Almost 100 years ago, between 1914 and 1919, Fort Lauderdale residents enjoyed a wide array of professionally trained musicians, actors, and stimulating lecturers who traveled to the small town, which when incorporated in 1911 had fewer than 500 residents, no paved streets, electric lights or city water.

Fort Lauderdale pioneer Ivy Stranahan related that during the early years after her arrival in October 1899, villagers routinely gathered at what is now the Stranahan House for dances. Although Frank Stranahan himself never danced, entertainment was provided by an accordion player and a fiddler. Charlie Root called the square dances. At other times, early settlers gathered in homes for dances.¹

During the early years, the Florida East Coast Railway played a critical role in bringing nationally known troupes of performing artists and lecturers to Fort Lauderdale. The Flagler railway extended south to Fort Lauderdale in 1896, linking the tiny settlement to the outside world, bringing new visitors and residents, and making possible shipments of produce and goods to and from the settlement.

Early Residents Included Trained Musicians

Among Fort Lauderdale’s early residents were professionally trained musicians like Georgia-born Llewellyn Marshall, second wife of the town’s first mayor, William H. Marshall. Mrs. Marshall had studied to become a professional opera singer in New York under acclaimed musician Dudley Buck from 1915 to 1917. She sang opera in Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Atlanta and various Florida towns for a time until leaving the stage to spend more time with her husband.²


In 1915, when Broward County came into existence, the chairman of the board of county commissioners, Pennsylvania-born Alexander Buchanan Lowe (1873-1929), became known as an accomplished songwriter and was locally referred to as “the Everglades Poet.” Dixie Music Publishing Company of Miami published Lowe’s songs using the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* presses. Lowe also played the piano for dances in the community of Davie, sang in a male quartet and took part in minstrel shows.³

The well-known Madame Lily Vilona Hall (1850-1942) played the violin for appreciative audiences throughout the town until she accepted a position on the faculty of the Miami Conservatory of Music. The Miami Conservatory was founded by Bertha Foster, later the first dean of the School of Music of the University of Miami.⁴

There seemed to always be a local band forming, practicing, and performing in Fort Lauderdale, led by men like Ed Bates and G.F. Mitchell. Community leaders believed early on that a band was necessary to keep traveling businessmen in town longer.

**Early Organizations Promoted Cultural Development**

The Fort Lauderdale Woman’s Club, as well as several of the early churches, played important roles in the cultural development of the town, providing venues for arts shows, small musical presentations and lectures. The Woman’s Club routinely promoted entertainment of various kinds, mounted exhibitions of paintings, and formed the first circulating public library in the county, which would later become the core of the Fort Lauderdale Public Library.⁵

In 1914, three years after its incorporation, the tiny town of Fort Lauderdale boasted three small hotels, three department stores, two banks, two book stores, two weekly newspapers, two pool halls, a Chinese laundry, a brass band, a movie house, a roller skating rink, the Woman’s Club’s circulating library, a choral club, and even a “Symphony Orchestra.”⁶

[Image of A. B. Lowe](image)

[Image of Madame Lily Vilona Hall](image)

[Image of Bertha Foster](image)


6 “What Fort Lauderdale Has,” *FLS*, September 18, 1914.
In late January 1914, the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* touted the upcoming appearance of the Alkahest Favorites. Presented by the Alkahest Lyceum and Chautauqua System of Atlanta, Georgia, the Alkahest Favorites were a trio of women musicians: Mary Gailey, a violinist from New York City; Cora LaPrade Cawthon, a reader from Mobile, Alabama, a graduate of the Lyceum Arts Conservatory and a former member of the Chicago Ladies Orchestra; and Eileen Beatty, a Chicago soprano and graduate of the Elias Day Conservatory. Ten months later, plans for the first traveling culture were firm. Soon the first of the “traveling culture” or lyceum “courses” in Fort Lauderdale would arrive by train to entertain and enrich the lives of local residents.

**Lyceum Course Premiers in 1914**

On November 13, 1914, Fort Lauderdale school principal James S. Rickards announced the launching of a Lyceum Course for town residents. The seven planned courses included Mississippi-born Booth Lowrey, a well known lecturer; the Cartwright Brothers Quartet; the Alkahest Favorites (Ladies Glee Club); the Treble Cleff Club; Mrs. William Calvin Chilton, a monodramatist; the Winters’ Family Entertainers; and a production of “The Merchant of Venice” by Fort Lauderdale school students. Season tickets would soon go on sale. Proceeds from the series were to be used to construct a playground at the new Fort Lauderdale school building under construction.

