright alto horn.

Charlotte Reid attended Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois, and later went to Northern Illinois State Teachers College at DeKalb, Illinois, with the idea of becoming a teacher. Later, Reid decided not to become a teacher, but wanted to sing over the radio, if possible; so this young lady left college and headed for Chicago. After a long and tiresome tour of the radio stations, a job was secured singing on radio station WGES located on the West side of Chicago. The program director at that particular station thought the name of Charlotte Thompson too cumbersome; so after quite a

¹⁵ Stated by Charlotte Thompson Reid in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on January 11, 1955.

discussion and considerable deliberation, the professional name of Annette King was chosen.

Louise Gilbert became the vocal teacher of Annette King and it was not long until this aspiring young vocalist was singing on the Don McNeill Breakfast Club program. At the particular audition, David Rose was the staff pianist. Annette King has also sung for Club Matinee, Sunday Dinner at Aunt Fannies, and many other Chicago radio shows.

Charlotte Reid has been content to become a housewife and has four children, two boys and two girls. Once a week, however, Charlotte Reid still travels to Chicago to take a voice lesson. These lessons are from the same teacher that assisted her in getting started at the beginning of her professional career.

Summary

In this era, school music in Aurora, especially band music, reached a peak that brought honors to the schools and to the community, as well as to the individual band members. Besides the honors, which were nice, the band contests inspired the people of the city to work together for a common cause. During the depression days, the East side band could not have had new uniforms or have gone to the national contests if the entire community had not worked together for those goals. Despite the fact that the city is divided by having two school districts, community spirit prevailed at that time.

No professional bands or orchestras were functioning during this period, but the town was blessed with many outstanding dance orchestras.

Even though the pay scale was not very high at this particular time, large dance bands were in demand.

Although not mentioned in this chapter, the Blackhawk Orchestra, later to become the Aurora Civic Orchestra, was in full swing. Many capable Aurora musicians were contributing numerous hours of work each week so Aurora could boast about an outstanding civic orchestra, and the musical culture of the town would continue to develop.

Since many professional musicians were out of work, a WPA band was organized, and Lyle Flanders was selected to be the leader. Along with many other government projects, this did not last very long.

All in all, this was the era of the school band movement with such outstanding citizens as M.W. Day, E.A. Fitzgerald, and H.H. Nigro on the march and teaching the band members something that the town will never forget. The people of Aurora must have felt that music would help their children to become better citizens.

CHAPTER VIII

MUSIC FROM 1937 TO 1948

In 1937, the country had just begun to recover from the great depression that had been upon it since the stock market crash of 1929. Jobs started to become a bit more plentiful, and people seemed to have more money to spend on recreation.

At the beginning of this particular period, some farsighted Aurorans attempted to organize a municipal band, but the people of Aurora voted no on this issue. After going through a depression, many people did not want to have their taxes raised for any type of recreational luxuries. It is a shame that the band tax was voted on at the same time a school tax was under way.

During World War II, community music seemed to be at a standstill. There was music in the schools, but the schools were more understaffed than usual, and the teachers did well to keep the music department from going backwards. Naturally, many youngsters continued taking private lessons, especially piano. With both parents working, in many cases, money did not seem to be a problem, if a private teacher could be located.

In the postwar period in Aurora, things began to get back to normal again. The Civic Orchestra of Aurora, the Palestrina Choir, and the American Legion Band came back to life, and the music in the schools began to show signs of a more definite advancement.

Instrumental Music

Instrumental music in Aurora has always seemed to be on a very high standard. Since the early days of music in Aurora, more instrumentalists than vocalists seem to have gained the limelight. It is very difficult to say why, unless there were just more of them and they had more opportunities to play, whereas the vocalists did not have too many chances to sing publicly unless in a church choir. Those choirs did not, as a rule, gain much

publicity, even though they were usually doing a magnificent job in their own particular right.

Violinists. One of the most promising young violinists of the 1930's was Eldon L. Sellers.¹ This young man started his violin studies with Lewis C. Schultz and later studied with Louis Zander, with Frederick Toenniges, and then with Pierre Henrotte, who was concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera House Orchestra of New York City.

Sellers was quite active in school orchestras, playing recitals, and even won the Quin Ryan amateur program contest over radio station WGN on February 21, 1936. In conjunction with Donald Hatch, another promising Aurora musician and French horn soloist, and with Frances Sherwood as accompanist, Sellers played a concert at the First Methodist Church on September 10, 1940. The proceeds of the concert were to further the musical education of Hatch at the University of Illinois, and the musical education of Sellers at Oberlin College.

During World War II, Sellers became a pilot and spent several months in the European theater of operations. The musician-made soldier had his fiddle with him at all times, practiced whenever possible, and played for the entertainment of others whenever time permitted. After Sellers received his discharge from the Army Air Corps, his studies were resumed, and then he did some teaching in Maywood, Illinois.

¹ Aurora Beacon News, April 8, 1952.

Marvin H. Cornwall² started his musical career with Grace Erickson Bjorseth and Shirley Bell Ainsworth, who were, at the time, well-known Aurora violinists. When in high school, Cornwall studied with Naomi Ryburn Lovekin and was concertmaster of the orchestra for three years.

Cornwall spent the war years in the Navy, and participated in two invasions, Normandy and Iwo Jima. While on the islands in the Pacific, Cornwall conducted several choirs and was violin soloist in several shows presented on the islands.

Upon returning from service, Marvin Cornwall enrolled at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois, and continued his musical studies. While in college, Cornwall was concertmaster of the Aurora Civic Orchestra, sang in the First Methodist Church choir, was a member of the Aurora American Legion Band, and taught the Brady elementary school band.

Ruth Kollman³ was born in 1933, and began her study of the violin at the age of 10 with Gertrude Tiensin. Later, Kollman studied with Robert Myers and then with Frederick Toenniges.

While in high school, Kollman alternated being concertmistress with another talented violinist, and was also given the job of teaching grade school violinists. Kollman studied piano at the Aurora Conservatory of Music, and studied the other stringed instruments under the direction of Vincent Langlitz, East side orchestra instructor.

² Stated by Marvin H. Cornwall in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on March 5, 1955.

³ Aurora Beacon News, April 16, 1952.

Robert Myers,⁴ another one of the talented violinists of Aurora, was born in the city and has spent the majority of his life there. Bob Myers began his musical training with Josephine Farmer Verdon, and later studied with Louis Zander.

Some of the highlights of the musical career of Bob Myers include his being concertmaster of the East High School orchestra for two years; concertmaster of the Fox Valley Music Festival in 1938; and a member of the Chicago Civic Orchestra during the 1941-1942 season.

There were Aurora violinists not previously mentioned who contributed to the musical culture. Some of them are as follows: Rose Greenman Burrell, Hildegard Burkland Kraft, Josephine Farmer Verdon, Ruth Crowe Johnson, Grace Erickson Bjorseth, Elizabeth Coon Davis, Olive Pierce, Marjorie Bulley, Irene Claypool, Betty Watkins, Geraldine Norton, Howard Breese, Mary Godard, Sylvia Sinden, and Rose Anderson Tabert.⁵

Pianists. Herbert Weichsel,⁶ another Aurora native son, began his piano training at the age of 11 years with Carrie Doetschman, and later studied with Alice Doty Wernicke and Harry R. Detweiler. Still later, Weichsel studied with Ambrose Irving Gingrich of DePaul University, Chicago, and with Jean Clinton and the widely known and very famous artist and teacher, Rudolph Ganz, of the Chicago Musical College.

