Clara Louise Kellogg (1842-1916), soprano whom many scholars credit with being the first American singer to gain international recognition as an artist of the first rank, headed the Kellogg Concert Company which toured Kansas in the 1880's. The above concert program for November 17, 1883, which the company presented at the Grand Opera House in Topeka, received mixed reviews in the Kansas capital. The soprano is pictured in a costume for the role of Aida.
GRAND OPERA IN KANSAS
IN THE 19TH CENTURY
HARLAN F. JENNINGS, JR.

I. HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

A PROFESSIONAL grand opera troupe first appeared in Kansas in 1869, when Indians and buffalo still roamed the western part of the state. Within 10 years the Indians had been consigned to reservations, and the buffalo were gone; but grand opera was about to emerge as the state's most prominent art form. During the better part of the 1880's, professional grand opera companies took center stage in the cultural life of the larger eastern Kansas communities. People on the frontier wanted to prove that they were as civilized as their compatriots in the East. They also wanted to demonstrate to the surrounding towns that their particular city was destined to become the state's leading cultural center. The most effective way of satisfying these desires was to import an opera troupe.

Of primary importance for the advent of opera in Kansas was the development of the railroads. Since the 1850's, traveling opera companies had paid occasional visits to Chicago and St. Louis. One reason that they had not ventured further west was the lack of adequate transportation. In the late 1860's, the availability of rail service made Kansas accessible to the various professional troupes that toured nationally, and by 1873 there was a network of rail lines connecting all the major cities in eastern Kansas.

Opera attracted a good deal of newspaper attention. Lionized by the press, prima donnas captured the imagination of the Kansas public and held court backstage or in their hotel rooms. Attendance was generally good, despite the higher admission prices charged for operatic events. Opera quickly became fashionable and was patronized by the so-called "elite." An opera performance, therefore, constituted one of the most important events of the social season.

As is the case today, people attended opera performances for various reasons. There was probably the usual assortment of husbands in attendance at the insistence of their wives, and many came to be seen or because there was nothing better to do, as is evident from an eyewitness at the Minnie Hauk concert given in Topeka on November 30, 1883:

It was my misfortune to attend one of those shows put down upon the bills as a "Classic Opera." Everybody said it would be the most fashionable attraction of the season, that everybody would be there, and so I went. I do not like operas, but I suppose there were others there besides me who did not like them, but merely went to see and be seen. I saw a number there whom I know could not whistle "Yankee Doodle," but they cheered when the others did, and when someone would ask them if that wasn't fine, they would look wise and say it was "perfectly grand," though I'll bet all I can borrow that they couldn't have told whether the man singing had a bass or a soprano voice. Operas, I have learned, are not made to be heard; people merely go to see who is there and what they wear, and the singing is kind of thrown in.

Aside from the snobs and the curious, however, there were certainly a great many who came because they enjoyed good singing and wanted to hear the best artists available.

There were various inconveniences associated with a visit to the opera house. First of all, there was heat. Since the season at opera houses opened near the end of August or the first week of September, and ran until late May or early June, patrons and performers alike occasionally suffered from indoor temperatures as high as 90 degrees. There were complaints about insufficient ventilation: "People have patiently listened to good performers ... while they mopped their faces and longed for some rule of society whereby they might dispense with coat and vest." Sometimes the ventilation was too good, as when a reviewer was offended by unpleasant odors arising from the alley next to Topeka's Crawford Opera House. In the winter the lack of heat could cause equal discomfort. Opera houses were heated by one or more basement furnaces, but evidently these did not always function efficiently. Another source of unpleasantness was rain. Most streets were not paved; consequently, any substantial amount of precipitation would turn them into seas of mud. Pickpockets were also a problem.

2. Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, May 27, 1880, p. 3.
3. Kansas avenue, Topeka's main street, was not paved until 1887.

(67)
Audiences demanded frequent encores, especially at concerts. The popularity of encores was partly an effort on the part of audiences to get their money's worth, but it was also simply part of the common practice of the period. Concert programs were arranged accordingly. A prima donna at the head of her own concert company might program herself for only three selections, knowing that she would end up singing five or six. Audiences liked to hear familiar songs (they still do today). Perhaps the only way most members of an audience could truly appreciate a good voice was to hear it attempt a well-known melody. Among the favorites were “The Last Rose of Summer,” “Home, Sweet Home,” “Coming Through the Rye,” and “Way Down Upon the Swanee River,” all guaranteed to bring tears and hearty applause. Since these selections were not vocally taxing and were what the audience had been waiting to hear, the encore system was popular on both sides of the proscenium.

Operas were performed in either the original language (usually Italian, since Italian opera was the most popular) or in English. Kansas audiences generally preferred the latter:

The only drawback to us, about the whole performance was that so much of the singing was in Italian, instead of plain English. We like sweet sounds, but our early education in music was so limited that we need the words to interpret the sentiment.4

Audiences had other preferences besides English and familiar ballads. They expected good, realistic acting, and were disappointed when performers made only half-hearted attempts at characterization:

To say that the “fire and ardor of his action is as great as it was twenty years ago” [a reference to the review in the Commonwealth], is sheer nonsense. . . . If it shows “fire and ardor” in a great singer to stand up and stare off between the flies with exactly the same expression when he is angry and jealous that he wears after he finds that Leonora is dying and is true to him, and [n]ever make a motion until she falls against him, then Brignoli is as of old, but not otherwise, for he is stupidly undemonstrative.5

The penchants for English and believable acting both demonstrate that Kansans were as sensitive to the dramatic as to the musical aspects of opera. This concern for the drama can further be seen in the critical attitude taken by reviewers towards performers who were not physically attractive or convincing on stage, and many reviews contain uncomplimentary references to fat or awkward singers, both principals and choristers. Some critics found the “trouser role” convention difficult to accept, claiming, for instance, that it marred the dramatic credibility of a role like Siebel in Faust. In brief, audiences wanted to hear opera sung in their own language and to see it acted convincingly by attractive performers.

II. OPERA HOUSES

In the late 19th century, the term “opera house” had a much broader meaning than it does today. It was probably a euphemism for the word “theater,” given the attitude of the religious community towards theatrical undertakings and theaters themselves. This attitude was not entirely without justification, in view of the fact that during the third quarter of the 19th century, the building that housed a local theater also frequently contained a saloon. Since opera was considered to be a more respectable form of human endeavor, the term “opera house” was conveniently assigned to buildings that were used for various kinds of entertainment, a distinct minority of which were actually operatic undertakings. In fact, real opera was never performed at the majority of these so-called opera houses.

From 1880 to 1900 there were 50 to 100 opera houses in regular use throughout the state, featuring both professional and amateur talent.

The average seating capacity of opera houses built in the 1870’s was 600 to 900. These were generally two-story structures, with the theater on the second floor and a hotel, drugstore, or other place of business on the first floor. Opera houses built in the 1880’s in the more populous cities were frequently three- and four-story structures with balconies and a capacity for 1,000 or more patrons.

The interior design and appointments of opera houses showed great variation. Some contained one or two balconies, box seats, raked auditorium floors, permanent seating in the parquet, and ornate walls and lighting fixtures. Others merely had plain walls of painted plaster and straight wooden chairs. Some theaters lacked proper dressing rooms, a condition which required that costume changes be made backstage, perhaps behind some makeshift

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5. Topeka Daily Capital, October 11, 1880, p. 4.
partition. Most opera houses in Kansas were not constructed with fly lofts for flying scenery. Scenic changes were effected by means of roll drops and sliding wings. All opera houses were lit by gas until electricity began to be used in the mid-1880’s. Limelight illuminated the characters on stage. Basement furnaces provided heat, which was carried upward into the house by way of air ducts. Although drop curtains customarily depicted some kind of landscape, a few enterprising managers rented space on the house curtain for advertising, a practice which offended the aesthetic sensibilities of some patrons.

The fare at opera houses ran the gamut of entertainment. Dramatic presentations ranged from Shakespeare to sentimental melodrama and farce. “Spectacular plays” were also popular. These achieved their impact through unusual scenic effects, including the use of animals. Referring to a production of “Calamity Jane,” the Lance reported that “among other attractions, the company has a pack of wolves, two bears, a poney, a donkey, and a full cornet band.” In addition, there were minstrel shows, operettas (especially Gilbert and Sullivan, which was always popular), variety or “specialty” shows, lectures, magic shows, medicine shows, elocutionists, concerts, and light operas featuring juveniles or midgets.

III. TOURING COMPANIES AND THE TOURS

THERE WERE two kinds of professional traveling companies that furnished Kansas with opera: concert companies and full-fledged opera companies. From the 1870’s to the 1890’s, it was the custom for a prima donna who had achieved stardom with a large company, such as that of James Henry Mapleson, to ally herself with an impresario and form her own opera troupe or concert company, which would then tour not only the large cities but also the smaller towns which could not support huge companies like Mapleson’s. The small opera and concert companies that toured Kansas in the late 19th century were nearly all in this category.

It was normal procedure for impresarios to ask for a guarantee from the local opera house. Emma Abbott’s manager, who also doubled as her husband, was paid $1,500 for her two appearances in Topeka in January, 1880. In October of the same year, Topeka manager L. M. Crawford was able to engage Abbott for three performances for a $1,500 guarantee. For six performances in 1882, the rival Grand Opera House offered Abbott’s manager the first $3,000 in box office receipts, with the provision that any income above this amount would be divided according to a sliding scale. This scale, which proved to be financially disastrous for the house, increasingly favored the Abbott company with each increment above $3,000. In 1883 the managers of the Grand guaranteed Abbott $2,000 for two performances. In 1885 the Grand management entered into another disastrous bargain, this time with Mapleson, to whom they promised 95 percent of the receipts, which totaled $2,096. On behalf of the impresarios, it should be stated that they were often forced to require large guarantees because of their contracts with the likes of Adelina Patti. In 1884, when Kansas City and St. Joseph, Mo., wanted to hear Miss Patti, Mapleson asked for $6,000 from each city. This was not unreasonable, since he was paying Patti $5,000 per night, but the guarantee was not forthcoming.

In the late 19th century, travel lacked some of the comforts and conveniences which we now take for granted, and it offered the prospect of adventures which are mostly unavailable today. Touring in Missouri, Clara Louise Kellogg once found herself on the same train with Jesse James. Another time her train had to run the gauntlet of gunfire from strikers in the railroad yards at Dayton, Ohio.

Trains were not equipped with dining cars and usually did not stop long enough to allow passengers to find a restaurant. According to Miss Kellogg, both food and water on the frontier were less than appetizing: “When I first beheld Missouri water I hardly dared wash in it, much less drink it.” The competency of doctors was also suspect. Kellogg’s mother, who accompanied Clara Louise on her tours, served as the company physician. As dressing rooms were frequently dirty, Kellogg insisted on having them cleaned before she would occupy them. In some instances, she found it necessary to dress in her hotel room.

En route between performances, artists passed the time sleeping, studying their music,

reading, conversing, or playing cards. Whist and poker were especially popular.

Concert companies presented individual arias, duets, or other solo ensembles in concert style, and sometimes rendered entire scenes or acts with costumes, scenery, and staging. All such performances had piano accompaniments. A typical troupe comprised three or four singers of different voice categories, as well as a pianist. The company would travel with one or two pianos, plus costumes, scenery, and properties—if staged operatic scenes were part of their repertoire. Traveling expenses were not excessive because there were relatively few people in the company and there was little baggage.

Although there were several so-called opera companies operating in Kansas in the 1880’s, only two of these troupes actually presented grand opera: the Emma Abbott Grand English Opera Company and Her Majesty’s Opera Company, the latter managed by the British impresario James Henry Mapleson. Both of these companies were considerably larger than the aforementioned concert companies, since they traveled with chorus, orchestra, principals, and enough baggage to mount several full-length grand operas. Mapleson’s 1886 troupe comprised 160 people. The Abbott troupe, though much smaller, still included 30 choristers, 10 instrumentalists, and a dozen principals.