Ten days later, the local paper editorialized that “[t]he spread of the Lyceum idea” resulted largely because “its managers reach out and secure the leaders of thought and the doers of deeds in all the noble activities of life. Statesmen, poets, philosophers, sociologists, preachers, journalists, travelers, explorers, evangelists, scientists, educators, as well as those who entertain with uplifting story and song, all are welcomed.” The paper went on to recall that Theodore Roosevelt regarded this “nationwide movement” as “the most American thing in America.”

The Alkahest Lyceum System was considered one of the largest concerns of its kind in the South. They had interviewed most of the “great men” of the country to secure some of them for the lecture platform. On November 20, the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* published a quarter-page pictorial announcement of the coming Lyceum series for the 1914-1915 season, promoted by S. Russell Bridges’ Alkahest Lyceum and Chautauqua System headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. The paper characterized

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8 “Lecture Course for Fort Lauderdale,” *FLS*, November 13, 1914. Information on and photographs of Booth and other lyceum performers found in Redpath Chautauqua Collection, MsC150, Series I, University of Iowa Libraries Special Collection available online through the Library of Congress’s American Memory website under “Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century.” Web address: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/whiatmeal/. Here after the collection will be cited as “Redpath Chautauqua Collection.” It is a searchable database and indexed alphabetically.
Mr. James E. Rickards,
Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Dear Mr. Rickards:-

I am writing this note in the interest of the Lyceum Course in your town for the coming season. Our representatives, Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Weidler, whose home is in Jacksonville, Fla., are looking after that territory for us and one of them will call on you sometime soon with the splendid list of talent which we have available for that section the coming season. They have already booked quite a number of courses in that section the coming season and for that reason we will be able to furnish you some splendid talent on quite reasonable terms.

Now that the war is over and I trust the "flu" epidemic passed, I feel sure that your people will be ready to support a first-class Lyceum Course the coming season and I am sure they will be able to get more out of a series of first-class Lyceum attractions distributed throughout the season, then you would in the Chautauqua if you are not able to have both. The Chautauqua sends all of their talent in a few days and gives you a regular debauch of music and entertainment in this short time which is all right if you are able to have both, but if you can support only one I am sure the Lyceum attractions distributed at intervals throughout the Fall and winter months will be of a great deal more benefit and pleasure to your people, so I hope you will decide to put the same amount of money into a first-class Lyceum Course that you would into the Chautauqua for the coming season and I feel sure the results will be quite satisfactory.

I trust you will wait for our representatives before making any definite plans should any one else call before our representative reaches you for Mr. and Mrs. Weidler have a proposition to make you that will be quite satisfactory I am sure. If there is any further information you desire I shall be glad to send it to you direct if you will let us know what it is.

Yours for Service,

[Signature]

President.

P.S.-I understand there is an unknown concern termed The Continental Bureau of Louisville, Ky., undertaking to book some courses in Florida for next season without a guarantee. This company spoiled a few towns in our territory last year for I found they only sent one or two attractions to the town if they found that town did not pay well. It is nothing more than a cheap theatrical agency trying to scoop some of the lyceum business. They have no real lyceum talent and in fact they couldn’t get any that would go on such basis. I hope this company has not been down the East Coast but if they have please let me know and don’t let them get a hold around there for we are planning to send some good talent down.
The lyceum bureau as a professional booking organization served as agent between the lecturer or reader and the contracting party, usually for a ten percent commission. It operated in three basic ways.

First, the bureau organized courses of lectures and performances and operated as manager of the course for a fee. It coordinated an entire course for a sponsoring group, which paid a set fee for the entire course. Finally, the entity rented the services of single artists, usually for high fees. In Fort Lauderdale, the lyceum bureau served primarily as a booking agent for performers, ensembles and musical groups, while local citizens acted as managers.

The lyceum bureau, America’s first lecture, concert and theatrical booking management company, had been founded by Bridges in Atlanta, Georgia in 1896. The Alkahest Lyceum System, Inc., sometimes advertised as the Alkahest Chautauqua System, was organized by Bridges in 1898 and incorporated in 1903 in Georgia. In time, the Alkahest agency would book hundreds of traveling Chautauqua and lyceum musical troupes, orchestras, bands and lecturers for presentations throughout the South, including Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Appearances would include such celebrities as Amelia Earhart, Winston Churchill, Enrico Caruso, Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan.

