

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #46 - Sides A/B

Subject: Agnes Foley Kennedy - On Sagebrush Symphony

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: November 6, 1975

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen on November 6, 1975 at Burns, Oregon, visiting with Agnes Foley Kennedy about Mary Dodge and the Sagebrush Orchestra she organized in Harney County in September 1910. Mrs. Kennedy.

AGNES FOLEY KENNEDY: These memoirs are being presented by Agnes Foley Kennedy, native daughter of Harney County. I have entitled the series "reminisces of a pioneer daughter of a cultural life of a frontier community at the turn of the century: 1900 to 1918." I was born in Burns, Harney County, Oregon at the beginning of the 20th century. Most of the mechanical inventions which now dominate our environment; the telephone, the phonograph, the automobile, the moving pictures, the airplanes, the radio and television were all invented or became an essential part of contemporary life within my memory.

These changes were ultimately less significant than another: The world of my childhood until World War I was the end of a golden age of optimism, confidence and security, the likes of which it seems unlikely anyone will enjoy again in the same way.

Alice Hinston Erst, in her delightful book "Trouping in Oregon", which describes the early touring stock companies known as The Wagons, which traversed the hinterlands, describes Burns and its citizens and particularly the situation as being the most

welcoming and generous to the actors.

The circuit started in LaGrande where Maude Dervin, wife of Otis Skinner, launched her career. Ed Nead, a great trouper, described his adventures with the wagons as they carried him from Canada to California, through the northwest's most remote backcountry. Nead's description of Burns in 1905 follows:

"There is a wonderful town in Oregon named Burns, situated 150 miles from the railroad. If we can get our company together, go to Burns and play for a week, we shall make more money than we could spend. Burns, out in the sagebrush near Bill Hanley's Bell "A" Ranch, is a wild, wooly, open stock country which also contains some refined, cultured, wealthy and very talented people."

The Ed Nead Company came to Burns, but I remember the Margaret Isles Company best, very vividly, because she became an ideal of mine. They played at the old Tonawama Hall for many seasons, often staying for a week.

The home talent in Burns was highly organized. There was a contagion about performances that passed from one gifted family to another. We had an extremely talented group of gifted musicians and very ingenious players. The talented Byrd family did indeed sing. They produced cantatas, oratorios, and light opera at the old Locher Hall. There was one most memorable production, Queen Esther. When my favorite, Julian, was cast in the role of Hamen, I threw the entire audience into consternation when it was announced that Hamen was going to be hung, forty cubits high. I screamed, "You cannot kill Julian!"

In this company of players was Julian, Charlie Byrd, Madge Byrd Leonard, and Mrs. William Farre was the prima donna. The Reed brothers, natural musicians in their own right, organized the town band. They were Homer, Teddy and Nollie, and a Fourth of

July could not have been welcomed, or made so delightful without the Reed Band leading the parade down Main Street.

Now, a short comment about the early days from 1900 to 1910. Prior to the influx of the new settlers in 1910, Burns citizens had developed a distinctive civic life which contained the best talents of all. There was always generous cooperation and complete tolerance among the churches and the schools. It was considered the highest mark of esteem to be named as a member of a school board.

Two women's clubs played a special role in supporting the educational efforts, and forming a lively life for socializing and for improving sub-cultural life of this small frontier community. The Ladies Library Club was founded and organized in 1903 by twelve ladies, all of whom had brought with them in their personal possessions, a very fine library. My mother, Mary Ellen Foley was the first president. Their purpose was to motivate the interest in a Burns public library. At first the ladies maintained a subscription library at 50 cents a year. You could borrow any book in the collection. The membership was finally raised to one dollar a year. Many money-raising benefits were given annually. A Tag Day became one of their most productive benefits.

At last they were ready. In June 1923, Mary Ellen Foley was asked to appear before the city council to request a franchise for a public library. An ordinance was passed and we were in business.

The Mother's Club was formed in 1907. The first goal being to raise funds essentially for the children's section of the library. My mother, Mary Ellen Foley, was again elected the first president. To this day the Mother's Club considers its first interest: The welfare of the young people of this community. The members provide several college scholarships to students throughout the country.

So when the influx of homesteaders arrived in 1910, they found many people here of similar interests and great talents who were gifted and welcomed them. They were immediately put to work according to their own talents.

