OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUSICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE
ALTON-WOOD RIVER, ILLINOIS, AREA

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Music
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITIES
AND SERVICES BEFORE 1925

The Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area is a highly
industrialized community located approximately twenty miles
north of St. Louis, Missouri, on the east side of the Mis­
sissippi River. According to the Greater Alton Association
of Commerce, the area comprises a total population of nearly
one hundred thousand people, a growth of about forty thou­
sand since 1925.

This industrialized center includes the cities and
towns of Alton, East Alton, Wood River, Roxana, Hartford,
Fosterburg, Bethalto, Cottage Hills, and Godfrey. Some of
the leading industries located in the area are Olin Indus­
tries (Western Cartridge); the refineries of Standard,
Shell, and Sinclair Oil Companies; Alton Box Board; Laclede
Steel; Federal Lead Works; Owens-Illinois Glass Company;
International Shoe Tanneries; and Mississippi Lime Company.
Many smaller companies and industries also make up a size­
able part of the commercial life of the community.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. In many communities there
are no outlets for musical participation, such as bands,
orchestras, or choral groups. It is the purpose of this study to compare the present opportunities for musical participation in the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area with those in 1925, or approximately at the beginning of the present generation. This comparison is made through the use of the questionnaire and the interview.

**Justification of the study.** Since the early days of radio and television nearly every community in America has become more "music conscious." The finest orchestras, choruses, bands, and soloists have been brought into our homes through the media of these wonderful inventions, and it is only natural that our musical culture has been enhanced greatly. Consequently, many people have begun the study of music in some form, either as a hobby for personal enjoyment or to supplement the family income through musical participation in some professional organization.

Because of the industrial nature of the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area many transient workers and people who wish to establish homes come into the territory. Many of them or some members of their families have musical talent, and, in order for them to live a full and happy life, they want to become a part of a musical group or display their talents as soloists.

Condensed versions of this survey, showing the opportunities for participation in musical organizations or for
solists, will be distributed to the various industries and to the Greater Alton Association of Commerce. These condensed versions will serve as an invitation to the musical person to apply for membership to someone responsible for the organization.

II. SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITIES AND SERVICES BEFORE 1925

The Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area has always been a musical community as is shown by the following list of musical organizations and services which were active at the beginning of the present generation. This list was compiled through interviews with people who were members of the groups or with those who were associated with the organizations in some other capacity.

Musical Organizations

Camarata Chorus
White Hussar Band
Fosterburg Band
Standard Oil Company Band
Wood River Band
Five dance orchestras
Twenty organized church choirs
Western Military Academy Band
Shurtleff College Choir
Monticello College Choir
Alton Senior High School Chorus
Wood River High School Chorus
Alton Senior High School Band

Musical Services

Plummer-Kramer Music Company
Kiesselhorst Music Store
Williams Music Store
Davis Music Company
Peters Music Store
Bruce Piano Company
Ten full-time private teachers
Twelve part-time private teachers

The following three chapters will be devoted to a discussion of organizations and services in the area at the present time.
"Musical experiences in the school, if worth while for the values brought to the individual in school days, will become even more worth while through the contribution the individual makes to himself, his family, and to the life of his community after he takes up the responsibilities of adult citizenship."\(^\text{1}\)

The schools in the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area offer music programs that are better than those offered in the average school systems. In the schools of this community the child has the opportunity to participate in band, orchestra, and chorus, and to develop his talent under the guidance of qualified teachers. The area has two colleges, a military academy, approximately sixty public schools and eight parochial schools. Following is a brief resume of the music programs in these schools.

I. MONTICELLO COLLEGE

Monticello College at Godfrey, Illinois, is a college for girls, who come from all parts of the United States. It

\(^{1}\)The Committee on School-Community Music Relations and Activities, "What is Meant by School-Community Music Relations and Activities," \textit{Music for Everybody} (Chicago: Music Educators National Conference, 1950), p. 3.
is a church school, sponsored by the Congregational Church, and has a very good chorus and choir. Instrumental music is taught, but there is no organized group of musicians.

