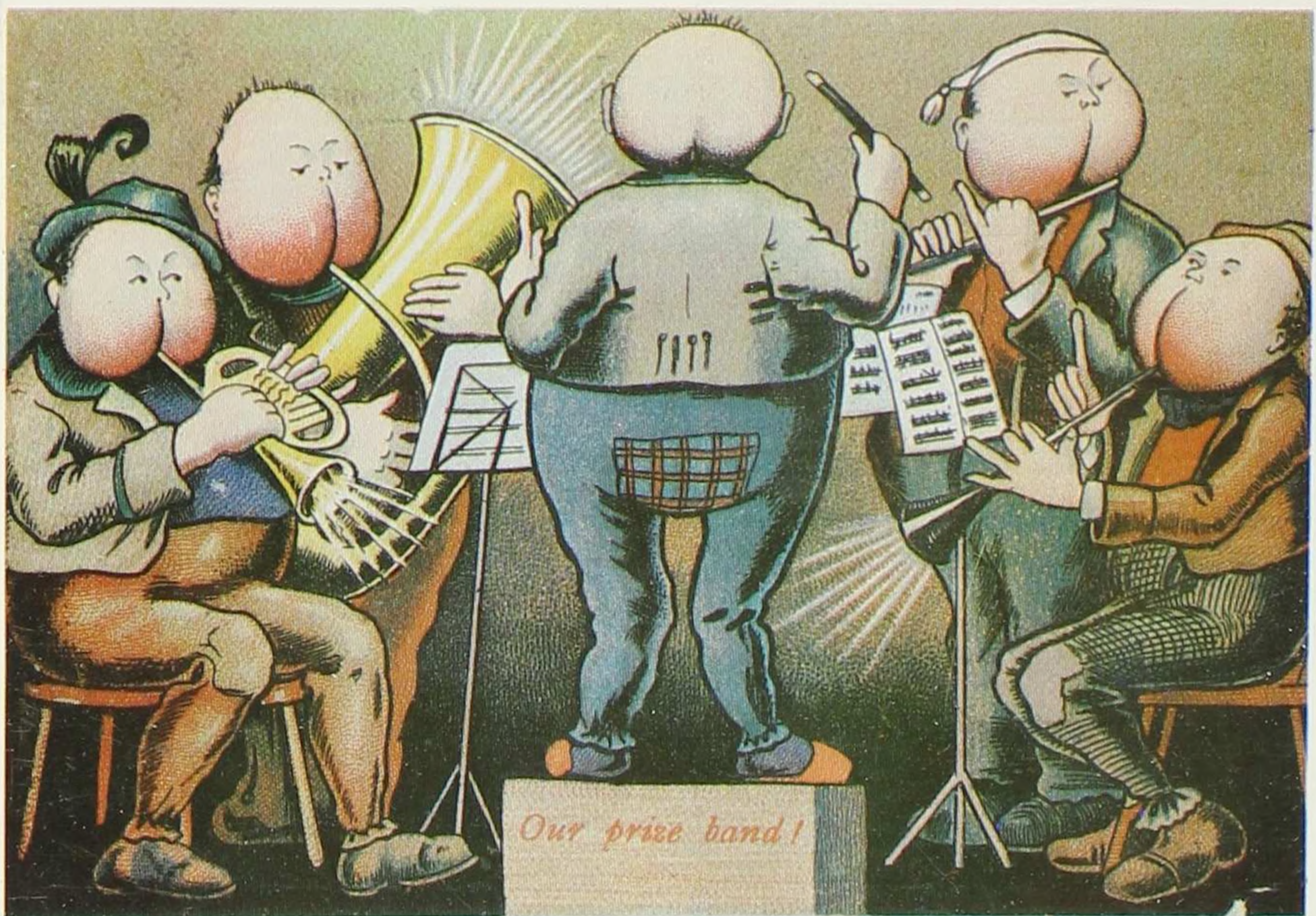


The
PALIMPSEST



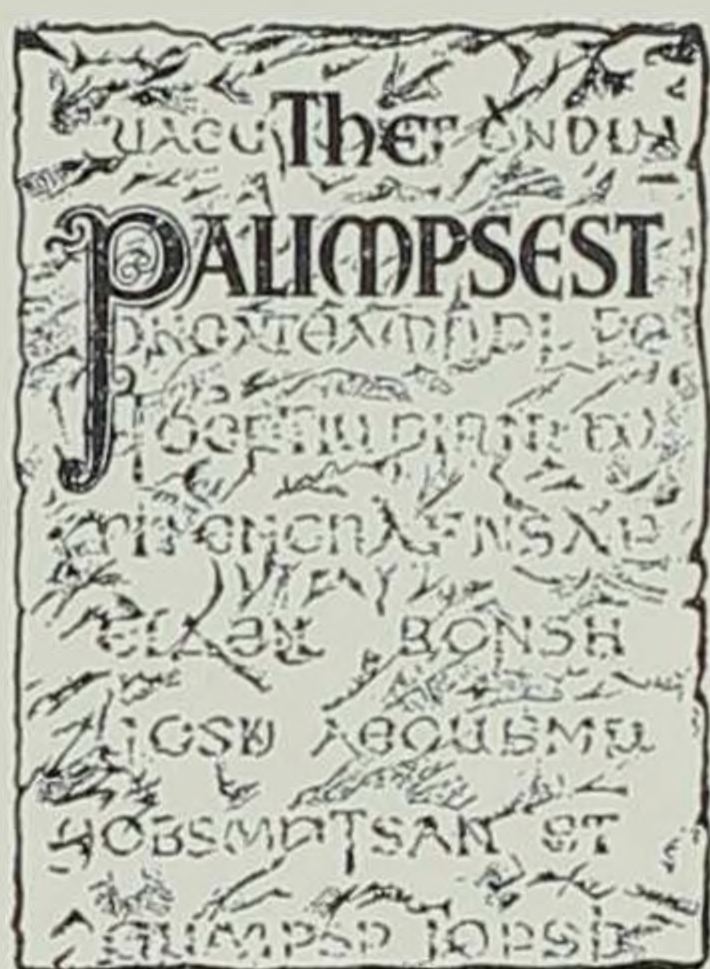
Music in Early Davenport

Published Monthly by

The State Historical Society of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa

JULY, 1964



The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material 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 record 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.

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THE EDITOR	

Illustrations

The editor contacted some sixty Davenport families to secure illustrations for this issue. He wishes to acknowledge with thanks the following Davenporters for their help: William Paarmann, Arthur Petersen, Harry Bawden, Walter K. Voss, Wayne H. Rohlf, Mrs. Louis Rohr and Ed Blesse. C. W. Karisch loaned the pictures (inside back cover) of the Sangerfests at Omaha (1915) and Milwaukee (1928) in which Tri-City singers participated. The outside back cover shows (top) the first Tri-City Symphony Orchestra and (bottom) the 1964 Symphony. The front cover is a German postcard sent to Anton Greene, Grand Mound, Iowa, in 1909.

Authors

William F. Betterton received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Iowa with a thesis on the history of music in Davenport during the 19th Century. Dr. Betterton found most of the material for his dissertation in the fine collection of Davenport newspapers in the possession of the State Historical Society of Iowa, running from 1841 to the present.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XLV

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No. 7

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Bands and Orchestras

It was a common sight in early Davenport to see a group of local citizens parading through the city streets on Sundays and holidays headed for the picnic grounds accompanied by a band. Musical life in Davenport kept abreast of the times and was always ready to take advantage of progress. When the railroad was completed from Davenport to Washington, the Artillery Band, a Davenport organization, played on board the train on its first trip to that city. Later, when telephone lines were completed to Keokuk and Burlington, a group of Davenport musicians gave concerts over the long distance lines for listeners in those cities. Many Davenport musicians performed on excursion boats on the Mississippi River, journeying sometimes as far as Minneapolis on the steamboats.

Certain factors stimulated the growth of music in Davenport. One was the town's location as a gateway to westward migration. Another was the influence of the German immigrants who had settled in the city after the Revolution of 1848 in Ger-

many. Again, there were many educated, freedom seeking people among these immigrants, who were highly appreciative of their newly-found freedom and celebrated the Fourth-of-July with parades and picnics even when the "American" citizens did not. The Germans were a gregarious people who often sponsored community entertainments which took the form of dances, parades, picnics, and concerts. They worked hard all week, and many, in contrast to the attitude of their American neighbors (which was that the Sabbath should be a day of solitude and quiet), felt that Sunday should be a day of relaxation and merrymaking. Consequently, their Sundays were often spent at the local beer gardens and at the picnic grounds.

The more "Puritan" American citizens sometimes resented their German neighbors' freer conduct and, from time to time, expressed this resentment in articles which appeared in the local newspapers. Thus, the *Gazette* of June 23, 1859, declared:

Every Sunday afternoon and evening the strains of a band of music can be heard all over the city. Those in the more immediate neighborhood of the place of festivity complain severely of these public concerts on the Sabbath. Strangers are amazed at such proceedings. Citizens at home are ashamed of them. . . . Let them so regulate their Sunday amusements as while enjoying themselves in their own way, in no manner to interfere with the comforts and fixed way and opinions of others.

One of the major organizations to accompany the Germans to America was the Turner Society, an organization that became active immediately upon the arrival of the German citizens in Davenport. The philosophy of this society was the basic principle by which these Germans had lived. "Building a sound mind in a sound body" was accomplished by placing equal emphasis upon physical, emotional, and mental endeavors. Music and gymnastics were valued on a par. The characteristic activities of the Turners were frequently combined in public exhibitions which were called "concerts." These "concerts" interspersed orchestral music with gymnastic displays.

Antoine Le Claire, Davenport's pioneer citizen, was a prominent supporter of music even before the German immigrants came to Davenport. The first indication of the presence of instrumental music in the city was an announcement of a pioneer ball held at his home on January 8, 1836. Le Claire is known to have played the violin at some of the pioneer dances, and he may have supplied the music on this occasion. He was also one of the chief supporters of St. Anthony's Church. The music at this church, the first in Davenport, was furnished by a flute, clarinet, violin, and cello. In 1844, Le Claire presented a bill to the town council for the purchase of musical instruments for the Davenport Band which had been formed about two years previously. The bill was rejected, however.

The Davenport Band was first mentioned in the *Davenport Gazette* in 1842 when the editor expressed his gratitude to the group for a serenade. Other activities of the band that year and the following year included marching in the local Fourth-of-July parade and playing for the Temperance Society meeting. It appears that the band was short-lived, and it was necessary for the Moline Band to play at the Davenport fair in 1847.

New attempts were made to stimulate interest in the organization of a brass band the following year, and the new Davenport Band was formed under the leadership of John Pope. This band was still in existence in 1856 under the leadership of A. W. Read.

Evidence exists to show that the German citizens also had organized a band as early as 1852 when this group played for a reception for Congressman John P. Cook. The band also furnished music for the Whig rally later that year.

The Davenport Band and the German Band, representing the two factions of Davenport pioneer culture, acted as the stimulus for the principal bands which dominated the musical activities of the city for the remainder of the century. Since the bands were so numerous, only the most important will be discussed here.

Probably the most outstanding instrumental groups to be formed in Davenport were organized by Jacob Strasser, a German immigrant who was

to be the most influential musician in the city until the turn of the century.

The first mention of the German Union Band under Strasser's direction was in 1856. The activities of the group in the early years included providing music for picnics, excursions, dances, and for other social functions. Many of the concerts were held in the various beer gardens of the city. The blue uniformed band, varying in size from sixteen to thirty pieces, also participated in numerous street parades. At the beginning of the Civil War, it was engaged by General Baker to furnish music for the regiments. However, it appears that the band ceased to function temporarily, probably because of the war. In 1862, it was reorganized by Jacob Strasser, and although the group was referred to as Strasser's band throughout its existence, from time to time, several other musicians served as director. The most prominent among them were Theodore Reese and C. F. Toenniges.

In 1873, a subscription concert series was given at Schuetzen Park and continued to be an annual event until the turn of the century. Season tickets for these concerts were two dollars and fifty cents per family. Later, a winter series of weekly subscription concerts was inaugurated at Turner Hall. Drive-in concerts, a popular form of entertainment by 1886, were held in Central Park and sponsored by the Davenport Driving Club. Carriages were admitted for fifty cents; seats were ten cents.