On Friday, November 27, 1914, word of the upcoming traveling culture in Fort Lauderdale began to spread. With the support of the local Board of Trade, promoters announced that season tickets for a lyceum series would go on sale the following week. The season opener was to be held on Christmas Eve at the Rex Theater. It was to feature The Cartwright Brothers Instrumental Quartette, a group of artists skilled in playing a variety of musical instruments, including the cornet, xylophone, trombone, cello, violin and piano. A special feature of the act was the use of the electric megaphone.

The Cartwright Brothers were twins who had played the cornet and trombone since childhood. They were to be joined by a Mr. Wohrlab, a violinist, and a Mr. Ryan, a pianist. It was announced that Dr. and Mrs. Edwin “Cyclone” Southers, “entertainers and actors of international reputation,” would appear in full costume on Friday, December 4 at the Rex in the production The Red Prince. Reportedly, the Southerses had just returned from a successful tour of Germany, Italy, France, Spain and the British Isles.
Announcing another booking apparently not part of the lyceum series, the December 4 edition of the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* touted the expected appearance of “The Great Chinese Magician Yee Ho Kiang.” Among Kiang’s tricks were “Etheria,” which featured a person vanishing in mid-air, and “the Spectacular Illusion ‘Noah’s Ark’,” with live animals. No statement was made as to when Kiang was to perform in Fort Lauderdale.\(^{15}\)

The same issue of the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* brought news of a four-day delay in the Christmas Eve performance and a change in the offering from the Cartwright Brothers to the Musical Art Quartette, another of the lyceum series presentations. The Quartette consisted of four male singers “trained and perfected under one of the best directors afforded in the city of Chicago,” who opened lyceum courses in Palm Beach, Miami, Key West and Tampa.\(^{16}\)

Toward the end of February 1915, organizers promoted another performance in the series, a dramatic presentation by the acclaimed monodramatist Mrs. William Calvin Chilton, who played the parts of all the characters in a single play or even the parts of some of the characters in several plays. Another in the series, Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, was performed on a Friday night, March 26, by Fort Lauderdale High School students. The production included a chorus of 60 voices, the Boys’ and Girls’ Glee Clubs and music teacher Dorothy Stearns, soloist. Playing to a crowded house at the Rex Theater, the production was deemed “a great success” by the local press. Local lumber dealer Clarence Rickard played Shylock. The local press doubted professionals could have done better. “We have real talent in our town,” the paper exuded, “and who knows but what Fort Lauderdale may now be the home of one or more who will become famous.”\(^{17}\)
The concert had been the inspiration of C. D. Kittredge, a school board member. Apparently, the venue’s acoustics were less than desirable. The local paper reported future plans for the installation of a “sounding board” behind the performers to direct the sound down until a platform could be built in the street. The noise of children playing in the street also presented problems during the concert. “Unfortunately many comments were made due to the noise the children made running on the porch and the continual sound of voices,” the local paper noted.

The following Saturday another concert was held. Entertainment included Hall’s orchestra, Mrs. Wheeler, and the Choral Club. “A noticeable feature at last Saturday’s concert was the lack of noise and the absorbed attention paid to the music.”

In July 1915, while completing plans for organization of the newly-created Broward County, the first Board of County Commissioners met at Fort Lauderdale town council chambers to make plans to buy the old two-story schoolhouse from Miami-Dade (then Dade) County and convert it for use as a new courthouse.

18 “Sixth Number H. S. Lecture Course,” FLS, April 9, 1915. Biographical information on lyceum performers found in Redpath Chautauqua Collection, op. cit.


20 Ibid.
Plans were also made for the building of a new schoolhouse with an auditorium seating 600. When completed, the auditorium would become a new and important venue for the coming lyceum “courses” or series of performances by traveling entertainers.