During the decade of the 1880’s, the following operas were given at least one complete performance in the state of Kansas: Carmen, Faust (four performances), Linda di Chamounix, Lucia di Lammermoor (four performances), Mignon, Rigoletto, Gounod’s Romeo and Juliet, La sonnambula, and Il trovatore (three performances). In addition, concert companies presented scenes from most of these works. The Kansas public was exposed to still more repertoire through arias and larger excerpts from the following operas: Attila, The Barber of Seville, La Cenerentola, Il crociato in Egitto (Meyerbeer), Dinorah (Meyerbeer), Don Giovanni, Don Pasquale, Emani, La favorita, Der Freischutz, La Juive, Lakmé, Lohengrin, Lucrezia Borgia, The Magic Flute, Manon, Mefistofele (Boito), Norma, La perle du Brésil (Félicien David), Robert le diable, Tancred (Rossini), Tannhäuser, and La traviata.

Considering the grueling performance and travel schedules maintained by road companies, it is remarkable that so few performances were cancelled. In extreme cases, some of the concert companies were performing five nights per week, each night in a different town. This often entailed boarding a train after each performance and spending the night traveling to the next city on the schedule, where a performance would be given the following evening, and so forth. In other cases, the principal soprano or tenor of a regular opera company might be required to sing major roles in three or four full-length operas on successive evenings. Emma Abbott, for instance, sang the leading roles in Martha, Faust, and Linda di Chamounix on three consecutive nights in Wichita in 1887. Of all the concert or grand opera performances given in Kansas in the late 19th century, a few were cancelled for reasons of finance or transportation, but none for reasons of illness or some other indisposition.

The rigors of travel, combined with such a heavy schedule, must have caused a certain amount of wear-and-tear on the voices. Unfortunately, we cannot know for certain because no recordings were made. But if the reviewers of the time are to be believed, most of the voices held up surprisingly well.

IV. Operatic Ventures in Kansas Prior to 1880

BEFORE considering specific performances, it would be well to list, on a city-by-city basis, those theaters which housed opera presentations between 1869 and 1880.

In Atchison, all opera performances and concerts took place at Corinthian Hall, located on the west side of Fourth street, between Commercial and Kansas avenue. The theater, which opened its doors for the first time on December 12, 1870, had a seating capacity of 800. Unfortunately, the stage was rather small, making it unsuitable for scenes involving large sets or great numbers of people. It was still in use in the 1880’s.

What was known as the “old opera house” was in operation in Leavenworth in the 1860’s. Located on the second floor of a building at the southwest corner of Delaware and Fourth streets, the theater was used continuously until the “new opera house,” situated on the south side of Shawnee between Fifth and Sixth, was erected by a stock company at a cost of
$20,000. The New Opera House opened for business in December, 1880.

There were two opera houses in Lawrence. Frazer’s Hall, in operation by the mid-1860’s, was on the second floor of a building next to the Eldridge Hotel. Liberty Hall, standing on the northeast corner of Massachusetts and Winthrop streets, opened in 1870. The Bowersock Opera House, which housed most of the city’s attractions in the 1880’s, was built on the site of Liberty Hall and opened September 18, 1882.

The building with the most interesting history was probably Costa’s Opera House in Topeka, located on the east side of Kansas Avenue, between Sixth and Seventh streets. The original structure dated from 1861. On March 26 of that year it served as the meeting place for the first Kansas house of representatives. It continued to serve as the site for legislative sessions in 1862 and 1863. Thereafter the building was used for various purposes. For a while it was a post office. During another period it was a general store. Lorenzo Costa, an Italian butcher, purchased the building in 1870 and remodeled it. On one side of the ground floor was Costa’s butcher shop. The other side contained a stairway leading to the auditorium on the second floor. Patrons had to enter through a door at the side of the stage, in full view of the audience, rather than at the rear of the auditorium. The opera house first opened for business January 12, 1871. Another Topeka structure, Union Hall, located on Kansas avenue between Fifth and Sixth streets, was occasionally used for concerts in the 1870’s.

The year 1869 witnessed the first opera performance in Kansas. A company headed by the Italian tenor Pasquale Brignoli performed at Frazer’s Hall in Lawrence on May 29 (only six years after Quantrill’s raid) and at the Leavenworth Opera House May 31. Aside from Brignoli, the company consisted of Marie Louise Durand, soprano; E. Petrilli, baritone; Sig. Sarti and Sig. Locatelli, basses; and Sig. Stefanone, music director. All had been recruited from New York City.

The opera was Don Pasquale, sung in Italian with piano accompaniment. Naturally, the choral sections were omitted. The “Tower Scene” from Trovatore was added for good measure. Reserved seats were $1.50, general admission, $1.00. By all accounts, the opera gave complete satisfaction. The Kansas Daily

8. Legend has it that the Russian Grand Duke Alexis, returning from a buffalo hunt in western Kansas (where he was escorted by William F. Cody and George Custer), was entertained with opera selections at Costa’s on the evening of January 22, 1872. This story, however, seems to have no basis in fact, as the Grand Duke had left town on a 5:00 p.m. train. There was an afternoon banquet given in honor of the Grand Duke at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, but copies of the program, as well as newspaper accounts of the occasion, make no mention of any operatic performance.

9. Pasquale Brignoli (1824-1884), a popular singer at the New York Academy of Music, had come to the United States in 1855 under the auspices of the impresario Maurice Strakosch and had sung with Adelina Patti at her debut in 1859. This was the first of several Kansas appearances for Brignoli over a 13-year period.
Tribune reported that "the hall was filled with the most accomplished citizens of Lawrence and Ottawa. . . . All expectations were fully realized." 10

The Brignoli troupe returned in the fall, performing at Lawrence November 8 and Leavenworth November 9 and 10. This time Isabella McCulloch was the soprano. A contralto, Antonietta Henne, had joined the company, and a certain A. Susini had replaced Sarti as one of the basses. P. Giorza was the pianist.

The Lawrence performance was essentially a concert. Part 1 consisted of operatic selections. Part 2 comprised the first act of Lucia di Lammermoor. The "Garden Scene" from Faust, in costume, made up part 3. This program was repeated at Leavenworth November 9. The following evening the Brignoli "combination" (19th-century parlance for "troupe") presented Rossini's Barber of Seville. The opera was sung in Italian with piano accompaniment. By necessity the production must have omitted the chorus and a couple of minor characters. Regardless of these deficiencies, there were frequent encores, and several bouquets were tossed upon the stage during the performance. In a typical expression of frontier civic pride, the Leavenworth Times and Conservative proudly exclaimed: "Leavenworth appreciates a good opera troupe. . . . The taste for opera is as strong here as in New York." 11

On December 18, 1869, the Mendelssohn Quintette Club of Boston visited Leavenworth. Touring with the Quintette was an American soprano, Jennie Busk, who had studied at the Leipzig and Paris conservatories. One of her selections was "Bel raggio," from Rossini's Semiramide, which she encored with "Comin' Thro' the Rye." The same program was given at Frazer's Hall in Lawrence on December 20 and at Union Hall in Topeka December 21.

Nearly four years elapsed before opera was heard again in Kansas. In June, 1873, as part of a farewell tour across America, the English soprano Anna Bishop gave concerts at Liang's Hall (on the northwest corner of Fourth and Delaware streets) in Leavenworth, June 5; Corinthian Hall in Atchison, June 6; Costa's Opera House in Topeka, June 7; and Liberty Hall in Lawrence, June 9. Supporting Madame Bishop were the English tenor Alfred Wilkie and the American pianist Frank Gilder. In all four cities general admission was 50 cents; 75 cents was charged for reserved seats. The Topeka press provided the most complete account of the concert. According to the Commonwealth, the program included "Ahi Come, Rapids," from Meyerbeer's Il crociato in Egitto, and "Home, Sweet Home," both sung by Madame Bishop; the duet from Linda di Chamounix, "Da quel di che t'incontrai," performed by Madame Bishop and Wilkie; and Lionel's song from the third act of Martha, "Ah, So Fair."

In the late summer and early fall of 1874, two opera companies visited Kansas. The first was the Redpath English Opera Company, which presented Martha in Leavenworth, Atchison, and Topeka on September 5, 7, and 8, respectively. There was no chorus or orchestra for these performances. On October 27 and 28, the Adelaide Phillips Grand Italian Opera Company gave The Barber of Seville at Leavenworth and Atchison, respectively. The troupe played before packed houses in both cities.

The Redpath English Opera Company revisited Kansas in 1875, presenting Martha on August 30 in Atchison and September 1 in Leavenworth. The latter city heard the company in Flotow's The Spectre on September 6, and Topekans witnessed the same work two days later.

In 1876 Payson's English Opera Company gave Leavenworth a double bill on September 15—The Love Test by Gounod and F. Hervé's Vertigo. They returned to Leavenworth September 23 to give Martha. Two days later the Gounod/Hervé bill was presented in Lawrence.

Thereafter operatic activity ceased until March, 1878, when the Ilma di Murska Concert Company performed in Topeka, March 7, and Leavenworth, March 12. 12 In addition to the prima donna, the troupe included G. W. Rossini, tenor; Cornelius Makin, bass; and John T. Hill, violinist and pianist. Unfortunately, the newspapers do not mention the titles of any of the selections which were sung.

There were two further operatic events in

12. Ilma di Murska (1836-1889), a Croatian dramatic soprano, was a student of Mathilde Marchesi in Paris before her Florence debut in 1862.
Kansas prior to 1880, both of which advanced the cause of opera because of the immense publicity which they generated. The central figure in all the headlines was a dark-eyed soprano who possessed the magical name of Patti. When the newspapers had finished their task, much notoriety and glamour had been added to the prima donna legend in the minds of Kansans.

Carlotta Patti (1835-1889), older sister of the immortal Adelina, was a fine coloratura soprano in her own right. Although lameness prevented her from participating in opera, she nevertheless became a successful concert artist. During November and December, 1879, she undertook a concert tour of the Midwest, which brought her to Leavenworth November 28 and Topeka December 16. On November 26, after traveling from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., she arrived much fatigued for a concert in Kansas City, where her voice nevertheless exhibited "marvelous compass, clearness and flexibility."12 On the following day, instead of being allowed to rest, she had to journey to St. Joseph, Mo., for another concert. Patti and her troupe reached Leavenworth on the afternoon of the 28th, but were unable to obtain a meal at the hotel until just before the concert. Thus she arrived at the concert tired, unsettled, hoarse, and possibly ill, for she had to cancel a subsequent concert in St. Louis because of illness, and was still suffering from a cold two weeks later in Chicago. Consequently, she did not sing well:

Patti's troupe was excellent; but Patti herself was not what the people expected. True, it was apologetically urged that she was very much fatigued with her journeying; but people who pay for a star at star prices expect to have the star shine as brilliant [sic] as advertised.13

On November 30, the day after this review appeared, Thomas Roscoe, manager of the Leavenworth Opera House, declared in an interview that Patti was drunk before, during, and after the concert, and the Leavenworth Times printed an editorial which included the following statement:

Carlotta Patti . . . appeared on the stage so much under the influence of liquor that her singing was a failure, and it appears upon inquiry that she indulged in a regular drinking carouse at her hotel after the concert. Such conduct on the part of persons who advertise to entertain the public in first-class style, at exorbitant prices, is inexcusable, and if Patti cannot control her appetite she should retire from the platform. When people pay a dollar and a half a ticket to hear good singing they have a right to expect and to demand something better than a drunken woman's maudlin mediocrity.16

The Leavenworth Times telegraphed its version of Patti's conduct to the Associated Press. A minor sensation resulted, as the story was pounced upon by the Atchison, Lawrence, and Kansas City newspapers. Still, the scandal might have been confined to northeastern Kansas, with no further damage to Madame Patti, had not the St. Louis Post-Dispatch published the accounts, which were later reprinted in various Eastern newspapers. The Post-Dispatch article coincided with Patti's arrival in St. Louis. Either out of concern for her reputation as an artist or an awareness of the financial resources of the Post-Dispatch, Carlotta Patti filed a suit for libel against the paper on December 2, asking for $25,000 in damages.

The result was a publicity agent's dream. From the end of November, 1879, to mid-January, 1880, the story of Patti's alleged intoxication and the proceedings of the libel suit were carried by all the major newspapers in northeastern Kansas. The scandal spawned a certain amount of controversy between Leavenworth and Topeka as to which city was the most appreciative of cultural events, provoked angry criticism of the Topeka Commonwealth by the Leavenworth Times, and ensured that Patti's second Kansas appearance, at Topeka in mid-December, would be a sellout.