Weichsel was on the faculty of the Columbia Conservatory and also the Toenniges Conservatory for several years, teaching piano and accordian. Weichsel, along with Ruthanne Farrell, Geneva Johnson, and Frances

⁴ Ibid., July 23, 1950.

⁵ Ibid., July 23, 1950.

⁶ Ibid., September 30, 1951.

Sherwood, purchased the Toenniges Conservatory and renamed it the Aurora Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Art.

Geneva Johnson⁷ was born in Wausa, Nebraska, and then moved to Spirit Lake, Iowa, before coming to Aurora. Johnson received some musical training before coming to Aurora, continued her piano training with Harry Detweiler, of the Columbia Conservatory, and later became a member of the faculty of that school. Johnson also studied with Serge Tarnowsky at Bush Temple Conservatory; with Moissaye Boguslawski and Rossetter Cole in Chicago; and composition with Louis Gruenberg. Geneva Johnson earned a bachelor of music degree at the Columbia Conservatory.

Geneva Johnson has been quite an active soloist, accompanist, organist, violinist, and teacher. The community has really been richer, musically speaking, by having this talented woman as a citizen, and many students have received an excellent musical training through her outstanding leadership.

Frances Sherwood,⁸ undoubtedly one of the busiest musicians in Aurora, received most of her musical training in Aurora, and Chicago. Harry R. Detweiler of the Columbia Conservatory, Moissay Boguslawski and Tomford Harris of Chicago, and Louis Crowder of Northwestern University, were the teachers of Frances Sherwood who has been organist and choir director at several larger churches in Aurora, and also has been a member of the teaching staff at Columbia and Toenniges Conservatories. For the past several years, Sherwood has been teaching piano at the Aurora

⁷ Ibid., September 30, 1951.

⁸ Ibid., March 23, 1952.

Conservatory of Music, of which she is part owner, and also teaching organ and piano at Aurora College.

Walborg Swanson⁹ was born in Denver, Colorado, and after coming to Aurora, began her piano study with Harry Detweiler at the Columbia Conservatory. Swanson was one of the many talented musicians who received excellent training at the Columbia Conservatory under the tutorage of Detweiler.

After graduation from the Columbia Conservatory, Swanson studied piano with Jan Ciapusso at the Bush Conservatory of Music in Chicago, and organ with the famous teachers, Edgar Nelson and Arthur Dunham, also of Chicago.

This woman has done much private piano teaching. Besides that, Swanson has done considerable organ work in several of the churches of Aurora.

Wava Hoopingarner Schneller¹⁰ has been an outstanding pianist and organist in Aurora for many years. Schneller received most of her training at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois, and studied organ with Professor C. C. Pinney of Kansas City, Missouri, and Whitmer Bryne of Chicago.

Ellen Munson Neitz¹¹ graduated from the Columbia Conservatory and did additional work at the Bush Conservatory and the Chicago Musical College, studying with many eminent teachers. Ellen Neitz did considerable

⁹ Ibid., August 27, 1950.

¹⁰ Ibid., August 27, 1950.

¹¹ Ibid., August 27, 1950.

teaching in Aurora, and also taught at the Texas State College for Women in Denton, Texas.

Ada Brandt¹² has demonstrated her ability as one of the most notable pianists and teachers in the Aurora area. Besides that, Brandt has achieved national recognition for her teaching techniques and for her writing in the field of piano music.

At college age, Ada Brandt entered Northwestern University School of Music with the advanced credit of a junior, and graduated from that institution with a major in piano. Brandt studied under Professor Arne Oldberg, and theory with the late Peter Christian Lutkin. After taking postgraduate work with Guy Maier, Ada Brandt has been working exclusively under his guidance. Upon the recommendation of Maier, students from the Chicago area have studied the Maier principles of technique under the supervision of Brandt. This pianist and teacher has also conducted lecture courses suitable for normal piano classes.

In 1946, Harriet Stewart Wagensell¹³ came to Aurora to be associated with Ada Brandt in her studio. Wagensell received her degree from the Chicago Musical College, majoring in piano, and has had summer courses studying the Maier method.

Burdell Whitford Sorensen¹⁴ has been a successful piano teacher not only in Aurora, but in DeKalb, Waterman, Evanston, and Chicago as well. The early training of Sorensen was received in Waterman, Illinois, and at

¹² Ibid., September 3, 1950.

¹³ Ibid., September 3, 1950.

¹⁴ Stated by Burdell Whitford Sorensen in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on March 8, 1955.

Northern Illinois State Teachers College, but her bachelor of music degree was received from the Columbia Conservatory of Music in Aurora. Sorensen was one of the first teachers to advance the idea of the progressive music club plan, and has advocated this training as being very beneficial for her pupils. A photograph of one of the Sorensen piano clubs of Aurora, and also an article relating to the club activities, appeared in the Etude magazine some time ago.¹⁵

Sorensen has been very intensive in the interest of bringing noteworthy artists to Aurora for the inspiration and benefit derived from hearing them. Sorensen has also been active as a member of the music committee of the First Methodist Church.

Kay Adams Avery¹⁶ has been teaching piano in Aurora for many years, and several students have received their initial, as well as advanced, training on the pianoforte from this outstanding teacher. Kay Adams Avery has pupils whose age ranges from 6 to 60, most of them just wanting to learn to play for the fun of it.

Carolyn Parker, Bernice Roe, Ethel Dudgeon, and Ruth Churchill are other piano teachers who have been, and still are, very active in the field of piano teaching. Some of these teachers have also branched off into teaching the electric organ.

Constance (Connie) Claire Janssen¹⁷ was one of the most outstanding concert pianists of Aurora. Connie Janssen studied with Lucy Spencer and

¹⁵ Sorensen, B., "Progressive Piano Club", Etude, 59:723. October, 1941.

¹⁶ Aurora Beacon News, October 8, 1955.

¹⁷ Ibid., May 6, 1940.

with Harry Detweiler from Aurora, with Rudolph Reuter from Chicago, and with Sandor Vas at the Eastman School of Music.

While attending East High School, Connie Claire Jannsen won first place in the piano division of the national contest, and was awarded a scholarship to the Interlochen Music Camp in Michigan. Connie Jannsen has appeared as soloist in Orchestral Hall, Chicago, and in 1939, appeared on the Major Bowes Amateur Hour as a representative of the city of Aurora, which was the honor city that particular night.

Accordion bands. Many citizens of the Aurora area received their initial musical training in one of the several accordion bands that are prominent in Aurora. Also, many have been members of one of the accordion bands that presented concerts practically everywhere that music was desired or needed. These accordion bands were in various classes, namely, all accordions, accordions and some, or all, of the instruments used in bands and orchestras, plus some plectrum instruments not primarily use in either one.

Anna Largent Esterday¹⁸ has been teaching music in the Aurora area for a good many years, and one of her most noted works has been the organization of an accordion band. Esterday had the benefit of considerable musical study before coming to Aurora, but after arriving there she graduated from the Columbia Conservatory; the Sherwood Music School in Chicago; the Ferris Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan; and received tutoring under several outstanding accordion teachers in Chicago.

¹⁸ Ibid., July 9, 1950.

