

Donna Edgington's Memories

Among early recollections was the installation of electricity in Culver homes. We were the first home in Culver to be wired.

Colip Brothers Electric store, from South Bend, came to Culver with a display of electric stoves. For a week they had cooking demonstrations for the town homemakers. Charles Colip and my father became good friends, and while Mr. Colip had to be in Culver with the display he stayed at our house.

In the center of town was the Home Theater. It was operated by John Osborn and his wife. He delighted in inviting us all in for a free show as we were going home from school. We would be thrilled over the free movie, but just as the picture got to the exciting part he would turn it off and tell us to go home and get a dime and come back for the rest of the show.

Every Saturday evening he ran a "special serial." It was like reading a chapter in a book. Of course, it was so exciting that no one wanted to miss a single episode, so it was a good business on his part.

Mrs. Miranda played the piano for the show, which was, of course, silent movies at that time. She was extremely talented and able to switch from wild frantic tempo to a slow romantic tune, and so forth, without hesitation. Everyone read the dialogue aloud as it appeared on the screen.

Later, a new movie house opened at the other end of town. It was operated by the Links.

I remember the first street carnival to come to Culver. Main Street was closed from the hardware corner to the Methodist church corner, a distance of two blocks. The merry-go-round was at the south end, and the Ferris wheel at the north end. In between were many games of chance and eating booths.

The whole town was so busy all week long. I had saved pennies and nickels for a long time in my little leather pocketbook. Then just at the start of the carnival I lost it. I was so sad thinking of all those merry-go-round rides I would miss.

A man who worked in our grocery store took up a collection for me, so I did not miss out after all.

There was a barrel that you threw baseballs into. If the ball rolled out a hole that was on one side a kewpie doll would be awarded. The fellows in the store put up a practice barrel in the back room. When they got real good they took turns going out and winning a doll. By the end of the week, they had the top shelves in the store all lined with kewpie dolls.

When I was 11, my little sister Marilyn was born January 17. Dr. Shoemaker and Dr. Wiseman both were in attendance.

A few days later my father gave me a little drawstring bag containing 50 dollars in gold coins. I was to carry it to Dr. Shoemaker's office and pay for my little sister. It was an important day in my life.

My father worked for the Medbourn Ice Company on Lake Maxinkuckee. The company was owned by his Uncle Sam. I loved to go see the ice being cut from the lake. It was quite an operation. When the ice was thick enough, the ice harvest would start, and work went on day and night. Farmers in the area would come in to work. There would be one hundred workers.

The ice field was plowed and scraped free of snow; then the ice was cut into large squares and floated through a channel to a beltway which carried it the large icehouses. There were three stories, and the elevator carried the ice past open doorways where men with spikes pulled the ice inside.

When the first layer was filled, straw was put on it, and the elevator carried the blocks on up to the next story until the icehouse was filled. In the summer, freight cars were loaded with the ice and sent to cities. I was at the icehouses often, and all the regular workers called me Bill.

— Donna Edgington

Donna Edgington, a valued member of the Antiquarian and Historical Society, died on March 16, 2004. She was born on January 19, 1913, and had been a part of the Culver community since 1932.

Culver and the Flood of 1913

This strange tale of diverse events sweeps across the world from Austria to Hoosierdom. The year is 1913. The city of Logansport seems to have mysteriously moved a gate about forty miles as the crow flies. The gate winds up on the doorstep of a famous military academy located on the edge of Culver, both school and village resting on the shores of Lake Maxinkuckee.

At the height of her fame and glory during the first half of the 20th century, Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink was hailed by critics as "the world's outstanding contralto." In her heyday, she was as important in operatic circles as Beverly Sills would be later during the last half of the century. Singers can't get much more illustrious than that.

Ernestine Roessler was born in Prague, June 13, 1861. Her father, an impoverished soldier in the Austrian army, abused and made fun of his plump daughter. To escape the "real old roughneck," she found teachers who admired her voice and provided lessons. At the age of 15, she began singing important operatic roles at the Dresden Court Opera. Later her appearances in Berlin and London opera houses made her internationally famous and brought her at the beginning of the 20th century to the Metropolitan

Opera House.

In 1905, she was sworn in as an American citizen. With war clouds on the horizon, she would soon discover that her new citizenship papers would have an impact on her extended families, pitting brother against brother in combat on the high seas.

Meantime, while gradually mastering 150 operatic roles, she increased her fame by making concert appearances from coast to coast. Often, when a crowd gathered to greet her, the every-gracious contralto would have an impromptu recital. In Culver, she gave a preview of the performance on the hotel porch by delivering a rendition of the drinking song from "La Traviata," acting out the dual roles of Violetta and Alfredo.