On December 4 the Leavenworth Times carried the following editorial, which accused the Commonwealth of being dishonest with the citizens of Topeka:

It seems that Patti has not yet recovered from her "illness"—indeed, she has had a relapse, and was so "ill" at St. Louis Monday night [December 1] that the concert had to be postponed.

A statement of Patti's condition when she appeared . . . in this city, . . . was telegraphed to the associated press, and if the papers of St. Louis had a tittle of the "independence" that they boast of, they would have published it, and thus have saved the people of that city a disappointment.

At the time the dispatch reached Topeka the sale of seats had not commenced. . . . But the editor of the Commonwealth quietly put the telegram in his pocket, and his

13. Kansas City (Mo.) Times, November 27, 1879, p. 5.
15. Ibid., November 30, 1879, p. 4. Later in the article it was alleged that "after the concert . . . seven quarts, a 'batfull' of macaroni and the Lord knows what other things were washed down by the madame with two bottles of beer and several glasses of claret."
readers, believing that they were going to hear a first class
musical entertainment, bought all the seats in the
house. . . . When the concert is over, and the people
see what a fraud has been practiced upon them, can the
Commonwealth be held guilless of participation in the
swindle? We believe it is a newspaper's duty to tell the
truth."

The Topeka press was favorably disposed
towards Patti from the beginning, and could
not resist a bit of self-righteous ridicule of
those newspapers which had been outspokenly
critical of her:

Topeka don't go back on Patti yet a while, all the Mis-
souri Valley and a few other cheap outside papers, to the
contrary notwithstanding. All the late publications derog-
atory to the character of the lady have only served to
increase the eagerness of Topeka citizens to see and hear
her. They propose to show her that there is one spot in
the great west where fine singing is appreciated. The chart for
reserved seats to the great concert was opened at 8 o'clock
this morning and such a grand rush as there were for seats
has never before been seen. Before 7 o'clock the pavement
was covered with a crowd eagerly waiting for the house to
be opened and gradually freezing to death.

It makes no odds whether St. Joe, Leavenworth and
Kansas City liked her singing or not, Topeka will give her a
manly hearing just the same."

Interviewed in Chicago December 10, where
she was quite hoarse and suffering from a cold,
Patti remarked that although she had been ill,
she had sung in Leavenworth at the insistence
of the Opera House manager, who had claimed
that he would be ruined if she did not appear.
Patti stated that she knew nothing of the alle-
gations of intoxication until she arrived in St.
Louis, where she saw the story, in large head-
lines, printed on the front page of the Post-
Dispatch.

With the local newspapers carrying daily
front-page accounts of depositions being taken
in St. Louis, Carlotta Patti arrived in Topeka
December 16 for her concert, which, in the
words of the Capital, "was a grand success.
Mme. Carlotta sang splendidly, and she was
sober." 18

The Topeka Monday Club had decorated the
Opera House stage for the concert. Various
local firms had contributed furniture and drap-
eries. A stage setting depicting an English
drawing room, with a library and a bay win-
dow, had been devised. A locomotive head-
light was used to illuminate the bay window,

17. Ibid., December 4, 1879, p. 2.
Seating capacity of the new Crawford Opera House, Topeka, was 1,000 and the acoustics were said to be excellent. There were two balconies and four upper and lower boxes. Advertising called it the “parlor opera house of the West.” This photograph was taken about 1900.

“which produced a fine effect.” On the stage were two Chickering pianos, a grand and a square, which traveled with the Patti company. Patti appeared with her husband, Ernest de Munck, cellist; Henry Ketten, pianist; Theodore Toedt, tenor; and Sig. Ciampi-Cellaj, baritones; and a certain Mr. Owen, accompanist. On the program were two unnamed Verdi arias, sung by Madame Patti, both of which were encored. Toedt sang an aria from Mignon, and the performance concluded with Patti and Ciampi-Cellaj singing a duet from one of Donizetti’s operas.

During the course of the performance, Patti read a telegram from her lawyers in St. Louis, which stated that the Post-Dispatch would agree to an out-of-court settlement. Patti then turned to the audience and declared: “No compromise!”

In Topeka, at least, such defiant words fell on sympathetic ears. As the Patti troupe traveled westward to San Francisco, the legal proceedings dragged on, with testimony being taken in Leavenworth and St. Louis. In the latter city, on December 15, Patti’s manager, maid, and accompanist had all testified that her use of alcoholic beverages never exceeded that of a modest amount of wine at dinner. C. A. Chizzola, Patti’s manager, stated in his deposition that, for the purpose of aiding Patti’s hoarseness, he had sent out for a hot brandy with sugar and water, but that Patti had not drunk it. In depositions taken December 16, it was stated that (1) Roscoe, manager of the Leavenworth Opera House, was in the ticket office during the entire concert and therefore could not have seen Patti at all, and (2) in singing the “Laughing Song” it was necessary for Patti to contort her face.

In Leavenworth, Prof. Carl Hoffman, a local musician and an agent for the Chickering Piano Company, entered the following testimony:

I heard Patti sing, or attempt to sing, on the occasion referred to. She acted very strangely. . . . I think her singing was a regular farce. . . . I telegraphed Chickering & Co. to cancel their contract with the Patti troupe. . . . I was completely disgusted with the whole performance, from top to bottom.”

J. H. Brooks, bill poster and janitor of the Leavenworth Opera House, gave the following deposition:

I saw four glasses of liquor brought into the Opera House that evening. . . . In two cases the liquor was Scotch whiskey. I brought one glass. Demunick [De Munck] ordered it. He told me to bring it for Patti, and to bring Scotch whiskey; he told me to tell the bar tender to make it stronger than before. I saw the drink prepared myself. It was what I would call a “bouncer.” . . . I carried the liquor into the theater, and put it on the table in front of Patti; I asked her if that was strong

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., January 6, 1880, p. 1.
enough; she tasted it and said "That's better." The four drinks I saw were placed on the table in front of her. They were all drunk between 8 and 10 o'clock; I thought she was very drunk; her drunkenness was the subject of remark by all the help on the stage; the amount of liquor she ordered and drank would make me pretty damned drunk.

Who was telling the truth? Was Patti drunk at the concert or not? The key to the scandal may lie in an article that appeared in the Leavenworth Times, December 7, 1879:

Owing to our criticism of the opening night performance, the managers of the new theatre seemed to think that we were in some manner prejudiced against their enterprise, and desiring to disabuse their minds on this point the proprietor gave explicit orders to have "a good report of the Patti concert," even though it should not come fully up to public expectation. The entertainment, so far as Patti was concerned, was a miserable failure; and on the way home Mrs. Anthony declared that it would never do to let The Times endorse that as a first-class musical entertainment.

The Times goes on to state that Mrs. D. R. Anthony, wife of the owner and editor of the Times, "dictated the criticism of the entertainment which appeared next morning." The paper further remarks that "the facts in regard to the drinking were not known by us till the next day, and consequently were not published till the second morning after the concert."

Assuming that Patti was innocent, given the information quoted above, it would be possible to construct a scenario for the origin of the intoxication rumor. The facts of the case appear to be these: (1) Patti was fatigued and probably ill. She did not sing well. (2) Her manager did order a hot brandy for her, which was brought backstage, and she was seen partaking of wine during her meal at the hotel. (3) Her facial contortions during one of her numbers and her lameness could both have given the impression that she was inebriated. (4) The managers of the Leavenworth Opera House were under a good deal of pressure to obtain a favorable review, in order to improve their standing in the community. (5) Mrs. Anthony, wife of the owner and editor of the Times and a prominent arbiter of local artistic taste, was displeased with the concert. Considering the circumstances just listed, one could conclude that the intoxication story might have been fabricated as a convenient face-saving device. At any rate, on January 13, 1880, Patti, now in San Francisco, decided to abandon the libel suit, stating that the damage which she had sustained was irreversible.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Patti incident points up the fact that audiences in the late 19th century were as demanding as audiences today. For years, it would seem, star performers have been expected to perform flawlessly, concert after concert. Then, as now, a prima donna could not afford to give a bad performance. Such nights are always remembered, while the many good performances are more easily forgotten, by both the press and the public. The 19th-century performer ran a greater risk of having an "off night" than the artist of today. His travel schedule was more rigorous and unpredictable, and he performed more often than his modern counterpart.

V. GRAND OPERA IN KANSAS IN THE 1880'S

IN THE 1880's, grand opera was presented in Kansas according to two basic formats. There was a continuation of the concert format with piano accompaniment, featuring individual numbers or larger excerpts. Entire scenes or acts were sometimes presented with scenery and costumes. The second format was something new to Kansas: complete productions of operas, with scenery, costumes, chorus, and orchestra. No longer were entire operas presented with piano accompaniment and without chorus.

There were two companies which were responsible for bringing complete productions of grand opera to Kansas: the Emma Abbott Grand English Opera Company, which appeared in Kansas in every year but two, 1881 and 1888, and Her Majesty's Opera Company, managed by the British impresario James Henry Mapleson, which came to the state in 1885 and 1886. As the title of the company would suggest, the Abbott productions, with the exception of one or two mixed-language performances, were given in English. Mapleson's operas were all sung in Italian.

Five cities—Atchison, Lawrence, Leavenworth, Topeka, and Wichita—were the centers of operatic activity in the 1880's. Atchison, however, did not actually hear a complete performance of a grand opera during the decade, unless an 1883 performance of Martha by the Abbott troupe is counted as such. Wichita, well

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23. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
behind the other four cities in population at the beginning of the decade, did not witness a complete opera performance until 1887. Of the five cities, Topeka was certainly the most active with regard to opera and, indeed, with respect to all types of theater.

The heyday of opera in Kansas lasted from 1880 through 1886. From 1887 to the end of the decade and beyond, there was a general decline in operatic activity over the state, for reasons which will be discussed later.

No sooner had Carlotta Patti departed than Topekans were thrilled by the announcement of a pending visit by the Emma Abbott company, which would provide the city with its first “season” of grand opera in English, January 5-6, 1880. The local press boasted that Topeka was the only city in Kansas included on the Abbott itinerary, and that the city was rapidly becoming the cultural center of the West. Originally the works to be presented were Paul and Virginia (Paul et Virginie, 1876) by Victor Massé and The Chimes of Normandy. Subsequently it was announced that Gounod’s Romeo and Juliet would be given in place of Paul and Virginia, much to the displeasure of one patron:

I hope my protest may not be understood to be given in any spirit of opposition to the proposed opera season... It may justly be a subject of pride to us that the largest English opera troupe in the country... can be handsomely sustained in Topeka for a season of two nights. But I continue to protest against the substitution of “Romeo and Juliet” for “Paul and Virginia.” Dramatically, “Romeo and Juliet” has been burlesqued in negro minstrelsy, and rendered trite by cheap theatrical companies. If a change must be made... by all means let us have “Faust.”

Emma Abbott, born in Chicago in 1850, was the daughter of a music teacher. In the late 1860’s, she wandered through Michigan and surrounding states, giving impromptu performances with her voice and guitar at various hotels. In Toledo she came to the attention of Clara Louise Kellogg, who found a teacher for her in New York. In 1872 she traveled to Milan, where she continued her studies with Sangiovanni. Her operatic debut, as Marie in Daughter of the Regiment, occurred at Covent Garden in 1876, and the following year she made her American debut at the New York Academy of Music. According to Oscar Thompson, Abbott was never accepted as a great artist by the New York critics, but she was always popular with audiences.

The Emma Abbott Grand English Opera Company was organized in 1878 under the management of C. D. Hess. The following year Abbott’s husband, Eugene Wetherell, took over management of the troupe. Aside from an orchestra of 10 players and a small chorus, the personnel for the 1879-1880 tour were Emma Abbott and Marie Stone, sopranos; Pauline Maurel and Zelda Seguin, contraltos; William Castle, Tom Karl, and Wallace Temple, tenors; Edward Seguin and Alonzo Stoddard, baritones; W. H. MacDonald and Ellis Ryse, basses; Caryl Florio, musical director; and A. W. Tams, stage and chorus director. The company numbered about 50 people in all. The repertoire for the 1879-1880 season comprised the following operas and operettas: Carmen, Daughter of the Regiment, Faust, Lucia, Martha, Mignon, Rigoletto, Romeo and Juliet, Trovatore, Bohemian Girl, Chimes of Normandy, Fra Diavolo, Maritana, Paul and Virginia, The Rose of Castile, and The Star of the North. For 12 seasons, from 1878 until Abbott’s death in Salt Lake City in January, 1891, the Abbott troupe toured extensively across America. Just how extensively can be seen in the following figures: the 1880-1881 season comprised 35 weeks, including a four-week residence at the Fifth Avenue Theater in New York; the 1882-1883 season was equally ambitious, with 35 weeks, 280 performances, and 21 different operas.