Joy Boffenmyer Brown¹⁹ began her musical studies with Clara Wilson and later studied with Frances Sherwood, Jennie Marselius, and Geneva Johnson of the Columbia Conservatory. Joy Brown graduated from DePaul University and also studied accordion at the Rizzo School of Music in Chicago. The Brown accordion band, which rehearses at the studio known as Joy's Music Center, has been quite active in many musical events throughout the state.

The Aurora Legion Band. Through the untiring efforts of John W. Bolinger,²⁰ the Roosevelt-Aurora Post Number 84 American Legion Band was organized in the fall of 1937. The band members consisted of young men who had recently graduated from high school and who wished to continue with their musical enterprises in the band field. This cadet band started with only seven members, but the membership gradually kept increasing until there were approximately twenty-five playing members. The Legion post was not very generous, allowing only five dollars a year to operate the band, but despite that difficulty, the band flourished, and in a short time, uniforms were purchased at the cost of \$9.26 each, and shiny metal helmets that cost \$5.50 each.

The first conductor of the cadet band was Norman Range, who directed the group until the beginning of World War II, when most of the band members entered the service of their country. After the cessation of hostilities and the soldiers returned home, the band was reorganized, this time as an official American Legion band. Dick Koffrom was the first post

¹⁹ Ibid., October 1, 1950.

²⁰ Stated by John W. Bolinger in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on March 17, 1955. Bolinger was one of the organizers of the Aurora American Legion Band.

war director, and after a short time was replaced by Theodore Haugland, a teacher from Marmion Military Academy, who held the rank of Captain in the Army of the United States.

After winning the American Legion State Band Contest in Class B in 1947, the band decided that they would like to participate in the national contest, which was to be held in New York City that year. After some deliberation, Roosevelt-Aurora Post Number 84 officers and members decided to send the band and to underwrite the entire expense account, which amounted to approximately \$4,000.00. That was quite a difference in money from the five dollars per year that the post gave the band in 1937. Transportation had to be by air inasmuch as many of the band members had already used their allotted vacation time, and most of them could not afford to be away from their work for too long a period.

Although the band did not win any prize money, the experiences and memories of that flying trip will never be forgotten. The present writer was chosen to direct the band at that convention contest, and after returning to Aurora, was chosen to be the permanent conductor.

The Roosevelt-Aurora Post Number 84 American Legion band has been a guiding light in band music in Aurora and vicinity during the last few years. Since Aurora does not have a municipal band, this band acts rather in an unofficial capacity as the city band. The Aurora Legion band tries to maintain a good reputation as being a fine musical organization, presenting concerts and playing in parades wherever desired. The band feels a moral obligation to play for all Legion functions, and especially to play concerts for the veterans in the many veterans' hospitals located in the area.

The Aurora Post band has won its share of contests; both the Legion sponsored state department contest and the contest held on Veterans Day each year at the State Fair in Springfield, Illinois. Since the band is allowed twenty per cent non-legionnaires to participate with the band during the contests, many outstanding Aurora musicians who were not in the service, including some promising high school musicians, have had the opportunity to play with the band.

The members of the band who have joined or returned soon after World War II are as follows: Richard Marti, drum major; Earl Huntoon, Kenneth Olson, Robert Hendry, Jerry Reding, Paul C. Rohr, Bertel Malmberg, Richard Crutchett, Robert Charest, Thomas Charest, Don Lies, Tom McDonald, Harold Osman, John Neumann, Robert Mitchler, Paul Mickelson, Peter Morrison, Ora Ellis, Franklin Powell, C.M. Abrahamson, Fred Porter, Warren Held, K.B. MacDonald, band manager, and the present writer, director. The organization has continually been trying to raise the musical standards of the city as well as to promote Americanism through the medium of band music.

Vocal Music

As has been mentioned previously in this chapter, the instrumentalists in Aurora have tended to overshadow the vocalists, but a few of the vocalists have become well known. Regardless of whether or not they reached the top in their particular field of vocal music, without a doubt, many vocalists in Aurora have contributed in helping to make Aurora musical. Many vocalists did their part by teaching, by singing at funerals, weddings, in church choirs,

and in many other smaller capacities, or by a combination of all of these, either as a full time occupation or merely as a sideline.

Outstanding vocalists. Even though she was born in Oak Park, Illinois, Elizabeth Anne McKnight Rogosin²¹ can be classified as a native of Aurora. The early schooling of Anne McKnight was in the West side schools, and her early singing was done at home, with her mother as accompanist, and in the schools and churches of the city.

Anne McKnight left Aurora to attend the Frances Shimer College at Mt. Carroll, Illinois, and it was there that her vocal coach, Madam Guildroy Scott, first realized the possibilities of the McKnight voice. From then on, McKnight started working to improve her voice, and that was also the beginning of an outstanding musical career.

While spending a summer vacation at Chautauqua, New York, and also doing some voice studying, McKnight met Evan Evans, then director of the Juilliard School voice department, who was at the summer resort that year. After hearing this talented young lady sing, Evans recommended to her parents that they invest in a musical education for her. McKnight was fortunate enough, and had enough talent, to win the five-year study plan in a Juilliard School of Music tryout.

While at Juilliard, Anne McKnight was urged by Willfred Pelletier, a well-known conductor, to try out for the part of Musetta in the NBC Symphony production of La Boheme under the direction of Arturo Toscanini. McKnight won the part, and the performance, sponsored by

²¹ Aurora Beacon News, November 26, 1950.

General Motors, was heard over the National Broadcasting Company network on February 3 and 10 in 1946.

From the time of the appearance of Anne McKnight with the world famous Toscanini, her fame began to spread throughout the country. The first professional debut in the Chicago area was at the Chicago Civic Opera House March 20, 21, 22, and 23, 1946, when she sang at the Fashion Rhapsody of 1946, staged for the benefit of the Veterans Fund of the Chicago Daily News. During the year 1946, McKnight made several other professional appearances in Chicago.

October 8, 1946, was the date of the Anne McKnight homecoming, and she presented a concert at the Aurora Woman's Club. At this concert, Frances Sherwood, who had been her accompanist many times before Anne McKnight made her professional debut, accompanied her singing, and was highly commended for the excellent work as accompanist.

Again in 1946, McKnight appeared in her hometown, this time under the auspices of the Student Music Series. The Aurora Civic Orchestra then chose her to be their first soloist of the 1947 season and she made an excellent showing at the November 29, 1947, concert.²²

Anne McKnight was again chosen by Toscanini to be his soprano soloist in his final broadcast of the 1948 season. In this broadcast, the NBC orchestra with chorus and soloists presented the Ninth Symphony by Beethoven.

²² Ibid., December 30, 1950.

Anne McKnight Rogosin and her husband moved to Italy where both continued their study of the opera and prepared to appear in several Italian operas. Anne also was the soprano soloist in the RCA Victor Red Seal recordings of the Bach B Minor Mass, directed by Robert Shaw.

Ruth Currier Dunning²³ did much singing in and about Aurora while attending West High School and also while attending the Northwestern University School of Music. Dunning studied with Hermanus Baer at Northwestern. This talented singer was also an outstanding dramatic reader and exhibited talent in dramatic reading at many of her concerts.

Elizabeth Strahocky²⁴ attended East High School and did her private vocal studying under the tutorage of Esther Cook Weiss. Strahocky attended Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, and the Cosmopolitan School of Music in Chicago.

Marion Royston²⁵ is a native of Aurora and has studied at the Columbia Conservatory of Music with many well-known local teachers. Royston has been quite active as a pianist as well as being a talented vocalist.