In 1910 the great influx of new settlers came, due to the opening of the Homestead Act. Mary Dodge was one of these settlers. She was a bride from Boston. Her husband was the chief engineer for a reclamation project led by Charles B. McConnell of New York City, an attorney, who had pioneered and prospected in Alaska in his youthful days. The project had as its goal, to make the desert "bloom". The glamour and color of the life of the far west, and the heavy air of independence far outweighed the limitations and sacrifices, which gradually bore in upon the homesteaders. Mrs. Dodge was eager to learn to ride horseback, and I have an amusing picture of her in so-called western attire, attempting to grapple with a lariat. Also the preparation and work on the Beulah Dam site began very promptly, and she was always off and away to accompany her husband to see the progress of what came to be known as the Glory Hole.

But I must now regress. My parents met Mr. and Mrs. Dodge at a dinner party given by the McConnell's to introduce their company to a number of well-known citizens of Burns. That evening my father, who had always had a passion for good music, learned that Mary Dodge was a violinist, a graduate of the Boston College, and had coached with one of the well known teachers of the times at the New England Conservatory of Music. So immediately he attempted to persuade her to take me as a violin pupil. She, however, was not prepared to even consider teaching that first year. She was a bride. And before the year was out the Dodge's were happy to welcome a son, Glen.

However, my father again pursued the subject with her. He and my mother called on her in what they called the Boston Tents. The company was housed in these tents at

the foot of the hill where Copeland's Lumber Yard now stands. Finally she decided to take me. In order to keep her interest, my father quietly spread the word of my progress to family friends. Violet Harkey ... who now lives in Portland, was a schoolmate of mine from first grade through first year of high school, had tried to reconstruct a special walk that J. C. Foley must have taken down main street to recruit Mary Dodge's first class. He remarked it was to keep her interest.

First he stopped at Ben Brown's general store. It was a dry goods store selling everything that the pioneer might need, which came in on freight wagons twice a year. So Milton, the second son was signed up. Next he met Mr. Harkey. Mr. Harkey's home was not far from the Boston Tents, and the family had heard the daily sound of the violin with a beautiful tone. Violet was very intrigued and so she became the third pupil. Mr. Foley then went up the hill and called at the Clevenger Furniture Store. Gary was very interested, about the same age as Violet and myself. He seemed a likely candidate, so became the fourth pupil. Then he went to the court-house on business, had a brief talk with Sheriff Richardson and his daughter, Viola, who was somewhat older than the other children, became Mary Dodge's prize pupil. What instrument should she most appropriately study? Why, a viola. A viola for Viola. She became very proficient, and was the only viola we boasted throughout the tour of the orchestra.

After identifying these first five pupils, Violet Harkey and I stopped counting for the roster grew very rapidly and by 1912 we were ready for our premier concert in Tonawama Hall.

Now I must tell you about a very remarkable man who came into Harney County seeking the free land through the Homestead Act. There were several others of his stripe, but he was surely an out-standing man. His name was Signor Merrigiolli from the land of

Italy. He had played in a New York Philharmonic Orchestra for three years. He was a professional musician, a graduate conductor, bandmaster, and flutist, and had played in the Milan Symphony, and in the orchestra at the La Scala Opera.

Mrs. Dodge immediately recognized his abilities and they became warm colleagues. Together they developed the first Sage-brush Orchestra. Mrs. Dodge taking care of the teaching duties, for she never considered herself a conductor. Signor Merrigiolli became our conductor. Our opening number in September of 1910 was the Intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana by Rossini, which Signor Merrigiolli had transcribed in simplified form for these children.

I recall being most proud of my brother Charlie's coronet solo, a brief passage in the Intermezzo. He was the solo brass player among the young pupils. His teacher was a Franciscan Friar, Father Roman. My father presented him with a beautiful Kahn instrument, which was considered the finest brass instrument of its day.

The woodwinds were played by mature musicians because there were no teachers of woodwinds in Burns. Teddy Reed played clarinet, Johnny Caldwell was on saxophone, and Mrs. Dodge's husband, Mott, played the big base violin. Dewey Robinson was recruited on the drums, but he was never a member of the Sagebrush Orchestra.

Dewey had a natural talent for dance music and had his own dance band which provided lively melodies for many of our dances and balls. The Sagebrush Orchestra grew, changed in personnel from year to year. When I was sent to convent school in Seattle, Kathleen Jordan was promoted to first chair violin, and principal soloist. It was the year the orchestra made its historic tour to Portland, playing five concerts in two days upstate there, and three concerts in Portland.