In 1885, the Union Band became associated with the Second Regiment of the Iowa National Guard, and from that time through 1898 it was often referred to as the Second Regiment Band as well as the Union Band. In addition to its numerous concerts, the band accompanied Company B to its various encampments. In 1886, the camp was held at Oskaloosa, Iowa. Two years later, they went to Camp Crapo at Burlington. The band also assisted the Iowa State Band of Des Moines at the G.A.R. encampment at Dubuque in 1891.

C. F. Toenniges and seventeen members of the band volunteered to go with Company B to Cuba during the Spanish-American War. These men were sent to Camp McKinley at Des Moines. After a concert given at the Y.M.C.A., the Des Moines *Register* is quoted as saying, "The band from Davenport is regarded by judges of such music as one of the best in the state, if not *the* best." Because of unstable economic conditions at home, and because of the poor physical condition of some of its members, the band was forced to return to Iowa when the regiment left for Cuba. Thereafter, it was no longer called the regimental band.

The following statement from the Cedar Rapids *Republican* is typical of the attitudes expressed toward the band during its many years of existence: "Strasser's Band has justly won the reputation of being one of the crack musical organizations of the West."

Another popular Davenport band which developed in 1870 under the leadership of C. F. Schoenert was the Great Western Band. Among the many activities of this group was the responsibility of accompanying Company C of Muscatine to its military encampment. Under the leadership of Professor Ernst Otto, the first instrumental music teacher of Davenport's public schools, the band reached its peak. In 1885, the renowned trombonist Frederick Innes appeared in a concert with the Great Western Band. Proudly displaying their new uniforms, styled after those worn by the Gilmore Band, the Great Western Band presented a series of weekly concerts at Schuetzen Park in 1887, as well as a series of subscription concerts at Black Hawk's Watch Tower in Rock Island. The band participated in many of the local parades which took place in the city. Probably the largest celebration in which they marched was the first Labor Day parade in 1890. The Great Western Band was called the "largest band in Iowa, and one of the best in the United States." Later, this group became known as Otto's Orchestra and Military Band.

In 1890, a group of Davenport business men engaged Professor Otto and Henry Restorff to organize a new band of forty players. The group was to be supported by a stock company with a capital of three thousand dollars and was to be a professional organization with a certain number of

players whose sole occupation would be to play in the group.

Otto and Restorff were signed to a five-year contract; forty new uniforms costing eight hundred dollars were ordered from Philadelphia, and a twelve hundred dollar set of new instruments of the finest quality was ordered from Boston and New York. Shortly afterwards, the grand opening concert, featuring both the band and the orchestra, was given at the Burtis Opera House.

The band rapidly gained a reputation throughout Eastern Iowa and performed in various cities, including Burlington, Cedar Rapids, and Clinton. Its popularity was to be short-lived, however. The gradual decrease in the band's membership and the scarcity of employment led stockholders to sell the instruments in order to retain as much of their initial investment as possible.

No further mention was made of the band in the Davenport newspapers until March, 1893. Then, an article appeared stating that the Davenport Band, which was composed of forty to fifty members supported by one hundred thirty stockholders, had disbanded. Monthly expenses were eight hundred to nine hundred dollars. These were greater than the band's engagements could support.

One of the last outstanding bands to appear before the turn of the century was formed in 1897 by Albert Petersen, a protégé of Jacob Strasser.

Petersen was a principal figure in Davenport's musical activities throughout the first half of the Twentieth Century. He began the instrumental music program at St. Ambrose College. His son, Arthur Petersen, is presently president of the Davenport local of the American Federation of Musicians.

The bands discussed here represent a fraction of the number that existed in early Davenport. Other bands which deserve to be mentioned include the following: Storm's Band (1850), Milo White's Band (1857), Rowley's Cornet Band (1867), Davenport Silver Band (1867), Colored Band (1869), Davenport Cornet Band (1882), Germania Band (1883), Metropolitan Brass Band, Timm's Band, The Light Guard Band, Biehl's Band (1880), St. Patrick's Band (1873), St. Mary's Band, Albert Wyatt's Band, Citizens' Band, Standard Brass Band, Davenport Artillery Band, The German Rifle Band, Cotillion Band, and Schillinger's Band (1893).

A fitting culmination of the community's Nineteenth Century musical development was the uniting of the professional musicians of the Tri-Cities' area in Local 67 of the American Federation of Musicians. On September 26, 1897, musicians of Davenport, Rock Island, and Moline organized for the common purpose of "enforcing good faith and fair dealing among its members, and to promote the cultivation of the art of music." Earlier,

some local musical organizations had actually accepted engagements without remuneration in order to prevent their competitors from receiving the employment.

Otto's Band was one of the last organizations to join the musicians' union. Because of its popularity in the area, the band had no trouble finding employment and therefore felt less need for a union. Shortly after the turn of the century, however, this band also joined. The local Tri-Cities Musical Society has continued to serve musicians of the Davenport area to the present, and it now has a membership of nearly one thousand musicians.

WILLIAM F. BETTERTON

Early Choral Groups

Choral organizations far outnumbered instrumental groups in Davenport. Participating in singing societies or attending concerts presented by these organizations appears to have been a favorite pastime for many Davenport citizens. From all indications, the German citizens of the community were unparalleled in their active participation in and promotion of these groups.

As was their custom, the Germans combined music-making with social activities. Consequently, many of the parties, which were held at Turner Hall and at the numerous beer gardens and parks of the city, were often referred to as "concerts." Since many of the musical gatherings took place on Sundays, the Germans were often considered ill-bred by the other citizens of the community. Witness the understated rebuke in this note in the May 28, 1859, *Daily Iowa State Democrat*:

There was a German concert and ball at the Flora Garden on Second Street, opposite Cannon's Mill last night. Lager was encored frequently. These concerts are to be kept up by the Germans every Wednesday and Sunday during the summer.

On special occasions the German singing societies combined for mammoth performances. A

typical Fourth-of-July celebration included a morning parade by the German singing societies and instrumental groups, which was followed by feasting, dancing, and singing at Schuetzen Park. One grand occasion in which the German singing societies participated was the dedication ceremonies of the Turner's new building in 1888.

Not all of the vocal organizations can be attributed solely to the German citizen's zeal for music, though German musicians figured prominently in the organizations and activities of nearly all of these groups. Choral organizations were present in Davenport prior to the German immigration to the city. The first singing society was active as early as April 4, 1844. A few years later, in 1848, M. J. Rohlf's organized the *Liedertafel*. This men's chorus was the predecessor of another long-lived German male chorus — the Davenport *Männerchor*.

In order to provide a more detailed account of the vocal activities in Davenport, each of the major organizations will be discussed separately.

The German's love for vocal music manifested itself in the formation of a men's choir by Reverend G. Wiehle, a local clergyman, in June, 1851. The German *Männerchor* was destined to remain active well into the 20th Century. According to a local Davenport newspaper account, only two singing societies existed in the United States in 1888 which were older than the Davenport *Män-*

nerchor. These organizations were located in Philadelphia and in Baltimore.

Forty members signed the constitution for the organization of this group in 1851, and officers elected for that year were August F. Mast (president), Gustav Schlegel, August Smallfield and Reverend Wiehle. Shortly after its organization on September 8, 1851, this group presented its first concert for the benefit of the German Lutheran Church. The reporter for the local newspaper made the following criticism of the concert in his review:

It was all Dutch to us, but we could perceive that their time and voices were good, so of course concluded that the whole performance was of the same nature.

During the early years of its existence, the *Männerchor* met for rehearsals on Tuesday and Friday evenings at Lahrman's Hall.

Since the *Männerchor* was affiliated with the Davenport Turner Society, many of its performances were given in conjunction with the gymnastic exhibitions of the Turners. The group also participated in many of the special activities of the Turners. It sang at the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone for the new Turner Hall building in 1887, provided music for the anniversary celebrations of the society, and entertained for Turner subscription drives.

Many of the entertainments of the *Männerchor*

centered around the celebrations and benefit concerts sponsored by the German citizens of the community. It sang for the benefit of the German Free School in 1853, participated periodically in festivals perpetuating the memory of the German poet Schiller, and provided music for the benefit of the German patriotic fund to aid the widows of the German soldiers of the Franco-Prussian War. In 1889, the *Männerchor* and ten thousand German citizens of Davenport celebrated "Forefather's Day," the 206th Anniversary of the landing of the first Germans in America.

The *Männerchor* was a member of the Northwest *Sängerbund* and participated in the *Sänger-fests* (German singing festivals), traveling many times to other cities for the festivities.

On numerous occasions the Davenport *Männerchor* assisted the *Deutches Lieberhabertheater-verein* in its productions at the German Theater. A noteworthy production was the operetta, *Preciosa*, presented in 1858 by a cast of local talent. Frequently, concerts were given by instrumental and vocal groups of Davenport in conjunction with the Davenport *Männerchor*.

Another popular singing group of the city was the Philharmonic Society, which was organized on August 5, 1856, by some of the leading male and female vocalists of Davenport. Only capable musicians were invited to be members of this society. Rehearsals of the forty performing members were

held weekly at St. Luke's Episcopal Church and at Grigg's Hall. The first three concerts were given under the direction of Mr. Charles Davie at the Congregational Church. Members of the congregation objected to the presentation of concerts in the church, and subsequent concerts were presented at the German Theater.

At a meeting of the society in August, 1857, it was determined that Handel's oratorio, *The Messiah*, would be presented in its entirety the following spring. Jacob Strasser was secured to organize an orchestra of from twelve to twenty players to accompany this production. The use of the new Metropolitan Hall was offered at "liberal terms" by its manager, Mr. Hill.

The performance of *The Messiah* was staged on April 7, 1858, with a chorus of fifty voices, and an orchestra of twenty members. "Two celebrated performers," of Boston and Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Mozart, assisted in the presentation. The concert was a success and was repeated on the following two nights. Two other performances of it were given that year in Rock Island and in Davenport. Haydn's oratorio, *The Creation*, was also presented by the society that year at Metropolitan Hall.

Believing that the "knowledge of music is an unfailing source of enjoyment that will last a lifetime," the Philharmonic Society originated a singing class for children under the instruction of Pro-

fessor Hugo Braunlich, a leading musician of the community. The students met at St. Luke's Church, and particular attention was focused upon psalmody in the instruction. Tuition was three dollars for twenty-four lessons. A preparatory class for young singers was also originated by the society. This class, consisting primarily of young ladies who aspired to membership in the Philharmonic Society, was under the instruction of Mr. Charles Davie at the Baptist Church.

Several of the Philharmonic concerts and benefits were presented with vocalists and instrumentalists of the city, including the Davenport *Männerchor*, the Davenport Orchestral Society, and the Union Band.

In 1862, because of the loss of several of its members and by "common consent of those remaining," the Philharmonic Society disbanded.

A society with the same basic philosophy as the Philharmonic Society was established in 1865. Its purpose was the promotion of vocal culture, and it became known as the Mendelssohn Society. The weekly rehearsals of the group were conducted by Mr. J. C. Wallace, a local music store owner. He was assisted by Mrs. J. S. Altman and Professor R. Trench, who served as piano and organ accompanists.

One attempt to promote interest in vocal culture took the form of a convention sponsored by the Mendelssohn Society in 1866 and directed by Pro-



"Saenger Fest Hall," Davenport, Iowa.