On January 5 and 6, 1880, the Abbott company performed for the first time in Topeka. There was a full house for Romeo and Juliet. Special trains brought patrons from Atchison, Lawrence, and Emporia. The round-trip fare of $1.75 included the price of admission. As an added convenience, all trains returned to their original points of departure immediately after the performance.

It goes without saying that the opera was enthusiastically received. The Commonwealth

28. William Castle, born in England in 1836, grew up in Philadelphia and made his operatic debut in 1864. He was one of the first tenors to sing the roles of Faust and Romeo in America, and was a mainstay of the Abbott company. Tom Karl, a native of Ireland, was a member of Parepa-Rosa’s English Opera Company and one of the original members of the Boston Ideal Opera Company. He was also associated with the National Opera Company during its first year of existence, 1886.
stated that Abbott sang the role of Juliet with great "energy and feeling" and praised her as a "matchless actress." William Castle, who sang Romeo, also received acclaim:

Mr. Castle is certainly the greatest actor, in this style, upon the stage. ... With his wonderful dramatic powers he presents a real lover with all his tenderness and bravery. Mr. Castle's magnificent physique is another and potent assistant in his difficult role. He has no equal in the art of love-making.

The Abbott season did not incur a deficit. There was no difficulty in paying Abbott's manager the $1,500 fee stipulated in the contract. In summing up the brief season, the Capital remarked: "The pleasure ... afforded by the opera ..., cannot be estimated to those who hunger and thirst for good music and good playing, and who so rarely have such an opportunity for gratification." The following day the newspaper predicted that "the season of the Emma Abbott English Opera just closed will ..., help to create a demand in this city for the best entertainments that pass between the great eastern cities and San Francisco." 31

The Capital's predictions would prove to be correct. But first a larger stage and a more commodious auditorium would need to be constructed. Some steps in this direction were taken by a shrewd young businessman, L. M. Crawford, who realized that a propitious moment was at hand to make a profit as an opera house proprietor. He purchased Costa's Opera House and accompanying lots for $20,000 in April, 1880.

Since Crawford was probably the most prominent figure in Kansas theater in the late 19th century, a brief account of his career is in order. During the 1860's, Crawford was first a printer's devil and then became state printer. His theatrical career began in the 1870's, when he initiated the practice of billboard advertising for theater troupes. Later he acquired the rental rights for Union Hall, which he rented for $15 per night, before adopting the more profitable percentage system. His purchase of Costa's Opera House soon led to similar purchases in Atchison, Leavenworth, and other nearby cities. Before the end of the 1880's, Crawford had become a powerful and controversial man:

30. Capital, January 6, 1890, p. 4.

L. M. Crawford ... has absorbed the management of the Warder Grand at Kansas City. This makes him the largest theatrical manager in the west. ... He now has the Warder Grand at Kansas City; Tootle's opera-house at St. Joe; the Grand opera-house, Omaha; Funke's opera-house, Lincoln, Neb.; Crawford's opera-house, Leavenworth; Price's opera-house, Atchison; the new Crawford Grand at Wichita; new opera-house, Arkansas City; new opera-house at Winfield; Love's opera-house, Fremont, Neb.; Crawford's opera-house, Topeka. These opera-houses Mr. Crawford owns or leases and has under his exclusive control. Besides them, he books attractions for over thirty-five opera-houses in Kansas and Nebraska, practically managing them. He can play an attraction for five or six weeks over his circuit and has a very large amount of the show business for two states. 32

At the peak of his power, Crawford owned and controlled a series of opera houses from St. Louis, Mo., to El Paso, Tex., and enjoyed a virtual monopoly over the theatrical business in those states comprising his circuit.

Crawford experienced some difficulty in assuming control over his new property. Although he was entitled to take possession on May 1, 1880, Crawford was denied the keys to the establishment by the former manager of Costa's, a Mr. Miller, who hoped to induce Crawford to purchase some scenery and other items in the theater.

At 7:00 a.m. on the morning of May 3, Crawford, accompanied by half a dozen men, appeared at the opera house and demanded entrance from Constable Vanderpool, who had been stationed inside by Miller. When Vanderpool refused, Crawford's men battered down the door with a large stone and entered the building. Crawford then showed his papers to Vanderpool, who acknowledged Crawford's right to possession and withdrew. When Miller arrived later in the morning, he found the opera house occupied by Crawford and his employees, who were calmly eating breakfast. Realizing that "possession is nine points of the law," Miller retired from the field.

Crawford immediately set about the business of renovating the old hall, at an estimated cost of $5,000. Joseph Hart, an artist from Chicago, was hired to paint new scenery and a house curtain depicting the Bay of Naples. Gas lighting emanated from 36 wall brackets and a "handsome chandelier." There were four private boxes, a parquet, a dress circle, and two galleries. The seating capacity was 1,200. The theater, now called the Crawford Opera House,
opened September 8, 1880, with a production featuring local talent.

In October, Crawford engaged the Abbott company to give three operas for a fee of $1,500. Season tickets were priced at $3. Reserved seats for a single performance were $1.50. General admission was $1.00 for the main floor and first balcony, 50 cents for the gallery. The Union Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railways ran special trains at reduced fares for the benefit of opera patrons living in other communities in northeastern Kansas. The pending opera season received the usual generous amount of newspaper coverage, the Capital going so far as to print a lengthy synopsis of each opera. The works chosen by Abbott were Carmen (given only five years after its world premiere), October 8; Trovatore, matinee, October 9; and Faust, evening, October 9. The following casts were announced: Carmen—Zelda Seguin, Carmen, William Castle, Don José, and Alonzo Stoddard, Escamillo; Trovatore—Julia Rosewald, Leonora, Pauline Maurel, Azucena, Pasquale Brignoli, new to the Abbott troupe, Manrico, and Alonzo Stoddard, Count di Luna; Faust—Emma Abbott, Marguerite, William Castle, Faust, Alonzo Stoddard, Valentine, and Lithgow James, Mephistopheles.

Cries of protest arose when it was realized that Abbott would sing only one performance. It was explained that her contract allowed her to sing only five performances a week, and that she would have sung four prior to her arrival in Topeka. Eventually a compromise was reached which partially assuaged the disappointment of her fans. It was agreed that Abbott would give her famous rendition of the “Mad Scene” from Lucia prior to the Carmen performance.

Carmen received mixed reviews. The Capital reported that the opera “was thoroughly enjoyed from beginning to end by the spellbound audience,” and singled out the choruses as being particularly memorable. On the other hand, the Commonwealth critic complained that the role of Don José did not afford William Castle much of an opportunity to display his vocal talents. The reviewer continued with the following assessment of the opera:

The opera of “Carmen,” while presenting many of those features which make up a popular opera, cannot be said, however, to take hold on the popular taste and awaken enthusiasm. The music reminds one of an unsuccessful effort to do something after the Wagnerian school. Nevertheless, the piece as a whole gave good satisfaction.

In the reviews of Trovatore and Faust, which appeared the next day, there was again disagreement between the two newspapers. But this time the difference of opinion centered on the artists rather than the repertoire. It was the Commonwealth’s turn to sound a positive note. Both of its reviews were entirely favorable, and it fairly gushed over Emma Abbott’s performance in Faust:

Of all the difficult roles in opera none is more so than that of Marguerite. . . . And it may well be doubted if Miss Abbott has a greater role than this one. The characterization she gives it is a new creation of itself intensifying that of the poet and of the composer.

The reviewer of the Capital seemed to have a different impression of Abbott’s performance, remarking that Marguerite was not Abbott’s best role, that she would be more convincing in a role “displaying a purer and more simple passion,” such as Virginia in Paul and Virginia. He further complained that the role of Siebel lacked dramatic credibility when portrayed by a woman. However, he reserved his most severe criticism for Brignoli, who, though vocally imposing as Manrico, was castigated for his poor acting.

Both newspapers had words of praise for Crawford’s efforts in securing the Abbott engagement. In summarizing the season, the Capital determined that Trovatore, with its beautiful music, expressive singing, and elegant costumes, gave the most satisfaction of the three operas presented. In fact, if Topekans had a favorite opera in the 1880’s, it was probably Trovatore.

In the fall of 1880, the future of opera in Topeka looked bright indeed. However, the prospects dimmed considerably on December 2, when an early morning fire destroyed the Crawford Opera House. Only part of the loss was covered by insurance, but the enterprising Crawford was not discouraged and borrowed $20,000 to rebuild. Two days after the fire, Crawford had secured the Congregational Tabernacle for his winter bookings, and a week of benefit performances, with the proceeds in-

33. Capital, October 9, 1880, p. 4.
34. Commonwealth, October 9, 1880, p. 1.
35. Ibid., October 10, 1880, p. 1.
tended for the new opera house, had been arranged by a group of local actors.

In mid-January, 1881, the Maria Litta Concert Company toured Kansas.36 On the itinerary were Atchison, January 12; Topeka, January 14; Emporia, January 15; and Lawrence, January 17. Unfortunately, the newspapers made little reference as to what was on the program, save for mentioning an aria from Tamerlano, which was probably "Tacea la notte placida," and the ever popular "Last Rose of Summer.

The concert was favorably reviewed in all cities except Atchison:

The people were disappointed in the Litta concert last night. The prima donna sustained her splendid reputation throughout, but the company was poor, and of unfavorable dress and appearance. Miss Hattie McClain, advertised as a phenomenal contralto, is an indifferent public singer, and in addition to this her appearance on the stage was the subject of involuntary and smothered giggling, in spite of the general well-behaved character of the audience. Miss McClain is very fat, and we doubt if the dress-maker lives who can make a suit of clothes to fit her. . . . H. L. Cleveland is a tenor about equal to the best one in Atchison. . . .7

In Lawrence the audience seemed intent on getting their money’s worth. The program of 13 numbers was applauded so vigorously that an entertainment of 25 numbers resulted, counting the encores. The only complaint was "that so much of the singing was in Italian, instead of plain English." 38

At Topeka the Litta concert, as well as Crawford’s other bookings for the winter and spring, took place at the Congregational Tabernacle, which Crawford had leased for a period of one year, ending in December. This arrangement, however, was challenged on March 22, when Lewis Bodwell, owner of the land on which the tabernacle was situated, filed suit to enjoin the use of the building for theatrical purposes. Because of the deliberate pace of the court proceedings, Crawford was able to retain the use of the building until his spring season had been completed. By autumn a new opera house was ready, and he no longer needed the tabernacle.

The New Crawford Opera House, built on the old site, opened September 5, 1881. The first floor of the building housed a saloon-

36. Maria Litta (1858–1883), an American soprano, was a student of Pauline Viardot before Mapleson hired her for his 1876 season at Drury Lane, where she was known by her maiden name, Marie von Ebner. Her American debut occurred in Boston in 1879.
The Grand Opera House, Topeka, exterior view, right, and interior, below, was built at a cost of $60,000 by a stock company organized in 1881. It had a capacity of 1,500, which one local newspaper claimed was the largest in the West. The building, located on the west side of Jackson street, between Sixth and Seventh streets, is still standing. It is listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places and has been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. At left is the Grand Opera House program for a concert given in 1884 by the Emma Thursby Concert Company, featuring an American soprano who sang several operatic selections with piano accompaniment.
billard hall and a restaurant, the latter managed by Crawford. On the second floor the section of the building closest to the street was divided into hotel rooms. The rear of the second story, 90 feet in length, comprised the auditorium and the stage. There were two balconies and four upper and lower boxes. The proscenium opening had been widened from 24 to 26 feet, and was 30 feet high. Ten dressing rooms were located under the stage. The walls of the auditorium, instead of being painted, were now covered with fresco paper. The hall was lit by gas chandeliers, but electricity was promised as forthcoming. Patrons were to be seated on folding opera chairs. The seating capacity was now 1,000. The acoustics were reportedly excellent.

