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Brockport Normal Mandolin Club

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The Brockport Normal School Mandolin Club

Over the years the archivist would occasionally notice and wonder about the posters of the Mandolin Club, the mentions of it in the student magazine and so on, but until recently had not had opportunity to research it. This gap has been remedied, and the following brief history and primary documents will help to explain this intriguing part of the school’s history.

While today mandolins are associated with bluegrass music, a century ago they were used to play the both the popular music of that time and classical pieces as well. Orchestras were made up of mandolins, cellos, and guitars and often accompanied by “elocutionists” reading popular pieces of the day and other entertainment, such as the Indian club swinging mentioned on a poster here. These groups were highly popular from the late 19th century into the early 20th century. A few such groups survive; one is the Minneapolis Mandolin Orchestra.

Brockport Normal’s group seems to have started in the early 1890s and the last mentions of it are from 1909.

In order following this introduction are excerpts from articles in the local village newspaper on the group, followed by pages from the student publication the Normalia, where there are mentions of the group, and images of some posters advertising them. The first page of this document is a photo of the group from the 1899 yearbook.
Brockport Mandolin Club

Articles from the Brockport Republic

*Brockport Republic*, April 15, 1886, p2: “The Mandolin Craze, New York, April 12.” A critical piece in which the author mocks what they see as the shallow and fickle nature of the enthusiasms of youth. It focuses on how the former passion for banjo and minstrel music had given way to an enthusiasm for mandolin music. Part of the appeal of mandolin music is attributed to the use of a pick, easier on the “delicate fingers” of young ladies than playing a banjo.

The article notes that mandolins were being built in factories in this country in large numbers, running from $5 to $200, averaging $25 in price. It then goes on to mock the “Mandolin maestros… usually Italians, who will tell you ‘Aha, ze banjoes no good. Ze mandolin ees ah so eezy, so romanteek…”

*Brockport Republic*, December 13, 1894, p3: under “Church Notes… The entertainment under the auspices of St. Luke’s guild… A little after 8 o’clock the stage curtain was rung up and the Brockport Mandolin and Guitar Club appeared before an audience… The club was assisted by Professor Jones of Rochester, and did so well they were obliged to respond to an encore…”

*Brockport Republic*, February 21, 1895 (advertisement :) “Guitar, Mandolin & Banjo. Miss Wilder, 300 Control Ave, Rochester, will receive pupils und arrange for lessons in Brockport on Mandolin and Banjo Thursday, Feb; 28, from 3 to 8 P. M. Mr. Henry W. Hutchens of Canandaigua, will give guitar instruction. The first meeting will be held in the National Bank Hall.”

BR, February 21, 1895 p3:

“The Concert this Evening.

…the concert at Normal Hall this evening. The members of the Brockport Mandolin and Guitar Club are as follows: Frederick S. Palmer, George Gordon, Issac Palmer, Luther Gordon, Issac Snyder. The ladies club from Rochester consists of the Misses… The program which will be rendered is as follows:

6. Sextette – “Senorita” Valse Espagnol…. Moore-Crary. Miss Laura Ritter, mandolin; Miss Anna Duesing, mandolin; Mr. Frank H. Jones, mandolin; Miss Dora Duesing, guitar; Mr. Issac Palmer, guitar.

No. 4 promises to be a very taking selection. Prof. Frank H. Jones, the conductor, is sparing no pains to make the concert a grand success.”

_Brockport Republic_, February 28, 1895: “The attendance at the mandolin concert last Thursday evening, while very good was not up to expectations. The program rendered was in every respect most excellent. The clubs separately and together produced the choicest music. The soloists, Prof. Jones and Mr. Frederic Palmer were received with great enthusiasm, and Mr. Millham, baritone, and Miss Greenwood, recitationist, exhibited a very high degree of proficiency. The audience was delighted. After the concert those who participated in it as performers, repaired to the National Bank Hall and had a dance.”

_Brockport Republic_, 6/18/1896 p3: “The Mandolin Club is announced to take part in school exercises at Bergen next Monday morning.”