II. SHURTLEFF COLLEGE

Shurtleff College at Alton, Illinois, is a co-educational college sponsored by the Baptist Church. It is one of the oldest colleges in the Middle West, and its music department is outstanding. The department stresses the teaching of voice and piano, and the Shurtleff College Choir is known throughout this section of the country.

III. WESTERN MILITARY ACADEMY

Boys from practically every state come to this military school at Alton, Illinois. It is rated very highly and has a good band and chorus for those students who play band instruments or like to sing.

IV. ALTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

These public schools provide opportunities for participation in bands, choruses, orchestras, and smaller ensembles. The high school band and the chorus give pupils numerous opportunities to appear in public, and within the last year an orchestra has been added to the music department for those pupils interested in string music. There are
three junior high schools, each providing a band and a chorus, but two of them have organized orchestras as well. The preparation for these organizations is begun in all of the grade schools.

V. EAST ALTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The grade schools and the junior high school provide outlets for musical talent in their bands and choruses. The pupils who attend high school go to the East Alton-Wood River Community High School.

VI. WOOD RIVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Here, too, the musically talented child will find a good grade-school band, a good chorus, and the opportunity to participate in many programs outside the school. For the boy or girl of high school age who is musically talented, the band and vocal organizations of East Alton-Wood River Community High School will provide excellent opportunities for musical participation. The groups are outstanding.

VII. ROXANA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This fast-growing community has an outstanding school system with the most modern of buildings. The music program is growing from year to year and offers a high school band, a high school chorus, and a junior high school band and a
junior high school chorus. Both instrumental and vocal music are also taught in the grade school.

VIII. BETHALTO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

These schools offer the same opportunities for musical participation as the other schools, excepting the fact that there is no string program for pupils wanting to play in an orchestra. The high school band has been in existence about five years, but the vocal department has always been outstanding. Both programs are also started in the lower grades.

IX. PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS

In the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area there are eight parochial schools including a high school. Vocal music has been taught since the beginning of the schools, but during the past three years, instrumental programs have been started, and in the near future there will be instrumental organizations as well as the long-established vocal groups. The Catholic high school has had a band for the past two years; also, the St. Bernard School in Wood River has an organization that is rapidly developing into a good band.
CHAPTER III

THE NON-SCHOOL MUSIC PROGRAMS

Throughout the United States, in Canada, and in other countries, there is an increased interest in community-wide and community-planned music programs. This interest is, at least in part, an outgrowth of the program of music education in the schools. In fact, the community and the school music programs are inseparable. Responsibility for the musical well-being of the community, therefore, must be shared by school and community leaders.¹

"Very important among the issues we have before us are the items pertaining to continuing participation and interest on the part of the individual and to the maintenance of media for such participation through local support of a broad program of musical activities of all kinds."²

That this industrial area has always been a cultural community is shown by the long list of opportunities for musical participation which existed long before the present generation. These opportunities are continuing here, whereas in some communities they have been abolished, and people wishing to take part in musical activities have no

²The Committee on School-Community Music Relations and Activities, op. cit., p. 3.
opportunity to do so. The Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area offers these following opportunities for musical participation to people who are above the school age.

I. ALTON MUNICIPAL BAND

Perhaps the oldest musical organization in the area is the Alton Municipal Band. It has the distinction of having been in existence for sixty-four consecutive years, which makes it one of the oldest organized bands in the Middle West. The personnel, consisting of men only, are all members of the Alton Musicians Association, Local #282, American Federation of Musicians, and they are paid for all appearances with the band which is supported by a city tax. This organization provides a worthwhile opportunity for musical participation since it meets regularly each week for rehearsals and plays two concerts each week during the summer season. It is very active through participation in many civic affairs besides the regular concerts.

II. CIVIC ORCHESTRA

In 1940 the present civic orchestra was formed under the title of the Madison County Symphony Orchestra. It was discontinued during the war years, and upon its re-organization in 1946, it was called the Alton Civic Orchestra. The organization is a voluntary group of
musicians who play orchestra instruments primarily as a hobby and receive no pay for their services. Its personnel consists of teachers, doctors, industrial workers, housewives, students, dentists, newspaper men, and a few professional musicians. With this type of membership the community is drawn closer together through the orchestra, and one could say it breeds good public relations. Four formal concerts are given during the fall, winter, and spring seasons, and the community sponsors the organization through the Civic Orchestra Guild. Membership and interest in the guild increases from year to year.