A favorite entertainer of servicemen during World War I, Madame Schumann-Heink, who possessed a stout matronly figure, maintained that she was a mother first, then a singer. On one occasion, after she charged through an orchestra knocking over music stands and musicians, the conductor asked why she didn't come in sideways. She answered, "With Mme. Schumann-Heink there is no side-

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The decision by Lt. Col. Leigh Gignilliat, Culver's superintendent, on the night of March 26, 1913, to send four of the Naval School's cutters to perform rescue work during the Logansport flood involved a commitment to a risky venture. So great was his faith in the young men of the corps that he did not hesitate to tell the mayor of Logansport he would participate in the rescue effort. (Photo courtesy of The Culver Academies)

ways." No one will deny that on the stage she possessed a regal and impressive bearing.

She spread out three husbands over two continents, the first a German whom she divorced, the second died, and a third deserted her for another woman. She ended up supporting a total of eight children, including the two left behind in Germany.

Her youngest son, George Washington Schumann, was the main reason for her interest in Culver. A member of the Black Horse Troop, winner of the Horsemanship Medal, George did not graduate with his class, but his presence inspired his famous mother to entertain the cadet corps of the Culver Military Academy and play the role of surrogate mother, a perfect Mother's Day icon.

On one of these occasions, a rainy Easter Sunday, March, 20, 1913, she sang up a storm. As a reviewer of the school paper wrote, "The halls of the academy have never been filled with such wonderful melodies as those which this extremely distinguished contralto showered in golden profusion upon her audience." The shower outside was turning into a deluge. Strong winds toppled trees, not just on the campus, but in Culver as well.

For 48 hours the downpour continued throughout Indiana and Ohio, submerging huge areas of these states. Eventually the loss of life from drowning and other violent acts of nature would reach into the thousands. After another four days, the Wabash and Eel Rivers, which converge in the nearby city of Logansport, rushed over their banks. The swift waters with dangerous currents flooded the business district five feet deep. Trapped residents moved to the upper stories or out on roofs, many of the women and children crying and begging for help.

D.D. Fickle, mayor of Logansport, requested help from Col. L.R. Gignilliat, superintendent of the Culver Military Academy, and the next day four cutters and 40 cadets were on a train to rescue the stranded citizens. The story of how they saved about 1,500 is too well known to retell here, but the legend on Logansport Gate at the entrance of the academies speaks eloquently: "Our citizens are loud in their praise of the heroic and magnanimous service rendered our citizens by the Culver Cadets during the flood of March 26, 27, 1913." Praise also came in from many high officials, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, then acting secretary of the Navy.