_Brockport Republic_, December 30th, 1897 p3: The Mandolin Club is noted as having played at a Christmas Concert at the Normal school.

_Brockport Republic_, October 27, 1898 p3: “They have a very fine Mandolin and Guitar Club started at the Normal school – all boys.”


_Brockport Republic_, April 6, 1899 p3: “Delegations from Albion and Holley attended the Band and Mandolin Concerts Monday evening.”
Brockport Republic, April 5, 1900 p2: “A photograph of our Mandolin club is published in the ‘Allegra,’ a monthly magazine devoted to music and the interests of mandolin, guitar and banjo clubs.”

Brockport Republic, April 30, 1903: “The Boys' Mandolin Club in their concert at Wards Opera House, Thursday May 7th, will be assisted by the Normal School Quartette, Miss Catherine Burns, reader, The Ideal Mandolin Club and Hiss Alice Wadsworth, pianist.”

Brockport Republic, May 14, 1903, p3: “The Boys Mandolin Club.” “…concert given under the direction of Miss Doyle…”

Brockport Republic, February 15, 1906: “The Normal Mandolin Club under the direction of Miss Doyle will give their annual concert Monday evening…”

Brockport Republic, April 25, 1907: “If frequent and prolonged applause is a criterion the concert in Normal Hall Monday evening was wondrously successful. The Mandolin Club divided the honors of the occasion with the University of Rochester quartette two of whose members, Raymond Lewis and Hugh A. Smith, were former Normal students. DeMain Wood, the director of the Club, also pleased the audience by his selections."

Brockport Republic, February 28, 1908, p5: The Rochester Mandolin Club, twenty in number, were entertained Saturday night by the Brockport Mandolin Club, at the residence of G. A. Witney (?) on College street. It was one of the most enjoyable occasions of the season and will long be remembered by those who were present. Prof. Wood, the leader of both clubs, and his estimable wife were present, and added to the pleasure of the evening.

Brockport Republic, October 22, 1908, p7: “MANDOLIN, BANJO AND GUITAR LESSONS. Miss May LaDue, pupil of DeMain Wood, gives lessons on mandolin, Banjo and guitar at Mrs. Chriswell's, 125 Utica St., on Wednesdays and Saturdays.”

Brockport Republic, February 4, 1909, p1: “Twenty-Fifth Anniversary (party for Mr. & Mrs. Yale P. Forbes at their house.) The evening was enlivened by music rendered by the Brockport Mandolin Club.”

there is a certain fascination about royalty, but we must condemn monarchy and class distinction. It is true that the Revolution was attended with numerous evils; but let us put aside sentiment and judge impartially. Let us look upon the Revolution as the grand vindication of liberty for all time, the beginning of a new era in the world's history, the herald of an ideal future when all mankind shall be united in "liberty, equality and fraternity."

WILLIAM A. SHEA.

LOCAL NOTES.

We regret to announce the resignation of Miss Anderson, editor-in-chief of the NORMALIA. Miss Vanderhoof has been elected in her place.

The Mandolin Club has been re-organized, with Mr. Charles Farmer as President and Mr. Geo. Burns as Treasurer.

The Senior class has elected the following officers:

Pres. - - - - - Roy E. Davey
Vice Pres. - - - - - Elsie M. Jesson
Sec. - - - - - - Fred S. Dunham
Treas. - - - - - William A. Shea
Poet - - - - - - Eben Norton
Prophet - - - - - - Clara G. Steele
Historian - - - - - Susie F. Anderson

The Seniors have decided to hold Class Day exercises next June. There has been no Class Day for the past four years, and the Seniors certainly ought to be commended for reviving a custom which does so much toward promoting unity of feeling in the class.

There was to have been a football game between the two societies, but in accordance with Prof. McFarlane's wishes the match has been broken off. Many are anxious to have a game of basketball, but this necessitates buying apparatus and providing a place for the contest. Of course these difficulties will be adjusted when the new gymnasium is equipped, but many of us will not be here to receive the benefits of its completion. We ought to have some kind of contest to "liven up things a little."