III. WOOD RIVER MUNICIPAL BAND

The Wood River Municipal Band is supported through a tax fund as are the bands of many cities that provide concerts for the public in their parks. This band has long been established, and the weekly concerts throughout the summer season provide opportunities for nearly forty men to participate in a musical organization. The Wood River Municipal Band is quite active. Besides giving its schedule of twelve concerts, it takes part in many parades and civic affairs of the community.
IV. FOSTERBURG BAND

The Fosterburg Band came into being as a result of the discontinuance of the Standard Oil Company Band which was dissolved because of union difficulties in the early thirties. Many of its members lived in the small community of Fosterburg, and in order to participate in a musical group, they organized the Fosterburg Band. During World War II, it was disbanded, but just a year ago the former members in the area reorganized the band and now have weekly rehearsals and play in parades and on holidays in their community. Membership is open to men, women, boys and girls.

V. ALTON AMERICAN LEGION DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS

American Legion posts throughout the country are sponsoring drum and bugle corps. The Alton, Illinois, post sponsors a senior corps for men which is quite active since it takes part in many parades, civic affairs, and the competitions for drum and bugle corps that are becoming so popular throughout the nation. About thirty-six members take part regularly.

VI. EAST ALTON AMERICAN LEGION DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS

The East Alton American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps is for junior girls only and has been organized about five years. It also participates in the parades, civic-sponsored
affairs, and the competitions mentioned above. Its membership numbers approximately thirty.

VII. CHURCH CHOIRS

It has been said many times that the heart of a nation lies in its churches. The area of which I am writing is a little more religious than most industrial centers as is shown by the steady increase in attendance at church services from year to year. Most of the churches in this community are filled on Sunday mornings, and twenty-four of them have organized choirs. The person who wants to participate in choir singing can readily find one of his denomination, and he will be most welcome to membership. Here is a list of the churches in the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area which have regular choirs, some of which have been in existence for eighty years:

Alton

St. Mary's--Catholic
St. Patrick's--Catholic
St. Paul's--Catholic
Evangelical and Reformed
College Avenue Presbyterian
First Presbyterian
Twelfth Street Presbyterian
Trinity Lutheran
Congregational
First Christian
First Methodist
Main Street Methodist
Grace Methodist
Upper Alton Baptist
First Baptist
Cherry Street Baptist
East Alton
East Alton Baptist
East Alton Methodist

Hartford
First Baptist

Wood River
St. Bernard's--Catholic
First Methodist
First Baptist
Christian
Presbyterian

Many other churches in the area have volunteer choirs or a nucleus of a choir.

VII. POPULAR DANCE BANDS

Many popular dance bands have sprung up over the country since the beginning of our present generation. With a total population of nearly one hundred thousand people, the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area supports fifteen popular dance bands employing on a part-time basis about sixty people who work regularly at some other occupation or profession. This opportunity for musical participation also provides some extra income for the family budget.

The leaders responsible for these musical organizations are: Otis Berry, Helen Barkley, Benjamin Bahr, John Calvey, William Deshirlia, Lester Geisler, Ephraim Green, Barney Hale, Ronald Klaus, Harry Laun, William Shaw, Walter Stiles, Roscoe Stiles, David Stiles, and Paul Woolsey.
IX. STRING (HILL-BILLY) BANDS

Since square dancing is being taught in many of the schools and in regular classes for adults, the string band is fast coming into popularity especially around industrial areas. The Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area sponsors ten of these organizations. Their members also have industrial or professional occupations, and participation in these groups is on a part-time basis. However, extra income is derived, because all instrumental musical groups are unionized and are members of the Alton Musicians Association, Local #282, American Federation of Musicians.

Here is a list of the men in charge of the string bands: Charles Crockett, Anthony Forbes, William Garrett, Frank Greenwell, Carter Hankins, Mitchell Brothers, Albert Pulliam, Raymond Skelton, Joseph Stamper, Ralph Timpe.

