

RE: Mark Twain, Delaware Ohio appearance 1885

From: Millie Barnhart <mdbarnhart@earthlink.net>

To: 'Scott Holmes' <scottholmes@sbcglobal.net>

Date: Mon, 13 Apr 2015 23:27:11 -0400 (04/13/2015 08:27:11 PM)

No problem Scott. I transcribed it so that we can use it sometime in the future in our society's newsletter that goes out to about 250 members in the US and Canada who have ties to Delaware County Ohio.

I once found an interesting tidbit that 18 year old Lena Horn performed at our hospital here in Delaware. I thought it so interesting that we shared it with our members also.

The year was 1936. The event was a free jazz concert on the porch of Jane M Case Hospital. How did it happen? A newspaper account tells it this way. On June 3, 1936, five Negro musicians, a young lady and four young men, were enroute from Cleveland to play an engagement at Rainbow Gardens in Cincinnati when a tire blew out and their car overturned in a ditch about two miles south of Ashley. Three of the men were taken to Jane M Case Hospital and the other two were treated at a doctor's office in Ashley. Noble Sissle, nationally known vocalist and band leader from Cleveland and two of his band members, Billy Banks and George Early Jr. were the men treated at the hospital.

Noble Sissle had been hospitalized near death with a fracture of the skull. By June 22, he was recovering and his band was happy. So happy, that they decided to come to Delaware and present a free concert for him. It may have been the first time in history that a famous jazz band had given a free concert at a hospital, and their injured director and the throng of approximately 400 Delawareans that flocked to the hospital grounds greatly appreciated the band's efforts.

The fourteen piece band was led by Lena Horn, an 18-year old girl with personality plus. She directed the orchestra, danced and sang. Joe Louis may have led with his jaw, but Lena led with her hips. Billy Banks, vocalist, who was slightly injured in the accident, brought down the house by his singing of "Star Dust" and later appeared in the floor show dressed in a romper suit and staged a clever one-man comedy. Jimmy Jones, personality man of the outfit, made a big hit in a number featuring his bass fiddle, or "dog house," as the bass viol is called by orchestra men.

Sissle was introduced to the gathering by William Henry, manager of the orchestra. Sissle read a clever poem about hospitals, nurses, and doctors which he had written during his stay in the local institution. Due to his weakened condition, Sissle did not take an active part in the concert. The band arrived in Delaware at 2:15 p.m. on a chartered bus. The band appeared in their sparkling uniforms red mess jackets and white flannel trousers. An impromptu stage and loud speaker system was set up on the front porch with the audience seated in the yard in front of the porch.

Sissle was quite well known at this time and had co-written and

produced Broadway shows with Eubie Blake. Sissle liked to travel to Europe while Blake wanted to remain in America so the team broke up. The Prince of Wales was his guest drummer in a concert in 1930, and he counted among his friends Cole Porter and Fred Waring. Lena Horne had been hired as a dancer at the Cotton Club when she was sixteen. She left the Cotton Club and took a job singing with Noble Sissle & His Orchestra, billed as Helena Horne. She made her recording debut with Sissle on March 11, 1936, singing "That's What Love Did to Me" and "I Take to You," both released by Decca Records. She married Louis Jordan Jones in 1937, had two children before a separation and divorce by 1944. She later married Lennie Hayton. In June 1997, her 80th birthday was celebrated by a show at the JVC Jazz Festival and the presentation to her of the Ella Award for Lifetime Achievement in Vocal Artistry. A year later, she released a new Blue Note album, Being Myself, which made the Top Ten of the jazz charts. She came out of retirement in to record three Billy Strayhorn songs on Classic Ellington, a Blue Note album by Sir Simon Rattle released in September 2000.

There are Delaware residents who still remember this concert. Little did they know that Lena's musical career would endure for another 60 plus years.

Contributed by Millie Barnhart,
Delaware County Genealogical Society Corresponding Secretary

-----Original Message-----

From: Scott Holmes [<mailto:scottholmes@sbcglobal.net>]
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2015 10:13 PM
To: Millie Barnhart
Subject: Re: Mark Twain, Delaware Ohio appearance 1885

You did an excellent job. I've run into a number of journalistic quirks as I've uncovered forgotten reviews. My favorite so far is "R1E", a theatrical term. If you don't mind I would like to share your transcription with the Twain-L community, a listserv dedicated to Twain.

On Mon, 2015-04-13 at 21:40 -0400, Millie Barnhart wrote:

> Yes, Scott, I did the transcription myself. A couple of parts of the
> newspaper were blurry but I feel confident that I got it all as it
> appeared in the paper. I even looked it up to see what they meant
> about the wax on the chair because to me it didn't make sense. :) But
> I found it very interesting. I went to several newspapers after his
> speaking engagement to see what was said about him but I didn't find
> anything at all. That was disappointing.

>
> Millie

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> -----Original Message-----
> From: Scott Holmes [<mailto:scottholmes@sbcglobal.net>]
> Sent: Monday, April 13, 2015 9:07 PM
> To: Millie Barnhart
> Subject: Re: Mark Twain, Delaware Ohio appearance 1885

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> Thank you very much for the files. I very much appreciate your
> efforts and will incorporate these into my project as soon as
> possible. Did you do the transcription yourself?

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> On Mon, 2015-04-13 at 17:17 -0400, Millie Barnhart wrote:
> > Scott,
> > Have you gotten the info you wanted on Mark Twains appearance in
> > Delaware Ohio Feb 10th 1885.
> > I had time yesterday to look through the one newspaper that we have
> > for that time period & am sending you the info by attachment in
> > another email Since I haven't corresponded with you before, I wanted
> > you to be aware of what I was sending.
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> > Millie Barnhart
> > Corresponding Secretary
> > Delaware Co. Genealogical Society
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