

3-1-1930

## The Palimpsest, vol.11 no.3, March 1930

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest>

Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

"The Palimpsest, vol.11 no.3, March 1930." *The Palimpsest* 11 (1930).

Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol11/iss3/1>

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Palimpsest by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

The  
**PALIMPSEST**  
MARCH 1930  
**CONTENTS**

**The Federated Music Clubs 97**  
G. PERLE SCHMIDT

**The Cornell Music Festival 107**  
BARTHOLOW V. CRAWFORD

**Dvorak at Spillville 113**  
RAMONA EVANS

**The High School Festival 119**  
FRANCES DOAK

**Comment 127**  
THE EDITOR

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

### THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

---

### THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

---

PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society      Iowa City Iowa

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

---

---

VOL. XI

ISSUED IN MARCH 1930

NO. 3

---

---

COPYRIGHT 1930 BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

## The Federated Music Clubs

“Iowa is the most musical State in the Union”, said Walter Damrosch on February 10, 1928, basing his opinion upon the response to his radio broadcasting. If this remarkable distinction is true, it is due partly to his own influence and unusual ability in teaching people how to appreciate good music.

But the stimulation of general interest in music and the foundation of musical attainment in Iowa was begun long before the name of Walter Damrosch became the symbol of radio popularity. Although it has been twenty-five years since the death of Theodore Thomas, his ideals of “music for the people and music by the people” of America have survived. One of the factors which has contributed to musical education in Iowa has been the coming, year after year, of the great Chicago Symphony Orchestra which was organized and directed by Thomas whose name it bore for many years.

In preparing a musical festival in 1893 for the World's Columbia Exposition in Chicago, Theodore Thomas realized that the occasion was opportune to form a national musical organization. Mrs. Rose Fay Thomas, working with her famous husband, issued a call to musical societies and clubs, asking that delegates be sent to a "Congress of Musicians". Forty-two organizations responded. Although the formation of a permanent society was proposed, the national organization was not perfected until five years later. Nevertheless it was the vision of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and their influence at the Chicago World's Fair which inspired the women who constituted the first Board of Directors to form the National Federation of Music Clubs on January 28, 1898, in Chicago. At a meeting, which was held at the home of Mrs. William S. Warren, eleven States were represented. The organization was incorporated on February 26, 1898, and the first biennial convention met in St. Louis the following year.

The ideals fostered by Theodore Thomas became the aims of the new organization: first, "To make America the Music Center of the World"; second, "To make Music useful in the Civic Life of America"; and third, "To Promote and Develop American Musical Talent." It was hoped that the influence of the federated music clubs would extend to every nook and corner of America, and be felt even in musical centers of Europe.

One of the founders of the National Federation

of Music Clubs in Chicago in 1898 was Mrs. Russell Ripley Dorr, formerly of Burlington, Iowa. Mrs. Dorr served as the fourth national president and, aside from other activities, has been almost continuously the historian of the National Federation. In a conversation with Mrs. Dorr, in Symphony Hall, Boston, on June 11, 1929, the writer expressed her pride to Mrs. Dorr over the fact that an Iowa woman should have been one to recognize and encourage the ideals of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas so long ago. With a long warm handclasp came the reply, "I am glad Iowa can, through me, claim her part in the formation of this great cultural society. My early married life was lived in Burlington and many happy memories are mine."

The National Federation of Music Clubs continued to grow. Its aims and ideals took root and during the administration of the eighth president, Mrs. Albert J. Oschner, the "official measure to organize each State into individual State Federations", was inaugurated. From 1915 to 1919 twenty-one States were organized. A former Iowa woman was largely responsible for carrying forward this work, Emma Roderick Hinkle Fisher (Mrs. William Arms Fisher), whose long service as an official in the National Federation is noteworthy. All of the States are now organized, as well as Cuba, the Philippine Islands, and Alaska.

The Iowa Federation of Music Clubs was organized at Davenport in December, 1916, with thirteen

clubs as charter members. During the first two years of its existence the World War occupied the attention of the organization. A decade later the Iowa Federation could turn to the pages of its records and recall with pride the words of the national president, Mrs. A. J. Oschner, spoken on June 30, 1919, at Peterborough, New Hampshire. "The unprecedented demands upon hearts and hands and the work of the war years has given to the Music Clubs of America a real responsibility", she declared. "For suddenly music was given recognition as a great moral force. Song leaders were sent into every camp. Community music was urged every place. Music and more music must be given our boys in training. . . . Music must fill the waiting hearts at home and vibrate from shore to shore with love, faith and gratitude."