Some Topekans, however, still were of the opinion that the city needed a more elegant, spacious theater to lure the finest road companies then available, and to enhance the prestige of the community. In the autumn of 1881, a stock company was formed for this purpose. In less than a year Topeka had a new theater, known as the Grand Opera House. Built at a cost of $60,000, the Grand had a capacity of 1,500 seats, which the Lance claimed was the largest in the West. There were four proscenium and two side boxes, along with a parquet and two balconies. The stage measured 60 by 67 feet, with a proscenium opening 35 feet wide and 38 feet high. Just off stage were two finely appointed star dressing rooms. Six others were located under the stage. The building, located on the west side of Jackson street, between Sixth and Seventh streets, is still standing and serves as a movie theater.

The final operatic chapter for the year 1881 concerns the Kellogg Concert Company, headed by a soprano whom many scholars credit with being the first American singer to gain international recognition as an artist of the first rank.

Clara Louise Kellogg, born in Suntermville, S. C., in 1842, studied for four years at the New York Academy of Music before making her debut there in 1861 as Gilda in Rigoletto. Her European career began under the auspices of Mapleson at Her Majesty’s Theatre in London, where, on November 2, 1867, she was heard as Marguerite in Faust. From 1873 to 1877 she toured the United States with her own English opera company, presenting many of the standard works in the vernacular. According to Oscar Thompson, Kellogg was “capable of light coloratura parts as well as of more dramatic roles such as the then new Aida.”

In addition to the roles previously mentioned, Kellogg’s repertoire included Amelia in Ballo in maschera, Lucia in Lucia di Lammermoor, Violetta in Traviata, Rosina in The Barber of Seville, Leonora in Trovatore, Amina in Sonnambula, and both Zerlina and Donna Anna in Don Giovanni.

In the fall of 1881, Kellogg’s company included Clara Poole, contralto; Pasquale Brignoli, tenor; Tagliapietra, baritone; T. Adamowski, violinist; S. Liebling, pianist; and Adolphe Glose, accompanist. The company traveled with a Weber concert grand piano.

The cities visited by the Kellogg troupe were Atchison, December 7; Leavenworth, December 8; and Topeka, December 9. Admission prices were higher than usual. Two dollars was charged for reserved seats, instead of the customary dollar and a half.

The troupe garnered favorable reviews in each city, but the most complete account of the concert was provided by the Leavenworth press. It is assumed that the same program was rendered in all three cities. Kellogg’s first number was “Tacea la notte placida” from Trovatore, which received two encores, the second of which was “Comin’ Thro’ the Rye.” Part 2 of the program opened with a trio from Verdi’s Attilla, which was probably “Te sol, te sol quest’anima,” from act 3. A quartet from Martha closed the program.

One of the most extensive opera seasons ever given in the state took place at Topeka from September 11 to 16, 1882. After a year’s absence from Kansas, the Emma Abbott Opera Company returned to open the Grand Opera House with a week of performances, rendering the following works: September 11, La sonnambula; September 12, The Colleen Bawn; September 13, King for a Day; September 14, The Chimes of Normandy; September 15, Lucia; September 16, Martha (matinee) and Fra diavolo (evening; Rigoletto had originally been scheduled).

The week must have been exhausting for Emma Abbott, who sang every night: Amina in Sonnambula, Eily O’Connor in Colleen Bawn.

Nemea in *King for a Day*, Mignonette in *Chimes*, Lucia in *Lucia*, and Zerlina in *Fra diavolo*.

Abbott’s company for the 1882-1883 season included Maria Hindle and Julia Rosewald, sopranos; Clara Weber, mezzo-soprano; Lizzie Annandale, contralto; Victor Beaumont, William Castle, and Valentino Fabrini, tenors; William Broderick and Alonzo Stoddard, baritones; and John Gilbert and August Hall, basses. In addition, there was a chorus of 30 and an orchestra of 10.

The opening of the Grand naturally called for a good deal of self-congratulation on the part of the local citizenry. Of interest in this respect is the subsequent excerpt from the dedicatory speech delivered by John Martin:

> [Construction] was pushed forward to completion with the energy and zeal so peculiar to the western man, who builds a house in a day and a city in a month. . . . This enterprise, like all other useful ones, has had its season of sunshine and storm; but the sunshine finally came to remain, and with it grew into life and beauty the splendid temple we now behold; and henceforth it shall be the home and abiding place of that “concord of sweet sounds” made sacred by the lives and labors of Haydn and Handel, Mozart and Meyerbeer, and Rossini and Bellini; and upon its stage shall be presented the purest and best literature of the Drama. And to those uses and purposes I now dedicate it.  

Emma Abbott then came before the curtain to announce a change of bill from *King for a Day* to *Sonnambula*, because of the illness of William Castle. Abbott remarked that she regarded *Sonnambula* as a more proper dedicatory piece, and “put herself en rapport with the audience at once by her artlessness, and by saying that she considered it a great honor to open such a splendid opera house.”

If at this point the performance was not already assured of success, such was certainly the case after Abbott came before the curtain between the second and third acts to sing “The Last Rose of Summer.”

The other leading roles in *Sonnambula* were assumed by Hindle, Fabrini, and Stoddard. Needless to say, the reviews were favorable.

The production of *Lucia* was also well received by the critics. Aside from Abbott, the cast included Fabrini as Edgar, Stoddard as Ashton, and Gilbert as Bide-the-Bent. Comparisons between tenors were inevitable: “Fabrini sings his part like a master of the art but in his love-making he lacks the superb fire and grace of Castle.” The review praised the chorus for its work but noted that they “will be better as they learn to get on without their by-play with each other.”

Despite competition from the opening of the Kansas State Fair and from Crawford’s Opera House, where the Fay Templeton Company was giving operettas nightly at prices slightly under those at the Grand, the Abbott week was a financial, as well as an artistic success. The gate receipts totaled $10,000.

On October 13 and 14, the Abbott troupe appeared in Leavenworth, where they presented *Lucia*, *Bohemian Girl*, and *King for a Day*.

The final operatic event of the year was the return of the Kellogg Concert Company, which performed at Wichita, December 4; Topeka, December 5; Leavenworth, December 7; Lawrence, December 8, a city which had heard Remenyi and Oscar Wilde earlier in the year; and Emporia, December 9. Kellogg’s personnel included three members of her 1881 troupe, Brignoli, Adamowski, and Glose, and two new singers—J. Dickerson, contralto, and L. G. Gottschalk, baritone. Excerpts from acts 1 and 4 of *Trovatore*, in costume, were on the program, as well as an aria from *Lucrezia Borgia*, which was probably the contralto *brindisi* “Il segreto per esser felici.”

At Leavenworth the opera house, though supposedly heated by two basement furnaces and four registers, was uncomfortably cold, as was the reception given Kellogg by one of the local papers. After remarking that the troupe was not well known in the West, an interesting comment in view of the fact that the company had visited the city only 12 months earlier, the *Times* made an even more astounding statement:

> The former [Kellogg] possesses a fine, sympathetic voice which entrances the audience, and with the cultivation of dramatic accompaniment she is bound to achieve great success upon the stage, though she can never become phenomenal.

Perhaps it would have been wise for this reviewer to follow the approach taken by the critic of the Fort Scott *Daily Monitor*, who, in

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41. Ibid.
42. *Capital*, September 16, 1882, p. 4.
43. Ibid.
44. Leavenworth *Daily Times*, December 8, 1882, p. 4.
reviewing a concert by Minnie Hauk, another internationally known diva, remarked: "Criticism here of artists of such widely extended reputation is out of place." 45

Prima donnas and other elevated members of the opera-singer species have not always been known for their generosity and good will towards their fellow artists, nor have their patterns of behavior exhibited a marked tendency towards altruism or self-effacement. As luck would have it, this variety of the species was no stranger to the prairies of Kansas.

The Kellogg troupe encountered internal difficulties in Lawrence. Brignoli, miffed because the company manager had registered the troupe at the Eldridge Hotel under the title of the Kellogg Concert Company, instead of the Kellogg-Brignoli Concert Company, became indisposed and refused to take part in the concert. It was necessary, therefore, to make wholesale revisions in the program. The two Trovatore scenes which had been staged had to be omitted; only Kellogg's "Tacea la notte placida," sung in concert style, could be salvaged. The Lucrezia brindisi was also retained. New to the program were the Nancy-Plunkett duet from Martha, sung by Dickerson and Gottschalk, Figaro's aria from The Barber of Seville, and a Dickerson-Gottschalk duet from La favorita, which was probably "Quando le soglie staranno varcate" from act 2. The program ended with a trio from Martha.

The manager of the opera house, Bowersock, was able to obtain a certificate from a local doctor, which he read to the audience prior to the concert. It stated that Brignoli was in bed with a cold and unable to sing.

Before the evening was over, there was more trouble, but this time the problems were of a financial nature. During the performance the manager of the troupe, Bechert, went to the box office to collect his percentage of the receipts. He was informed by Bowersock that his agreement was with Crawford, who had arranged the concert tour. Bowersock therefore turned over the receipts to Crawford. When Crawford agreed to pay Bechert after the concert, the performance, which had been delayed, was allowed to continue. However, at midnight Crawford left for Topeka with all the receipts.

In a letter to the Lawrence Daily Journal, written several days later, Crawford explained his actions. According to him, Bechert had wanted to divide the proceeds in conformity with a previous contract which had been voided by mutual consent. Crawford, who stated that he had made a separate contract for the Lawrence concert with one of Bechert's agents in Topeka, then offered to settle with Bechert according to this agreement. Bechert refused. Crawford, having, in his own words, dealt honestly with Bechert, then departed for Topeka with the funds. Crawford concluded by saying that he was still ready to settle accounts with him.

What had otherwise been a good year for opera in Kansas closed on a sour note. In mid-December it was announced that the famous Swedish soprano Christine Nilsson would give a concert in Topeka on December 27. Despite high ticket prices of one to four dollars, there was an advance sale of $2,000. However, on December 24 Henry Abbey, Nilsson's manager, telegraphed from Denver to say that Nilsson would not appear in Topeka after all. Denver patrons had offered her $8,000 to remain an extra day.

In February, 1883, Kansans had the opportunity of hearing a former resident of the state, now a reigning prima donna. Born in New York City in 1852, Minnie Hauk grew up on a farm at Sumner, between Atchison and Leavenworth. Her mother managed a boarding house adjacent to a steamboat landing on the Missouri river. Minnie's father decided to seek his fortune elsewhere, and designed a houseboat for a voyage to Louisiana, by way of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. En route their boat was rammed and sunk by a river steamer, but they were rescued and eventually reached New Orleans, a city soon engulfed by the Civil War.

When the battle for New Orleans was over, Minnie, then 12 years of age, appeared on a benefit concert for war sufferers, singing "Casta diva," from Norma. Impressed with her performance, wealthy members of the audience determined to send her to New York. Thus Minnie embarked on still another adventure, sailing from New Orleans to New York through the Union blockade during the closing months of the Civil War.

At the age of 14, Minnie Hauk made her debut at the Brooklyn Academy of Music,
singing Amina in La sonnambula. She sang Juliet on November 15, 1867, approximately six months after the world premiere in Paris. By the age of 17, Minnie had sung in London, Paris, Vienna, and Moscow.

Mapleson engaged her for the London premiere of Carmen in April, 1878, and she is generally credited with establishing the popularity of the opera after its relatively unsuccessful beginning. Until 1886 she toured the United States as a regular member of Mapleson’s company, for whom she sang the title roles in two American premieres—Carmen, in October, 1878, and Manon, in December, 1885. During the 1890-1891 season, she appeared at the Metropolitan Opera, but was not rehired because of a dispute with the management. Thereafter she toured at the head of her own opera company before retiring to Lucerne, Switzerland, with her husband, an Austrian baron.

Regarding her voice, Herman Klein, London critic and voice teacher, stated that “it was not remarkable for sweetness or sympathetic charm, though strong and full in the medium register.” 46 Hauk sang all the soubrette and lyric soprano literature of the day, including the role of Cherubino, which nowadays is usually assigned to a mezzo-soprano.