May I regress for a moment to give a little aura of the particular atmosphere in that

time in the old homes on the hill? The wives of the pioneers had brought their most precious possessions from the east or elsewhere. Almost all of us owned fine pianos, and so when Mrs. Dodge accepted my father's invitation to take me as a student, he felt that the walk up the hill to the old Foley house was much too long and tedious, so he would always call for her in our first car, a large Studebaker touring car. As he always said, all our wagons and buggies had been made by Studebaker, why couldn't they make the best car in the country. I suggest we create a lesson in the old Foley home. It's a pleasure to think about those days, and it comes back to me very vividly. It was a brilliant sunny day in the high country. The clear desert air registered many familiar sounds. A wedge of Canadian geese flew over, for it was the fall migratory season. Dr. Hibbard's retrievers were barking with the prospect of a chase along the Foley Slough. There was a backfire from Dr. Geary's new miraculous Ford which was making a triumphant run down main street, terrifying the saddle horses tied to the hitching posts. The unsteady treble tone of a violin came from one of the pioneer homes on the hill in Burns. The calm ... counted to an insistent beat: one, two, three, four; one, two, three, four; with the Boston Broad A which Mrs. Dodge never lost. Agnes Foley was receiving a music lesson.

Hilmar Grondahl, senior music editor and critic of the Oregonian staff did me a very great service. He heard me give my preliminary report on the Mary Dodge history and her contribution to children's music in Oregon before the performing arts committee of the Oregon Historical Society. Within the next week he telephoned me and asked for an interview. I was very happy to meet him as a person because I had greatly admired his reviews of the symphony concerts and the opera productions. He said he had never known some of the facts that I had given at that particular meeting, concerning the beginning of the Harney County Children's Orchestra. Would I kindly give him a series of

interviews, and who else could he see who might give him the history of the two succeeding orchestras, which she founded in Portland.

So I gladly gave Mr. Grondahl five hours of interviews. Two articles resulted from those interviews, which were published in the Oregonian in November of 1973. Mrs. Dodge's son Glen was contacted and he, together with Ruth Saunders Leupold, knew the entire history of the Irvington School Orchestra, the Journal Juniors as they were called, and the Portland Junior Symphony. So together with their assistance, and the special information, which I received from Gwendolyn Lampshire Hayden, four fine articles resulted. They are to be found in the Oregonian of November 1973. The first two described Harney County, the atmosphere in which the symphony grew, and the third and fourth were devoted to the Irvington Orchestra and the present Portland Junior Symphony.

I shall now read excerpts from a number of Mr. Grondahl's stories. "The season ahead is the orchestra's 50th anniversary and plans for its celebration are extensive, involving the entire Portland community in a substantial way. To have reached its present eminence, and to have affected so many young lives in the process, is a greatly satisfying achievement. The genesis of the orchestra we know as the Portland Junior Symphony was from humble sources from among the rolling sagebrush hills of Harney County. The catalyst was the wife of a civil engineer at Burns, Mary V. Dodge, a trained musician from Boston, who developed the Sagebrush Orchestra when her husband was in Harney County as chief engineer on a reclamation project."

I remember Mary Dodge in the '20's, '30's, and '40's as a very vital person. Short, sandy-haired, energetic in both mind and body. Her speech with a clipped Boston accent, and very firm impressions about all ideas in the musical firmament in which she lived and

had her being. She was born Mary Thompson. Her grandfather was Dr. ... Trabonne, physician and French counsel general at Boston. Her father, a law graduate from old Gordon College, one of the Ivy League Colleges of New England, served as captain of light artillery during Civil War.

Her early education was at a convent school in Manchester, New Hampshire where she specialized in music, studying violin, piano, and cello, as well as public speaking. Later, in Boston, where she graduated from the Boston College, she coached with a famous violin coach at the New England Conservatory of Music. For several years she taught in the public schools of Boston and New York.

A fellow teacher who had moved to Oregon wrote her about the fascination of the area and urged her to come west. She took a train to Los Angeles to visit another former classmate, then on to Portland where she was hired to teach at Shattock School in Portland. There she stayed at a well-known boarding house called, very elegantly, The Mansion. Many young professionals lived at this boarding house, and it was there that she met M. V. Dodge, a recent graduate of the University of Iowa. They were married and went to Southeastern Oregon together where he was chief engineer in Harney County for an irrigation project, the year was 1910.

I have already had the good fortune to describe how Mary Dodge became my first teacher. The result of those lessons were a life-long interest in chamber music. And wherever I lived I organized a string quartet. There was always a group waiting for a first chair or second chair violinist to round out their group. My happiest group was the last year I spent in college at my mother's alma mater. There I had a group of three string players. The young man who played the cello later became one of Larado Taft's most famous sculptures and artists.