Ellen Pray Goewey²⁶ has been thrilling Aurorans with her very pleasing voice since coming to Aurora in 1946. Ellen Goewey has had a thorough musical education and much experience as a soloist and as a choir member.

²³ Ibid., April 20, 1952,.

²⁴ Ibid., April 20, 1952.

²⁵ Ibid., November 9, 1952.

²⁶ Ibid., November 9, 1952.

Although not a native Auroran, Ruth Thomas²⁷ has added much to the musical culture of the community. Thomas was made musical director of the Women's Club chorus, and this organization has achieved considerable success.

G. Byron Healy²⁸ was born in Aurora, Illinois, on January 23, 1917. Healy has done a great deal of studying throughout the country and uses his fine baritone voice to quite an advantage.

Healy studied with Bruce Foote while attending the University of Illinois, and while in school there, did extensive singing in the school organizations as well as in many churches. In 1944, Healy was the first division winner in the Chicagoland Music Festival. Since moving to Davenport, Iowa, in 1947, Healy has been actively singing in several churches in the Davenport area.

Some of the other very active male vocalists in the baritone and bass class who have not been mentioned are: J. Emil Brunnemeyer, C.P. Currier, Thomas P. Merritt, William F. Krause, Ed Kaser, Robert Spence, Merritt R. Evans, Paul Erickson, George E. Lidecka, Max Augustine, Jack Gilloguy, William Richards, Everett Harroun, William Otto, Ralph Hunt, Robert W. Weir, Elmer Burkland, A.W. Aylesworth, Ray Thorp, A.E. Hallman, W.C.K. Phillips, and Paul E. Keiser.²⁹ Some of the tenors that have done considerable singing in Aurora are: R. F. Lindberg, Walter W. Duncan,

²⁷ Ibid., August 6, 1950.

²⁸ Ibid., July 8, 1951.

²⁹ Ibid., October 28, 1951.

Henry Wittrup, Robert Milton, B.E. Lindstrom, J. Harrold Blair, Ray Baltar, Arthur Lay, and Harold Buckley.³⁰

The Palestrina Choir. The Palestrina Choir³¹ was organized in 1937 by the late Father Thomas Schaefer, O.S.B., and enjoyed noble success until Father Thomas was recalled to the St. Meinrad Abbey. In the fall of 1945, the group was reorganized under the direction of Father Ernest.

The purpose of the choir was to present in concert the representative selections of the outstanding choral composers of sacred, secular, and popular music, with special emphasis on good liturgical music. The organization usually numbered at least 100, and many of the original members are still active participants in this successful choir.

The director, Father Ernest,³² whose family name was Schnaus, and obviously German, was born on St. Patrick's Day in 1917. The mother of Father Ernest, however, changed the date of birth to March 16!

Without a doubt, Father Ernest has had a colorful career as a student and teacher, and is one of the most learned men in the area. In 1930, this priest entered the St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana, and studied piano and organ. The good priest has learned to play most of the instruments of the band and orchestra, and has played them in certain organizations at one time or another.

Father Ernest has received several degrees from as many universities and colleges, and has been the head of both the music and English

³⁰ Ibid., March 23, 1952.

³¹ Ibid., August 6, 1950.

³² Ibid., August 6, 1950.

departments at Marmion Military Academy. This talented musician, member of the robe, has made his mark in the field of music in the Aurora area, and is respected for his outstanding work throughout the country.

Negro Artists

Aurora can be proud of its Negro citizens in all walks of life, and can especially be proud of their musical achievements. These Negro musicians have been active in church, school, and community musical activities, and undoubtedly have added much not only to their own musical culture, but, to the culture of the entire human race.

Jennie C. Saunders Bryant³³ received her early training in the West side schools. Bryant studied piano, violin, and voice in the public schools, and later started taking lessons with Frederick Toenniges and Geneva Johnson.

Jennie Bryant entered Northwestern University in 1943, and graduated in 1947, with a double major in piano and violin. She has done considerable teaching, especially in Greensboro, North Carolina, and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Francis Leon Barrigher³⁴ came to Aurora when a young man and has been doing his part in the musical circles there ever since. Barrigher possesses a clear tenor voice and has put it to good use in entertaining people all over the Aurora area.

³³ Ibid., January 11, 1953.

³⁴ Ibid., January 11, 1953.

Richard Johnson³⁵ began his musical training in the East side schools, and at an early age was given private lessons, which were paid for by Civic Betterment League of Aurora. Johnson was a member of the East High School band and orchestra, playing bass horn in the band and string bass and piano in the orchestra. Known for his fine accompanying work, Johnson has played for many soloists in district and state solo contests, as well as for recitals. Work by Johnson with youngsters was outstanding, and his teaching of piano in the East side public schools met with a great deal of success.

Before graduating from high school, Johnson enlisted in the Army during World War II, and was a conductor of an Army band. After his discharge from military service, Johnson finished high school and attended DePaul University for a time. After another tour of duty, this time in the Navy, Richard Johnson received the call to preach, and enrolled in the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois. It is the general consensus of opinion that Richard Johnson has been, and still is, a truly Christian gentleman.

Mabel Griffin,³⁶ wife of the minister of one of the Negro churches of Aurora, is another one of the outstanding vocalists of the city. Griffin did most of her studying in Chicago, and has been soloist in many church choirs and community musical organizations.

School Music

³⁵ Stated by Richard Johnson in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on February 10, 1955.

³⁶ Aurora Beacon News, January 18, 1953.

The schools of Aurora have continued their high standard of music education, a standard that was set by earlier teachers who were pioneers in the field of school music. The parochial schools have carried on a music program as well, but not on as high a scale as the East and West side public schools.

Because the directors of the various school organizations felt that contests had served their purpose as far as large organizations were concerned, only the soloists and ensembles were sent to district and state contests in recent years. Contests had done much to build up the school bands, but had become such a cost and burden to all concerned that other devices such as festivals, tours, and playing for more civic events, were selected to take their place.

The Marmion Military Academy Band. In 1926, a Catholic high school was built, and at the time, was called the Fox Valley High School. This school operated as a day school until 1933, when the Benedictine Fathers assumed management, and the institution became a reserve officer's training school. Also at this time, the name was changed to Marmion Military Academy,³⁷ and the school became both a boarding and a day school.

Father Norbert Spitzmesser, O.S.B., superintendent, had been a former band director, and realized the need for a band at the school. Leo Zitzmann served as director for one year, followed by Howard Strom who came over from Joliet, Illinois, and taught two days a week at the academy.

³⁷ Ibid., May 14, 1950.

Theodore Haugland³⁸ was selected in 1937 to organize the academy band to meet the requirements of the war department. Haugland was born in Montevideo, Minnesota, and received his early musical training on the cornet while attending the Montevideo grade and high schools. After graduating from high school, Haugland enlisted in the Navy during World War I and spent his time playing in several Navy bands, both on land and aboard ship.

After the war, Haugland enrolled at St. Olaf College at Northfield, Minnesota, studying under Arndt Bergy and F. Melius Christiansen, graduating in 1923. Haugland did graduate study at Northern Illinois Normal and at the University of Minnesota. Prior to coming to Aurora, this bandmaster taught for fourteen years in Minnesota.

