

The history of music is rich in Monroe County

In his tongue-in-cheek account of living in the Bloomington area in the early 1820s, Indiana University's first professor, Baynard Hall, wrote about the arrival here of the very first piano. James Woodburn, an IU professor and the university's historian, also writes of musicians (a fiddler and a flutist) who welcomed IU's new president and family to Bloomington.

And so, from its earliest days, Bloomington has had a residue of music appreciators. It is not surprising, then, that those appreciators and performers should spend some time together for their mutual enjoyment of music. Their gatherings to perform for each other were formalized in 1905.

For the 75th anniversary of Friday Musical, Ora Briscoe, wife of an IU professor and administrator, wrote an account of its first 25 years. She had made a study of the minutes of the organization to present to the women.

One of the first things the members of Friday Musical did was change its name. There must have been some reason why it was for-



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

merly called the Automathian Club, but Briscoe did not elaborate on that point. The "e" at the end of the word "Musical" was added in 1922.

Those early years were not without humorous incidents. Briscoe reported that "Some of the interesting things that happened this year were the evening meetings to which the husbands were invited ... the time the ice cream failed to appear (at a meeting) and nearly prostrated the hostess — not to mention the disappointment of the guests; they give insight into the nature of the club."

Among those insights are the notations that in 1907-08, there was a discussion about expanding the number of members. The la-

dies of the Fortnightly Musical Club were invited as guests at a December meeting, which endangered the Friday Musical treasury to the extent of \$3.45! Also, during that time, somebody discovered that there was a new musical history game played with cards. The club ended the year with 20 cents in the treasury.

The musical group was not strictly social. The women were certainly aware of needs in the community and even farther afield. In March of 1917, Friday Musical donated a victrola to Bloomington High School.

Another project of the club was more human. Having heard that there were French orphans who needed financial assistance, the club "adopted" one and had the satisfaction of hearing from her in a letter.

Before the 1918 flu epidemic sent Bloomingtonians into a panic, Friday Musical had intended to present a performance of Handel's *Messiah*. It was cancelled, because public meetings during that period were not a good idea at all.

The birth of the Music Department at the university brought some gifted musicians to Bloomington, and the club was enriched by the new talent.

With an eye to the future, in 1921, Friday Musical established junior groups. The club was also involved in the establishment of a loan fund for needy students at the university. According to Olive Dunn White, who wrote part of the Friday Musicale history, "To advance their philanthropies they had labored to present benefit concerts, had rummage sales, held auctions and performed all the functions of an ambitious charity organization in promoting that 'spirit of sociability and kindness.'"

Through the years since its founding, Friday Musicale thrived and grew. By the year 1977-78 there were 92 members, a far cry from the early days when there was a lively discussion about whether the membership should be raised to 25.

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