So in those early years Mrs. Dodge set up a studio on the banks of the Silvie's River. On the wall she tacked a chart of the Boston Symphony from which her pupils learned the organization of an orchestra, and the seating arrangements of the various sections. She subscribed to two national magazines, "Etude" and "The Musician", so as to keep her charges informed through articles about music and what was happening in the world at large, especially in Eastern cities.

She also had a Victrola, as our family did, and a number of other families had early Victrolas; a large collection of records which included many by violinist Mischa Elman that turned out to be a preparation for the concert by that artist which the Sagebrush Orchestra members heard at the Hilig theater during their visit to the Willamette Valley in 1908 and 1916. They had been acquainted with much of his repertoire in advance.

The problems of generating an orchestra from among the children in isolated town of 1500 were many and awesome. To stimulate the individuals wish to play, to induce the parent to provide an instrument, to teach each pupil the basics as to how to hold the instrument, how to apply the bow, how to tune, and finally how to play in a melodious manner with excellent intonation. And from there to organize the young players under orchestral discipline; because this was Mary Dodge's vision, and it grew as the Sagebrush Orchestra grew. That this was the meaning in life; she was to form a symphony orchestra for children. And her great desire and ambition was finally gratified when she became the founding teacher of the Portland Junior Symphony, which had 90 members and full instrumentation.

As she had always declared that she did not consider herself a conductor, she then had to search for a proper conductor. It was of course Mary Dodge's indomitable enthusiasm and dedicated fervor that made it possible for this idea to develop at an

astonishing speed in Harney County. As early as September 1912 the Sagebrush Symphony was giving its first concert in Tonawama Hall.

Certainly, there also had to be a stroke or two of luck, in this generation of musical interest in Harney County. For one thing there was Signor Merrigiolli. I believe I have mentioned him earlier. A graduate of the Milan Conservatory of Music in Italy, he had come to Burns to homestead a piece of land. Here is Mrs. Dodge, and children of the area needing someone who could teach the woodwinds and conduct. Mary Dodge had no pretensions, and welcomed him to the podium and presented him with a baton.

On the following Fourth of July there was a parade in Burns and the members of the Sagebrush Orchestra were one of the features of that event. Riding through town seated on a huge violin that had been fashioned for the occasion by Daniel Jordan, a master craftsman, and carpenter. He had made the violin to the most minute scale. This photograph became famous nationally because it was used in an article by "Etude" magazine, which went into almost all music lovers' homes during the 1900 to 1920 period.

In 1915 the orchestra toured Eastern Oregon through most of the small towns and even larger cities. In LaGrande and Pendleton they appeared on the Chautauqua circuit, an arrangement made by Judge G. R. Cochran of LaGrande who had heard them in concert in Burns and said, "These children must find a wider audience. I think they are simply wonderful." The following September 1916, the 35 members of the Sagebrush Symphony played seven concerts in Salem in two days, and three concerts at the Eleventh Street Theater in Portland.

Mary Dodge and the principal piano teacher, Eugenie Racine Rembold of Burns often played joint recitals. Mrs. Dodge at once found a colleague in Mrs. Rembold and also what you might call a sorority member because they had both studied at the New

England Conservatory of Music. Mrs. Rembold's mother, who ran the French Hotel, had sent her daughter; at great sacrifice I am sure, to the New England Conservatory in Boston for three years of training. Mrs. Dodge's most gifted pupil was Agnes Foley. Other pupils who were very talented were Gwendolyn Lampshire Hayden, Violet Harkey ... and later Gladys Byrd, and Viola Richardson.

Among Mrs. Rembold's pupils the senior was Roberta Hibbard. Evelyn Byrd appeared in every annual concert as a very progressive piano student. Raymond Voegtly had a special proficiency on piano, so his teacher requested his parents to send him to Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore for special studies. His father, a pioneer hardware merchant, brought the first Steinway grand to Burns. Then, as well, Burns boasted a fine vocal teacher. She had a distinctive voice herself, a high lyric soprano, and had coached in Portland with some of the famous coaches of the time, especially with a New York coach who came out every year, for several years. Her name was Mrs. Gault. Her husband was director of the local bank. Her annual recitals were listed as occasions. With her New York accompanist James Fellows, attired in white tie and tails, and Mrs. Gault always in a magnificent gown. We so enjoyed the stage scene at her glamorous recitals.