In the aftermath of the rescue operation, cadets enjoyed

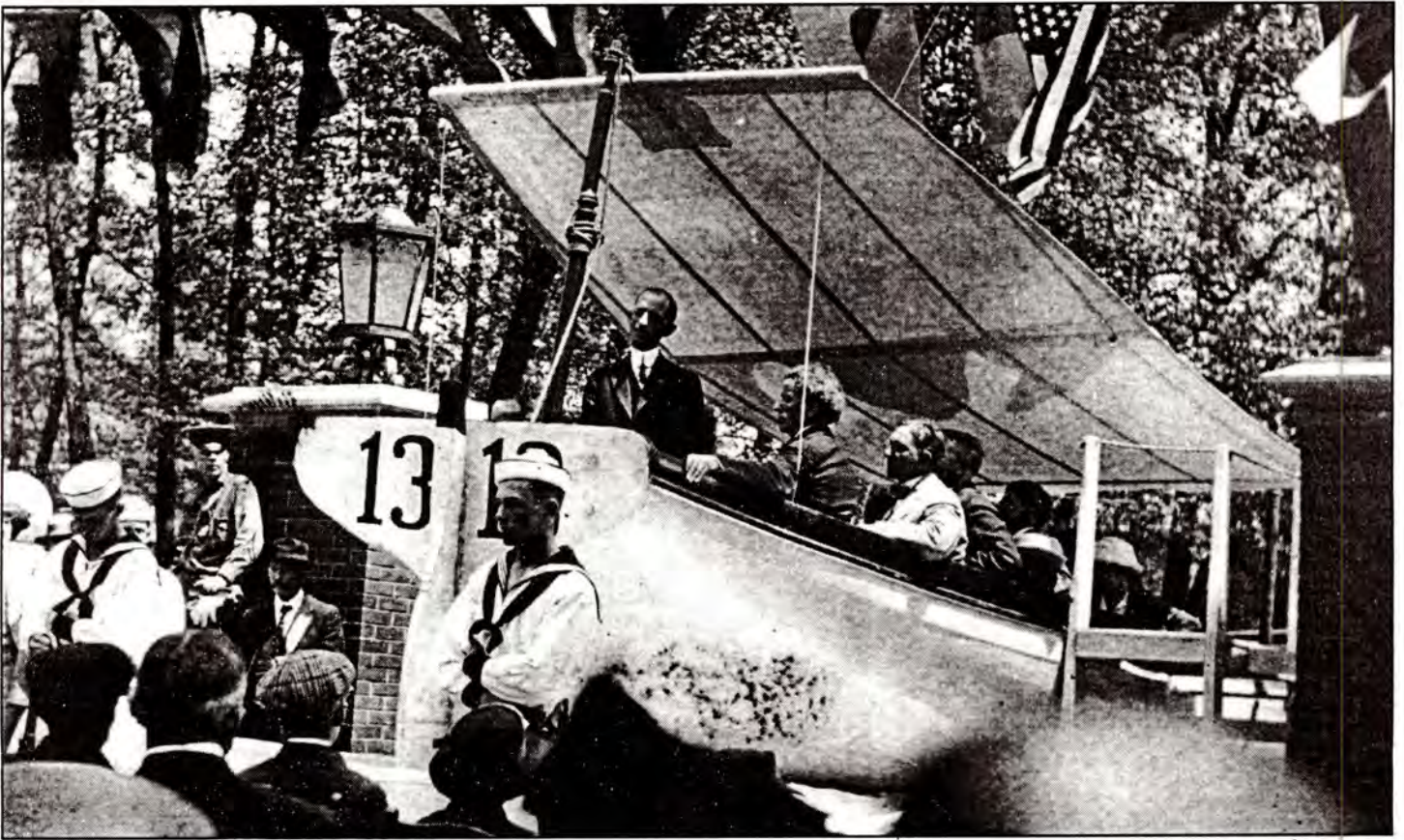


When the train carrying the Culver cutters arrived at Logansport, the water almost reached the floor level of the flatbeds. It was a simple matter to slide the boats into the water and begin the rescue operation. (Photo courtesy of The Culver Academies)

sharing some of their adventures. One elderly lady was informed that she would have to leave her dog behind. When they returned later, she had a small child dressed in baby clothes by the name of Fido. Near another cutter, a circus elephant stretched out its trunk and tried to get into the boat. One rescued damsel kept her arms around her savior, a rather naive cadet, who didn't know she made her living in the notorious district along the railroad tracks.

Townpeople also offered many helping hands. Captain Morris lent his boats to search the dangerous flood waters. Thirty men hurried to Logansport, and two of them – Phil McLane and Ed Washburn – almost lost their lives when

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Deeply moved by the actions of the Culver cadets and faculty, the citizens of Logansport launched a drive to raise \$1,500 for a tribute to their valor. In May of 1914, the construction of the landmark “Logansport Gate” was complete and presented to the Academy. Not surprisingly, instead of using a speakers’ stand, the Academy elected to use one of the cutters. The gift of the gate was accepted by Edwin R. Culver (standing) from A.G. Jenkins (seated front left), campaign chairman. (Photo courtesy of The Culver Academies)

their boat overturned. Women’s clubs sent huge quantities of food and clothes.

Many of the Midwestern cadets were worried about their families. Marched to a church service, they were greeted by their adopted mother. She lifted morale by singing, “Oh Rest in the Lord” and “The Lord is Mindful of His Own,” reminding them that “God’s in his heaven/All’s right with the world.”

Not confining her visitations in this area to Culver, Mme. Schumann-Heink had close friends in Plymouth, among them the Fife family and the Fred Kuhn family. As a young man, Fred Kuhn was a violinist with the Fife Brothers Evangelistic group. Madame Schumann-Heink had begun to record songs and gave Fred a copy of Brahms’ “Lullaby.” Her recorded duet with Caruso (‘Ai nostro monti’) from “Il Trovatore” created a sensation among music lovers worldwide. Enrico Caruso Jr. later attended the academy.

Seldom was there a flare-up of the traditional prima donna temperament. A South Bend evangelist made the mistake of accusing the opera star of being “a cheap skate.” Her stinging rebuke: “That is not religion. My religion is love. Never was my reputation gained by an unkind act toward my neighbor. You, sir, do not preach

the teachings of Christ.”

She had promised to sing at the academy during commencement week, but for once she failed to fulfill her commitment to the cadets she loved so much. She said she had a terrible cold, but the main reason was a disturbing decision made by her son. George Washington Schumann had resigned from the academy shortly before graduation and enlisted to fight for his country. That was a terrible blow to his mother. George would join other brothers already in the service, and they would be fighting against a brother and an uncle serving in the German Navy. In real life, she was caught in the web of a Greek tragedy, a mother weeping for her endangered children, offspring dedicated to killing one another.