A few musical groups sponsored by industries in the area were formed during the generation since 1925 but were later disbanded because of various reasons—some of which were (1) conflicts with organized labor and (2) the time for meetings and rehearsals not being adequate or available for each of the members to attend.
CHAPTER IV

MUSICAL SERVICES

Behind the scenes of the school musical programs and the non-school musical organizations in the community exists a business without which the organizations could hardly survive. That business is the selling, renting, and repairing of musical instruments and supplying the needs for all types of printed music. The professional music teachers and the part-time instructors are also factors in keeping the musical organizations alive. These services, usually in existence wherever there are flourishing musical groups, find it to their advantage to give full cooperation in organizing and maintaining such organizations. The musical services in the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area at the present time are commented on in the following paragraphs.

I. GOULD MUSIC COMPANY

This company is a well established concern and is very active in the area both with school and non-school musical organizations as well as in the promotion of musical talents of individuals. The Gould Music Company of Alton sells all kinds of musical instruments, sheet music, records, and accessories. It also maintains an instrument repair department for minor adjustments, but for any extensive
repairs that are needed, the instrument needs to be sent to nearby St. Louis, Missouri, or to the factory. A rental plan for all musical instruments is also in effect at this store.

II. PLUMMER-KRAMER MUSIC COMPANY

The oldest of the music services organizations in the community is the Plummer-Kramer Music Company. Located in Alton, it has a large and complete supply of sheet music, sells band and orchestra instruments on a small scale, and sends out to individual repair men instruments that need minor adjustments.

III. COMMUNITY MUSIC CENTER

This new "up and coming" music center in Alton is proving to be outstanding in service and cooperation. It has a good rental plan, and sells the finest makes of band and orchestra instruments and accessories. The proprietor of the Music Center is a former instrumental music instructor in public schools, and he thoroughly understands the school music situation. A complete record department and a sheet music department have been added to the services of the store since its opening a year ago. Gradually more new departments are being added, and the store promises to become one of the most complete in the area in the near future.
The Acord Music Shop in Wood River is the only one in the community located outside of Alton. It has been established about three years and supplies the type of instruments and supplies in demand by western or "hill-billy" organizations. It has a complete supply of stringed instruments and accessories, but some of the more common band and orchestra instruments (cornets, clarinets, violins) are kept in stock. Some accessories can be supplied.

V. ROYAL SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Primarily, this school is an accordion and guitar sales company in Alton organizing accordion bands throughout the area and promoting the sales of many makes of these instruments. It supplies accessories and music necessary for the instruction, but does not carry complete lines. Band and orchestra instruments are not carried in stock.

All of the companies and stores previously mentioned will provide instructors for the various instruments, and the Gould Music Company, the Community Music Center, and the Royal School of Music maintain studios for such instruction in connection with the store.

Without these services the school and community musical organizations and the opportunities for participation in them would greatly be decreased.
VI. FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME MUSIC TEACHERS

Obviously, with musical organizations such as those in the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area, there is a considerable need for professional or full-time music teachers (those who give private lessons) as well as several part-time instructors. In the community today, besides the vocal and instrumental teachers in the school, there are twelve full-time and twenty-two part-time instructors who are a great help to the maintenance of the musical groups. Information concerning the teachers can be had by consulting any of the music stores and companies or by questioning any number of the music-minded citizens.

VII. GREATER ALTON CONCERT ASSOCIATION

The person who does not play an instrument or participate in a vocal group but who enjoys just listening to or seeing in person great artists of the present day need not be deprived of his enjoyment. The "Greater Alton Concert Association" sponsors a series of concerts, given throughout the fall, winter, and spring seasons, of the best available musical organizations, singers, instrumentalists, and dancers. The audiences range from eight hundred to a thousand for these performances, and the artists are of such caliber that many are requested for repeat appearances during the ensuing concert series.
Such are the musical services in the area for the performer and the layman—services that meet the needs of the immediate community.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the writer in the preceding chapters has been to make a comparison of the opportunities for musical participation today in the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area with those of 1925, the approximate beginning of the present generation.

Through methods of the questionnaire and the interview, the writer found the following facts:

1. The area's population increased from approximately sixty thousand people to one hundred thousand—an increase of 66 2/3 per cent.