Florida Governor Park Trammell dedicated Fort Lauderdale’s new school on September 16, 1915, along with local school board members C. D. Kittredge (the first Broward school board chairman), Clarence Rickard and Dr. S. J. Clark. The program included an afternoon overture by the Broward County Band and an evening concert by Madam Hall’s Orchestra, a violin solo by Madam Hall, and a voice solo by Llewellyn Marshall, wife of the town’s first mayor and Broward County’s first representative to the State Capitol.21

Early Lyceums an Artistic and Financial Success

On October 8, promoters announced the Lyceum Course for the upcoming season. Performers were to include the Morrow Brothers, a quartet of voices and brass instruments, along with a reader; the Dorva DeLeon Company, an ensemble of brass and stringed instruments, soloists, and a reader; Signor Colangelo’s Italian Band and Orchestra of twelve players; Ralph Parlette, a nationally known lecturer and humorist; and the Riheldaffer-Skibinsky Company – “a great American soprano, master violinist of two continents, and the greatest pianist appearing in New York last year,” promoters touted.22

On Friday, January 7, 1916, the Fort Lauderdale Sentinel announced the imminent performance of Signor Luigi Colangelo’s Italian Band and Orchestra, with soprano and tenor soloists at the...
new high school auditorium, which was to take place the following Tuesday, January 11. “Colangelo is a superb cornetist, and a great conductor,” the paper reported. Selections were to be played by the band with brass and reed instrument solos and by orchestral groups with songs by a tenor and soprano. To the accompaniment of guitars and mandolins, soloists were to sing operatic and folk songs, with changes in costumes. Reserved seats went on sale at Phipp’s Postcard Shop at noon on Thursday, January 6. Only season ticket holders could reserve seats and only from Thursday through noon Saturday. After Saturday, those without season tickets could reserve seats for seventy-five cents apiece.

On February 18, lyceum promoters announced a great cultural coup with the anticipated performance of the Riheldaffer-Skibinsky Company on Monday night, February 28, in the school auditorium. Madam Grace Hall–Riheldaffer had been recognized as one of America’s greatest sopranos; Alexander Von-Skibinsky, as a masterful European violinist. General admission ticket prices had dropped to thirty-five cents for seats in the rear of the auditorium; fifty cents for seats up front. On Friday night, March 3, the Dunbar Male Quartette and Bell Ringers presented a combination concert and theater show including a quartet of male singers, an astounding 200-silver bell concert, a brass quartet, violin and cornet solos and even a few impersonations.

23 “Italian Orchestra Tuesday Night,” FLS, January 4, 1916. Biographical information on lyceum performers found in Redpath Chautauqua Collection, op. cit.

On Friday, March 10, promoters touted the last professional presentation in the Lyceum series, the Boston Lyrics, set for Wednesday night, March 15, in the school auditorium. Two months later, the Fort Lauderdale Sentinel pronounced the lyceum series – which ended with a performance of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night by the local high school on May 8 – an artistic success. The series was also a financial success, with all current expenses paid, three matinee performances given to the school children free of charge, and receipts great enough to pay off the last year’s deficit of nearly $75. A course of eight offerings was expected for the next season.

**Popular Event Enters Fourth Year**

In September 1917, tickets went on sale for the fourth annual lyceum series, including seven offerings, at Phipps’ Postcard Shop. A contract had been arranged for a group of Hawaiian musicians, a Florentine musical party, including a noted violinist and “the world’s greatest accordion player,” a men’s quartet, a ladies’ quartet, a drama reader presenting one modern play, possibly one more musical feature, and one or more home talent plays, presented by the Fort Lauderdale High School’s Effective Speaking Club. Managed by former school principal James Rickards, the season’s double tickets were priced at $4.00, with single admission prices expected to be at least fifty cents. Season tickets for school children were priced at $1.00. Less than two months later, the local Board of Trade announced that the Fort Lauderdale band was to give open-air concerts once a week for the coming season for $15.00 a week. While the board had no funds to pay the band members, the trade group named a committee comprised of W. I. Evans, C. C. Ausherman and C. J. Joiner to raise the money.

On December 17, the Fort Lauderdale Sentinel published an announcement and photograph of the Davenny Musical Quintet. Headed by Hollis Edison Davenny and his wife Gertrude, the musical group was expected in Fort Lauderdale for entertainment on Wednesday night, December 26.

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Rickards promised that the Hawaiian Singers and players would appear for the second offering. Four days later, the concert was delayed one day until December 27 to allow performances at Daytona and Palm Beach.

Tuesday night, January 8, 1918, the Troubadours of Miami, directed by Robert Zoll, presented a musical concert under the auspices of the Music Department of the Woman’s Club at the high school auditorium to “a good-sized audience,” according to the local paper. On Saturday, January 12, a band concert was to take place, in what appeared to be the first of a series of concerts to be presented every two weeks, with Ed Mitchell, manager, and G. F. Bates, director. The Woman’s Club was expected to host Coburn’s Minstrels Wednesday night, January 23, at the high school auditorium, with “[r]egular parade and concert at noon” and tickets to go on sale at Phipps. Vierra’s Royal Hawaiian Singers and Players were to appear Monday night, January 28, at the school auditorium, as the second offering in the Lyceum series.

