

Old band concert days recalled by Anna Hiner

Almost 50 Easter Sundays have gone by since Anna Hiner and her late husband, Dr. E. M. Hiner, came to Highland Park, bringing with them an era of stirring band music that marched impressively through the twenties and thirties.

Widowed and ill, Mrs. Hiner lives with some lively memories, set to the score of Sousa, as she recuperates from a siege of flu, complicated by a heart attack.

She's back at home now after being hospitalized and all the friendly "ghosts" are there to greet her at the unique cobblestone house (that looks as if it had come from a Grimm's fairy tale). Located on North Figueroa directly across the street from Sycamore Grove (once the site of the most impressive band concerts in the city) it was the mecca of many a famed musician, most notably John Philip Sousa who always stayed with the Hiners when he visited Highland Park.

It was generally believed that Sousa's visits were strictly musical in motive, but the great band leader once confessed that it was "Mrs. Hiner's spaghetti that really drew him to Highland Park." Sousa also considered Anna Hiner "our greatest dramatic soprano and dedicated his composition, "The American Girl," to her.

In fact, Sousa was so much a part of the home that the Hiners named it "Sousa's Nook," in his honor.

Early Days

Dr. and Mrs. Hiner had made Sousa's acquaintance back in the early days when they established a band headquarters and music studio in Kansas City, Mo.

Dr. Hiner also conducted the third regiment band in Kansas City for 27 years. With this band they toured the United States which brought about one of the many highlights of the Hiner career. Dr. Hiner was selected to play in the White House for President and Mrs. McKinley. Mrs. McKinley presented the musician with a bouquet of flowers, which he pressed and treasured for years.

Dr. Hiner, who also conducted the seventh regiment band and was director of the Kansas City Municipal Band, had one of the largest collections of band music in the world and willed it to the central Kansas City Library.

During the Spanish-American War, Dr. Hiner was chief musician of all Army bands.

Firemen Heroes

Still full of the zest for living and keeping the memories of the old bandstand days always in mind, Mrs. Hiner has not lacked for excitement. She credits the local firemen with saving her home from destruction and more recently arriving just in time to answer her emergency call for oxygen.

By an amazing coincidence, the St. Luke's Hospital heart specialist who was also instrumental in saving Mrs. Hiner's life, told her that as a boy he had delivered bottled water to the home and still remembered that Dr. and Mrs. Hiner's thrilling band concerts had been one of his greatest experiences.