Hauk’s itinerary in February, 1883, included the following cities in Kansas and western Missouri: Leavenworth, February 10; Kansas City, February 12 and 14; Atchison, February 15; Lawrence, February 16; Topeka, February 17; and St. Joseph, February 18. Her supporting artists were Miss St. John, contralto; Augustino Montegriffo, tenor; Mr. Strini, baritone; and Constantine Sternberg, pianist.

At Leavenworth the program included two arias from Mignon. “Connaiss-tu le pays?” and the “Styrienne,” both sung by Hauk and both probably rendered up a whole step in the customary transpositions for soprano. She encored the Mignon selections with “Comin’ Thro’ the Rye” and “Home, Sweet Home,” accompanying herself at the piano for the latter. A duet from Boito’s Mefistofele, the Azucena-Manrico prison duet from Trovatore, and staged, costumed excerpts from the first two acts of Carmen were also part of the evening’s entertainment.

The above notwithstanding, the Times regarded the program as being “rather of a popular nature.” Considering Minnie Hauk’s qualifications and the fact that she was more or less a home-town girl, the Leavenworth paper was less than courteous:

To place Madame Hauk with the leading artists of the day certainly trespasses on the confines of truth; in fact, it borders [sic] on the ridiculous. . . . On the whole, it was a fair entertainment, but it was not a $1.50 concert.”

Elsewhere, however, the critics were more appreciative. In Atchison the audience and the performers overcame several obstacles in order to produce a satisfying evening. First of all, there was the weather. En route to the theater, patrons had to wade through a good deal of mud; and a thunderstorm raged during the performance. Secondly, out of necessity the troupe had a new Knabe piano for the occasion, the old one having fallen through a trap on the stage in Kansas City. Finally, because of the small size of the Corinthian Hall stage, the Carmen scene had to be omitted.

Hauk and her troupe met with an enthusiastic audience—Hauk herself was recalled four or five times after each of her numbers. Perhaps the company had taken some of the Leavenworth criticism to heart, for in Atchison prices for the best seats were reduced from $1.50 to $1.00. Hauk was paid approximately $500 for the performance.

With ticket prices reestablished at $1.50 for the parquet, the Hauk Concert Company next invaded Topeka, where they were again triumphant. The program was somewhat altered from previous concerts. Selections from Martha and Bohemian Girl were added, and there were two duets from Trovatore and two Lohengrin arias. The latter, sung by Hauk, must have been Elsa’s two arias—“Einsam in träben Tagen” from act 1, and “Euch Lüften die mein Klagen” from act 2. Hauk also sang “La Styrienne.” Counting her three Carmen arias, Hauk appeared on the program eight times. As in earlier concerts, when recalled by the audience she responded with familiar ballads, seating herself at the piano for one of them.

In March the Emma Abbott Grand English Opera Company toured Kansas for the third time. There was only one grand opera per-

47. Leavenworth Daily Times, February 11, 1883, p. 4.
the former manager, having been relieved of his duties for reasons of financial incompetence. In the eyes of the stockholders, Crowther's gravest error had been his failure to show a substantial profit during the Abbott engagement of September 11-16, 1882, a week during which the box office receipts had exceeded those of any previous week in Topeka's theatrical history.

After the close of the 1882-1883 season, the stockholders decided to take control of the opera house. While Crowther was away, they changed all the locks. But the resourceful Crowther managed to enter the locked house through the coal bin and a manhole, and systematically replaced the new locks with the old. The stockholders then regained possession by evicting the caretaker. This second attempt to rid themselves of Crowther was successful.

Unfortunately for the stockholders, Crowther had a contract for two years. He therefore filed suit for $12,500 in damages in September, 1883, and won a settlement of $4,500. He also turned over all of his bookings for the coming season to L. M. Crawford, manager of the rival opera house. Faced with the prospect of an idle house, the Grand stockholders succeeded in obtaining the assistance of Corydon Craig, manager of the Gillis Theater in Kansas City, who was able to arrange a respectable season of attractions, including appearances by Clara Louise Kellogg and Emma Abbott. Nevertheless, the receipts for the entire 1883-1894 season amounted to only $15,076, a figure too low to provide the stockholders with a profit.

The Kellogg Concert Company visited Kansas for the third consecutive year in the fall of 1883, giving performances at the Leavenworth Opera House on November 16 and at Topeka's Grand Opera House on November 17. Assisting Madame Kellogg were Alta Pease, contralto; P. Ferranti, baritone; J. F. Rhodes, violinist; Teresa Carreno, pianist; and Adolphe Glose, accompanist. The program included "O mio Fernando" from La favorita and "Di tanti palpiti" from Rossini's Tancredì, both sung by Miss Pease; "Casta diva" and the Mignon polacca, rendered by Madame Kellogg; and a duet from Don Pasquale, probably "Pronta io son," sung by Kellogg and Ferranti.

In Leavenworth the audience was not large. The troupe was favorably reviewed, however.
Perhaps by way of atonement for its remarks of the previous year, the Times stated: "Miss Kellogg is well known here. . . ."

In Topeka there was some disagreement regarding the vocal prowess of Madame Kellogg. The Capital reported that "her voice has lost none of its sweetness since her former appearance here. . . ." 46 The Lance, on the other hand, after noting that "Miss Kellogg . . . wore fifteen separate pieces of diamond and emerald jewelry," remarked that Kellogg's voice was "perceptibly breaking and broadening, and is not as delightful as it was a few years ago." 50 The review continued with the following comment:

She sang but two numbers in English, "The Lord and the Lady," and "Some Day," greatly disappointing the audience, and favoring them with "Last Rose," "Swanee River," or one of the old favorites. 47

In less than two weeks, Leavenworth and Topeka heard another diva with international credentials, as Minnie Hauk visited the cities for the second time that year. On this occasion Madame Hauk had in tow Pauline Sali, contralto; Augustino Montegrillo, tenor; Sig. De Pasqualis, baritone; and pianists Guarro and Constantine Sternberg.

The concert program included the following operatic selections: "Ai nostri monti" from Trovatore, sung by Sali and Montegrillo; the Lionel-Plunkett duet from Martha, sung by De Pasqualis and Montegrillo; "Connais-tu le pays?" from Mignon, rendered by Madame Hauk; and "Largo al factotum" from The Barber of Seville, sung by De Pasqualis. Part 2 of the program was devoted to the second act of Favorita, given with costumes and scenery.

At Leavenworth, where Minnie Hauk had received such cold treatment from the press earlier in the year, the reception was possibly a degree or two warmer, but still well below the freezing point.

The Minnie Hauk concert was attended by a small but very appreciative audience. The madame sang her solos with good taste and expression showing a careful training, although her voice is considerably worn and about a tone below pitch. Of Mlle. Sali and Sig. Montegrillo we cannot say much, as they are not above the ordinary. Sig. De Pasqualis is a magnificent baritone. His rendering of "Figaro" was nearly perfect. The quartette was not what could be asked for, as the voices did not blend at all [a reference to the quartet that ends the second act of Favorita]. . . .

Adding insult to injury, the Leavenworth Times reinforced the negative criticism which it had printed 10 months earlier:

Mme. Minnie Hauk sang to a very small audience at the opera house last evening, and, as she has made no noticeable improvement since her last appearance in this city, it was as much as she deserved. Mme. and Mlle. Sali and Sigs. Montegrillo and De Pasqualis were somewhat applauded. . . . In the third [second] act of Donizetti's "La Favorita," the acting was very stiff and not calculated to please. Leavenworth is not a Minnie Hauk town.

In Topeka the performance at the Grand Opera House on November 30 was attended by Governor Glick and other state dignitaries. A full house greeted Madame Hauk, who was asked to encore each of her numbers. One of her selections was "Swanee River," which met with "storms of applause." De Pasqualis, recalled after his rendition of "Largo al factotum," elected to sing the aria a second time. Still another encore was the "Miserere" from Trovatore, sung by Hauk and Montegrillo. In reviewing the performance, the Lance expressed the feelings of most Topekans: "Altogether, the Minnie Hauk concert company . . . is an admirable combination of lyric artists, well worthy of the praise they are receiving."

Compared to the previous year, there was a slackening of operatic activity in Kansas in 1884. Nevertheless, thanks to the Emma Abbott troupe, three complete grand operas were given during the year. Two of these, Rigoletto and Mignon, were new to the Kansas public.

Arriving in carriages and streetcars, an overflow crowd gathered at the Grand Opera House in Topeka to hear Rigoletto on March 24. The title role was assumed by a new member of the Abbott company, Tagliapietra. Valentine Fabrini was the Duke. As Gilda, Emma Abbott received several encores, and at the request of the audience she came before the curtain after the conclusion of the opera to sing "Home, Sweet Home."

Among the local critics, there was a division of opinion regarding the success of the newly

48. Ibid., November 17, 1883, p. 4.
49. Capital, November 18, 1883, p. 7.
50. Lance, November 24, 1883, p. 8.
51. Ibid.
52. Leavenworth Evening Standard, November 30, 1883, p. 4.
54. Lance, December 8, 1883, p. 8.
heard opera. The *Capital* took a positive
stance:

"Rigoletto" is a pleasing opera and one well adapted to
the strength of the Abbott company. The music is of the
purest and most exalted type, in strict consonance with the
story it interprets. . . . The title role introduces Sig.
Tagliapietra in his greatest character and affords ample
scope for his rare vocal gifts and accomplished acting."

Not everyone, however, was pleased with the
opera:

The opera of *Rigoletto* was quite a disappointment to the
majority of the audience, in that it was not thoroughly
understood, and possessed but few bright passages. Tagliapietra, Fabrina, and Miss Abbott were in excellent voice,
but the first named sang wholly in Italian, and the others
did likewise with some of their solos, much to the disappoin-
tment of those who expected English opera.65

On March 25 the Abbott troupe gave a perfor-
mance of *Maritana* at the Bowersock Opera
House in Lawrence before moving on to Leav-
енworth, where they presented matinee and
evening performances of *Lucia* and *Mignon*,
respectively, on March 26.

The Leavenworth Opera House, which had
recently come under Crawford's management,
was well filled for both operas. Julia Rosewald
had an especially busy day, singing the title
role in *Lucia* in the afternoon and returning in
the evening to sing Filina. Emma Abbott
appeared in the role of *Mignon*, presumably
singing the two arias in the customary trans-
positions for soprano. The reviews in both the
*Standard* and the *Times* were favorable, but
the former provides a glimpse of the public's
admiration for Abbott's interpretive style and
sterling reputation:

[Mignon] affords an opportunity for those pathetic bits
of song and acting in which Abbott is especially strong. On
several occasions last evening she was rapturously en-
cored. . . .

The long and arduous season which the company has
had has told on all of them, and not the least upon Abbott
herself, whose honesty will not allow her to save herself to
the disappointment of her audience. . . . 66

Several concert companies, featuring lesser-
known sopranos, toured Kansas in 1884. On
February 20 the Emma Thursby Concert
Company appeared at the Grand in Topeka.
Thursby sang the "Serenade" from Meyer-
beer's *Star of the North*, "Le chant du misoli" from Felicien David's *La perle du Brésil*, and
the "Bell Song" from Lakmé. Another member
of the troupe, tenor Russell S. Glover, sang
"Elle ne croyait pas" from *Mignon*.

A fairly extensive tour of the area was un-
tertaken by the Abbie Carrington Concert
Company during the fall of 1884. The troupe
visited Topeka, September 29 and October 4;
Kansas City, September 30 and October 1; Fort
Scott, October 2; Emporia, October 3; Parsons,
October 14; Lawrence, October 16; and possi-
bly other communities in eastern Kansas. The
October 4 performance at Topeka's Grand
Opera House featured "O mio Fernando," "Quella o quella" from *Rigoletto*, and act 2 of
*Faust*, in costume (Sali sang both Marthe and
Siebel), according to the reviews. Not men-
tioned in the newspapers but on the printed
program were the *Mignon* polonaise and the
bass aria from act 1 of *Lucrezia Borgia*, "Vieni:
la mia vendetta."