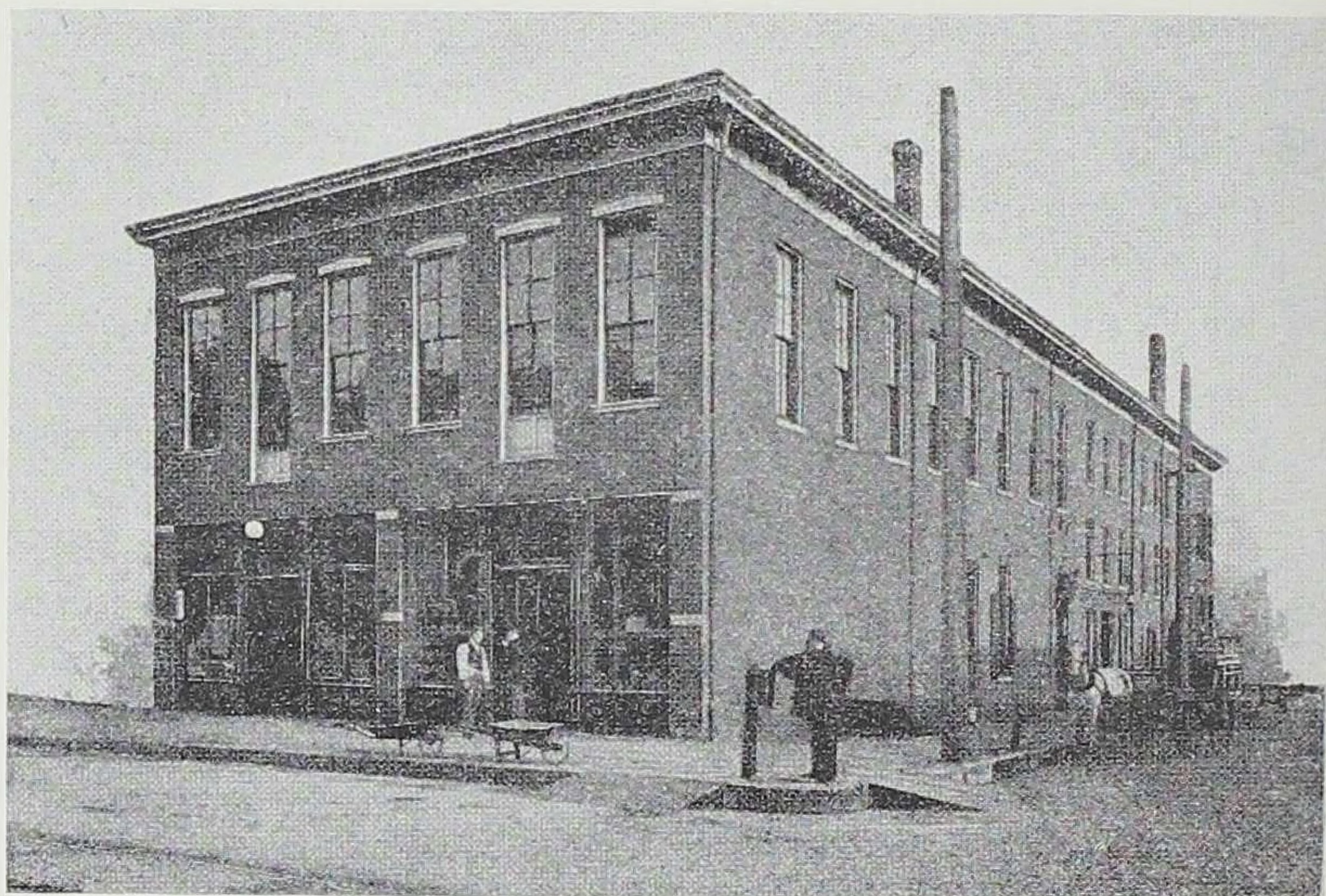
William Paarmann Photo Collection

Saenger Fest Halle — Scene of the Great Midwest Music Festival of July 28-31, 1898. It was later renamed The Coliseum and was located on the S.E. corner of Myrtle and 4th Street, just across the street from the new Coliseum.



Courtesy Bawden Brothers Photo Collection

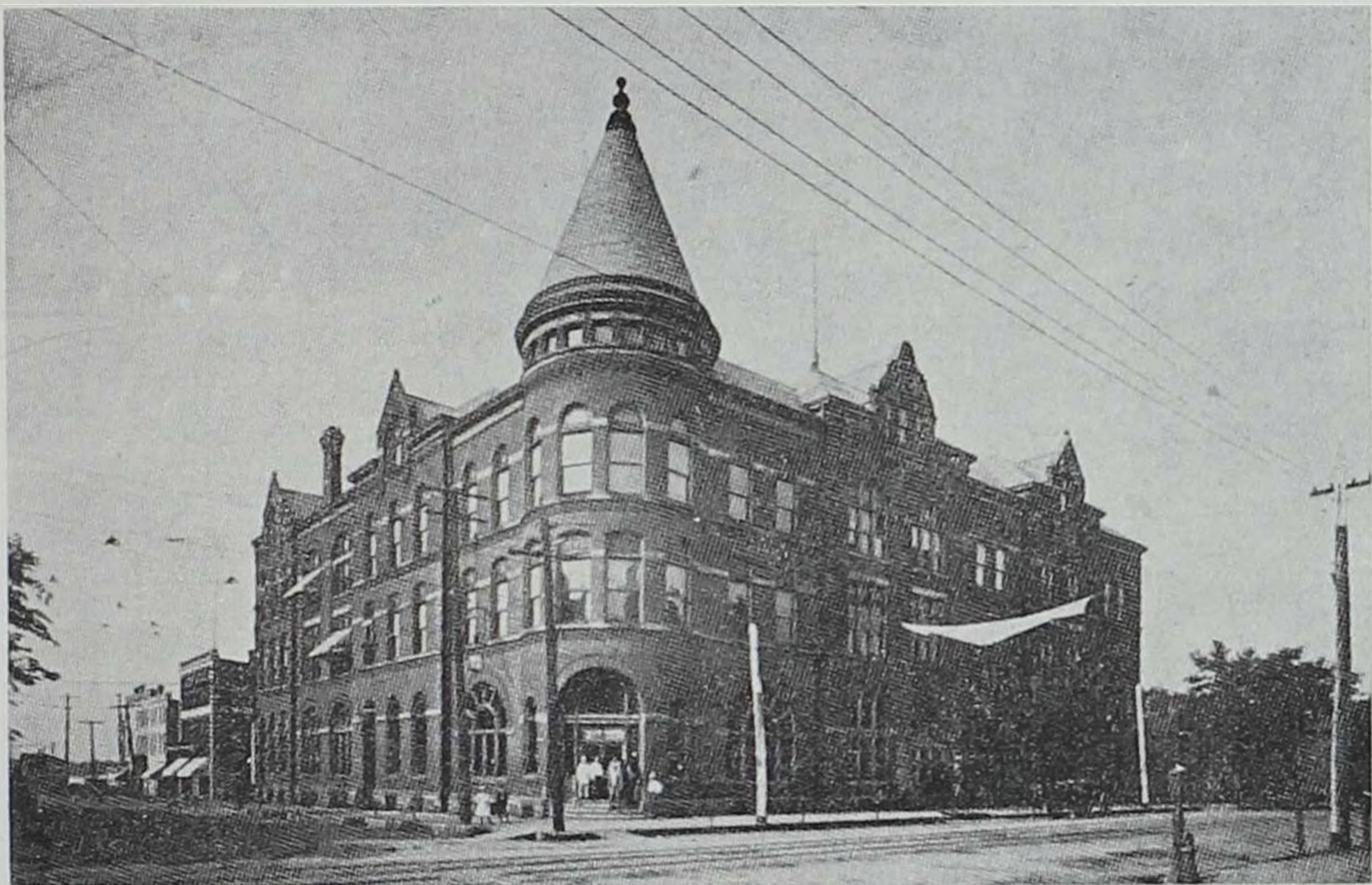
Claus Groth Hall at 1224 West 3rd Street. Used by many musical groups including the Harugari Society.



State Historical Society of Iowa Collection
Lahrman's Germania Hall — still standing at S.E. corner 2nd and Ripley.

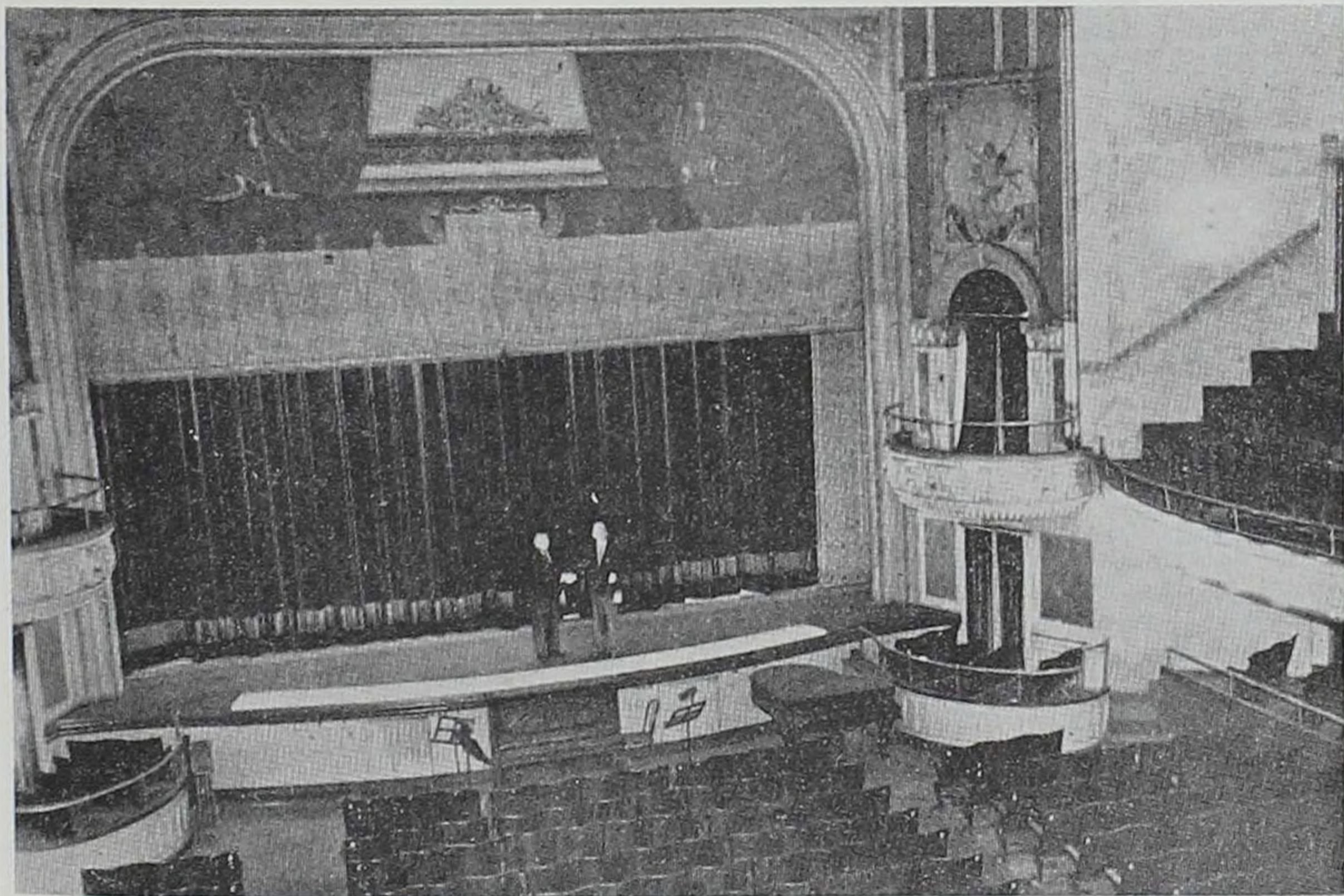


State Historical Society of Iowa Collection
First Davenport (Central) Turner Hall on S.W. corner 3rd and Scott.



State Historical Society of Iowa Collection

Central Turner Hall — built on site of first Turner Hall at 3rd and Scott in 1887. The site has now become a parking lot.