With what pride Miss Norma Weise of Davenport, the first president of the Iowa Federation, gave her report on the outstanding war music work! "For Music in Camps: Many volunteer programs rendered. To camps Dodge, Travis, May, N. J., and the Rock Island Arsenal have been sent 14,240 sheets of music, 1,650 Victrola records, 800 pianola rolls, 55 musical instruments (including several pianos)." When the Iowa Federation of Music Clubs held its biennial convention in Des Moines in November, 1918, officers and delegates were cordially received at the Hostess House at Camp Dodge.

After the war came a period of expansion. Mrs.

Nora Babbitt Harsh, Des Moines, was elected the second State president; Mrs. Louis B. Schmidt, Ames, third; Mrs. Charles D. Marckres, Perry, fourth; Mrs. George Judisch, Ames, fifth; Mrs. Susan Bender Eddy, Des Moines, sixth; and Mrs. Nelle M. Johnson, Muscatine, the seventh and present State president. Each of these administrators has advanced the aims of the national society along the various lines of work through faithful and conscientious efforts, aided always by a board of officers and the chairmen of departments.

In 1921 the Iowa Federation adopted the national classification of departments and organized its work in accordance with the general plan. Each department is subdivided, with a chairman for each section. The Education Department includes the divisions of Course of Study, Public School Music, Library Alcoves and Extension, Pageantry, Choral Music, Civic Music, Music in the Home, Radio, Music Settlement Schools (in mining camps, night schools, and for factory workers), Music Credits, Motion Picture Music, Memory Contests, Community Music, and Legislation. The Department of American Music sponsors memorials for noteworthy musicians, particularly Iowans. It also includes Chamber Music, International Musical Reciprocity, Bands, Orchestra, Opera, American Composers, Iowa Composers, Religious and Church Music, and Young Artists Contests. In the Extension Department are the District and County Chairmen, New Clubs, Artist

and Individual Memberships, Past Presidents Assembly, Junior and Juvenile Clubs, and Contests. The Finance Department is composed of the Budget, Ways and Means, Scholarships, MacDowell Colony, Endowments, and Life and Special Membership branches. Radio Programs, National Music Bulletin, and State Publications are the activities of the Publicity Department.

The Young Artists Contests have been one of the principal activities since the beginning of the national society. Before the State contests were organized, Ralph Leo, of Cedar Rapids, was one of the first national contest winners. Mrs. J. J. Dorgan of Davenport, who has served as third vice-president of the National Federation, was State contest chairman for twelve years, while Professor E. H. Wilcox of Iowa City served four years as national contest chairman.

In many respects the national contests constitute the most important work of the Federation. Under the supervision of Professor Wilcox, the administrative headquarters for this activity were located at Iowa City from 1923 to 1927. In 1924 preliminary contests were held in every State of the Union, the winners of the State contests participated in district contests, and finally the best in each of the fourteen districts competed in the national contest. Some conception of the value of this work may be gained from the fact that several of the successful contestants have won professional recognition directly after

their triumphs in the competition of the National Federation of Music Clubs. Hilda Burke and Kathryn Witwer have sung in the Chicago Civic Opera, while Catherine Wade-Smith has attracted much attention as a violinist.

Iowa composers have received special attention by the Iowa State Federation of Music Clubs. This work was started in 1916 by Mr. John W. Teed of Bloomfield. Mrs. C. L. Armstrong of Waterloo and Mrs. Louis B. Schmidt of Ames have compiled a long list of names and collected copies of many compositions, dating back as far as 1881. Two articles based upon this material have been published. Dr. Carl Engel, Director of the Music Division in the Library of Congress, wrote in 1926 that "If other states would do what Iowa has done in collecting data on their writers of music, we would soon know where we stand in creative musical art."

In public school music a survey conducted by Mrs. Sue Hambley of Gilmore City, in connection with the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction, won national honor in 1922. Scholarships and prizes have aided many worthy young Iowa musicians. The Junior and Juvenile Club work, especially the contests, as carried forward by Mrs. W. F. Murdock of Clinton and Mrs. Carl Ristvedt of Story City, has laid the foundation of musical education for young people in Iowa. Other organizations have eagerly absorbed the principles established by the Iowa Federation of Music Clubs in promoting simi-

lar contests. At present Iowa has sixty active progressive Junior Clubs under the leadership of Mrs. Lewis H. Bolton of Des Moines.