Miss Saunders has already had several calls to do institute work this fall. On Sept. 27th she had three periods in the institute at Gowanda, N. Y. On Oct. 10th she gives three periods on reading at Pulaski; on Oct. 23rd she is to assist in the Genesee County Institute, and on Oct. 31st will go to Machias, N. Y. for the same purpose.

Prof. McFarlane also has many engagements during the month of October. He was at Holley Oct. 7th and 8th on institute work, and at the Council of Principals in Albany on the 9th, 10th and 12th inst. Oct. 14th he attends the institute at Angola, Oct. 29th at Scottsville, and on Oct. 30th at Avon.

Miss DeLano was with us a few days last week on her way from Buffalo to her home in New York.

Miss Mary Hart Allen has donated a collection of books and shells to the library.

The school is indebted to Dr. Smith for two tickets of admission to the Peterhof Palaces near St. Petersburg.

Prof. McFarlane talked to us recently on the result of Lieut. Peary's polar expedition. He showed that such expeditions were not mere fool-hardy undertakings, as the finding of the North Pole would mean a great deal to the world of science.
the election of Miss Conover. The other officers are: vice-

president, Miss Potter; secretary, Mr. Nichols; treasurer, Mr.

Burns; doorkeeper, Mr. Truesdale.

The Junior Class was organized September 30 with the

following officers: president, Mr. McManis; vice-president,

Miss Miller; secretary, Mr. Weaver; treasurer, Miss Day;

doorkeeper, Mr. Dunn; prophet, Miss Pepper; poet, Mr.

Wallace.

The Sophomore officers are: president, Mr. William Wins-

low; vice-president, Miss Lester; secretary, Miss Marion Heb-

bard; treasurer, Miss Marie Dean; doorkeepers, Mr. Dobson

and Mr. Furney.

The senior reception was held October 1 in the gymnasium,

which was well filled with teachers and students. The large

banner given by the class of 1903 hung just below the gal-

lery, where it met the eye of every one entering the room.

Dr. and Mrs. McFarlane received with Miss Conover and

Miss Potter. Music by the mandolin club and dancing add-

ed to the pleasure of the evening.

Mr. Charles R. Bostwick, of New Haven, Conn., who was

instructor in heavy gymnastics at Chautauqua last summer,

comes to Brockport as our physical instructor. He is a grad-

uate of the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale and a member

of the Chautauqua School of Physical Education.

We are glad to note a larger attendance at the students' 

prayer meetings.

During October Dr. McFarlane attended the Principals'

Council in Albany and spoke at institutes in Palmyra, Lyons,

Greene, Farmer and Franklinville. We can easily see why

our Principal is in such great demand, and we do not blame

those outside the school for wanting to hear him; but we are

just a bit selfish, too.

Miss Saunders and Miss Coan assisted at institutes during

October, Miss Saunders at Batavia and Miss Coan at Albion.

A picture play, Barrie's "Little Minister" by Albert Arm-

strong, opened the Lecture Course on October 19. The

pictures were unusually fine and Mr. Armstrong accompanied
them with an admirable rendering of the story. To those who knew "The Little Minister" before, Gavin and Babbie seemed especially real.

We are glad to see Miss Allen in school again after an illness of several weeks.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, October 20, the Y. W. C. A. held a reception at the home of Mrs. McFarlane in honor of Miss Lewis, the traveling secretary of the Y. W. C. A. Miss Lewis is a most delightful conversationalist and all were glad to meet her. She remained in Brockport three days and greatly helped the officers of the Association in their work. At the Wednesday night prayer meeting, Miss Lewis spoke on "The Necessity for Bible Study."

The Boys' Mandolin Club has this year been reorganized as a school club, with Miss Katherine Doyle again as leader. Some excellent music will be expected from the club at the various school functions and it will probably give a concert during the winter.

**ARETHUSA.**

The Twelfth Annual Convocation of the Arethusa Fraternity was held in Buffalo October 18 and 19 with the Zeta Chapter. About fifty members were present, Alpha being represented by Miss Tompkins, Miss Wadsworth, Miss Hubbard and Miss Chapman.