State Historical Society of Iowa Collection

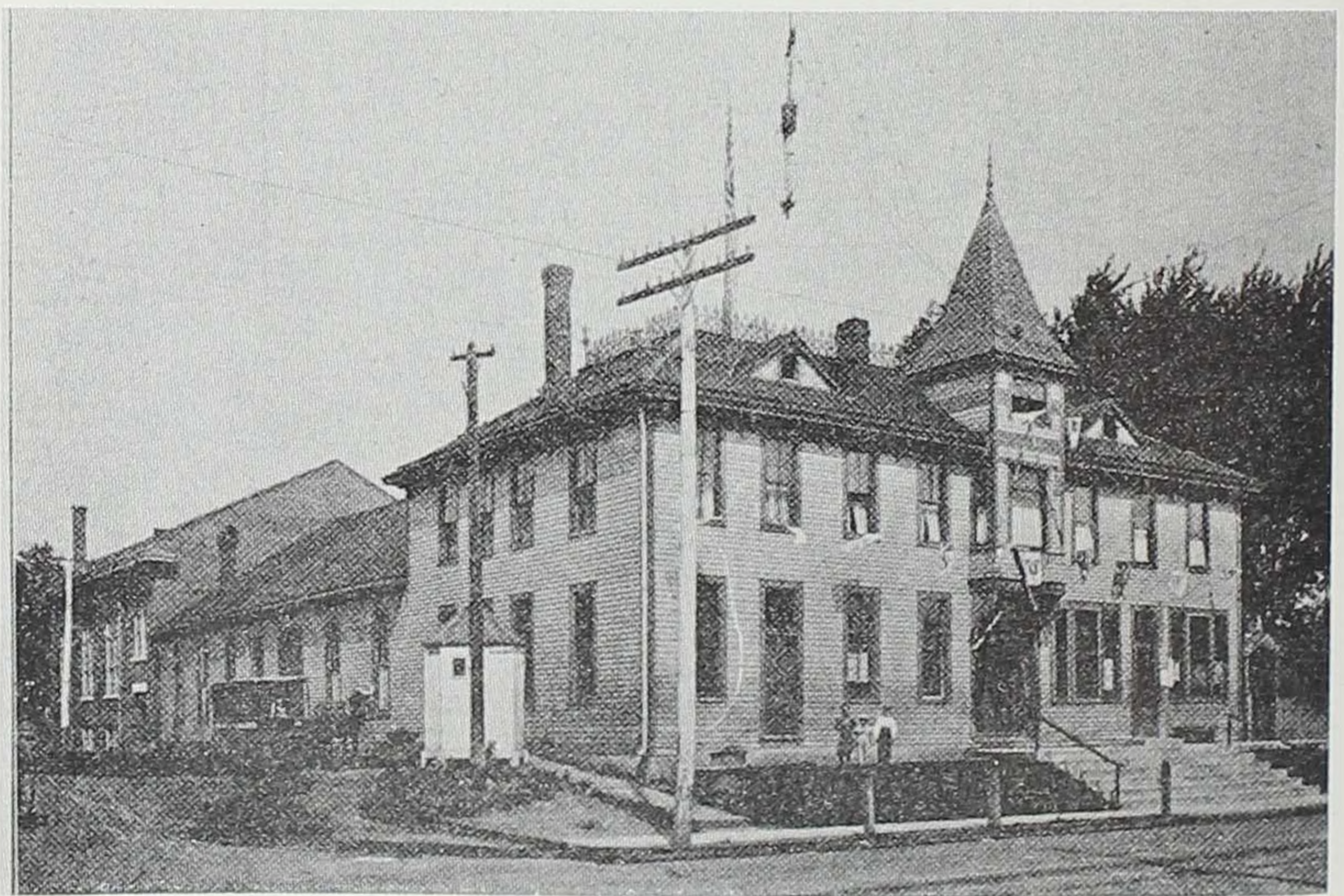
Interior of the Grand Opera House in Central Turner Hall. Scene of many concerts until converted into bowling alley in 1947.



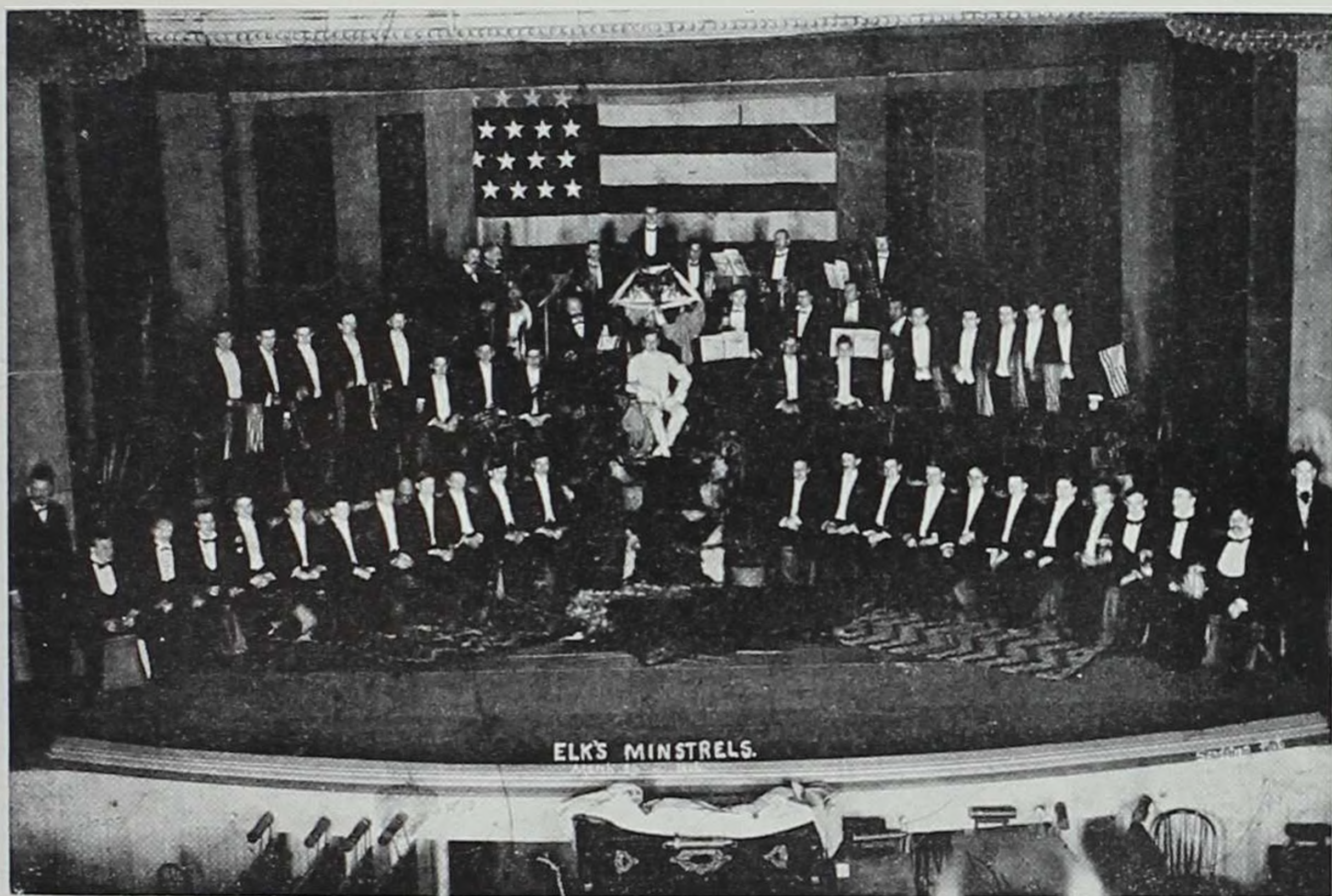
State Historical Society of Iowa Collection
Music Pavilion in Schuetzen Park.



State Historical Society of Iowa Collect
German Free School — Davenport Institute



State Historical Society of Iowa Collection
Northwest Davenport Turner Hall — 1602 Washington Street.



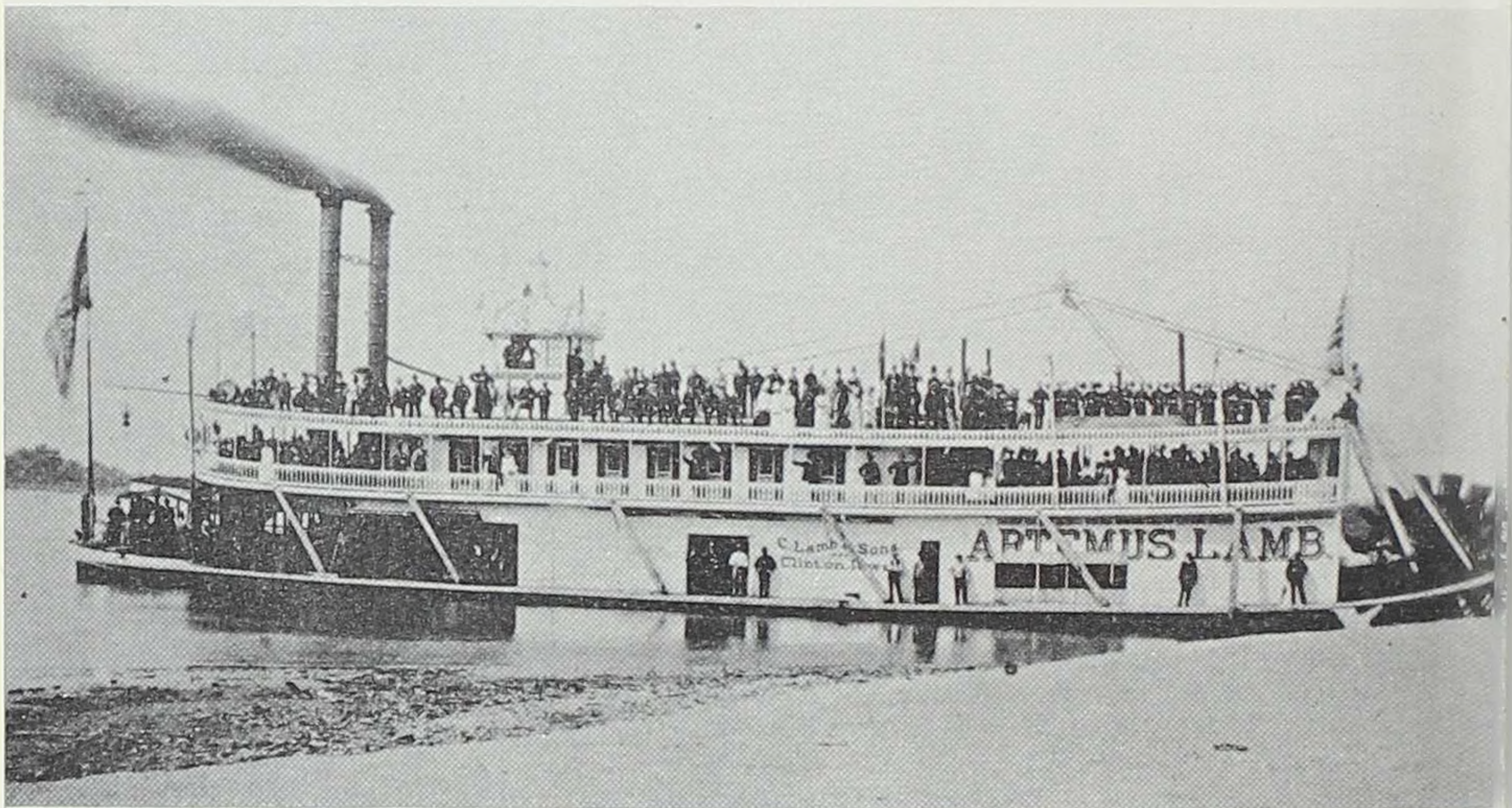
William Paarmann Photo Collection

The Elks Minstrels and band entertaining in the Opera House on March 5, 1906.



William Paarmann Photo Collection

Strasser's Band and Orchestra in the Band Shell at Schuetzen Park on July 4, 1900



William J. Petersen Collection

The raftboat *Artemus Lamb* with band lined up on the stern of the hurricane deck.



William J. Petersen Collection

The raftboat *Musser* with band lined up on the bow of her hurricane deck entertaining crowd on shore before departure.