The success of each State organization depends upon the strength of the individual clubs. The Ladies' Musical Club of Independence is forty-nine years old. Conspicuous in northeast Iowa is the Music Study Club of Cresco, which has established in the Cresco City Library probably the finest music alcove to be found in Iowa. The Idlers' Music Club of Salem, among innumerable activities, reported in 1921 a gift valued at \$350 to the Orphans' Home in Council Bluffs. These brief records indicate the civic work done by music clubs. Many times the finest work is done by the smaller clubs. Gilmore City, a town of seven hundred people, drew crowds of three thousand to their Sunday afternoon Community Concerts from 1919 to 1924.

In 1921, from the 4th to the 14th of June, Davenport was the scene of the largest gathering of musicians that ever met in Iowa. The nine federated music clubs of Davenport, assisted by the Chamber of Commerce, entertained the National Federation of Music Clubs in behalf of the "Tri-Cities", Davenport, Rock Island, and Moline. A record in the historian's files shows that Davenport alone spent \$31,000 for this unsurpassed Iowa music fiesta. Within the large fifty-page program were names to be conjured with in national and international music circles. Not the least of the programs to at-

tract attention was the one devoted to Iowa and Illinois composers. Fredrick Knight Logan's "Pale Moon" was given its "premier public performance, with the composer at the piano." The soloist was Genevieve Wheat-Baal of Des Moines. No doubt the star attraction was the presentation of Paolo Gallico's prize-winning dramatic oratorio, "The Apocalypse", on Tuesday evening, June 7th, followed by the awarding of the prize of \$5,000 by the National Federation of Music Clubs.

It was at this time that the Iowa Federation reached its largest membership with a total of ninety-six clubs. After the excitement of the national convention had subsided and normalcy had returned in Iowa music circles, the weaker and hastily organized clubs disbanded. Recently, however, the number of clubs has increased and the *National Bulletin* credited Iowa with a membership of ninety-four music clubs on January 1, 1930.

The door to the fairyland of music is open to every man, woman, boy, and girl who may choose to enter. The cost is no more than the price of an ice cream soda, for the membership fee in a music club is no more than that. There are no paid officers either in the State or the National Federation. The whole organization is entirely philanthropic in scope. Unfailing intelligence, direction, and ceaseless efforts of officers and members have raised hundreds of dollars to benefit Iowa musicians and music lovers. Thousands of dollars have been raised by the

national organization and large sums given personally for prizes, scholarships, and innumerable enterprises. And so the vision of Theodore Thomas, nearly forty years ago, has been realized in the "greatest constructive force for music in America".

G. PERLE SCHMIDT

## The Cornell Music Festival

Back in the "gay nineties", thirty-one years ago this coming May, Charles H. Adams, graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, launched at Mount Vernon, Iowa, an enterprise the results of which have doubtless far exceeded his ambitions and dreams. The May Music Festival, thus established, represented the faith and vision which always characterize pioneers. Music was not then the influence in the life of the American people that it is to-day. Neither phonograph nor radio had as yet made their way into the home. You could not then on a Sunday afternoon press a button, turn a dial in an unimpressive cabinet, and hear the words, "The Standard Oil Company of Indiana takes pleasure in presenting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra". Not only was such a thing then impossible, but few would have dreamed that it ever could be possible. Hearing music in 1899 demanded more initiative. If you lived in a neighboring town, you could not count on your automobile to bring you home over a paved road; but might have to prove your devotion to the arts by sitting up half the night in a train or railroad station.

Remembering all these things, one can realize that it took a stout heart to plan a Festival of even three concerts in a village of fifteen hundred inhabitants

and a college of a third that many students. To be sure, only the soloists were imported. There was no orchestra; and the main feature was the newly organized Oratorio Society, singing Goring Thomas's "The Swan and the Skylark". The venture was bold, but its popularity was conclusive. The next year, 1900, the three concerts were increased to five. An assembled orchestra of twenty pieces arrived on the last night from Chicago to accompany a full evening's performance of "The Messiah". In 1901 another step forward brought what was then known as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, a touring organization headed by Adolph Rosenbecker, but not to be confused with the great orchestra which more recently acquired the legal right to the name. With this year, symphonic music, even the "Unfinished Symphony", found its way into the programs. In 1902 the short-lived, but attractive, Spiering Orchestra was the feature. Then, in 1903, the Festival acquired real prestige with the arrival of the Theodore Thomas Orchestra.