The Madonna High School music department. The music department of Madonna High School,³⁹ the Catholic high school for girls located in Aurora, was organized in 1926, the year the school was built. Sister Laudesia, O.S.F., was appointed the first music teacher, and organized the first glee clubs. The initial appearance of a Madonna high school group was on December 8, 1927, when the senior glee club sang at the dedication of the school chapel.

The music teaching at Madonna has been very thorough, and the students have had the opportunity not only to study voice, but to study piano, the various instruments of the orchestra, and music appreciation. The role of music in the church is given special emphasis, but all types of music are studied and performed.

³⁸ Ibid., May 14, 1950.

³⁹ Ibid., June 18, 1950.

West Side public schools. West side schools have been very active in the vocal department also. Wayne Hertz,⁴⁰ who moved to Washington in 1938, was the originator of the gowned choir singing a capella in Aurora, and this organization has grown to tremendous heights.

Sten G. Halfvarson⁴¹ replaced Hertz as head of the West side voice department in September of 1938. Halfvarson completed both his undergraduate and graduate work at the Northwestern University School of Music, and taught for one year at Menominee, Michigan, before coming to Aurora.

At West High School, Halfvarson has been very successful in developing outstanding vocal organizations. The Halfvarson groups have presented many well-known operettas, plus writing and presenting some of their own shows.

Since 1948, Halfvarson has taught summer sessions at the Vandercook College of Music located in Chicago, Illinois. Halfvarson has also been guest conductor of many music festivals throughout the country. Three original compositions by Halfvarson have been published, namely, The Easter Hope, Psalm 61, and Come Sleep. Birchard published the first one and Choral Press the next two.

Sten Halfvarson formerly directed the Swedish Lutheran Church Choir in Geneva, Illinois, and later took over the directorship of the New England Congregational Church choir. Lucille, the wife of Sten Halfvarson,

⁴⁰ W. Hertz is presently head of the music department at the Central Washington College of Education in the state of Washington.

⁴¹ Stated by Sten G. Halfvarson in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on February 22, 1955.

directs the choir at Our Saviour Lutheran Church, and has been their featured soprano soloist for several years. The Halfvarson family has also been very active in community music as well as in church and school musical activities.

Warren Felts,⁴² a native of Harrisburg, Illinois, came to Aurora, Illinois, in 1942, after teaching two years at Flora, Illinois. Felts received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois in 1940, and was a member of the tuba section of the famous University of Illinois concert band. Felts spent three years in the armed forces and, for a time, was a non-commissioned officer in charge of the 121st Armed Ground Forces Band at Schofield Barracks near Honolulu, Hawaii.

Since returning to Aurora, Felts has been in charge of both the band and orchestra at West High School. Felts has also been active as director of music at Bethany Lutheran Church in Batavia, and as a member of several prominent local dance orchestras.

East Side public schools. The East side schools have tried to carry on a high standard of musical training, and each year more and more students are taking advantage of the opportunity of learning to play a musical instrument. The bands and orchestras, both grade and high school, all present several concerts each year and a spring festival, plus playing for many school and civic affairs.

⁴² Stated by Warren Felts in an interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on January 10, 1955.

Upon the retirement of M.W. Day from the teaching of music, James V. Trotto⁴³ has had charge of the East High School band. Trotto was born April 20, 1915, in Virginia, Minnesota, and received his elementary and secondary education in that city.

Trotto began his musical training with Vernon Malone, a former Army bandmaster who developed music to an unusually high standard in the mining town of Virginia, Minnesota. Malone had such a wonderful reputation that Deems Taylor and Olin Downes traveled from New York City to this small town to hear its famed concert band and symphony orchestra.

For his higher education, Trotto attended Virginia Junior College and then transferred to Iowa State Teachers College. Later, he received his master's degree from the University of Minnesota.

James Trotto came to Aurora in 1938 to teach band and academic subjects at the Center School. In 1942, Trotto enlisted in the United States Navy, and served as an officer until discharged in 1945, at which time he returned to Aurora and resumed his teaching in the East side schools.

Vincent Langlitz,⁴⁴ a native of Aurora, became the teacher of stringed instruments and director of the East High School orchestra in 1937. Langlitz began his musical training with E. C. Hoffman, and studied the violin for eight years. In high school Langlitz played violin in the orchestra, and also studied string bass and viola and began his study of harmony.

⁴³ Stated by James V. Trotto in a personal interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on September 1, 1954.

⁴⁴ Stated by Vincent Langlitz in a personal interview with the present writer at Aurora, Illinois, on July 2, 1954.

While a student at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois, Langlitz played the violin and did the arranging for the Orrin Tucker dance band, in addition to touring the country with this band and playing at several large hotels and ballrooms. Langlitz also studied at Northwestern University, and received his master's degree from the American Conservatory of Music, Chicago.

During his war service, Langlitz arranged much of the music for broadcasts originating from Camp Wheeler, Georgia. Since returning to the teaching profession, Langlitz has continued his work as an arranger for school orchestras and has done considerable composing. Langlitz is considered to be an outstanding, well-trained musician, and the training given to his students has been topnotch.

The present writer was born in the farming community of Seymour, Illinois, on July 27, 1917, and received his elementary and high school education in the Seymour, Springfield, and Champaign, Illinois, public schools. His musical education commenced when in the seventh grade at which time he started playing the baritone horn under the teaching of William (Buck) Ewing, a creditable musician who directed many outstanding professional bands. The present writer played in the Champaign High School band under the direction of Ira B. McKinney, L. B. Monachesi, and Mendel Riley, and also studied harmony with the eminent composer and violinist, Sol B. Cohen; the Illinois State Normal University band under the direction of Kenyon S. Fletcher; the University of Illinois band under the direction of Clarence Sawhill, Mark Hindsley, and Austin A. Harding; the Vandercook College of Music band under several outstanding conductors including Richard Brittain and H. E. Nutt. In addition, he studied

composition and arranging with the prominent Chicago composer and arranger, Forrest L. Buchtel. The present writer received a diploma from Illinois State Normal University, a bachelor of science in education degree from the University of Illinois, and a master of music education degree from Vandercook College of Music, Chicago. The present writer has done considerable work toward a doctor of music education degree at Chicago Musical College. There he studied with many well-known teachers such as Hans Rosenwald, Duane Haskell, and Merton S. Zahrt.

Since 1937, the present writer has been a teacher in the East Aurora schools, District Number 131, and since 1947, has been supervisor of elementary and junior high school bands. Also in 1947, the present writer organized the All-Grade School Band, which consisted of the Junior High School Band (eighth grade only) as a nucleus and added the more advanced performers from the various grade school bands. The Junior High School Band met every day, but the other band members were allowed to rehearse with them only two days a week, on Monday and Thursday. This All-Grade School Band has become the honor band of the system and their ability to play with musicianship has been praised throughout the country.⁴⁵

The present writer enlisted in the United States Army on September 8, 1942, and received an honorable discharge on February 1, 1946. During his Army career, he was a member of the 15th Cavalry and the 62nd Armed Ground Forces bands.

⁴⁵ Stated by many musicians who have attended both rehearsals and concerts of the East Aurora All-Grade School Band.

Each year the present writer has carried on the tradition of organizing and holding the annual East Aurora Grade School Solo Contest. Also, as stated before, the present writer directs the Aurora American Legion band.

Summary

All the musicians who played or sang in some type of musical organization contributed something to the musical culture of the city of Aurora. To name all of those people would be too tremendous a task, and besides, many names probably would not mean anything except to the persons themselves and their immediate friends. As a result, only a few of the outstanding musicians have been mentioned.