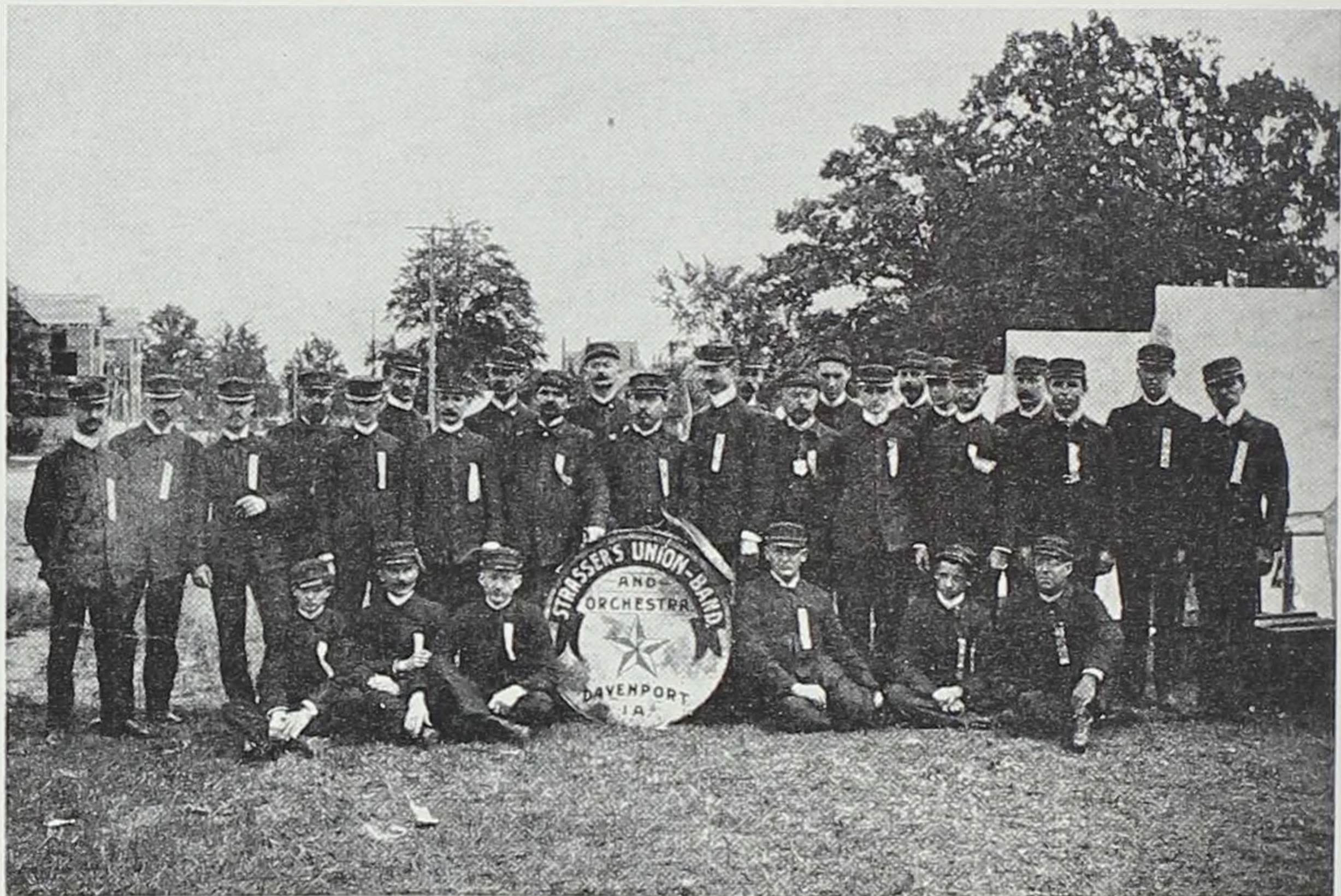
Courtesy Arthur Petersen

The Light Guard Band of Moline, Illinois . . . October 19, 1890.



Courtesy Arthur Petersen

The Columbia Band of Davenport, Iowa . . . October, 1895.



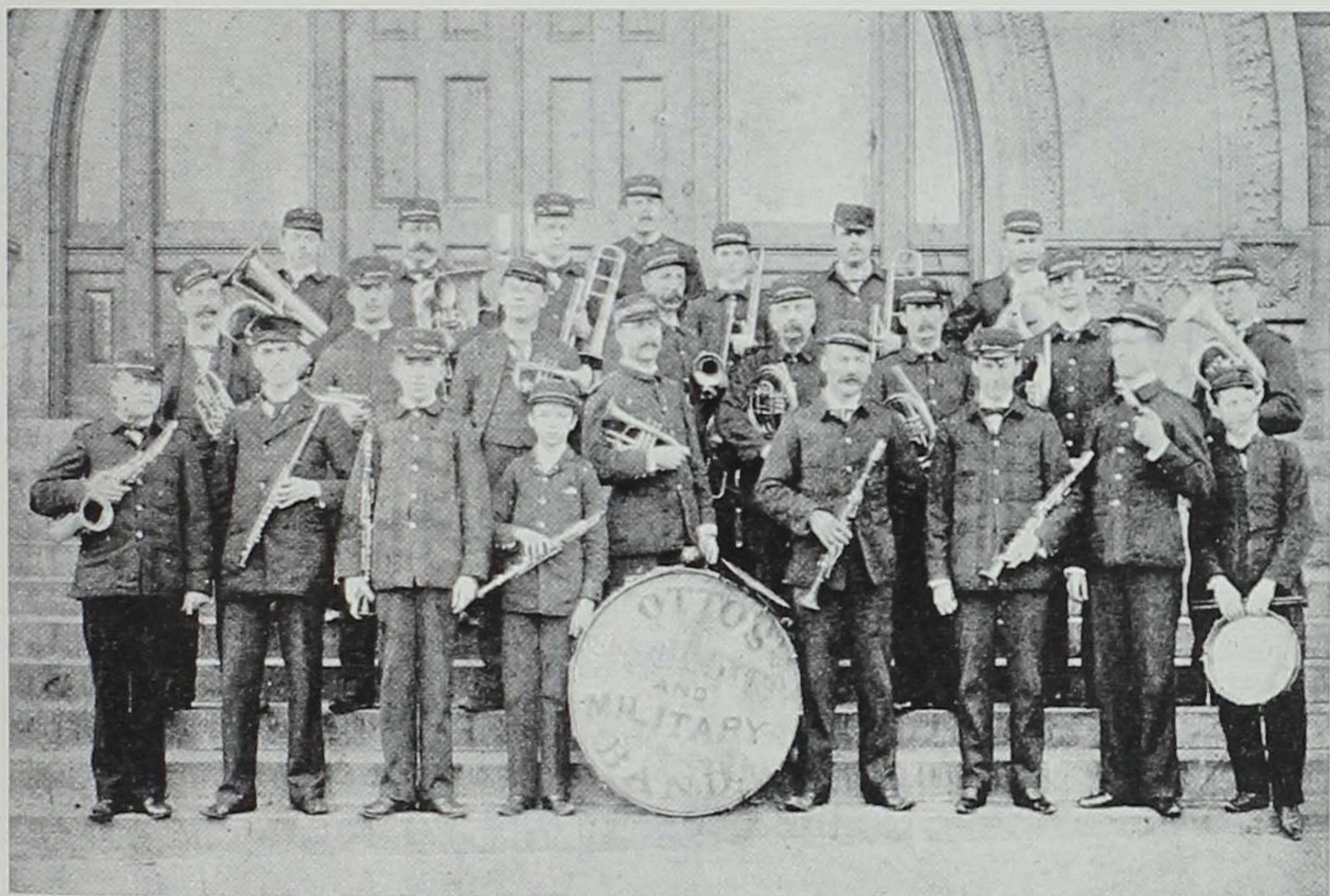
William Paarmann Photo Collection

Strasser's Union-Band and Orchestra of Davenport.



Courtesy Arthur Petersen

Petersen Band and Orchestra of Davenport.



William Paarmann Photo Collection

Ernst Otto's Orchestra and Military Band.



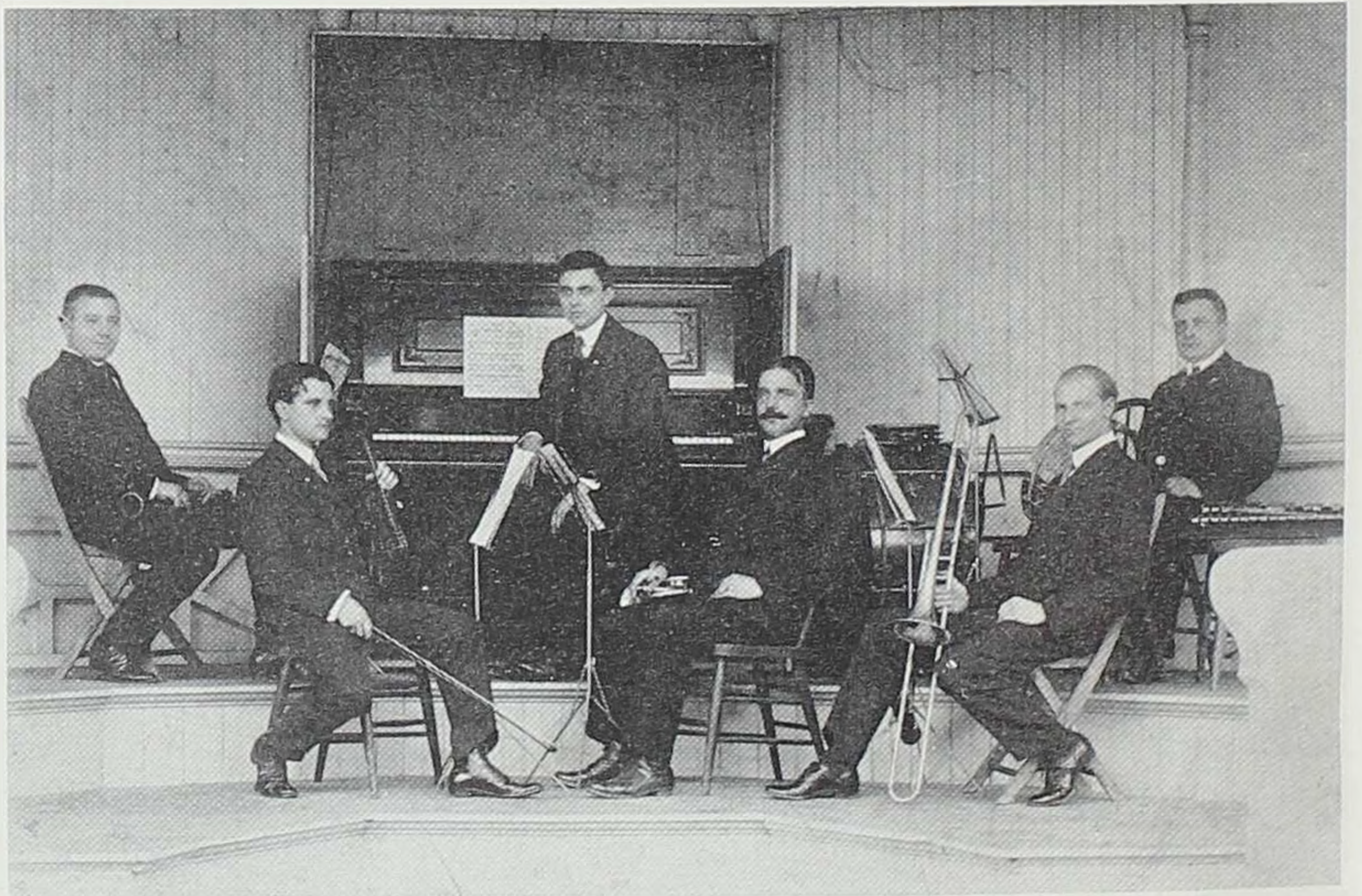
William Paarmann Photo Collection

Davenport Military Band and Orchestra.