Instead of its distinguished founder, the young assistant conductor of the orchestra, Frederick A. Stock, made the trip. According to authentic tradition, it was the first occasion on which he had conducted the orchestra outside of Chicago; and this fact has sometimes been used to explain his indisputable fondness for Mount Vernon, and his warm loyalty in the face of tempting offers to play concerts elsewhere in this territory. The 1903 visit of

the orchestra began an unbroken chain of performances which is now virtually a fixed engagement — the only one west of Chicago. Twenty-six years have seen the disappearance of many a familiar face. Faithful attendants upon the concerts recognize a mere handful of the original orchestra. But with every year, old ties are strengthened, and new ones are formed. As for Mr. Stock himself, he is the most loved of all Festival traditions. The cheer that breaks out each year from a rising audience at his appearance is no mere gesture. His response is an intimacy of manner and speech which amazes Chicagoans, accustomed to the chill correctness of Orchestra Hall. On a Saturday night he teases the audience, conducts guessing contests, leads community singing. The experience is one never to be forgotten, a unique tradition.

As regards musical content, the Festival early arrived at a plan which has since been seldom disturbed. Following recitals on Thursday night and Friday afternoon, the audience first sees the orchestra on Friday evening. This concert, often the high point of the Festival, has presented, usually, one solo by a great artist such as, let us say, Wither-  
spoon, Bispham, or Amato. Often, it has been nearly or wholly Wagnerian.

Saturday afternoon is termed the "Symphony Concert", and is in every respect the counterpart of such a program in Chicago or Boston. In the course of the years, there have been performed no less than

twenty complete symphonies, several of them more than once. In this number have been included modern as well as classic pieces — a deserved tribute to the musical maturity of the audiences.

Saturday evening, now divided with the orchestra, was once the exclusive possession of the Oratorio Society. This choral organization is the contribution of the local community to the success of the programs. Never numbering fewer than a hundred voices, and drilled faithfully for months, it maintains a high standard despite constant changes in personnel and direction.

The list of soloists who have appeared at Cornell Festivals is far too long for inclusion here. Personal fame in the field of musical performance is short-lived, and some names which once created a thrill might require a biographical sketch to-day. With apologies, however, to the long list omitted, we may mention:

*Sopranos*, Rider-Kelsey, Perceval Allen, Hinkle, Rappold, Garrison, Gluck, Hempel, Lashanska, Stanley, Sundelius, Dux, Austral.

*Contraltos*, Spencer, Keyes, Schumann-Heink, Alcock, Braslau.

*Tenors*, Hall, Hamlin, Johnson, Beddoe, Miller, Murphy, Aresoni, Althouse.

*Baritones*, Heinrich, Campanari, Bispham, Witherspoon (at least five times), Werrenrath, Whitehill, Amato, de Gogorza, Middleton.

*Pianists*, Godowsky, Bloomfield-Zeisler, Ganz,

Goodson, Shattuck, Maier and Pattison, Hutcheson, Levitzki, Reuter, Ney.

*Violinists*, Macmillan, Elman, Zimbalist, Ray, Morini, Lent.

Among the factors which have combined to perpetuate the Festival, one must take into account the energy of the successive directors of the Conservatory, the loyal support of the local community, and the financial sacrifices of the board of guarantors. One of the most potent factors, however, is not human but natural—the sheer charm of the season and the setting. May is not a trustworthy month from a climatic point of view, and many times concerts have had depleted audiences because of threatening or stormy weather. But when an Iowa May is on its good behavior, there is no more exquisite time in the whole year. What is more, the College Chapel, where these Festivals are held, crowns the highest hill for miles around, is surrounded by lovely sloping lawns, and looks down upon a smiling and prosperous countryside, unsurpassed in Iowa. The spectacle after either matinée or evening concert is a pleasant memory to many visitors.

