

MUSIC

Haskell County, Kansas

Written by Maxine Ridge

*Consultant: Mrs. J. J. Miller of Sublette, Kansas
(See story... MRS. NINNIE B. (NEWBY) MILLER, Haskell County, Kansas)*

When Mrs. J. J. (*Ninnie*) Miller moved to Southwest Kansas with her family in 1885, she brought with her a grand piano. It was a large square, four-legged instrument. The piano was the only one in the area for miles and miles around.

The songs and music of the earlier days were ballads and folk songs. It was one of the main entertainments of those days. The people would meet in homes on Sundays and have what they called a "Community Sing along."

The earlier years' music consisted of violins (*then called fiddles*), harmonicas, mouth harps, and accordions. Mr. Truman Alexander of Copeland owned one of the first accordions in the western part of the state. There were fiddler contests, and socials were held just for the purpose of playing music.

Some of the entertainments were dances. The most popular was the square dance. These dances were held in different homes, just like the community Sing-Alongs.

The organ was a trendy instrument, and they were familiar to the Kansas people.

One of the most outstanding musical entertainments was the medicine show. It was generally seen and heard in a covered wagon. They would entertain until they got the attention of the crowd and then try to sell their medicine. Most of the shows were held in larger cities like Dodge City.

Sacred songs and Negro spirituals were the types of music heard often. The people all enjoyed spirituals like "Roll Jordan Roll," "The Gospel Railway," "Oh, Them Golden Slippers," and many other songs. Instead of singing the church songs by note or by word, they sang them in syllables.

Evangelistic singing was always enjoyed. When preachers would come to hold a revival, they would bring a singer with them, attracting larger crowds to the church meetings.

The popular songs of earlier times had more meaning than the songs of today in 1936. Plus, the songs seemed to continue in popularity for many years. Some of them were "Wait Till the Clouds Go Rolling By," "The Fatal Wedding," "After the Ball," and many others. War songs were also popular for a long while.

There weren't many composers of music around this area. Ralph Wallace of this district composed a Kansas Song. Thurlow Lieurance* wrote many Indian songs and set them to music.

The movies at that time were just pictures. The pictures were shown on a screen, and someone would lecture or sing to illustrate the images.

The schools of today have music contests, and the best singers are chosen. Then contests continue at the state level.

Additional Information THURLOW LIEURANCE

Newspaper Obituary

The Iola (Kansas) Register – Thursday, 10 Oct 1963

Thurlow Lieurance dies, at 85

Wichita – Dr. Thurlow W. Lieurance, musical composer and dean emeritus at the University of Wichita School of Music, died Wednesday (9 Oct 1963) in Boulder, Colorado. He was 85.

Dr. Lieurance came to Wichita University in 1926 and served as its dean until 1945. He had lived in Boulder in recent years.

He attained national fame for his composition "By the Waters of Minnetonka" in 1914. He was known for his work in giving music an Indian flavor.

In 1930, he composed "Minisa" (Red Water at Sunset), which won him the Presser Award at the Fontainebleau School of Music in France.

Survivors include his widow, Edna Woolley Lieurance, (*born 23 Aug 1892 in Lincoln, Nebraska*); one son, Thurlow Lieurance, Jr. of Topeka; a sister, Mrs. Leoni Learned of Kansas City; a brother, Richard Lieurance of Lincoln, Nebraska; and two grandchildren.

Mr. Lieurance was born on 21 Mar 1878 in Oskaloosa, Iowa. He received his high school education in Neosho Falls, Woodson County, Kansas. The house his family lived in was pointed out to Neosho Falls visitors for many years but was torn down about 15 years ago.

(Edna Lieurance died in 1986 in Topeka, Kansas.)