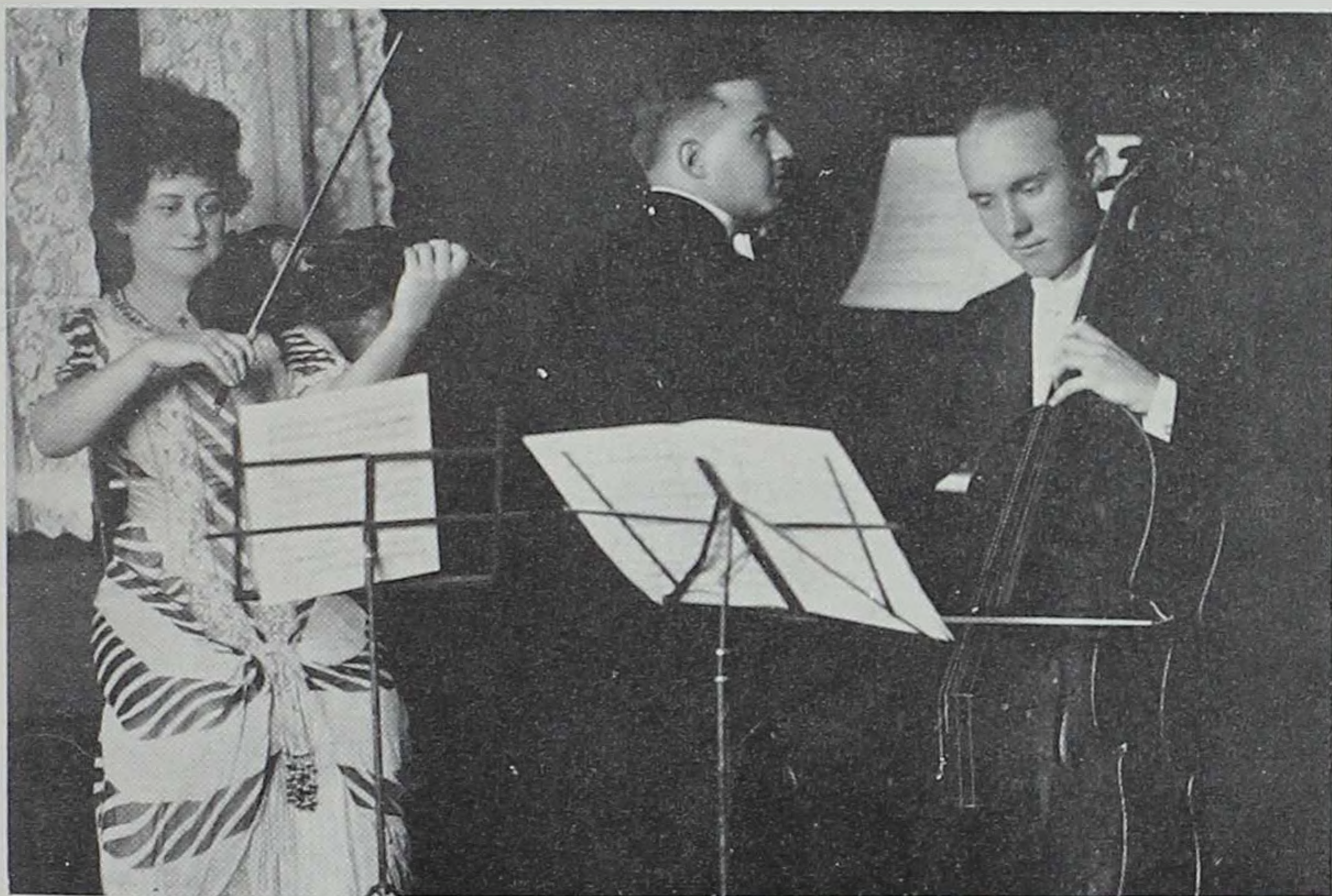
William Paarmann Photo Collection

The Criterion Orchestra directed by Will A. Paarmann.



William Paarmann Photo Collection

The Ogden Orchestra at the Blackhawk Watch Tower — Will A. Paarmann — violinist, and Charles Paarmann — drums.



Courtesy Arthur Petersen

The Gazella Webber Trio — Popular in Iowa and Illinois. Gazella Webber, violin; Ceno Petersen, piano; Arthur Petersen, cello.



HAWKEYE ENSEMBLE

Herbert Silberstein - Violin Albert Petersen - Viola
 Will A. Paarmann - Violin Arthur Petersen - Cello
 Ceno Petersen - Piano

William Paarmann Photo Collection



The Davenport Little Symphony.

William Paarmann Photo Collection



Courtesy Walter K. Voss

Davenport Kiwanis Quartet — National Kiwanis Champions in 1923.

The Paarmann Family Sextette.

William Paarmann Photo Collection

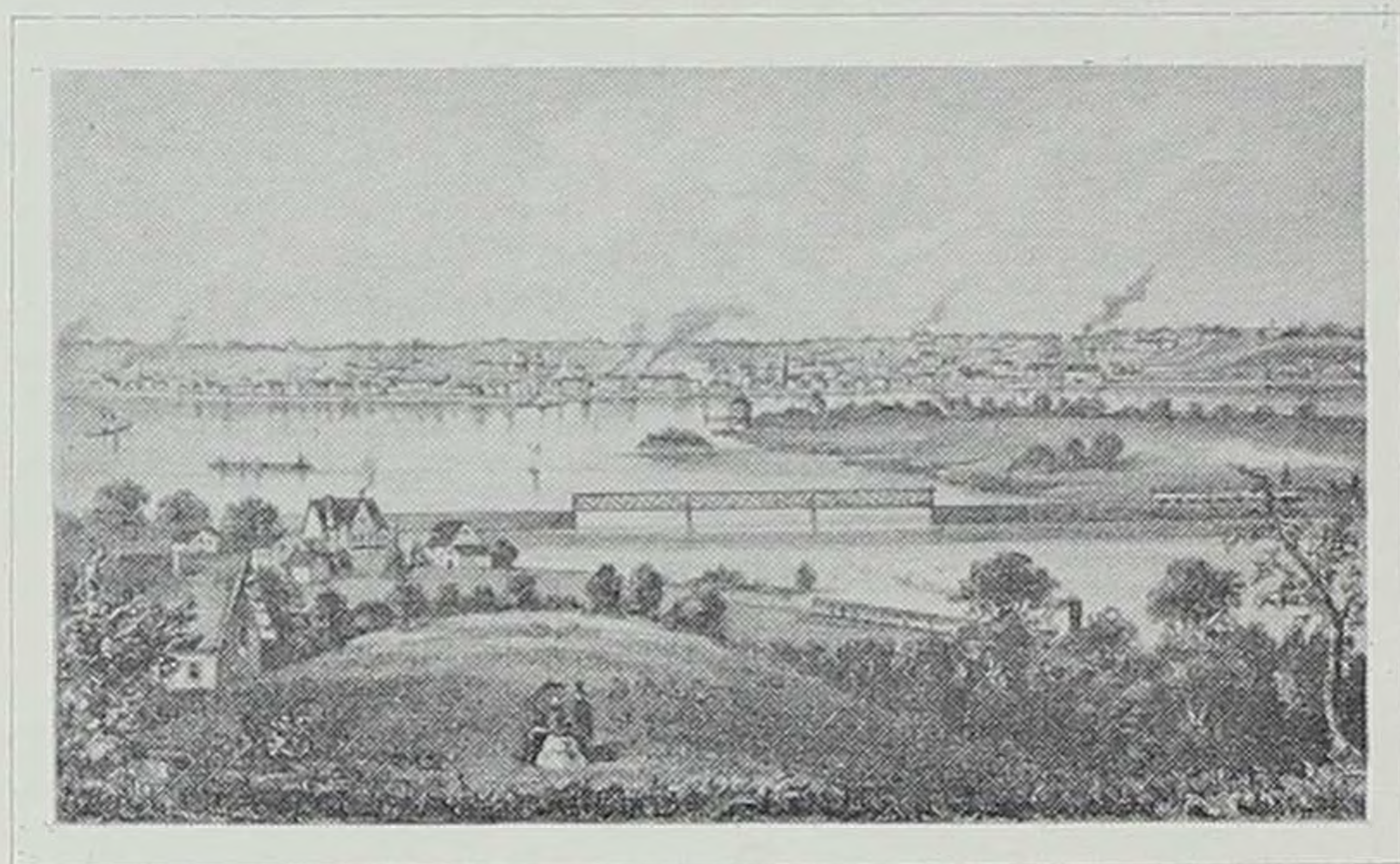


Davenport Music Teachers

1898-99

Ames Grace M Miss, (Vocal) 325 E 12th
Anderson Caroline E Mrs, 1416 Farnam
Atwill Alice Dutton Mrs, Library Bldg
Biehl Anthony, (string) 211½ W 2d
Branigar Gertrude Miss, 414 E Pleasant
Braunlich Hugo G, 732 W 5th
Bruning Ludovica Miss, 508 Scott
Bruning Selma Miss, 508 Scott
Burch Florence L Miss, 1632 Brady
Chapman Kathryn M Miss, room 45 Whitaker Bldg
Davis John W, es Hickory Grove rd nr limits
Dittman Pauline O Miss, 1922 Brown
Eagal Anna K Miss, 119 E Locust
Eldridge Cora M Miss, 1340 Third av
Fahrner Albert K, 632½ W 3d
Finley Cecil Miss, Atlantic Hotel
Finley Maud M Miss, Atlantic Hotel
Forrest Lulu N Mrs, Wolfe Hall 1120 Main
Friedrichsen Conrad, 403½ W 2d
Gabbert Etta Miss, 1202 Tremont av
GRABBE LEE B, 113 W 2d
Hapke Elsie Miss, 129 W Locust
Hasson Flora A Miss, 1319 Ripley
Jordan Florence A Miss, 2114 Brady
Jordan Hattie L Miss, 2114 Brady
Ketelsen Peter, 310½ Gaines
Lesser Flora Miss, 516 W 3d
Mitchell Charlotte E Mrs, 1309 Perry
Nichols Eugenia Miss, 1013 Tremont av
OTTO ERNST, rooms 55-56 McCullough Bldg
Paddock Mary E Miss, 428½ Brady
Reese Rudolph T, 826 W 5th
Schmidt Minnie M Miss, 220 E 3d
Schmidt Olga Miss, flat C Cora Lee Roy Bldg
Seemann Julius C, 1934 Ripley
Sievert Clara E Miss, 2109 W 3d
Smith Bertha Mrs, 512½ W 3d
SONNTAG BERTHA H MISS, room 53 McCullough Bldg
Stolle Johanna E Miss, 222 W 16th
Toenniges C Frederick, 704 Main
Toll Hugo, 318½ W 2d
Toll Rudolph, 1607 W 4th
Tuey Margaret Miss, 623 Fillmore

TO MISS CHARLOTTE BROBSON,
PHILADELPHIA.



VIEW OF DAVENPORT, IOWA.

The Davenport Schottisch, composed by Charles P. Burr, was copyrighted in 1858. The *Davenport City Directory for 1866* listed Charles P. Burr as a grocer.