The influence of such an institution as the Festival is, of course, difficult to measure; but is likely strongest upon children growing up in the community. Years ago one member of the orchestra began staying in a home where was a lad with musical ambitions. As the visits continued, the visitor

began teaching the lad the same instrument he himself played. The families having become fast friends, there was visiting back and forth between Chicago and Mount Vernon. At length, the boy went to Chicago, to be in the musician's home, and continue his studies. To-day he is a promising player in the Chicago Civic Orchestra. While he may never attain fame, that is one way cultural institutions make their mark, and sometimes are rewarded in the development of great geniuses. Equally valuable, however, is the transitory, diffused influence upon the casual hearers. Other agencies have now begun to reinforce it on a large scale, and America is fast becoming, what Germany and Italy have long been, a music-loving country. In this, one of the gentler of the arts, it thus finds a calming influence to balance its merciless and exhausting energy.

BARTHOLOW V. CRAWFORD

## Dvorak at Spillville

With the smoke from his pipe curling around his head as he strolled on an exploratory tour, Antonin Dvorak was already beginning to enjoy the little Bohemian village of Spillville, Iowa, after a residence of only an hour. How pleasant to be far from the nerve-racking noise of New York City, how restful to escape from the hurry and surge of the restless millions. Here, beside the Turkey River, the tranquility of nature and the songs of many birds invoked a mood of quiet contemplation.

In the fall of 1892, Antonin Dvorak, accompanied by his family and his American assistant, came to New York. It was his purpose, as Director of the National Conservatory of Music, to develop for America a school of music that would be as typical of American life and ideals as the German, Russian, and Italian schools are expressive of their distinctive national traits. Characteristically he assumed the duties of his position on the day after his arrival. At the same time he began the orchestration of a cantata upon which he had been working.

Dvorak's assistant, a combined pupil, interpreter, and secretary, was J. J. Kovarik, a native of Spillville, Iowa. As a boy he had shown considerable musical ability, so his father had sent him to Prague that he might study in the fatherland under Dvorak.

Upon his arrival in New York with his master he asked permission to go at once to visit his parents in Iowa, but Dvorak, knowing his need for an assistant, kept him until spring.

That winter was very trying for Dvorak. He was by nature a country gentleman, used to the serenity of rural life and accustomed to the solitary enjoyment of nature. In contrast to such an environment he was suddenly the center of great attention in New York. His social engagements were scarcely less numerous than his musical appointments. After meeting these private demands in addition to his duties as Director of the National Conservatory, he had little time left for composing. And when he did try to make a tune, it was invariably accompanied by the roar of elevated railway trains and the general clamor of traffic.

As spring approached Dvorak wanted more than ever to escape from the noisy city. He was anxious to work on some new music that he had in mind. One day Kovarik suggested that Dvorak accompany him on a visit to Iowa. Apparently his master did not hear, for he paid no attention to the remark and made no comment. A few days later, however, he quite unexpectedly asked Kovarik about Spillville. Kovarik explained that Spillville was a little Bohemian settlement, where his native language was spoken on the street; that it was peaceful and quiet, as well as beautiful; and, most important of all, there were no railroads in Spillville. Several days

passed. Then Dvorak asked his assistant to draw a map of Spillville, indicating every house, every street, every person who lived in each house and what they did. That was all; Dvorak made no comments. But when some friends of his from South Carolina tried to persuade him to go there for his rest he said, "No, I am going to Spillville."

So it was that a lovely day in June saw Antonin Dvorak, his wife, their six children, a sister, a maid, and his assistant, alight from the train at the little station of Calmar, eleven miles from Spillville. Kovarik sent the family on to the village while he remained to look after the baggage. Upon his arrival, he found Dvorak strolling around, smoking his pipe, quite at home, and apparently very much pleased with his surroundings.

The idyllic conditions at Spillville seemed to furnish the very incentive that was needed, for Dvorak began composing immediately. Within three days he had sketched his "String Quartette in F Major", Opus 96, and at the end of twelve days it was finished — a very unusual achievement. Indeed, this amazing feat was regarded with awe by the musical world. The score was begun on June 12th and finished on June 23, 1893.

The "New World Symphony" was still in manuscript form when he came to Spillville. To supply duplicates for publishers, Kovarik made several additional copies. "It is strange you don't have the trombones playing at the end of the last movement

when they have had such a prominent part in the rest of the Symphony", he remarked to the master. Dvorak had apparently overlooked this fact, so he set to work and added the trombone parts to the final movement. This was probably the only revision he made in the Symphony while he was in Iowa.