There were many individual musicians, who started teaching and performing in this area, and many were carryovers from the previous era, but they all were contributing something toward music in their own particular way. Some musical organizations were formed and kept going despite the many obstacles that they might have had to hurdle. Other groups could not make the grade and dropped by the wayside.

If research had been done in the field of church music, much information undoubtedly would have been found showing that vocal music was on a much higher plain. Many vocalists were in existence, but most of them were singing music in the churches.

Despite the hardships and handicaps, that is, coming out of a great depression and being plunged into a devastating war, music in the city of Aurora survived and kept forging ahead. It is thought by many that music helped the people to pull through those hard and uneasy times, and helped them to continue being good citizens.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The collecting of the historical data concerning the instrumental emphasis of the musical development in Aurora, Illinois, and the presentation of this information in an organized form has been the problem of the present investigator. This was done because the somewhat typical mid-western community of Aurora, Illinois, is immensely rich in musical heritage, and, heretofore, no complete history of music in this particular community has been written.

An attempt has been made to test the following hypotheses: (1) music in the community helped to develop public school music, (2) public school music, in turn, had an effect on community music, and (3) prominent musicians influenced and even hastened the growth and understanding of music in the community. It is also realized that some of these hypotheses may be classified in one group.

In order to write this history, all available data was examined and evaluated in order to find pertinent material showing the evolution of music in Aurora, Illinois. This material was found primarily in old editions of the Aurora Beacon News and in scrapbooks of prominent Aurora musicians. Also, many old time and present day musicians were interviewed in an attempt to secure additional information as well as to confirm some existing data.

Summary

From existing data it was found that band music was the first type of organized instrumental music to exist in the city of Aurora. Various types of bands were organized from time to time, some of them originating from fraternal, church, and service organizations, and others as professional bands. At one period there was a great need for professional bands to play for many community activities, and, as a result, numerous bands were formed. As school bands reached maturity, they began replacing most of the other bands in serving the needs of some of the community musical activities. At the present time, only one non-school band, the Aurora American Legion Band, is operating in the city.

Orchestras developed at an early date, and Professor E. A. Stein organized the first concert orchestra of importance. Shortly after the Stein orchestra was formed in 1878, B.W. Merrill organized one of the first high school orchestras in the United States. Many church orchestras were also organized, and a considerable number of professional groups were needed to play for acts in the various show places of the community. As the years went by, a considerable number of civic orchestras were organized, but one that undoubtedly survived for the longest period of time and performed for the largest number of people was the Blackhawk Orchestra. This group later became known as the Aurora Civic Orchestra.

Organized vocal music also had an early start in Aurora. Records show that the Congregational Church Choir sang at the birth of the Republican Party at Aurora, Illinois, in 1854. (The present writer is aware of the fact that the community of Ripon, Wisconsin, also claims this

distinction.) It is assumed that most of the churches supported a choir, but that topic was not pursued in this investigation.

It was not until 1876 that a vocal group of great importance was organized. This aggregation was named the Apollo Club, and, according to all reports, was a leader in musical circles for many years.

In 1897, the Woman's Amateur Chorus and the Men's Auxiliary Chorus was organized by Emma Skinner Miller and for several years these groups sang under her direction. These organizations survived for several seasons and undoubtedly made a contribution to music in the city of Aurora.

Numerous civic vocal groups were formed, sang for a short time, and then disbanded. Presently, there is only one community vocal group in existence and this is known as the Palestrina Choir.

Many Aurora musicians made names for themselves in the musical world, some becoming internationally known, while others were known only to Aurora and vicinity. In the instrumental field, Professor E.A. Stein became known for his orchestral conducting and his ability as an organist; Alice Doty Wernicke for her performing on the piano and organ, for her private piano and organ instruction, and for establishing a music library; E.C. Hoffman for his ability as a band and orchestra conductor and as an organist; and Minnie Godard Worcester for her pianistic ability and for being more or less a music philanthropist in bringing good music to the people of Aurora. Dwight Godard was also successful in the instrumental field as a performer, conductor of both bands and orchestras, and composer. Maud Powell brought fame to herself and to the city of Aurora by earning the title of the world's greatest woman violinist. In the vocal field, Emma

Skinner Miller earned a reputation as being an outstanding conductor of civic and church choirs and as a public school music teacher.

The schools in Aurora pioneered in public school music since the founding of the city and of public education. For many years, music in the schools was only incidental or extracurricular, but later on, with the help of good teachers, administrators and board members began to comprehend the value of music in the schools. Therefore, school music began to spread out and become recognized as being a vital part of the school program as well as a contributing factor in raising the standards of music in the community. The need and desire for private music instruction prompted the organization of a conservatory of music. It really was not until the 1929 to 1936 era that public school music reached a new high standard. School music overshadowed practically all community music during this period. One reason for this fact was undoubtedly the depression, and another reason was perhaps the fine showing the bands made in contests.

In the public school music field the following teachers were the pioneers of music education in Aurora: Margaret F. Pouk, Maurice W. Day, Edward A. Fitzgerald, Peter Dykema, B.W. Merrill, G.W. Fickensher, and Emma Skinner Miller. Harry Nigro was also a pioneer, and is still engaged in teaching band and orchestra in Aurora.

In the field of music schools, E. Bruce Knowlton, H. R. Detweiler, Frank Kells, and Frederick Toenniges were quite active. These musicians contributed much to the cultural development of musicians and laymen alike.

Many interested musicians were quite instrumental in forming civic organizations to bring outstanding musical talent to Aurora. Also, a considerable number of clubs were organized to present local musical talent and to discuss and study interesting musical items.

Conclusions

The first hypothesis to be tested was as follows: Music in the community helped to develop public school music. The mere fact that there were good examples of music in the community led educators and public-spirited citizens to believe that more music should be added to the public schools. School music teachers endeavored to teach their students to perform as well as, if not better than, some of the highest developed music groups in the community, and civic music leaders attempted to keep their programs on still a higher level.

In keeping with the same line of thought, Professor Stein was credited with organizing the first concert orchestra in Aurora in the early 1870's. Only a few years later, in 1878, to be exact, B.W. Merrill organized the first high school orchestra in Aurora, and undoubtedly one of the first in the country, while still a high school student. The Stein Orchestra certainly stimulated Merrill and this was one of the contributing factors that caused him to organize the high school group. This experience also led Merrill to further his musical education and to become a full time music teacher in the East Aurora schools.

From interviews with old time musicians, information was gathered showing that Maud Powell certainly influenced and helped to develop public school music. When Maud Powell was attending elementary school, her

father was superintendent of schools and Professor Fickensher was hired to teach music on a part time basis. Whether or not the music education of Maud Powell had anything to do with the hiring of a music teacher will probably never be known, but it is a fact, however, that Powell was a farsighted educator and undoubtedly foresaw the need for music in the schools. The career of Maud Powell and her rise to fame must have influenced many pupils in the Aurora schools to study and understand music.

The St. Cecilia Musical Club helped to foster music in the public schools by its work in keeping music in the community functional. This group was also helpful to the public school music teachers, especially when one of the early meetings of the Illinois Music Teachers Association was held in Aurora, Illinois.

The rehearsals of the German Boys band were held in a public schoolhouse, and Andrew Domeier, director of the band, was a schoolteacher at the time. Instances such as this helped sow the seeds, which later germinated into all forms of instrumental music being installed in the public schools.