As far as Topeka opera-goers were con-
cerned, the highlight of the 1880's was the
February, 1885, visit of the most illustrious
opera troupe then on tour, Her Majesty's Opera
Company, managed by James Henry Maples-
son. Since the 1878-1879 season, Mapleson
had toured the United States with a veritable
galaxy of opera stars. The 1885 tour was his
second venture west of the Mississippi river.
His roster for the season included the sopranos
Adelina Patti, Emma Nevada, Minnie Hauk,
and Louise Dotti, as well as the contralto Sofia
Scalchi.

At first it was announced that Mapleson's
company would perform *Rigoletto*. Many To-
pekans had not taken kindly to this opera when
first exposed to it in March of the previous
year, and a cry of protest arose:

We regret that *Rigoletto* is to be produced by the com-
pany. It is only a one "part" opera, and does not show the
company at its best. We had *Rigoletto* once upon a time,
and we pray the Lord will spare us this affliction. . . .

Because of the public outcry, Mel Hudson,
manager of the Coates Opera House in Kansas
City, who was acting as booking agent for the
Grand, negotiated with Mapleson for a change of
bill. It was subsequently announced that
*Trovatore* would be substituted for *Rigoletto*.

Ticket prices for the Mapleson engagement
were higher than those for any previous oper-
In 1883 Kansans had the opportunity of hearing a former resident of the state, then a reigning prima donna. Born in New York City, Minnie Hauk (1852-1929) grew up on a farm at Sumner, between Atchison and Leavenworth. By the age of 17, she had sung in London, Paris, Vienna, and Moscow. Mapleton engaged her for the London premiere of Carmen in 1878, and she is generally credited with establishing the popularity of the opera after its relatively unsuccessful beginning. Her Kansas appearances in February, 1883, included Leavenworth where the Times' review of her program was less than kind, considering Minnie Hauk's qualifications and the fact that she was more or less a hometown girl. This photograph of the soprano in the role of "Carmen" is reproduced courtesy of the Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.
atic entertainment. Boxes sold for $2.00-$3.00. Reserved seats were priced at $2.50. General admission ranged from $2.00 to 75 cents, depending on the location. Seats went on sale at 9:00 a.m., February 13, at Barnes and Sim's Drug Store.

Mapleson's cast was as follows: Leonora, Louise Dotti; Azucena, Sofia Scalchi; Manrico, Franco Cardinalli, De Pasqualis sang both the Count di Luna and Ferrando, indicating that Mapleson had doctored the score somewhat. There was a large orchestra and chorus. Prompters made their first appearance in the state, and Kansans witnessed their first ballet, since a ballet sequence, featuring Malvina Cavallazzi, was included in the performance.

On February 18, 1885, there was standing room only at the Grand. In the audience were Gov. John Martin and other dignitaries. The performance began at 8:30, half an hour late. Despite the late start and the length of the opera itself, which had been increased by the addition of the ballet, the audience requested several encores. "Il balen del suo sorriso," "Di quella pira," and the "Misere" were all repeated, as were the Azucena-Manrico duet and Leonora's "Prima che d'altrui vivere" in the prison scene.

The reviews, of course, were favorable. The Capital stated that Dotti's voice was "very pleasing, a clear, rich soprano under excellent control." Cardinalli was accused of "see-sawing" with his voice, but was praised for his tone quality and attractive appearance. The Lance, on the other hand, had a slightly different impression of Cardinalli:

There was something about his voice that grated harshly at times but at others he forgot the promptor [sic] and allowed his voice full score to the appreciation of the ladies. He was not gushing in expression and did not pay enough attention to the rhythm of the music. Then again, he must pay more attention to personal appearance and get over looking slovenly.61

Highest honors were reserved for Scalchi. Although the Lance reviewer scolded her for wearing her diamond bracelet in the prison scene, he had the following words of praise for her performance:

Of Scalchi nothing too laudatory can be said. . . . She is so far above the other artists in the cast that there is no proper point from which to make comparisons. She is the greatest contralto of the century and her technique is the finest we have ever seen.62

During the Topeka engagement, the lack of available spirits caused a minor crisis within the Mapleson camp. The incident is best recounted in the impresario's own words:

We had exhausted our stock of wine in the train, and those artists taking part in the performance, on entering the hotel near the theatre where it was proposed to dine, were surprised and annoyed at having water placed before them; the baritone vowing, with knife in hand, that unless he could have a more stimulating beverage he would refuse to play the "Count di Luna" that evening.

Inquiry was made high and low, but there was not a drop of wine or spirits of any kind officially known to be in town. Going along the street on my return to the hotel, I met a gentleman with whom I was acquainted, and through his kindness I was enabled to obtain from a medical practitioner a prescription. The prescription was in the Latin language, and the chemist evidently understood its meaning. There was no question of making it up. He simply handed me three bottles of very good hock.63

Emma Abbott again toured the state in 1885, but she did not present any grand operas. Her itinerary comprised Leavenworth, December 3; Lawrence, December 4; Topeka, December 5; and Fort Scott, December 15. All of the above cities were treated to The Mikado, and Topeka was given a matinee of Martha as well.

During the year Topekans heard three professional concerts which included operatic selections. On April 14, 1885, the Bernhard Listemann Concert Company appeared at Library Hall. On the program was an aria from Traviata (presumably "Ah, fors' è lui") sung by the soprano Emma Howe. On May 9 Library Hall was the setting for a concert by the Mendelssohn Quintette Club, including the soprano Cora Giese, who sang the "Grand Scene and Air" from Der Freischütz, Gilmore's Band was heard at the Crawford Opera House on November 5, and the program included Louise Pyk's rendition of "Ernani, involami."

The year closed with an appearance by the American prima donna Emma Nevada at the Grand Opera House. Miss Nevada, whose real

59. Louise Dotti, whose real name was Dotti, was a native of Rochester, Mass. After study with Sangiovanni in Milan, she sang opera in southern Italy before being engaged, under the name of Louise Swift, by Mapleson for his 1880 London season, where she debuted as Leonora in Lo farsa del destino. Sofia Scalchi (1850-1922), an Italian contralto, made her debut at Matteus at the age of 16. She sang regularly at Covent Garden from 1868 to 1890, and was heard as Siebel at the opening of the Metropolitan Opera House in 1883.

60. Capital, February 19, 1885, p. 5.

61. Lance, February 21, 1885, p. 4.

62. Ibid.

name was Emma Wixom, was born in Alpha, Cal., in 1859. She derived her stage name from nearby Nevada City. In 1877, while she was on a tour of Europe with a group of young women, an elderly doctor serving as the group’s chaperon died suddenly. Instead of returning to America with her friends, Miss Nevada proceeded to Vienna, where she began vocal studies with Marchesi. Three years later she gave her debut under Mapleson’s auspices in London, singing Amina in La sonnambula. By 1883 she had sung in Trieste, Florence, Naples, Rome, Genoa, La Scala in Milan, and the Paris Opera Comique.

Aside from Sonnambula, Nevada’s repertoire comprised Lucia, Puritani, Mignon, Faust, and Lakmé. According to Oscar Thompson, the voice had a marked flautelike quality, with a range extending to F above high G.

The Topeka concert took place on December 29, 1885. Assisting Miss Nevada were Edmond Vergnet, tenor; Carlo Buti, baritone; Luigi Casati, violinist; and Gustavo Levita, pianist. Ticket prices, rather high for a concert, ranged from $50 cents to $2.00. The program included four operatic selections: the “Waltz Song” from Meyerbeer’s Dinorah, a soprano-tenor duet from Traviata, “Il mio tesoro” from Don Giovanni, and “Largo al factotum” from The Barber of Seville. The prima donna sang two encore after her first number and obliged with “Home, Sweet Home” following the Dinorah aria. The program was repeated at the Leavenworth Opera House on the evening of January 1, 1886.

On March 10, 1886, Her Majesty’s Opera Company paid a second visit to the Grand Opera House in Topeka. The opera was originally announced as Carmen but was later changed to Lucia di Lammermoor. Featured in the title role was the Finnish soprano Alma Fohström; Francesco Giannini was Edgardo, Innocente de Anna was Ashton, and Enrico Cherubini sang Raimondo.64

Contrary to the previous year, when the Topeka press had been quite enchanted with Mapleson and his company, the newspapers were unanimous in their condemnation of the performance:

Her Majesty’s opera company . . . presented . . . “Lucia di Lammermoor,” in a very unsatisfactory manner. . . . The opera company this year, according to Col. Mapleson, has sacrificed expensive soloists for the improvement of the ensemble, but the ensemble has not improved. . . . However, the expensive soloists have been sacrificed—that much of the colonel’s statement is true.

Mlle Alma Fohström in the title role sang with much sweetness and effect, . . . and was warmly applauded and frequently recalled. Sig. De Anna made an ideal Ashton, his rich baritone . . . and his acting being highly satisfactory. With the exception of these two, the solo voices were poorly placed. Giavini [sic], as Edgardo, has a stilted stage action, and upon several occasions his tenor gave serious intimations of falling him—which it evidently did in the last act . . .

The chorus, male and female, is the characteristic Maplesonian conglomerate of mis-shapes, cross-eyes, kaleidoscopic costumes and miserable acting, making a comic valentine appearance that no matter how fine the singing is, detracts very much from the opera.65

Much of the ill-feeling seemed to stem from the fact that an advertised ballet was omitted. Another complaint was registered about cuts in the score.

The Mapleson troupe sang before a large audience, though not as large as a year earlier. As was frequently the case with important musical events, the performance was attended by many citizens from surrounding communities.

After an absence of nearly three years, Minnie Hauk returned to Kansas in the fall of 1886, giving concerts at the Grand Opera House in Topeka on October 25 and the Fort Scott Opera House on October 27. She judiciously avoided Leavenworth.

The Grand was filled with the “elite of Topeka,” the Capital listing the names of 54 personages who were in attendance. Hauk’s supporting artists were Muellenbach, contralto; Spigaroli, tenor; Fox, baritone; Chevalier de Kontzki, pianist; and Charles Pratt, accompanist. The first part of the program included Madame Hauk’s rendition of the “Grand Air and Gavotte” from Manon, a new opera by Massenet, and a soprano-contralto duet from Boito’s Mefistofele. Part 2 consisted of the fourth act of Trovatore.

Minnie Hauk appeared in a “richly embroidered white satin dress, covered with dia-

64. Alma Fohström (1880-1914) made her debut in Berlin in 1878 and was first contracted by Mapleson for his 1885 season at Covent Garden. She became a mainstay of the Imperial Opera, Moscow, from 1890 to 1904.
mons of unusual size and beauty.” 66 The Commonwealth noted that the Manon aria was well suited “to show the rich, velvet-like quality of Madame Hauk’s voice, ...” and it praised her ability to sing with “astonishing ease, producing scales, octaves and the most difficult echo effects as if they were the most natural thing in the world.” 67 Furthermore, the newspaper pointed out that the audience was so pleased with the concert that they called the singers before the curtain at the conclusion of the performance, an unusual occurrence in the 1880’s.

The company was favorably reviewed in Fort Scott, where the program included the quartet from Rigoletto, as well as the Trovatore excerpt.

In December the Emma Abbott troupe embarked on another tour of the state. The following cities were on the Abbott itinerary: Fort Scott, December 1; Topeka, December 3; Lawrence, December 4; and Parsons, December 18. Martha was presented at Fort Scott and Parsons. Topeka heard a matinee of The Bohemian Girl and an evening performance of Faust. The latter opera was repeated in Lawrence. In Topeka the cast for Faust included Emma Abbott as Marguerite, William Broderick as Mephistopheles, William Pruette as Valentine, and Montegriffo, substituting for an ailing Michelena, as Faust. In Lawrence, Michelena reassumed the title role.