DAVENPORT SCHOTTISCH

Composed by

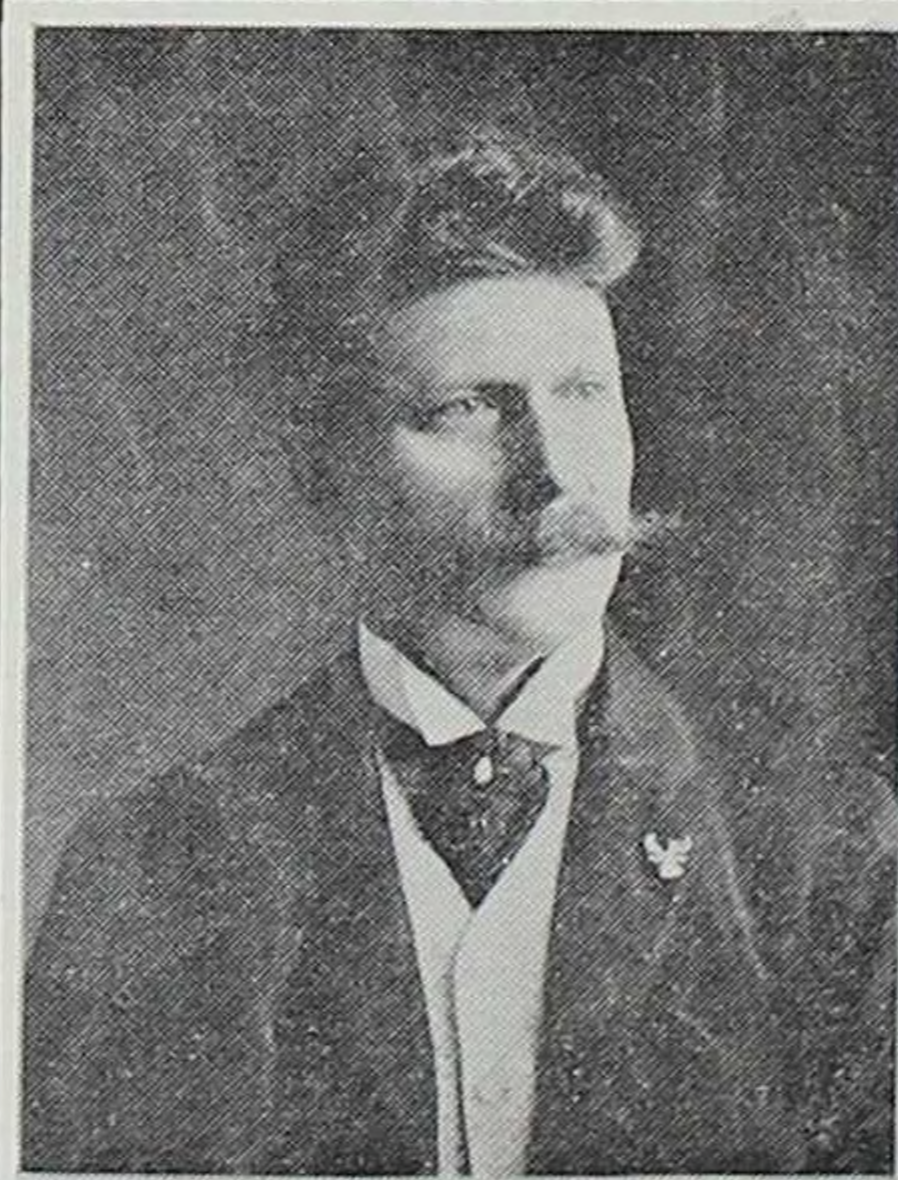
CHARLES P. BURR.

William J. Petersen Collection

Samentation

Valse Lento

COMPOSED
BY



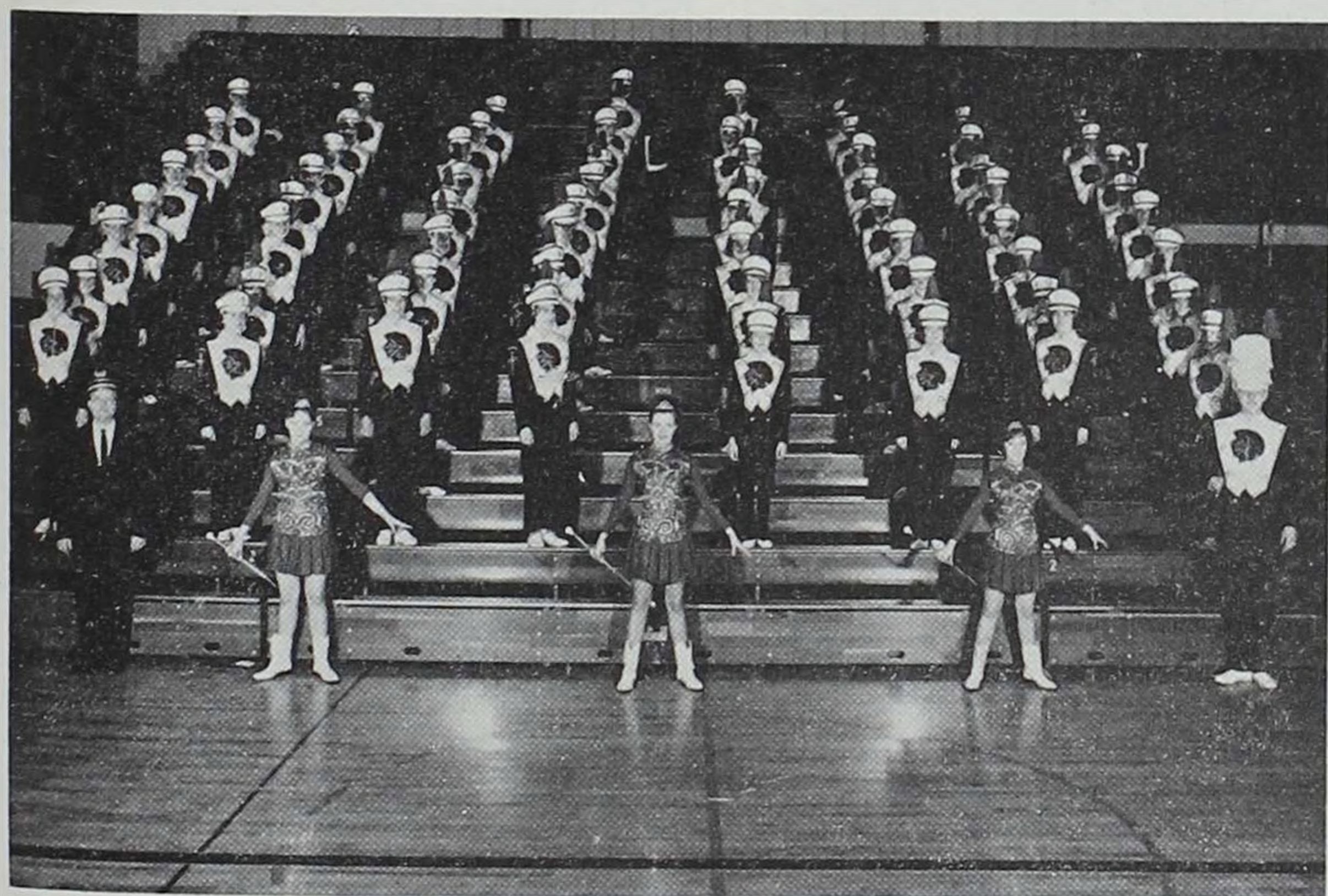
ERNST OTTO.

William Paarmann Photo Collection

Ernst Otto was a talented composer, a distinguished band and orchestra leader, and a music teacher in Davenport schools.



William Paarmann Photo Collection
St. Ambrose College Orchestra in 1920's — Will Paarmann, Director.



William Paarmann Photo Collection
The Assumption High School Band — Carl Paarmann, Director.

fessor J. F. Fargo of the Normal Academy at Bloomington, Illinois. At the close of this convention, a public rehearsal consisting of choruses and small vocal ensembles was held at Le Claire Hall by the Society, which then had approximately one hundred members. As a result of the success of this first convention, the Mendelssohn Society was instrumental in securing Professor Fargo's Normal Music Academy for Davenport. The Academy offered daily classes in vocal music for a six to eight weeks' period during the summer months, at a fee to pupils of fifteen dollars a term. The plans were that the Academy would continue for five years, and complete scholarships would be sold for seventy-five dollars.

The regular concert series of the Mendelssohn Society consisted of four concerts for which subscriptions were sold in advance. A limit of one hundred subscriptions was sold. Each ticket admitted two persons to each of the four concerts, the first of which was given in May, 1866. The Society developed the practice of presenting publicly their last rehearsal prior to a concert, and fifty cents admission was charged.

Occasionally, concerts were also given in Rock Island, and these too were generally well attended by Davenport people. When the Society performed choruses from Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at Babcock Hall in Rock Island, it was reported that of the four hundred persons attending the per-

formance over half were from Davenport. The last mention of the Mendelssohn Society concerned a concert presented in 1878 with Strasser's Orchestra.

A male chorus was organized on October 17, 1896, at the office of Dr. J. R. Kulp, a local dentist. C. F. Toenniges was chosen as director of the Schubert Glee Club which originally consisted of four tenors and eleven basses. Rehearsals were held at the Unitarian Church on Wednesday evenings.

This chorus presented its first concert on January 12, 1897, at the Turner Grand Opera House. The group, which had by then grown to thirty members, was assisted by Strasser's Orchestra and Mrs. Lillie Stibolt Hanssen, a soprano from Davenport. Another concert was given on April 27 with Strasser's Orchestra and a Davenport vocal group, the Ladies' Harmonie Society. Louis Knocke, an active Davenport vocalist, had this to say about the glee club in *The Weekly Outlook*:

Unquestionably the Schubert is far in advance of the average male chorus, and gives ample evidence of careful training on some of the most essential features of chorus singing, namely, precision, attack and rhythm. The voices are melodious, harmonize well, and the parts are well blended. If anything, the bass is a trifle heavy. But this can hardly be counted as a fault, for a strong bass makes a good formation upon which to build rich harmony, and is also great support to other voices. The work of the chorus in unison passages is particularly fine. This is another evi-

dence of good training, for it requires as much practice, if not more, to render a unison passage well than to produce good harmony. The general verdict is, that the Schubert Glee Club is a credit to the city, and deserves the hearty support and encouragement of our citizens.

Many other choral organizations existed in Davenport from time to time, and only the most prominent ones have been discussed here. Others which should be mentioned are: The Harmonie Society (formed in 1876), Concordia Society (1859), The Apollo Club (1877), Davenport Glee Club (1885), Davenport Musical Society (1886), North Davenport Musical Association (1866), Arion Club (1887), Davenport Madrigal Club, Lend-a-Hand Chorus (1886), Colored Ladies' Chorus, and Lotus Glee Club.

Many other German singing societies, which received much less publicity than, for example, the popular *Männerchor*, existed in Davenport. These include, among others, the *Germania Sängerkhor*, the *Gesang Verein Teutonia*, the Northwest Davenport *Liedertafel*, the *Eintracht* Glee Club, the German *Liedertafel*, the *Harmonia Damen* Choir, the Claus Groth Singing Society, the Turner Singing Section, the *Thalia Verein*, the *Vorwaertz* Singing Society, the *Harugaria Männerchor*, and the Davenport *Sängerbund*.

More than a dozen small vocal ensembles contributed to musical entertainment in Davenport. The most popular among this group was the T. K.

Quartet. The letters T. K. meant *Truen Kameraden*, but "Tom Kats" came to be the more playful expansion of the term. In 1886, the year of their formation, the T. K.'s sang for benefit concerts, but their primary engagements involved serving as the choir in many of the local churches. Quartet choirs were popular at this time, and once this group journeyed to Minneapolis to serve as the choir in a church there. Many of the vocal quartets of Davenport served as the nucleus for the future development of church choirs in the city.

In this account of the choral groups of Davenport, it has been noted that the Davenport *Männerchor* was the organization of greatest stability among the vocal ensembles of the city. The development of such larger singing societies as the Philharmonic Society, the Mendelssohn Society, and the Schubert Glee Club, indicates the persistent presence of a desire for vocal activity in the community. Davenport was never without a large choral ensemble for any great length of time.

WILLIAM F. BETTERTON

The Sangerfest of 1898

"Willkommen!" Huge signs greeted singing societies from Midwestern towns as they arrived in Davenport on the evening of July 27, 1898, to participate in the great *Sängerfest* or singing festival. The first societies to arrive were from Elkader and Manning, followed by groups from La Crosse and Eau Claire in Wisconsin, Elgin and Peoria in Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri. Fast on their heels came other musical societies, by train and steamboat. Each group was escorted by a brass band to Turner Hall to join the revelry of the German societies from Davenport and Rock Island which were already assembled for the four-day festivities.

The tradition of these musical gatherings which united the many German *Sängerbunds*, or musical societies, dates back to 1847 when the first Northwest *Sängerbund* originated in Milwaukee after two German singing societies united. Their public concerts attracted much attention and stimulated the cultivation of music in the area. Hans Balatka, who arrived in Milwaukee in 1849, succeeded in uniting the musical talent of that city into one great society, and shortly after, in the spring of 1852, the first Northwest *Sängerfest* took place. Three years later, in 1855, delegates from societies in Illinois,

Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin met at Milwaukee at the suggestion of Balatka to establish the Northwest *Sängerbund* and to hold its second festival.

Davenport acted as host for the third festival of the *Sängerbund* from June 30 to July 2, 1858. The three-day celebration opened with a concert at Metropolitan Hall, directed by Hans Balatka, conductor of the Milwaukee Opera. The Davenport *Männerchor*, the oldest singing society of the city, was judged the best singing society at this festival.