2. In 1925 the community supported one adult chorus, four brass bands, five dance bands, twenty church choirs, four school choruses, and two school bands. At the present, there are three brass bands, one civic orchestra, two drum and bugle corps, ten string or hill-billy bands, thirteen school choruses, three school orchestras, and thirteen school bands.

3. At the beginning of our present generation the community had six music stores, ten full-time private teachers, and twelve part-time instructors. Today there are five music stores, one repair shop, twelve full-time private instructors, and twenty-two part-time teachers.

4. The Greater Alton Concert Association has been functioning for nine years, bringing the best available entertainment to lovers of music in the area.

Looking at the chart on page 26, one can easily see that the largest increase in number occurs in dance bands, school choruses and bands, and the part-time teacher. Smaller increases occur in church choirs and full-time private teachers.
Bugle corps, school orchestras, a repair shop, and a civic orchestra have been formed.

The adult chorus, the brass band, and the music stores have each lost by one since 1925.

Schools, in the past twenty-five years, have been stressing the importance of music in everyday life; consequently all school musical organizations--orchestras, bands, and choruses--have been formed over the entire country. The trend is still upward in this respect. It is obvious that more full-time and part-time private teachers would be needed. The greater increase has been among the part-time instructors.

The consensus of people in the community is that due to the finer processes of recording music, the radio, the television, and the increase of wages, more dance and string bands are formed. Many dancing clubs and private parties are requesting live music since economic conditions permit that type of entertainment.

Our nation has always been a religious nation and that is shown by the increase in attendance of church services as compared to the increase of population. Much has been written in the past few years concerning that fact. A few new church buildings have been erected in the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area during the present generation, and subsequently, new choirs have been formed.
In the case of the full-time private teacher, industry could give him a more substantial income, and still he could offer his instruction in music on a part-time basis.

Through the competition of drum and bugle corps sponsored by the American Legion, an increasing interest in these organizations has developed all over the United States. The Legion instigated the competition five years ago.

Civic orchestras are in existence in nearly every city over thirty-five thousand in population, and we owe much of that interest in good music to good phonograph records, and to radio and television programs. Most of the symphony orchestras are sponsored through orchestra guilds or endowments.¹

Adult musical groups in the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, area which were disbanded during the period since 1925—one chorus and one band—ceased to exist because the members found other means of recreation which offered diversified entertainment whenever the financial condition allowed. The musical groups were formed during times that were unsound economically, and were disbanded when prosperity was at hand.

Increased transportation facilities and the proximity of St. Louis, Missouri, were the causes of some music dealers going out of business. Some new establishments spring up

¹Statement by Max Steindel, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis, Missouri, in personal interview.
from time to time and exist for a while, but the ability of
the nearby St. Louis dealers to cut prices and deliver
quickly forces them to close. The older, established dealers
in the community survive.

It seems that the best chance for success in musical
services in the community lies in instrument repair. Few
good repairmen are available, and the costliness and time
required to send instruments to St. Louis or the factory for
repair are discouraging.

It is the writer's conclusion that the Alton-Wood
River, Illinois, area is a growing community in offering
opportunities for musical participation. This industrial
center, on the average, has better schools, larger increase
of church attendance, and more cultural and civic pride,
than most cities of its size according to a statement made
by the Greater Alton Association of Commerce.
TABLE I

COMPARISON OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUSICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE ALTON-WOOD RIVER, ILLINOIS, AREA IN 1925 AND 1954

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<td>School Orchestras</td>
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<td>Repair Shops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music Stores</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Teachers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concert Associations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
QUESTIONNAIRE

Opportunities for Musical Participation in
the Alton-Wood River, Illinois, Area

Name of company, corporation, or industry.

__________________________________________

Is there a musical organization connected with or sponsored
by your company, corporation, or industry? (Yes)____(No)____

Name of organization_____________________________________

When was the organization formed?____________________19___

When was the organization discontinued?______________19___

Reasons for discontinuing_________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Date_____________19___

Alton, Illinois

June, 1954
BIBLIOGRAPHY
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Steindel, Max, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis, Missouri--Statement, May, 1954.