The fourth lyceum event was to take place Friday night, March 1, at the auditorium. Organizers expected Bertha Beeman, a contralto, accompanied by A. Sabbatino, a harpist with Arthur Pryor’s world-famous band at Miami, and perhaps a pianist. Pryor had been a member of John Philip Sousa’s band before striking out on his own. Fort Lauderdale music teacher Dorothy Stearns had studied under Beeman during 1916 and 1917.

29 “Davenny Festival Quintet,” FLS, December 17, 1917.
30 “Concert Changed to Thursday, Dec. 27,” FLS, December 21, 1917. Biographical information on lyceum performers found in Redpath Chautauqua Collection, op. cit.
32 “Fourth Lyceum Number March 1st,” FLS, February 22, 1918.
On Friday, February 22, the school auditorium served as the venue of yet another event, a musical comprised of offerings from the Girls’ Glee Club, the school’s string orchestra, and the school quartet. Before the event, the Fort Lauderdale band played a short concert, followed by an acrobatic demonstration and a dog show for the children. The next lyceum number was expected to be a home talent show on Monday, March 18, to be put on by the high school’s Effective Speaking Class. The fifth and last presentation in the Lyceum Series, the Shawmut Quartet, was to be presented Thursday, March 28, at the school auditorium. On Wednesday night, April 10, under the auspices of the Order of Eastern Star various members of the Fort Lauderdale community presented a play entitled Close to Nature. Guy Phipps, shop owner, played Lasso Wellman, the lawyer; Wade Morrow played Ted, the small son; J. K. Gordon, the doctor; George Hall, the poor young man; J. F. Karnatz, Hugh Killroy, the rich young man; H. V. Calder, Alonza K. Dewsnap, the editor of a health magazine; along with Clyde Carrier, and J. E. Savage as Jim Jarks, the backwoodsman. Cora Peiper played Mrs. Wellman, an “ambitious mother,” along with Marie Harmon, as Barbara, the daughter, whose work was described by the local paper as “such as might be expected from the best professional players.” Additional members of the cast were Pauline Emans, an employee of the Fort Lauderdale Sentinel and Lola Holloway who played Carrie, the maid.

Community Sings Draw Large and Patriotic Crowds

Caught up in the activities of World War I, community leaders began organizing regular Community Sings in the city, beginning Friday night, July 12, 1918, with more than 100 in attendance. John Sherwin presided, while Reverend C. G. Nelson led the singing. Craig’s Postcard Shop loaned a piano. Some of the songs included America, Gem of the Ocean; Dixie; Old Kentucky Home; and the Star-Spangled Banner. The impetus for the patriotic event appeared to be the War Department’s Commission on Training Camp Activities, which had been established to improve morale among soldiers going overseas. The commission in turn created the National Committee on Army and Navy Camp Music, which published both Army and Navy song books for distribution among the soldiers. Reportedly, no unit went abroad without each soldier knowing at least a dozen songs. This song movement soon spread throughout the civilian population as a way of supporting the war effort and improving morale for those remaining at home.

In the middle of August, just as workers began laying tile on the north wall on what would become the Hotel Broward, Broward County school trustees hired Lauriena Inderrieden of Boonville, Indiana, to teach music and art at Fort Lauderdale High School. Well-educated but with just four years of teaching experience, Inderrieden had graduated from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, the Louisville Conservatory of Music, and the Art Academy of Cincinnati.

By the middle of October, Madam Lily Vilona Hall, a mainstay of the local cultural scene, had accepted a position as instructor in violin and orchestra at the newly formed Florida Conservatory of Music and Art. The school was located in a building on the bay front, near downtown Miami. While Hall already had a large class of pupils and a 25-piece orchestra in Miami, she planned to remain a Fort Lauderdale resident and continue her classes there. At the October Community Sing, community leaders sold war bonds for the Liberty Loan drive to support American troops abroad.

In the middle of November, a U. S. Navy Band comprised of 22 players from the Naval Air Station at Dinner Key gave a short concert along Brickell Avenue in downtown Fort Lauderdale. The band members were on their way to West Palm Beach to encourage the United War Work campaign there. At the concert’s end, A. J. Beck treated the players to ice cream at his downtown drug store. Both sides of the automobiles transporting the band members northward bore signs declaring, “We’ll go broke if we must, but no one’s busted yet.”