James Fellows later became a piano salesman for Sherman Clay and eventually set up his own company. He often told me a little anecdote about my mother who was very interested in his great talent. He added a measure of gentlemanliness as well as musicality to our little community, a man of great personal charm. He said my mother actually sold more pianos than he did, because she would call her friends at random and say, "You know your children should really have a piano."

Years later James Fellows profited substantially from investments in Arizona lands,

and five years ago a handsome new library was built in Burns with money he willed to the community for that purpose.

Another famous homesteader who remained in the community for the rest of his life was a counter tenor you could hear at the Catholic Church in those days. His name was William Carroll. He had come from New York to homestead in the Catlow Valley. While digging a well, he fell into the excavation breaking both legs. His whereabouts was not discovered for four days, and by that time amputation was necessary. Mrs. Dodge, always compassionate, took her first violin pupil, Agnes Foley, Mrs. Donald Dwight Kennedy of Portland, to the nursing home to play for Billy. Billy married Leta Egli, the daughter of Wagontire pioneers, and he became the perennial county clerk of Harney County.

Gwendolyn Lampshire Hayden, who died last year in Eugene, was one of the original violinists in the Sagebrush Orchestra. She was Mrs. Dodge's lifelong friend and coached with her every year into the late 1940's. Gwendolyn's mother, Mrs. Grace Lampshire, was the first woman mayor in America. Was that the beginning of women's lib in Harney County?

There was something about the country that appealed to artists and musicians alike. The celebrated painter Childe Hassam was in Harney Valley several times from 1908 to 1912, visiting the ranch of William Hanley who had one of the most expansive spreads in the state.

SIDE B

Two Hassam landscapes painted from the Double O Ranch are in the Portland Art Museum collection. Colonel C. E. S. Wood was a frequent visitor to the area, researching

Indian lore and legends. His book of Indian tales is now a collector's item. He later published, "The Poet in the Desert" and "Heavenly Discourse".

Anne Shannon Monroe, a writer in Portland, often visited Catlow Valley searching for material for her essays. She refers to this ranch country in her books, "Happy Valley" which was the story of the homesteading days. And she did the authentic anecdote about Billy Carroll's unfortunate accident. Also, her book, "Singing in the Rain" is probably her best publication and was written at the McDowell Colony in New Hampshire.

When President Theodore Roosevelt suggested in 1908 that Malheur and Harney Lakes be set-aside as a wild refuge for waterfowl and wildlife, it was Dr. William Finley, naturalist and state biologist, who made many research tours of the Harney Basin. His local colleague was Dr. L. E. Hibbard, pioneer dentist and amateur ornithologist.

The Hibbard family came to Oregon in 1847 and were granted donation land claim No. 1 in the Willamette Valley.

Through it all, Mary Dodge's Sagebrush Orchestra grew, providing instruction and pleasure. I have referred to the tour of Eastern Oregon in 1915. Later in that year Rex Lampman, a reporter for the Oregon Journal, was visiting Bill Hanley with C. E. S. Wood, and he heard the Sagebrush Orchestra perform. He immediately started insisting that this little orchestra shouldn't hide its light under a bushel of sagebrush. Charles B. McConnell, the Burns attorney who had come from New York, via Alaska, became the impresario for the trip to Portland and Salem. Bill Hanley and C. E. S. Wood were also sponsors. The businessmen of Burns pooled \$2000 in volunteer funds towards the expenses of the trip. Phil Metschan, who ran the Imperial Hotel, the Cattleman's Headquarters in Portland, offered his hostelry gratis to the young musicians and their escorts.

Sponsoring groups in Portland included the Monday Musical Club, the McDowell

Club, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the Music Departments at Washington and Lincoln High Schools. Of course this venture into the Willamette Valley was the event of the young lives of the 35 child musicians. For most, it was their first trip in a Pullman car, their first ride in an elevator, their first view of a city. They were featured at the State Fair, and came off with a prize of \$100. Their three concerts in Eleventh Street Theater in Portland were triumphs of sentiment and musical aspiration. Pathe News filmed them in action on the roof of the Northwest Bank building.

But the most unforgettable event was playing in their khaki uniforms and bright red scarves for Madame Schumann-Heink, world-renowned contralto, who happened to be concertizing in Portland at the time. She invited Mrs. Dodge and her group to her suite in the old Portland Hotel where they played an entire program for her. At the conclusion of the performance she said to Mrs. Dodge, "It is perfectly wonderful for these children to play this way. I want to do my share to encourage them. Just now I can do nothing as all funds from my concerts are going to the war cause. But next July I shall be in Portland, and if I am still alive I shall sing a special concert for the Sagebrush Orchestra of Harney County, and hopefully I shall give an annual benefit for them, that this great work can continue."