No sooner had the "Quartette in F Major" been finished than Dvorak began composing other chamber music. There is no evidence to show just when the "String Quintette in E Flat", Opus 97, was started, but he finished it in August. The third movement, "theme with variations", was originally intended as a new tune for the hymn "America", but Dvorak changed his mind and used the air for this wonderful set of variations.

Progress on the "Quintette" was interrupted for a week early in August when Dvorak went to Chicago to visit the Columbia Exposition and to conduct the Theodore Thomas Orchestra on Bohemian Day at the World's Fair. On the day after the concert he hurried back to Spillville and to work.

A week later, when the "Quintette" was finished he made a trip to Omaha and Minneapolis. He especially desired to see the Minnehaha Falls. As he stood at the foot of the falls and looked up at the beautiful cataract, he caught the inspiration for a new melody. Turning to his assistant he asked for some manuscript paper. But Kovarik had none with him, so Dvorak took his pencil and made some notes

on his stiff cuff. When he returned to Iowa he utilized this theme in the second movement of his Sonata for violin and piano, Opus 100. This particular movement as rearranged by Fritz Kreisler is well known as the "Indian Lament".

It is natural to suppose that his intervening works, Opuses 98 and 99, were written in Iowa, but nobody knows just when they were composed. Perhaps they were written previously and numbered later.

Probably Dvorak planned to leave Iowa at the end of the summer but his actual departure was precipitated by his eldest daughter. Unknown to her parents she had become infatuated with a young man in Spillville. According to tradition their elopement was intercepted in the nick of time, and so ended the youthful romance. When "Papa" Dvorak learned of the affair he was so incensed that he ordered the family to pack up immediately and they all left for New York the next day.

Many years passed and the visit of the great composer to the little Bohemian village in Iowa was almost forgotten. But in 1922, at the annual meeting of the Iowa Conservation Association, Mrs. Louis B. Schmidt, then Chairman of the Historic Spots Committee and president of the Iowa Federation of Music Clubs, proposed the commemoration of that notable episode in the history of Iowa. The suggestion met a cordial response and after several years of careful investigation definite plans were adopted

for the erection of a suitable monument at Spillville.

The memorial which stands on the banks of the Little Turkey River, was dedicated on September 28, 1925. On each face of the monument is carved the name of a Dvorak masterpiece, and around the bottom is a list of the compositions upon which he worked while in Iowa. On a bronze tablet set on a large central boulder are the words:

In Commemoration of the Visit

of

Antonin Dvorak

Renowned Composer

to

Spillville in 1893

This Tablet is Erected by

His Friends

and

The Iowa Conservation Association

Every year hundreds of people visit the Dvorak memorial. A glance at the pages of the register reveals the signatures of many noted musicians who live at the ends of the earth. Some of them no doubt have travelled far out of their way to visit this Iowa shrine of the famous composer.

RAMONA EVANS

## The High School Festival

Excited students, eager parents, and loyal younger brothers and sisters gathered at Novelty, Missouri, one evening in the spring of 1915 for a high school music contest. Long before the first number on the program the room was filled to overflowing. Cheers echoed and reechoed. Certainly the contest was successful in arousing interest. The enthusiasm which greeted the efforts of Superintendent G. T. Bennett to introduce interscholastic music contests was due partly to their novelty and partly to rivalry between neighboring high schools. But the results were highly satisfactory whatever the contributing factors may have been in bringing together this musical talent.

Five years later when Bennett was superintendent of the public school in Rockford, Iowa, he wrote to all schools in the State with six or more teachers suggesting a State-wide music contest for the following spring. Only fifty replies were received, but forty of them favored his plan. The interested schools were so scattered, however, and the teachers so busy that no State organization was formed that year. Nevertheless, two small contests were held, one by the Northeast Iowa Musical Activity Association at Rockford in March, 1921, and the other by the Northwest District Music Association in April of

the same year at Rock Rapids, thus preserving the ideal from utter failure until more enthusiasm could be worked up among other schools.

These contests encouraged Bennett to make another attempt to form a State organization. Early in September, 1921, he wrote once more to the school superintendents of Iowa. This time about one hundred replies were received which in the main were favorable.