Cultural Events Increase as Community Grows

Early in 1919, the Woman’s Club and two church groups added to the cultural life of the community. On Wednesday, February 19, 1919, the All Saint’s Episcopal Church Guild was to present Sweet Lavender, a three-act comedy play led by Michael Dempsey of Daly’s Theatre, London, England, at the school auditorium. In connection with a Colonial Tea to be given by the All Saints Guild at the Woman’s Club on Saturday, February 22, on display were to be a group of watercolor and oil paintings of Florida landscapes by Atlanta artist Susie Mellichamp. Brought to Fort Lauderdale by the Women’s Exchange of the Methodist Episcopal Church South (now the First United Methodist Church of Fort Lauderdale), famed Danish violinist Axel Skovgaard performed before a packed audience at the school auditorium on Saturday night, March 22, 1919. Born on May 20, 1875, in Copenhagen, the 43-year-old musician had studied violin under the great European master Joseph Joachim, an aficionado of Brahms.
The Women’s Exchange was able to book Skovgaard on his way to Miami after concerts in Tampa, Bradenton and Arcadia. Skovgaard appeared to tour the country by train as part of the Chautauqua traveling circuit from the early 1900s at least through the 1920s. He would make additional appearances in Fort Lauderdale in 1923 and 1925. Skovgaard and McClung resided in Chicago when not on tour.43

At the end of October 1919, one of the more interesting cultural events occurred at the Dreamland (later, Dream) Theater, sponsored by the local chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. Between short motion picture offerings, various members of the community provided live entertainment, including young Jack Reed, singer; Ms. Allen, dancer; a school teacher, Ms. Williams, who sang “Listen to the Mockingbird”; and Mrs. H. G. Wheeler, who sang “unusually well,” according to the local press.44

While the Queen and other commercial motion picture theaters presented many of the more popular, less cultured pictures, in December the Queen presented Ibsen’s A Doll’s House, featuring Elsie Ferguson. Ferguson had been under a contract with Adolph Zukor of Paramount-Artcraft that called for her to make 18 pictures over a three-year period at a salary of $5,000 per week. The picture was neither a critical nor popular success by most accounts.45

At the same time, acclaimed director D.W. Griffith was in Fort Lauderdale wrapping up the making of Idol Dancer. Griffith’s company was the first to occupy the newly constructed Hotel Broward during filming. At the conclusion, Griffith held a gala ball at the hotel, with music supplied by a Miami orchestra on Thanksgiving Day.46

A week before Christmas, a few residents traveled to Miami to hear the classical concert given by the Miami Symphony Orchestra and the Miami “Y” singers, 46 male voices led by J.A. Riach. Hamilton Hopkins sang Aria Eri Tu. The concluding number was the popular Anvil Chorus from El Trovatore (The Troubadour), an offering featuring the striking of anvils representing men toiling.47

Lyceum Replaced by Other Cultural Venues

By the end of the decade, the annual lyceum series no longer joined the many other cultural events the townspeople had enjoyed in the past. Still, a group of literary-minded women formed the 1919 Club; another group formed the Review Club in 1928. Fort Lauderdale continued to grow until the population reached an astounding 50,000 in 1950 despite the bust of the real estate boom of the 1920s and the Great Depression. After World War II, a new spurt in population gave birth to new community-based cultural organizations throughout Broward County, but mostly centered in Fort Lauderdale where a group of leading citizens spearheaded the drive to raise funds to build the War Memorial Auditorium in 1949. The city-owned auditorium has played host to hundreds of cultural events, and for almost 40 years served as the only venue for symphony concerts and opera productions in Broward County.

Among the first of the new cultural institutions to evolve were the Opera Guild (1944) and the Fort Lauderdale Symphony Society (1948), followed by the Fort Lauderdale Art Center, now the Museum of Art of Fort Lauderdale (1958). In February 1967, the 1,200-seat Parker Playhouse, a gift to the City of Fort Lauderdale from Hungarian-born inventor Louis W. Parker, opened with performances of Neil Simon’s The Odd Couple.48

In 1894, Skovgaard played before the King of Denmark. Five years later, Skovgaard acquired what would become his trademark, a Stradivarius violin reportedly costing $13,000, a large sum at that time. Moreover, his left hand had reportedly been insured for $50,000.