On Friday evening a banquet was served at the Iroquois Hotel. After due attention had been given to the menu, Miss Carter, Zeta, introduced members who responded to the following toasts: "Our Guests," Miss Donigan, Zeta; "Looking Backward," Miss Tompkins, Alpha; "The Unruly Member," Miss Castle, Epsilon; "Fashions," Miss Mott, Beta; "Arethusa—Its Future," Miss Frary, Gamma; "Mirrors," Miss Bacon, Delta.

Saturday morning the business meeting was called to order by the grand president, Miss Sarah Daniels. It was decided to hold the next Convocation with Alpha Chapter of the Brockport Normal School; and so, as is customary, most of the officers were chosen from that chapter. The officers
Brockport men hit rather well but their base running and fielding were poor. Upton pitched a good game, and if he had been given better support the score would have been different. The batteries were: for Rochester, Webster and Leonard; and for Brockport, Upton and Adams.

LOCAL NOTES.

On the afternoon of April 22, Miss Saunders gave a reception to the mothers of the children in the Training School. Not only is this a pleasant social gathering, but it also gives the parents and the teachers a better understanding of each other's work.

The joint session of the High School societies, Alpha Upsilon and Alpha Zeta, was held on the evening of the same day. There were present several of the teachers and some of the alumni members.

Junior Rhetoricals were held April 29 and May 13. The subject of the first was the condition of the negro, and most of the papers of the other were upon Japan.

During the last week of April, Dr. McFarlane was at Theresa, Jefferson County, doing institute work. May 10 and 11, he attended the semi-annual principals' meeting at Albany, and the following two days he was one of the instructors in an institute at Livonia.

A concert was given Tuesday evening, May 3, by the Brockport Normal Mandolin Club, assisted by the 1903 Normal School Quartette, Mr. Bostwick, Miss Corbett and Miss Wadsworth. The selections were all well rendered; but two, "A Dream from Fairyland" and "A Day in the Cotton Field", were particularly pleasing. Miss Doyle, the leader, is to be congratulated upon the success of her work. The club and torch swinging by Mr. Bostwick showed great skill.

On Color Day, May 9, the gold and green which we all love so well greeted us on every side. Programs for the day...
without coming under the spell of his charming personality. We soon learn to admire and reverence that simple, quiet man with the brain of a deep thinker and the heart of a poet, who lives so close to Nature that he can say with rare sympathy of a little gray rabbit which lived one winter under his study floor.

"I think she is some support to me under there,—a silent, wide-eyed witness and backer; a type of the gentle and harmless in savage nature. She has no sagacity to give me or lend me; but that soft, nimble foot of hers, and that touch as of cotton wherever she goes, are worthy of emulation. I think I can feel her good will through the floor, and I hope she can mine."

We cannot long resist the invitation of such a guide as this when he offers to show us the mysteries of a world he so deeply loves and so thoroughly understands.

F. S.

LOCAL NOTES.

Miss Florence Smith, Miss Ross, Miss Viola Dietsch, Miss Garlock, Miss Weeks, and Miss Grace Dietsch gave interesting essays at Senior Rhetoricals November 10. "The City of Boston" was the topic of Senior Rhetoricals November 24. Miss Melvin told us about Colonial Boston; Miss Munger, about Boston during the Revolution. Miss Genevieve Connolly discussed Boston as a literary center. Miss Sullivan described the many interesting resorts in and about Boston, and Miss Farwell spoke of the city of to-day. The musical part of the program consisted of solos by Miss Young and Mr. Kerr, and a selection by the Mandolin Club.

The Mandolin Club is organized this year with Mr. Clarence Walker as leader. We greatly enjoy the marches which
they play for us on Friday mornings and only wish we might hear them every morning.

In chapel November 24 we listened with pleasure to a vocal solo by Miss Bessie Caton.

Dr. McFarlane attended an institute at Wilson November 14 and 15, and one at Elmira November 28 and 29.