During the Civil War the *Sängerbund* ceased to function, and it was not until 1865 that another festival was held, this time at La Crosse. Subsequent festivals took place at Milwaukee, Watertown, Madison, Dubuque, Burlington, Quincy, Galena, Freeport, Chicago, St. Louis, and Minneapolis.

Davenport was not to be outdone by the splendor and pageantry of the above celebrations. When this justly famous "Queen City of the West" had its second opportunity to serve as host for the *Sängerfest* of 1898, the Germans staged one of the grandest affairs ever held in Davenport. Preparations were begun two years in advance, or shortly after a delegation from the *Männerchor* secured Davenport as the site for this biennial celebration. Ten of the major singing societies of Davenport united in 1896 to organize the festival. Among these groups were the Claus Groth Singing

Society, the Harugaria *Männerchor*, the Teutonia Singers, the Northwest Davenport Liederstafel, the *Vorwaertz* Singers, the Concordia Singing Society, the West Davenport Singing Society, the Davenport Turner's Singing Sections, and the Davenport *Männerchor*, all leading German musical societies of the city.

At their initial meetings which were held at John Schnaak's Hall, at Turner Hall, and at Claus Groth Hall, this group, known as the United Singers of Davenport, adopted a constitution and by-laws for their organization, and they also chose the songs that would be sung at a fund-raising concert to be given prior to the fest. John Berwald and John Schnaak of Davenport were elected president and vice president respectively.

In November of that year, Mr. Moritz Herling of Milwaukee, president of the Northwest *Sängerbund*, was a guest of the local singers when the twenty-first conference of the officers of the *Sängerbund* was held in Davenport. Theodore Reese, who was at one time leader of the *Männerchor*, Strasser's Band, and many other prominent Davenport musical groups, was appointed to serve with Theodore Kelbe of Milwaukee and Henry Von Oppen of Chicago as a committee to select music for the coming *Sängerfest*. Also at that time the motto "O gruene fort und bluehe lang In unserm Bund, du Deutscher Sang" was adopted for the fest. A prize of twenty-five dollars was later

awarded to Professor Reese for setting this motto to music.

Fund raising drives, which included concerts by the ten participating Davenport societies, flourished. Donations were received from many German organizations of the community, as well as from businesses and individuals. The John Deere Company donated their newest model plow, valued at forty dollars. A four-day fund raising fair opened at Turner and Claus Groth halls on November 24, 1897. Another item sold to secure funds for the *Sängerfest* was a sticker that could be attached to correspondence. It bore a design of a harp entwined by a steamship and was inscribed, "*Sängerfest, July 23-31, 1898.*"

One of the biggest problems which the Germans faced in preparing for the fest was the location of the festivities within the city. Since there was no adequate building available to them at that time, plans were formulated in 1897 for a fest hall which was to be erected especially for this important event. A bid submitted by Oelerich Company was accepted early in 1898, and an auditorium 102' x 225' without posts or galleries, was built with special consideration for acoustical properties. The seating capacity of the hall, which was located at Fourth and Green Streets, was three thousand while the stage could accommodate twelve hundred persons. Long distance telephones were installed in the hall to enable persons in all parts of

the country to hear the programs of the fest. They could also be used by the almost thirty newspaper reporters hailing from a half dozen states.

Excellent physical facilities and a well-trained chorus were essential to the success of the fest. In 1897, weekly rehearsals began at Turner Hall by the participating societies. With the addition of the Ladies' Harmonie Chorus and the Schubert Glee Club the number of Davenport societies increased to twelve. Six months prior to the celebration, the societies from the singing section of the Turners of Rock Island and Moline joined the Davenport vocalists in their rehearsals. One hundred and twenty vocalists were present at a rehearsal in March, 1898.

Plans were formulating smoothly for the *Sängerfest* until an event took place which saddened those who were making the preparations. Less than two months before the fest, its secretary, Adolph Weise, upon whom many of the responsibilities for the preparations had lain, died. Mr. Weise, an active member of both the Davenport Turners Singing Society and the Davenport *Männerchor*, was buried June 7, 1898. The proposed *Sängerfest* orchestra and the United Singers of Davenport provided music for his funeral services. His successor, Mr. H. L. Wagner, was named secretary shortly after, and he continued to make the final arrangements for the fest.

These preparations included the training of one

thousand children from the Davenport schools by their beloved music instructor, Professor Ernst Otto to sing "Die Wacht am Rhein" in German and the "Star Spangled Banner" in English. Three days of diligent volunteer work was required to decorate the streets of the city and the *Sängerfest* Hall. The final rehearsal was held the evening before the first concert, with the orchestra and chorus rehearsing past midnight at the Coliseum.

The *Sängerfest* program opened officially July 28 with a reception concert directed by Theodore R. Reese. This was followed by a welcome address by the fest's president. Vocal selections were rendered by Miss Pauline Woltmann, a mezzo-soprano from Rock Island, by the United Singers, by the children's chorus, and by the other individual singing societies.

On the following night another concert was presented at *Sängerfest* Hall, with Theodore Reese again directing the orchestra. Featured again as soloist was Miss Pauline Woltmann. Several of the individual singing societies as well as a mass chorus of fourteen hundred voices also sang.

Davenport's musicians figured prominently in all of the concerts of the fest. A feature of the matinee concert on Saturday, July 30, was a cornet solo by Professor C. F. Toenniges, director of the Ladies' Harmonie Society, Strasser's Band, and other choral and instrumental groups of Davenport. Sharing the honors as the featured musician was

the vocal soloist of the day, Miss Emma "Poddie" Ross of Davenport. Miss Ross was a graduate of the Pashall Souvestre Italian School in Dresden. She studied with Oreste Bimboni of Florence and with Carlo Carignani of Milan. During one of the most enthusiastic ovations ever received in Davenport, Miss Ross was presented with a beautiful armful of roses. Later, on August 17, 1898, Miss Ross was honored for her *Sängerfest* triumph by the Davenport Business Men's Association. Twenty-five hundred music lovers attended a testimonial concert given in her honor at the *Sängerfest* Hall and they presented her with one thousand dollars as a token of their gratitude.

Another of Davenport's vocalists, Miss Bertha Sonntag, was a featured soloist at the second grand evening concert on July 30, 1898. Miss Sonntag later graduated with high honors from the Royal Academy at Munich. She appeared in many Davenport community performances.

The closing day of the *Sängerfest* was Sunday, July 31. Fifty singing societies and a dozen bands participated in a parade which originated at the corner of Third and Scott streets at nine o'clock a.m. It was a colorful procession as the paraders wearing uniforms and the light grey hat, the official dress of the *Sängerfest*, paraded to the park where nearly twelve thousand people attended an informal picnic. Each of the participating groups set up its standards on the ground to proudly ad-

vertise its own singing society. During the day, the societies exchanged visits, sang, listened to speeches, recitations, and band music. It was a fitting close for the four days' activities.

Because of the great success of the *Sängerfest* and the enthusiasm resulting therefrom, the United Singers voted to continue as a permanent society. The eighty-five active members elected to use Turner Hall as headquarters for both rehearsals and regular meetings.

The enthusiasm displayed in the two *Sängerfests* which were held in Davenport was a significant testimony of the German people's love for music. These festivals were representative of other conventions which were held during that period in cities throughout the country. They help to illustrate the important effect that German culture has had upon the musical development of the State of Iowa as well as upon the musical development of the entire United States.

WILLIAM F. BETTERTON

Land of Music and Song

Davenport, from its very beginnings, seemed destined for greatness. On August 4, 1838, the *Iowa Sun and Davenport and Rock Island News* declared:

The country around Rock Island is, in our opinion, the most charming that ever the eye beheld. Here nature has clearly intended that the Queen City of the Far West should be built. Rock Island is of itself, one of the greatest natural beauties on the Mississippi . . . and Davenport with its extended plains and sloping bluffs, completes one of the most splendid pictures that ever delighted the eye of man.

Twenty years later, in 1858, Franc B. Wilkie wrote in his *Davenport Past and Present*:

Davenport, among its other excellencies, possesses its quota of musical talent — albeit its development . . . both vocal and instrumental, rests with our German population. Strasser, as a violinist, and Braeunlich and Schlegel, as pianists, take a front rank among amateur musicians.

The newly-formed Philharmonic Society, Wilkie pointed out, which had been created for the improvement of vocal music among males and females, gave promise of future greatness. Meanwhile, the seven-year-old German Mannerchor had taken second at the Western Singing Festival in Chicago in June, 1857. Ten other musical or-

ganizations, equally divided between vocal and instrumental, were listed by Wilkie in 1858.

Forty years later, in 1898, Davenport and its sister cities across the Mississippi, welcomed the Northwest Sangerfest for a brilliant three-day musical festival. The Davenport *Democrat* of July 31, 1898, editorialized as follows:

Three days of song, of melody, and harmony. Three days to live in memory with choruses to return in dreams by night and reverie by day. Three days of Beethoven, Schumann, Verdi, Meyerbeer, Gounod, Donizetti, Wagner, Schubert, and the other worthies who have made the world better to live in by driving care away, by elevating thought, and enlarging happiness.

We cannot all enjoy the creations of these masters as they come from first sources, but when they are interpreted as they have been during these four concerts by those we see and know; those who have studied to find the sentiment, the feeling, the music; those who have brought home to us the charm of song, then we are dull and unappreciative not to realize the inspiration. Take the children's chorus of Thursday evening, of Friday, or the grander one of the matinee with the national songs of two countries by the children from the public schools, and the man is more than a barbarian who does not soften under the divine power.

And so it is with each of the four concerts in their completeness. They have been a surprise, a delight, and a blessing. What if this feast of song did cost thousands and tens of thousands of dollars, looking at it merely from the low plane of transaction! — it has more than paid. That, however, was not the incentive in securing the Saengerfest for Davenport. . . . No investment within The

Democrat's time has returned larger dividends than the one made in this festival of music.

Music, both instrumental and vocal, continued to thrill Davenporters as the 20th Century advanced. In 1915 the Tri-City Symphony Orchestra was formed with Ludwig Becker of Chicago its first conductor. This outstanding musical organization, the twelfth oldest Symphony in the United States, observes its Golden Anniversary in 1964.

The Iowa Federation of Music Clubs was incorporated at a meeting held in Davenport in 1916. Davenport music clubs have played an important rôle in the activities of this Federation. For example, in 1921 a still greater honor befell the Queen City of the Far West when the National Federation of Music Clubs held a ten-day session in Davenport from June 4 to June 14. The City of Davenport alone spent \$31,000 to promote this outstanding music festival. That such expenditures were bearing fruit is attested by the comment of Mrs. Frances Elliott Clark of Philadelphia, who was chairman of the department of education for the National Federation of Music Clubs. According to Mrs. Clark: "Iowa is really a wonderful state in its musical organizations and we have found the school work in Davenport has come forward so rapidly and developed so fast, this is becoming one of the outstanding cities of the country in school music."

That Davenport and Iowa had forged to the

forefront in musical development was attested by Walter Damrosch on February 10, 1928, when he declared: Iowa is the most musical state in the Union." Damrosch based this opinion upon the response to his radio broadcasting from letters received from all over the country.

In addition to the Federated Music Clubs, one would have to point to the thousands of music lovers, and the more than two score music teachers who found steady employment in Davenport.

Nor should one overlook the numerous musical families identified with the Davenport scene. The names of Jacob Strasser, C. Frederick Toenniges, Theodore Reese were written large in the story of music in the 19th Century just as those of Albert Petersen, Ernst Otto, and Will A. Paarmann were boldly written among the immortals of the 20th Century. Two of these men have transmitted their unusual musical gifts to their progeny. Thus, the sons of Albert Petersen and the family of William A. Paarmann have played a dynamic rôle in Davenport musical circles through fifty years of time. Indeed, Arthur Petersen, a charter member of the Tri-City Symphony, will be playing his fiftieth season in 1964. Six Paarmanns have played with the Tri-City Symphony in a single season. Davenport is fortunate to harbor such stellar musical performers.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