In the following spring regional contests were conducted at Logan, Sheldon, Audubon, Garner, and Manley, the winners of these being invited to meet at Sheldon in April. Only four schools responded to the Sheldon invitation. The contestants paid their own travelling expenses, but were entertained in Sheldon free. Thus the first high school music contests in Iowa were sectional affairs with the participants selected by invitation, the events limited, and the number of entries few, due partly to the lack of proper facilities.

In 1923 bands were added to the list of events to compose a program of mixed choruses, girls' glee clubs, boys' glee clubs, orchestras, and bands. Six district contests were held previous to the so-called State contest at Rockford. Cedar Rapids won first place in the orchestra section and in each of the three vocal events, while premier band honors went to Charles City.

After this contest a need for classification of schools according to size became apparent. Before

the 1924 contest at Cedar Rapids, the constitution of the High School Musical Activities Association was revised to permit the division of high schools with an enrollment of less than one hundred and fifty into class C, those between one hundred and fifty and five hundred into class B, and those over five hundred into class A. The State was also divided into eight districts with specific boundaries and the number of competitors in certain groups was limited. About five hundred high school pupils representing twelve schools participated at Cedar Rapids, while at Ames the following year eight hundred and fifty pupils were entered, though some parts of the State were not represented.

The first annual contest which was truly State-wide in competition occurred at Iowa City in 1926. Upon the suggestion of Professor E. H. Wilcox, the State University of Iowa proposed to convert the usual State contest into a high school music festival to be held at Iowa City under the joint auspices of the Association and the University. The announced purposes of this arrangement were to "encourage an interest in music by promoting concerts in which representatives of many Iowa schools may join;" to "make it possible for large numbers of students to hear an outstanding musical artist;" to "demonstrate the accomplishments of our high schools in their music courses and organizations;" to "set standards for high school music;" to "enthuse high school students by showing the in-

terest in music in other schools;" to "give an incentive for intense and sustained preparation;" and to "recognize outstanding merit." In accordance with the new plan, the constitution of the Association was revised to provide for a joint festival committee. The number of events was increased from five to fifteen, more definite eligibility rules were adopted, the classification of schools was changed slightly, and judges were forbidden to place a school in a higher class. Since 1928 only public high schools have been eligible to enter their students in these events.

On May 6, 1926, nearly two thousand high school boys and girls poured into Iowa City. They came in special trains, busses, interurban cars, and automobiles. From Danbury the townspeople, eager to help the students, brought a delegation of fifty in automobiles. Edward H. Lauer, Director of the University Extension Division, called on boy scouts, Iowa City high school pupils, and university students to aid in taking care of the throng which was nearly twice the expected number. The mayor issued a proclamation of welcome. Private homes, dormitories, and fraternity houses were made available for the entertainment of the guests. One Iowa City man whose wife was out of town volunteered to house fourteen boys. Upon learning that his sister would be with him at the time of the festival, he requested that fourteen girls be sent instead. But his sister brought several friends, so the genial house-

holder spent the nights of the festival in his porch swing. According to an inveterate statistician "if the maximum number of beds required to rest these weary music devotees were placed end to end they would cover the distance of two and one-half miles which would reach from the city limits of Iowa City to the very heart of Coralville." The University supplied the contestants with meal tickets at the various restaurants and boarding houses during their stay in Iowa City.

A year later, early in May, 1927, nearly three thousand giggling, bobbed-hair girls and tall, "dressed up" boys filled the streets of Iowa City. Again dormitories, private homes, and sorority and fraternity houses were pressed into service. Even the armory was used for sleeping quarters for this deluge of aspiring artists.

In 1928 the number of participants was well over three thousand, due to increased interest in the contest idea, more thorough organization, and better roads for motor transportation. The congestion was relieved, however, by extending the period of the festival from two to three days and arranging the program so that many of the contestants would not need to be in Iowa City for more than a day or two. The first day was devoted to soloists and small groups, the second to choruses and glee clubs, while bands and orchestras brought the festival to a colorful climax on the final day. "Both in the higher type of music presented and in the improvement of the

way the music was played," this festival showed "great advancement". One of the most memorable features of this festival was the picnic supper provided by the University at the Memorial Union. Seventy gallons of ice cream, a hundred gallons of milk, two hundred pounds of wieners, four barrels of potato chips, four kegs of pickles, and two truck loads of buns were consumed with gusto and appreciation.