The following took part in Junior Rhetoricals November 17: Mr. Wilson, Miss Carrie Titus, Mr. W. Winslow, Miss Abenshene, and Miss Munger.

It was thought advisable to close the Training Department from November 20 to December 4, as there were a few cases of scarlet fever among the younger children. It has now opened again and the work is going on as if there had been no interruption.

AGONIAN.

Plans are being made to entertain the Agonian Fraternity, which will meet with the Zeta Chapter for its annual convocation in March.

At our regular meeting, November 17, we enjoyed a debate on the following subject, "Resolved, that a study hall is beneficial." Miss Hoffman and Miss Hendrick were the leaders. The judges decided in favor of the negative.

ALPHA DELTA.

On account of the Alpha Delta-Philalethean Joint Session, Friday evening, November 17, our regular business meeting was held Monday afternoon, November 20.

We have chosen Miss Laura Farwell and Miss Carrie Titus to represent us at the annual Oratorical Contest.

ARETHUSA.

At the regular meeting held November 18 the subject of the program was Alfred Tennyson, and at roll call each member gave a quotation from his poems. Two of Alpha's alum-
County, presided as toastmaster in his customary efficient manner.

The following were elected officers of the permanent organization: President, Mr. Thos. A. Caswell, Rochester, N. Y.; Secretary, Mr. T. H. Armstrong, Rochester, N. Y.; Treasurer, Mr. P. A. Blossom, Brockport, N. Y.

A similar reunion will be held next year, and those who are looking forward to this reunion are assured that more ample accommodations will be provided, and it is hoped that nothing will intervene to detract in any way from the enjoyment of the next banquet.

LOCAL NOTES.

The children of the Primary Department are delighted to have Miss Arey with them again after her long illness.

On Monday evening, April 1, we again had the pleasure of hearing the Amherst musical clubs. After the entertainment the members of the clubs were invited to the gymnasium, where Dosser's orchestra furnished music for dancing.

The Y. W. C. A. were fortunate in having Miss Eleanor Harris, the assistant secretary of the association for the states of New York and New Jersey, with them Wednesday and Thursday, April 17 and 18. A reception and tea was held in her honor Thursday afternoon and in the evening occurred the Silver Bay meeting, at which Miss Harris gave a very interesting account of the Silver Bay conference.

We are indebted to the Arethusa society for the delightful concert given in Normal Hall Monday evening, April 22. Those who attended fully appreciated what was said by Dr. McFarlane the next morning in chapel: that he had heard many mandolin clubs but none that surpassed this either in rendition or in choice of selections. The club was assisted by its leader, Mr. DeMain Wood, and by the University of Rochester male quartette. The quartette we listened to with especial interest, as two of its members, Hugh A. Smith and Raymond F. Lewis, were formerly students in our own school.

Miss Wombough has returned from her trip abroad. She was with us again Monday, April 22.
Normal Mandolin Club

WILL HOLD THEIR SECOND ANNUAL BENEFIT AT
NORMAL HALL, DECEMBER 19, 1899
TUESDAY EVENING, ASSISTED BY
GRACE LUCILE MALLERY, VOCALIST.

The Program to consist of Popular Music by the Mandolin Club,
Solos by Miss Mallery, and a Short Drama entitled

"FENNELL."

By Francois Coppee, translated from the French by Jerome K. Jerome.
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MISS NASH.

ADMISSION, 25 CENTS. RESERVED SEATS, 35 CENTS.
Diagram Open at Briggs’ Drug Store, Tuesday, December 12th.
BROCKPORT NORMAL Mandolin CLUB

CONCERT

MONDAY EVENING

FEBRUARY THE TWENTY-SIXTH

ASSISTED BY
MISS RUMSEY, of Rochester, Elocutionist
MISS EDITH V. SHARPE
and MISS ALLEN
PROF. BOSTWICK, Club half torch swinging
NORMAL CHORUS

Admission 25 c.  Reserved Seats 35 c

Diagram at Dobson’s, Wednesday the 21st