Besides his teaching in a Lutheran school, E.C. Hoffman taught many students privately. A considerable number of these students performed in public school musical organizations. Some of the more advanced students performed in several of the church and civic groups directed by Hoffman.

Although not supported financially by the community, the Aurora American Legion Band and the Palestrina Choir have done a considerable amount as community groups to help develop music in the public and

parochial schools. This was achieved through the presentation of concerts consisting of a high grade of musical literature and by giving school children the opportunity to attend. A selected few of the outstanding students in the high schools were allowed to perform with these organizations.

Several times, high school vocal groups presented performances that required accompaniment by an orchestra, but no school orchestra was in existence. Consistently the directors called upon Dwight Godard to bring his professional orchestra to assist with the performance. This surely did much in stimulating instrumental music in the public schools.

Professional musicians began to take over positions as music directors in the public schools. H. L. Condy, who had been a professional musician, first attempted to organize a high school band in the East side of Aurora. Condy was not very successful; so A. L. Huen, a prominent Aurora professional musician, took his place. Then, M.W. Day, who had originally been a professional musician, took charge of the band. E. A. Fitzgerald, a professional pianist and leader of dance orchestras, was then hired to assist Day with the grade school bands. All three of these men were professional musicians, and they continued in that capacity, in a small way, however, even after commencing to teach in the public schools.

Another working hypothesis was as follows: Public school music, in turn, helped to develop music in the community. Many of the items stated under the first hypothesis could be reversed and they would fit under this category also, but there are several people and organizations that primarily belong under this particular hypothesis.

Ada Foster was certainly an early public school music teacher who did much to stimulate music in the community. Through the use of simple but practical methods, Foster inspired her pupils to love and understand music. There were undoubtedly many similar teachers in Aurora, but no known record of these achievements exists.

As music in the public schools progressed, the people who graduated from the schools had a much improved understanding and knowledge of music, and were better prepared to further the cause of music in the community. This was a point that was true then and should be true at the present time.

The personnel of the two civic groups in existence at the present time, the Aurora American Legion Band and the Palestrina Choir, consists primarily of graduates from the Aurora high schools. This is another point proving that music in the community and school music go hand in hand. This item also stresses the fact that school music helped to develop music in the community.

The third hypothesis was as follows: Prominent musicians influenced and even hastened the growth and understanding of music in the community. Records showing the many musical achievements by the numerous outstanding musicians can substantiate this fact. Besides those already mentioned in this chapter, a few other really prominent musicians were the Plain family, Herman Barnard, Robert Barclay, Oliver Anderson, Charles Gridley, Maude Bouslough, Ada Brandt, Geneva Johnson, Frances Sherwood, and many other private, parochial, and public school teachers.

There were also three basic assumptions; the first one being the coming of the railroad to Aurora helped to stimulate music in Aurora. The rapid industrial and cultural development of our country has depended upon the development of the transportation facilities, and this was true of Aurora, Illinois. The coming of the railroad to Aurora made the city more accessible for visiting artists and teachers who wished to stay for only a short time, or to make Aurora their permanent home. This railroad also stimulated musicians to travel to Chicago and to other large cities for their musical instruction as well as to hear outstanding musical performances.

Another basic assumption, the proximity to metropolitan Chicago, was a leading factor that promoted good music in Aurora. This basic assumption goes hand in hand with the railroad assumption in regard to visiting artists and also in encouraging citizens of Aurora to travel to Chicago for musical instruction and entertainment. Records show that outstanding soloists, small ensembles, and the entire Chicago Symphony Orchestra traveled to Aurora many times to present musical performances. Existing data also gives information relative to the fact that many outstanding Chicago music teachers taught part time in Aurora.

The desire and need for music, the third basic assumption, was emphasized by the fact that the people of Aurora supported a conservatory, several schools of music, and numerous private music teachers. The citizenry also supported music in the public schools. The people also must have had a desire and need for music; otherwise, they would not have supported the many civic and professional music groups.

Recommendations

It is recommended that other investigations be made in the field of history of music in Aurora, Illinois, either as elaborations upon topics mentioned only slightly in this study, or upon subjects which were not presented. Music in the churches of the city of Aurora is a subject that should be covered in a thorough manner. An investigation of church music activities should lead to more information regarding outstanding vocalists and organists in the city of Aurora.

It is further recommended that more thorough investigations be made regarding the Blackhawk Orchestra, vocal music, small vocal and instrumental ensembles, and dance orchestras. More complete biographies could be written about numerous personalities in the music field, including

Dwight Godard, Maud Powell, Emma Skinner Miller, and the grand lady of music, Alice Doty Wernicke. This present study could also point the way to the writing of a history of music in Kane County and could eventually contribute to the writing of history of music in the state of Illinois.

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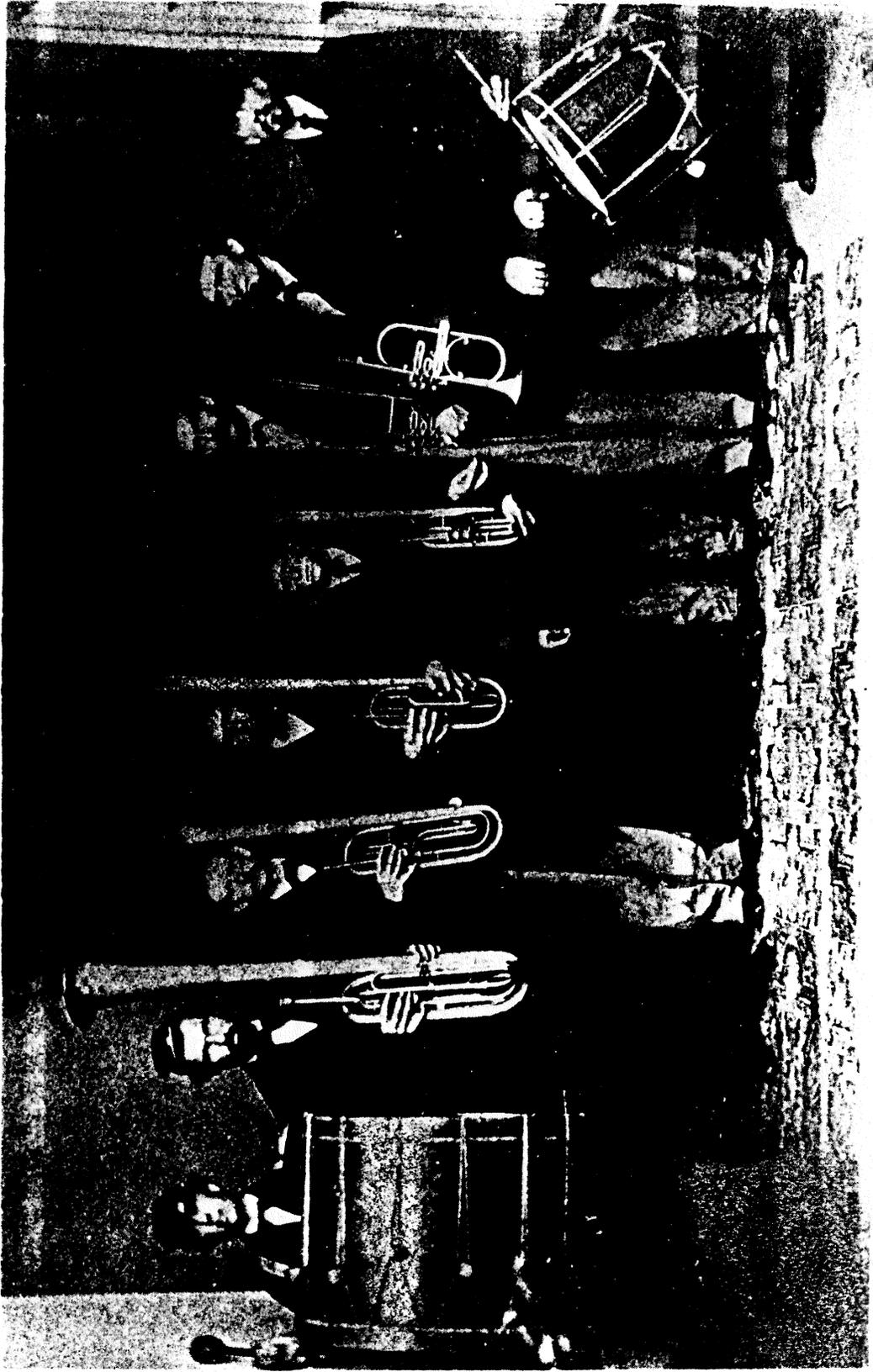