An American destroyer rammed the German submarine that the oldest son was on and caused his death. George, the youngest son and former cadet, survived the sinking of a transport torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of France. After the war, he became an accountant and later managed his mother’s financial affairs.

She remained true to her adopted country, a doughboy favorite, giving many concerts for the Red Cross and pro-

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A cadet reads the presentation plaque from the gate: "IN RECOGNITION OF THE HEROIC AND MAGNANIMOUS SERVICE RENDERED OUR CITIZENS BY THE CULVER CADETS DURING THE FLOOD MARCH 26, 27, 1913. THIS GATEWAY IS CREATED BY THE CITY OF LOGANSPORT. MCMXIV." (Photo courtesy of The Culver Academies)

viding entertainment in United States Army camps. Later, in 1922, she would return to Culver to give a benefit performance for the William Alexander Fleet Post of the American Legion. With her accompanist Arthur Loesser, she presented at least two songs that must have torn at her heart: "Have You Seen Him in France?" and the "Flanders Requiem" by La Forge.

She gave her final operatic performance in 1932 and moved to Hollywood, but continued to give benefit concerts. "I could not retire unless I lost my voice," she said. "I love America and all Americans, and I want to work."

Seemingly indefatigable, Mme. Schumann-Heink was given a role in a movie as a singing instructor to Nino Martini. She caught the attention of two producers who battled for the right to star her. Too late, for she was close to death, which she faced "without fear or regret" on November 17, 1936, at the age of 75.

"It is very comical," she said just before dying, "this quarreling among motion picture men who call me terrific, colossal."

And that's exactly what she was: terrific and colossal, and with a voice strong enough to sing up a storm and flood listeners with great passion.

— Harvey Firari

In Memoriam

Marian Nixon 1918-2004

Thirty years ago, Marian and Joe Nixon came to welcome us to our house on the lake with a beautiful book of piano music by Cole Porter. They told us that Cole Porter had come often to our house to visit the Shirks, who were the original owners and friends of the Porters in Peru, Ind.

The list of Marian's kindnesses and interests is long and can be found in the March 15 and 16, 2004, issues of the Wabash Plain Dealer newspaper. We remember her as a charter member of the Antiquarian and Historical Society and as a cheerful giver of herself to many good causes.

Typical of her lovely way of becoming involved was her yearly appearance at the "Trail of Courage," handing out her own apples to every walker who participated. All who knew her will remember her in their own way, but I will remember her as the first local visitor we had as proud new owners of the house that Cole Porter visited.

— Agnes Bramfeld

Mary 'Stu' Clark

We lost another long-time member of the society on April 9, when Mary Stuart Mann Clark died, leaving her son, Litt, his wife and three children and many friends in both Culver and Wilmette, Ill.

Mary Stu and her sister, Margot Helms, were the fourth generation of the Blain descendants to spend many wonderful summers at the family cottage on the East Shore of our lake. Culver was a major focal point in her life, and she was proud to see her grandchildren inherit her love for the family cottage on Lake Maxinkuckee.

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**SPRING, 2004
NEWSLETTER**

**Antiquarian and Historical Society
P.O. Box 125
Culver, Indiana 46511-0125**

Our Summer Get-Togethers During 2004

The 2004 annual meeting of the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Culver will be held on Saturday, June 19, at 10 a.m. in the meeting room of the Culver-Union Township Public Library.

There will be an election of board members and a discussion of plans for this summer.

One event that is being planned is a repeat of the popular and successful Ice Cream Social and Boat Show, which will be held this year on Sunday, August 8, at the Culver Cove.

We can use suggestions from members.

Chairpersons of the various committees need volunteers to help with the many activities that have made this such a successful event in the past.

We are very proud of last year's social but would like to make the event even better this year, if that is possible.

The July meeting is still in the planning stage, and August is the Ice Cream Social.

In September, we are planing a trip to the Cord-Auburn-Duesenberg Automobile Museum in Auburn, Indiana. The museum displays more than 140 examples of the three automobile makes along with other well-known antique, classic and special-interest cars in the original showroom of the Auburn Automobile Co.

The trip may be combined with a visit to another stop, and, of course, lunch at some exciting restaurant along the

way. You will hear more about this at the coming meetings.

Dates to Remember:

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| June 19 – | Annual meeting, Culver Library – 10 A.M. |
| July ? – | To be announced. |
| August 8 – | Ice Cream Social and Boat Show. |
| September ? – | Day trip to Automobile Museum in Auburn, Indiana. |

Memorial Bricks in Park

We are still taking orders for memorial bricks to be installed in Heritage Park.

This has become a popular way for our members to honor family members and friends. Call Agnes Bramfeld, 842-2477, or Dorothy Peterson, 842-3940, for information and the necessary forms for ordering.