Unhappily the event never took place, but the thrill of the experience remained with the players. World War I was on the horizon, and in 1917 besides her pupils and the orchestra, Mary V. Dodge was Harney County Food Administrator. As vigorously as she worked for her orchestra, she took up the cudgel in behalf of the reclamation of irrigable lands as a means of increasing the food supply.

... Lampman has a most ingratiating comment and description of Mary V. Dodge, much as her early students remember her. May I read from ... Lampman's column of

September 23, 1916, which is entitled, "Young Musicians Make Wonder Trip".

"Thirty-five Harney children arrived in the city, Sagebrush Juveniles amazed. Symphony orchestra has arrived from the State Fair at Salem. Their return is celebrated."

Continuing the comment from Mr. Lampman, "The predator of the Sagebrush Orchestra was made possible through the liberality of the businessmen of Burns, who subscribed \$2000 overnight that the pride of Harney County might wander forth to see the wide world as far as Salem and conclusively prove to scoffers that Eastern Oregon has not neglected its art and its culture."

His description of Mrs. Dodge is most sympathetic and touching. No mention of the orchestra is complete without mention of its founding teacher who organized, then inspired it with the dynamic force of her enthusiasm. Picture a little woman, frail of physique whose countenance and action are alike animated with purpose and decisive rapidity of thought, and gestures that dart hither and thither in direction of her forces, and you still have a very inadequate conception of the personality that is behind this orchestra. "We are just a crowd of homesteaders and the luxury of this big hotel simply dazes us," said Mrs. Dodge, "and I cannot imagine a finer reception than has been given us in Portland." Now, for instance, and with a quick reversal, the listener sped after the nimbler wit as it raced on among the incidents of those glorious days when the orchestra was but a dream in farming.

... Lampman mentions of ... hospitality at the Imperial Hotel, recalled to me the greatest adventure I probably have ever enjoyed in Harney County. I was too young to remember the first trip, but we made a second and I recall the trip from Burns to Baker when my mother was taking my brother and me with great pride to display her family of children to the Foley and the McCauffey families in Wisconsin. Phil Metschan was a

Canyon City pioneer in 1863 during the gold rush, and left Eastern Oregon in 1890 to establish the unique and handsome hotel in Portland which still continues to entertain the cowmen and Eastern Oregonian ranchers.

On the old coach route, stagecoach route, from Burns to Baker through Canyon City, one of the rest stops was Mitchum Station. I was a two-year-old child on the first trip. My brother Charlie was four years old, and my mother must have had great adaptability since both of us were very lively youngsters.

Many people on the train strove to assist her when she went to the dining car to keep the two lively babies amused, and preserve their decorum and also their present ability when she arrived at the old home in the east. As she left the train at Chicago, an elderly gentleman who had been very attentive to us said to her as he tipped his hat, "Madam, you are a veritable Joan of Arc".

In this column, which ... Lampman wrote in tribute to Mary V. Dodge and the Sagebrush Orchestra, he enumerates the instrumentation of the orchestra. It consisted of 24 violins, one viola, one bass viola played by Mott Dodge, an adult, one trombone, played by an adult, one clarinet played by an adult, Johnny Caldwell, drums played by an adult, one coronet, a child member of the orchestra, and two flutes, children who had been tutored by Signor Merrigiolli, a master flutist. Mrs. Dodge was at the piano. The pupils were five to fifteen years of age.

My favorite review of the many from the Portland papers of those three concerts I should be pleased to read for you now. I spent two years in the microfilm at the Multnomah Library sieving out the material, and I received the most friendly and generous assistance from all librarians present. They became very involved in my project, because none of them had heard of the Sagebrush Orchestra. This is the review.

By ... reporter and editor of music for the Oregonian. It is dated September 28, 1916. The headline: "Child Musicians Win." Hundred are turned away because of crowded theater. Technique of Sagebrush Orchestra surprises artists of the city and every number is encored.