Figure 1. First Brass Band



Figure 2. Aurora Cornet Band

GRAND
Promenade Concert

— OF THE —
AURORA LIGHT GUARD BAND,
— AT —
**COULTER OPERA HOUSE,
TUESDAY EVENING, FEB. 12, '78**

ASSISTED BY
MISS MAGGIE HARRIS, Pianist.
MISS MARY BYRON, Vocalist.
PROF. CARL ZOEBERBIER, Violinist.
And a Male Quartette from the Apollo Club.

PROGRAMME:

PART I.

1. SELECTIONS (Mixed Candy,) Caywood
LIGHT GUARD BAND.
2. PIANO SOLO, Selected
MISS MAGGIE HARRIS.
3. OVERTURE, Zoberbier
L. G. BAND ORCHESTRA.
4. VOCAL SOLO, Tender and True, Caston Lyle
MISS MARY BYRON.
5. TUBA SOLO, Medley, Selected
BEN CHAMBERS.

PART II.

6. ROCK RIVER WALTZES with Baritone Solo, - McCosh
C. MILLER AND L. G. BAND.
7. QUARTETTE, - - - - -
ROBINSON, BUSSEY, PIERCE AND TIDD.
8. TULIP WALTZ, - - - - - Graffula
C. MILLER.
9. VIOLIN SOLO, 7th Aire, - - - - - DeBeriot
PROF. CARL ZOEBERBIER.
10. BRASS SEXTET, Image of the Rose, - - - Reichardt
ASPINWALL, TIDD, DUNN, MILLER, STICKLE & CHAMBERS.
11. MOONLIGHT ON THE LAKE Q. S., - - - Perkins
LIGHT GUARD BAND.

All those who wish, can remain after the Concert, and dance for a short time, without additional expense. Music by the Light Guard Band Orchestra.

Admission, - - - - - 25 Cents.
Reserved Seats in Gallery, - - - 35 Cents.

To be procured of members of the Band and at Watson's Book Store. Admission Tickets exchanged for Reserved Seats, at an additional charge of 10 cents.

BRACON Steam Print, 24, 26 & 28 Broadway, Aurora, Ill.

Figure 3. Coulter Opera House program presented by Aurora Light Guard Band

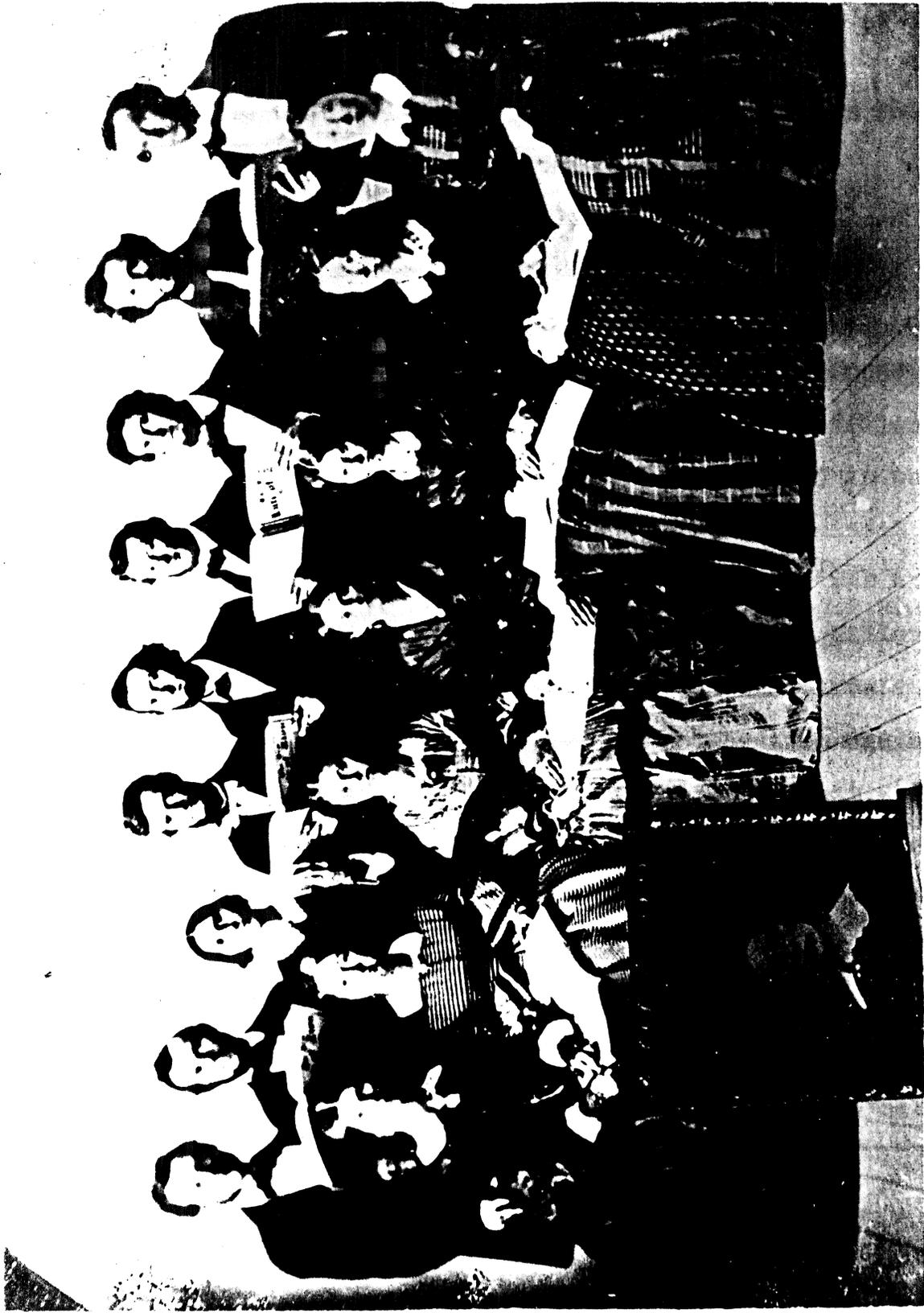


Figure 4. Choir of the old First Congregational Church