A more elaborate system of eliminations was conducted before the State contest in 1929. This had the effect of slightly reducing the number of contestants at Iowa City and of raising the standards of performance. The State was divided into six districts and thirty-six subdistricts, so in all there were forty-two preliminary contests. Among the twenty-eight events on the program at Iowa City was a new band marching contest.

Previous to the contest at Ames in 1925, each contestant or director selected his own music, but the difficulty in judging such contests made a change necessary. Since the festival has been held in Iowa City all choruses, glee clubs, bands, and orchestras have been required to prepare a group of two, three, or four specified selections. From these the State festival committee chooses one to be given by all competitors in the same class. The contestants also prepare at least two pieces of their own choice and may render one or both as time and the inclination of the director permit.

Not in the nature of a prize to be won but as an opportunity to be embraced, the State University invited to the campus as guests of the University, during the summer session of 1929, those students who merited recognition for their accomplishments in high school music during the year. Nearly all were winners in solo events in the State festival. The first term was devoted to instrumental music. An orchestra was organized under the direction of Lee M. Lockhart, who was assisted by a staff of notable musicians. The daily routine included orchestra rehearsals, chamber group rehearsals, private lessons, classes in music theory and appreciation, and one elective high school or college course. Twenty-six schools were represented, and thirty-six high school supervisors and teachers were granted the privilege of regular attendance at the rehearsals followed by daily conferences with the conductor in which problems of orchestra training were discussed. The second term of the summer session was devoted to instruction in vocal music. A chorus was organized and rehearsed daily by H. Stanley Taylor of Morley College, London, England. All of this valuable instruction was given free by the University.

Both the State high school music festival and the summer training afforded by the University seem to be exerting a tremendous influence upon musical education in Iowa. The competitive element is lending zest to the process. And the University is succeeding in sensitizing the State to its educational

facilities. More people are learning to play better music better. Approximately twenty thousand students entered the thirty-six subdistrict music contests this year, from among whom about twenty-five hundred will be selected to participate in the final competition of the eighth annual high school music festival.

FRANCES DOAK

## Comment by the Editor

### ONLY ART SURVIVES

In imagination people still hear the "hurrying hoof-beats" as Paul Revere all "booted and spurred" rides "through every Middlesex village and farm". So, too, in rhythmic verse comes the "Black-Robe chief" Marquette to visit the Indians in Iowa. The pathetic death of Crazy Horse is a haunting actuality for those who read the Song of the Indian Wars. Thus it is that poets provide the past with immortality.

Nor is history vitalized in literature alone. In marble and on canvas the figures and scenes of former times endure. Art survives when memory fades and dismal archives gather dust.

If the character of a people is to be expressed in true perspective, if their record of accomplishment is worthy of remembrance, if the normal features of their daily life possess significance, they should cultivate the field of art. In literature, painting, sculpture, and music the truth can be told in ways that people everywhere and in the centuries to come can understand. The substance of civilization may vary widely, but the fundamental laws of form are universal. Art is the badge of human unity. Whoever would appreciate the past and comprehend the

present must interpret what has been and is in terms of vital harmony. The nation that would achieve celebrity may well democratize the consciousness of beauty, for beauty is the sesame of everlasting life.

Through human discord and confusion runs a golden melody of unison and harmony. To some, who recognize the tune at only unexpected intervals, the whole creation seems to be no more than noise; but to the ear of the Composer every tone has its significance in the symphony of life. Out of such apparent chaos, artists can perceive the beauty of design—can explain the meaning of events, portray the character of men, and harmonize the music of existence. What greater service can be rendered to mankind? Let those who yearn for glory realize their aim in cultural instruction. All honor to him who can write an epic of the conquest of the prairie, to him who can carve the progress of the pioneers in one enormous monument, to him who can compose a symphony of industry.

J. E. B.

# THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Established by the Pioneers in 1857  
Located at Iowa City Iowa

---

## PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY

The Quarterly Journal of History  
The Palimpsest—A monthly magazine  
The Public Archives Series  
The Iowa Biographical Series  
The Iowa Economic History Series  
The Iowa Social History Series  
The Iowa Applied History Series  
The Iowa Chronicles of the World War  
The Miscellaneous Publications  
The Bulletins of Information

---

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the State Historical Society may be secured through election by the Board of Curators. The annual dues are \$3.00. Members may be enrolled as Life Members upon the payment of \$50.00.

*Address all Communications to*

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Iowa City Iowa