The review: From the standpoint of pure music, the concert last night at the Eleventh Street Theater of the children's Sage-brush Orchestra from Harney County was a memorable one of much value and interest. Every available seat was occupied, with hundreds of would-be auditors turned away with lack of room. This concert was quite successful from the directions of entertainment and education. So enthusiastic was the audience that every number was encored. The cruel spectator who could view unmoved the appearance of the tots from Oregon's sagebrush as they played on the theater stage is past redemption. It was a sight and occasion sufficient to stir the hearts of all who love little children and music. The best talent of the Harney County visitor's lies chiefly in the violin section of the orchestra. Here the violin tone is easy, colorful, and excitedly agreeable to listen to. They play with perfect intonation. The young musicians played the entire program from memory, no manuscripts were used. Their bowing and general violin technique was excellent. They played also with absence from stage fright, perfect poise and demeanor, and the childish enthusiasm reached out to every member of that audience, I am sure. In the rendition of Strong's Happy Memories, Fife's: A Song of Greeting, Schubert's March Militare, The Scotch Fantasia, Leider's Prince of ... and other selections, the children won out. Several of children are conductors and they do admirable work. They do not use a conductor's baton, but they raise their hand in a very business-like way. They keep good time."

In 1918 Mrs. Dodge's husband was called to Portland to be chief engineer on a

Columbia River project. So with some of her former pupils, she worked to establish an orchestra at the Irving-ton School and the Journal Juniors. The Journal Juniors were a special group of unusual attainment, somewhat senior to the Irvington School of children, and they were so named because Sam Jackson, editor of the Oregon Journal, was always one of Mrs. Dodge's most loyal admirers, and anonymously gave many, many sums to support the tuition of the poorer students. I have a review of every concert that was given by the Irvington School and the Journal Juniors.

At Irvington School, Mary Dodge's duties vastly increased because the word went round that there was an excellent school orchestra at Irvington. It was the first of its kind in the City of Portland. So young musicians would ask if they might come from their own high schools to practice with the orchestra, not necessarily to become members, but to acquire the knowledge of ensemble playing.

In time Mary Dodge found herself conducting an orchestra with almost full instrumentation. That combined with the five-day week of classroom instruction and private violin lessons was beginning to be too heavy a load. So Principal Barr said, "She came to me and asked if the school treasury could afford to hire some competent person to train the school orchestra. The problem was to find that person who would be willing to work for the pittance the school could afford. As it turned out, our treasury could not provide even that pittance, so for the first year the conductor who was chosen was paid by Mrs. Dodge out of her own resources.

One evening Mrs. Dodge phoned me to tell me that a school patron was sending her an orchestra leader for an interview. He was a Russian, Jacques Gershkovitch, who had escaped from the Bolshevik Revolution, and found a haven and orchestra in Tokyo. Now he and his talented wife, an engineer, were in Portland looking for work. He would

like anything connected with orchestral music, for they were destitute refugees. He had almost no English, but she had enough to interpret.

We hired him for that nominal sum which Mrs. Dodge in her generosity offered to pay, and waited for the first rehearsal to see what we had hired. Jacques Gershkovitch, a highly trained musician, and his wife had arrived in Portland in the fall of 1923. They fled Japan because of the earthquake, which killed 143,000 people. Friends here hired the Portland Symphony Orchestra for a special concert in which to display the Russian's conductorial expertise. In a letter to the Oregonian, the late Gwendolyn Lampshire Hayden tells of what happened next. When Mrs. Dodge heard Mr. Gershkovitch conduct the Portland Symphony, she wrote, she immediately decided he was a man who could make her idea live. She asked for an appointment, went to his home, and after the conversation in which he said he was doubtful at first, as he had never worked with children, Mrs. Dodge urged him, come and hear them play. It was arranged.

Glen Dodge, then about 13, remembers exactly all the events of that evening. His mother delegated him to stand on the front porch of their home at 13th and Brazee opposite Irvington School to await and greet the Gershkovitches, and usher them up into what was called the attic studio of the Dodge house, where the orchestra was assembled. Mrs. Hayden's account continues:

After the full orchestra performed for him in the large attic of Mrs. Dodge's studio home, he turned to her and said, "I take." He never learned to speak English, but Mrs. Dodge interpreted for him for the first three and a half years. And she said to him, "All you need to use are the usual musical marks, for the children know them all as they know their own vocabulary. Adagio, legato, agitato, pianissimo, and dynamo." With a bow, Mrs. Dodge gave him the baton, and her part henceforth was to conduct the sectional

rehearsals, raise money by subscription, and help organize a board of management, and name the orchestra.