His wife Alice McClung, a famed pianist in her own right, performed the Liszt Polonaise in E Major. Tickets to the event cost seventy-five cents and $1.00 for reserved seats; open seating was fifty cents. School children paid twenty-five cents.

Skovgaard was assisted by members of the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York, according to reports, but more probably by members of a group Skovgaard called the New York Metropolitan Company, an ensemble comprised of a mezzo-soprano, a contralto, and a tenor in addition to Skovgaard and McClung.
Formed in 1983, the Performing Arts Center Authority built the $52 million Broward Center for the Performing Arts on the banks of the New River along Riverwalk. The Center boasts the 2,700-seat Au-Rene Theater and the 590-seat Amaturo Theater, playing host to hundreds of traveling Broadway shows, operas, symphony concerts and other cultural offerings each year. Alkahest Artists and Attractions, Inc., now in its 107th season and operated by a member of the Bridges family, still brings traveling culture to Fort Lauderdale and other cities and towns throughout the United States. Current featured Alkahest performers include The Capitol Steps, Boots Randolph, Peter Duchin, The Lettermen, Shirley Jones, B.J. Thomas, Dukes of Dixieland and Anna Maria Alberghetti.49

Fort Lauderdale has come a long way since Charlie Root first called the lively square dances at Frank and Ivy Stranahan’s trading post almost a century ago. We have always welcomed some of the finest traveling musicians and entertainers American culture has had to offer, as much as we could afford. We still do, despite the recent loss of a major symphony orchestra. But we were never a cultural wasteland.

### About the Author

Dr. Claire M. Crawford

Immediate past chair of the Broward Cultural Council, Dr. Claire Crawford has a long history in the arts at both the state and local level. As Bureau Chief of Statewide Programs for the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, she managed statewide programs and authored cultural policies, legislation and speeches for Secretary of State George Firestone. A member of the Broward Cultural Council for more than 15 years, Dr. Crawford holds a BA and MFA in theatre, a certificate in Arts Administration and a Doctorate Degree in Public Administration and is an adjunct professor.

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**Chautauqua Movement Had Roots in Religious Instruction**

The Chautauqua-Lyceum movement in America began in 1874 and lasted until 1925, but the height of its popularity in Fort Lauderdale was for a much briefer period of time, from 1914 until 1919. By the early 1860s, touring platform speakers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau had become commonplace, their popularity enhanced by improvements in railway transportation, a desire for educational and cultural activities, and the anti-slavery movement.50 In 1915, so popular had William Jennings Bryan become on the traveling circuit, promoters believed the silver-tongued orator could easily earn as much as $137,000 for his lyceum speeches in a single year.51

Apart from the lyceum series, the Chautauqua movement began in the summer of 1874 when businessman Lewis Miller and a Methodist minister, John Heyt Vincent, held a two-week adult assembly along the shores of Lake Chautauqua in western New York. Two propositions laid the foundation for the assembly: one, that the whole of life is a school; two, that the true basis of education is religion. What began as a two-week summer course in religious instruction expanded into a full summer of broad cultural education that continues to this day at Chautauqua, New York.

The Circuit Chautauqua began in 1904. The Chautauqua movement later promoted the first distance-learning courses for adults. By the 1920s, circuit Chautauqua performers and lecturers had appeared in more than 10,000 communities in 45 states before audiences totaling 45 million.52 In Florida, the movement spawned the creation of the first Chautauqua assembly at DeFuniak Springs in February 1885, an annual event which continued well into the 1920s. Although the Chautauqua and lyceum programs offered cultural and educational enrichment to audiences both large and small throughout the country, each sprang from entirely different roots and ideals about adult education. Lyceum attractions were normally presented in winter; the Chautauqua assembly, in the summer. The lyceum had been an urban movement with venues in small auditoriums and theaters serving secular purposes with a series of lectures and performances taking place throughout the season. The Chautauqua assembly had its roots in rural settings like Lake Chautauqua and Defuniak Springs, Florida, and was often held outside under large tents. Lecturers and performers educated and entertained audiences over the course of several days if not weeks, and there were distinctly religious aspects to many of the courses.

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49 See Alkahest Artists and Attractions, Inc., at website at http://www.alkahestartists.net/about.htm.


52 “What Was Chautauqua,” Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century, Redpath Collection, op. cit.