The president of that first board was a remarkable man in his own right. He was Robert Robinson, master violinmaker. He was the first president in 1924, honorary president in 1925 to '30. When Mrs. Dodge received and auditioned a very promising young violinist, she asked the parents of that child to provide them with a Robinson violin because they were expertly made with fine tone. Other members of the first board are well known to Eastern Oregonians. Marshall Dana, an editor of the Oregonian, was one of the early directors and always supported the orchestra throughout his life. From that moment on improvement was slow but steady. It was apparent that under Jacques GersHKovitch, the orchestra had the future that was envisioned in Mary Dodge's mind.

The excitement and determination which followed these early rehearsals resulted in many, many new pupils of great influx into the symphony orchestra. The word passed rapidly throughout the city and it became a mark of an enterprising child to pass the audition to become a member of this orchestra. Sectional practice continued for a time in Mrs. Dodge's attic, but gradually the work of conducting and developing the orchestra was consolidated under Jacques GersHKovitch's control.

Finally came the historic day, March 15, 1924, when the youth symphony played for the first time in public. Among its members were several who had been Mary Dodge's pupils in Burns, including Ruth Saunders Leupold. Many of our families remember Ruth's father, Mr. Saunders, who came annually from Portland to keep our pianos in tune. Gwendolyn Lampshire was also a member of the first group.

Portland musicians, who had developed under her private tutelage, and in the orchestra, now include Glenn Reeves who is principal violist of the Oregon Symphony,

1975. And James Eoff, assistant conductor of the Portland Junior Symphony who in 1925 was Mrs. Dodge's pupil, and continued with the orchestra throughout his musical life. He celebrated his 45th year in the position of assistant conductor to Mr. ... now conductor. And this year he was rewarded with a handsome citation for his long years of service to music in Portland.

I should like to read two special articles by Dean Collins who was on the staff of the Oregon Journal for many years, and was one of Mrs. Dodge's great admirers. These articles were written twenty years apart, the first in 1925 when the orchestra had just established itself in its first concert, and the last in February of 1942. I shall begin with the article of 1925.

In particular the achievement of the Portland Junior Symphony is due to the splendid enthusiasm of Mrs. Mary Dodge, who for many years has made this work her chief care. She has given lavishly of her time, strength, and skill, and she has been a great factor in arousing the musical sentiment among the children of this city. Mrs. Dodge's dream was to make the orchestra the nucleus of the young people's true symphony that would make permanent the activity begun by her. She employed Jacques Gersikovitch to conduct the symphony and decided that he would help make her idea live. She and some of her players who went to her home ... to his home the next day, named the orchestra which had not yet taken form.

As the Portland Junior Symphony, she sent the two girls, Ruth Saunders and Dorothy Cowgill to the Multnomah County Courthouse, to make, to record the name and to this day it is still called the Portland Junior Symphony.

Mrs. Dodge continued with the group for four years more in order to assure the permanency of the Portland Junior Symphony. And she continued after that to send her

most talented pupils to Mr. Gershkovitch as members of the orchestra.

When Mr. Grondahl interviewed me together with Ruth Leupold and Glenn Dodge for this series of articles which I have given you in excerpt, he received many letters of praise in his office at the Oregonian. One of those letters came from a very dear friend of mine, to whom I wish to give a great deal of credit for my pursuing this project. In Marion Rutherford, a life member of the Oregon Historical Society, a member of the Presidents Club of Oregon State University, and the old Rutherford Wheat Ranch near Arlington which is still his home, was settled by his ancestors in the early 1859's. His letter to Mr. Grondahl follows:

Mr. Grondahl: You recently wrote a series of articles about the Oregon Junior Symphony and the nucleus of it's beginning in Harney County through the Sagebrush Orchestra. There the orchestra received a dedication of a small but cultured group of people who desired the best for their children. I should like to join those Oregonians from all over our state from whom you have no doubt received high praise for this excellent series on the Oregon Junior Symphony, and for the credit given its founders. The founding teacher, Mary V. Dodge, and the founding conductor Jacques Gershkovitch. I think it is entirely possible that you may never write anything that will be as important historically as the documentation of this story. It is a story that needed telling for many years, and one that acknowledges the efforts of some dedicated and talented people in the hinterland of Oregon that would have otherwise have gone unchronicled.

My congratulations for a splendid documentary work, and my thanks to you for writing it.

Sincerely, Marion T. Rutherford. Dated: The Rutherford Ranch, Arlington, Oregon, December 31, 1973.

May I thank Pauline Braymen for her great kindness and skill in being my colleague in making this tape which is very near to my heart.

-pb-

bl