From Leavenworth came a report of a disagreement between L. M. Crawford and the Abbott company (it also seemed that Crawford and the Times were not on the best of terms):

Miss Abbott declined coming here because of the niggardly and pernicious [sic] course pursued by Mr. Crawford, ... who refused to advertise her performance properly. She would not consent to visit Leavenworth and be rated with the various cheap shows that Mr. Crawford delights in palming off on the people of this city. ... 68

Several days later a Times reporter interviewed Emma Abbott and Eugene Wetherell, Abbott’s husband and manager. Wetherell claimed that he had made several attempts to negotiate with Crawford regarding a performance in Leavenworth, but that Crawford had insisted that such an agreement could be concluded only if the Abbott company signed a contract to appear at all the opera houses on Crawford’s circuit. Wetherell further remarked that Crawford “offered to let me have the Leavenworth house if I would play with him in Topeka; I refused, as the Grand opera house where we appeared is a much better one than Crawford’s.” 69

The quarrel between Abbott and Crawford may have had long-lasting and unfortunate consequences. During the 1880’s only two companies had provided the Kansas public with full-scale productions of grand opera: the Mapleson and Abbott companies. After his disastrous tour of 1885-1886, Mapleson withdrew from the field, leaving only Emma Abbott. 70 With Crawford in control of nearly all the opera houses where the population and citizen interest were sufficient to support opera, the Abbott troupe would find its outlets greatly restricted as long as the quarrel continued. By November, 1889, Abbott and Crawford had evidently come to terms, for the troupe appeared at the Leavenworth Opera House at that time. In the intervening period between her 1886 tour and the 1889 performance, Emma Abbott appeared only once in Kansas—a series of performances in Wichita in the spring of 1887, given at an opera house not under Crawford’s control. 71

Wichita’s introduction to grand opera occurred March 17-19 at the Garfield Opera House, located at First and Water streets (it had first opened for business January 25, 1887). On opening night the Abbott company presented Martha. This was followed by Faust on March 18. On the 19th there was a matinee of Bohemian Girl and an evening performance of Linda di Chamounix. The charge for general admission was $2.00 for the evening performances, $1.00 for the matinee.

As far as the Eagle was concerned, Martha was an unqualified success. Referring to Abbott, the paper stated: “The sweetness, sympathy and delicacy of her voice held her audience

66. Commonwealth, October 26, 1886, p. 5.
67. Ibid.
68. Leavenworth Daily Times, December 10, 1886, p. 4.
69. Ibid., December 14, 1886, p. 4.
70. There were still other professional opera companies—such as the Andrews Opera Company, the Kate Benberg Company, and the Comrined English Opera Company—that toured Kansas. However, these companies restricted themselves to the lighter repertoire, and did not feature internationally known singers.
71. Wichita's Turner Opera House, located at the southwest corner of First and Market streets, opened November 6, 1878. Crawford assumed management of the Turner in September, 1885. In 1887 Crawford built a new opera house at the southwest corner of 16th and Topeka avenues, but it collapsed prior to its scheduled opening in September. Crawford rebuilt on the same site and opened for business in February, 1888.
entwined [sic] in her every note; while her marvelous and dazzling execution electrified and astonished them. 72

The Beacon provided a more technical analysis of Abbott’s voice:

Miss Abbott is not heard to the best advantage in Martha. A role with more florid music suits her better, as her upper range of voice is much purer than the medium and lower registers, and her execution is most accurate and brilliant. Miss Abbott’s high pianissimo is a beautiful and peculiar feature which has received, and merits, much commendation but the medium tones in her voice are at times a little forced. . . . 73

Abbott’s costumes and ample display of diamonds drew favorable comments from the ladies in the audience, and the chorus and orchestra were similarly praised.

In its review of Faust, the Eagle exceeded its previous laudation of the prima donna:

Her greatest efforts were in the sentimental and impassioned scenes, where her powers as an actress were as great as a Sara Bernhardt or Clara Morris, the agonized expression on her face, the pitiful moan and shrill shriek of horror at the dying brother’s curse was simply a masterpiece of acting. 74

The Eagle’s most lavish compliments, however, were held in reserve for the Linda review:

Miss Abbott’s marvelous execution in her first aria roused the audience to the first and greatest encore of the evening, and from that moment it was but a succession of lyrical and dramatic triumphs. Pronette’s acting, as the outraged and indignant father, was really magnificent and fairly carried away the audience, but it paled beside the tremendous mad scene which immediately follows, in which Miss Abbott outdid any of her previous efforts and was rewarded with a double recall. Space forbids us to enter into details . . . on a performance which is simply perfection. . . . It is an event that will be long remembered in Wichita and it is sincerely hoped that . . . a return visit in the fall will be realized. 75

After the Linda performance, Emma Abbott was justifiably delighted with the success of her engagement and praise in her praise of Wichita. In her final interview, she demonstrated a capacity for eulogizing equal to that of the Eagle’s reviewer:

Today I have been called upon by so many and such pleasant people. My audiences, too, have been such as any singer may well be proud. Your ladies dress so nicely, so elegantly. Why, . . . we have . . . said it reminds us greatly of a Baltimore or Louisville audience, where, you know, there are such a number of beautiful women. But best of all I am glad to see the appreciation shown. I have studied so hard both in America and the old country and it is a pleasure . . . to see our efforts appreciated and to know that what we ourselves think the strong points of our opera are equally observed by others to be such. I hope that soon I shall return to Wichita for I must confess I am charmed and in love with the city. . . . 76

After Abbott’s season closed in Wichita, there were no performances of complete operas or operatic excerpts in Kansas until the arrival of the Emma Juch Concert Company in October, 1888. In the interim, Leavenworth came close to hearing a performance of Lohengrin by the National Opera Company. The opera was scheduled for December 12, 1887, and tickets went on sale for $1.50 to $3.50. However, on the day of the performance the opera was cancelled.

There were conflicting reports as to the reasons for the cancellation. The Kansas City (Mo.) Star stated that the opera company had been delayed in Kansas City because it lacked enough funds to pay for rail transportation to Leavenworth. However, the Standard reported that the company had, in fact, arrived at the Leavenworth depot at 5:00 p.m. on the day of the performance, that it had remained there for two hours and then traveled on to St. Joseph, Mo., where it had given a performance December 13 and grossed $3,000.

The Leavenworth Times stated that the performance had been cancelled because of a poor advance sale. In the opinion of the Times, admission prices had been “beyond all reason,” and the paper stated further that “had the price been $2.00 downstairs and $1.50 upstairs, same as in Kansas City [in fact, the prices charged in Kansas City were the same as those in Leavenworth], a crowded audience would have been the result.” 77

One other development during the year 1887 should be noted. This was the Lance’s growing disenchchantment with L. M. Crawford, a disenchantment that would mature into a prolonged feud in subsequent years. The first statement critical of him appeared in February. Noting that he operated a circuit of opera houses comprising Atchison, Leavenworth, Lawrence, Topeka, Emporia, and Wichita, thereby monopolizing, to a great extent, the

75. Ibid., March 20, 1887, p. 4.
76. Ibid.
77. Leavenworth Daily Times, December 13, 1887, p. 4.
theatrical business in eastern Kansas, the Lance registered the following complaint:

[Crawford] dictates whether or not companies shall come to Topeka—tells them that they must come to his house or be shut out of the circuit controlled by him. Rather than submit to this, the better companies refuse to visit Kansas, and therefore we are deprived of nearly everything of merit.

Later in the year the Lance's attacks became more vitriolic:

There is not a town on the globe that is more ridden by the pestiferous manager than is Topeka. Crawford controls the "critical" departments of the Journal as well as the Capital, Commonwealth, and Democrat and compels these four papers to slobber over his attractions and praise them whether they be good, bad or indifferent.

The November 5 issue accused Crawford of charging exorbitant prices of admission for attractions of low merit, speculating in tickets, maintaining a fire trap, and permitting disorderly behavior among patrons. The allegations continued intermittently until September 1892, when new editors took charge of the Lance.

Meanwhile, there was a second incident at Leavenworth involving Crawford. According to the Standard, in October, 1888, the Katie Putnam Company (a drama troupe) had arranged to give three performances at the National Soldiers' Home for a substantially reduced fee. Crawford had not been included in the negotiations. When he learned of the forthcoming performances, he allegedly demanded and received royalties from the Putnam company, threatening to banish them from his circuit. The cost of the royalties was passed along to the home, which could ill afford the extra expense.

In addition, the Standard alleged that Crawford had discouraged local amateur productions, which he viewed as being competitive, by charging exorbitant rental fees—$10 per rehearsal and $50 per performance—for the use of his opera house.

In the autumn of 1888, the first concert troupe to visit Kansas in two years appeared on the scene. The Emma Juch Grand Concert Company gave performances at Crawford's Opera House in Topeka on October 30, at Price's Opera House in Atchison on October 31, and at the Leavenworth Opera House on November 1. The supporting artists were Rose Linde, contralto; William J. Lavin, tenor; Clemente Bologna, bass; Adele aus der Ohe, pianist; and Victor Herbert (destined to become the famous composer), cellist.

The prima donna herself had been born in Vienna in 1863, of American parents (her father, an Austrian, had become an American citizen). Her early youth was spent in Detroit. After study in New York with Murio Celi, she made her debut with Mapleos in London, singing Filina in Mignon in June, 1881. She remained with Mapleos for several seasons, then joined the National Opera Company in 1886. In 1889 she formed the Emma Juch Grand Opera Company, touring in Mexico and the United States until 1891. According to Oscar Thompson, "Miss Juch's voice was one of unusually lovely quality and extraordinary purity."

The operatic selections for Juch's Kansas tour were "Connais-tu le pays," the "Toreador Song," and a staged presentation of Faust, act 2. The company played to only modest houses in Topeka and Leavenworth, but the reviews in all three cities were unconditionally favorable. Typical of the comments were these by the Times:

She immediately became "en rapport" with her audience. She has a remarkable voice, a round, full soprano, of great power. Her phrasing and shading are beautiful. [She has] an easy, graceful, and queenly stage presence. . . . If Mr. Crawford will keep up the class of entertainments he has been furnishing our people lately, he certainly deserves a generous patronage.

The year 1888 witnessed a continuation of the Lance-Crawford feud. On April 21 the paper referred to Crawford's theater as "Crawford's chicken coup," a designation to which it would adhere throughout the duration of the quarrel. A week later the Lance alleged that the opera house was in a bad state of repair and therefore dangerous to the public. On October 13 the weekly published the following editorial:

In his advertisements, Mr. Crawford pleads that he should be upheld by the people in his successful management. . . . Why should people uphold Mr. Crawford, who has lost no opportunity to insult, outrage and almost rob them? Why should they uphold him in his management of a house that while it is advertised as respectable, . . . , is conducted . . . after the fash-

78. Editorial, Lance, February 19, 1887, p. 5.
79. Ibid., October 29, 1887, p. 4.
80. Thompson, The American Singer, p. 121.
On January 26, 1889, the *Lance* made further allegations regarding Crawford. According to the paper, each winter during the past several years Crawford had submitted a letter to the Grand management, offering to take control of the opera house. Then, in order to enhance his position while bargaining with booking agents in the East, he would inform them that he was in the process of negotiating for the Grand, and that it would undoubtedly be under his management by the beginning of the fall season.

On November 17, 1889, the *Lance* stated that a “fire committee” was in the process of examining all hotels and places of amusement in Topeka. A week and a half later the Topeka *Journal* reported that the committee, headed by the fire marshal, had concluded that the Crawford Opera House was a fire hazard and contained inadequate escape routes for the public. Extensive changes in the construction of the building were recommended. On December 15 the *Lance* alleged that Crawford had “bought up enough members of the [city] council to insure the defeat of the report presented by the special committee two weeks ago.” This allegation turned out to be false, but Crawford did succeed in thwarting some of the recommendations. Appearing before the council on December 30, Crawford stated that he had already let contracts to increase the water supply and to line the interior of the stage with sheet iron, thereby providing some sort of fire wall between the stage and the audience. He insisted, however, that his theater had adequate exit space. When a councilman read the recommendation regarding the widening of the front exit, Crawford refused to comply, telling the council that they might as well condemn his building. A councilman then moved that the above-mentioned recommendation be stricken from the committee’s report. The motion carried.

In 1889 two concert companies visited the state. The first was a troupe headed by Clara Louise Kellogg, who was making her first appearance in Kansas since 1883. The Kellogg tour was quite extensive, covering the following cities and perhaps others as well: Ft. Scott, May 6; Parsons, May 7; Wichita, May 9; Winfield, May 10; Concordia, May 16; Emporia, May 17; Topeka, May 22; and Lawrence, May 23. Kellogg’s assisting artists were Carrie Morse, contralto; Carlo Spigarioli, tenor; William H. Lee, baritone; and Charles Pratt, pianist.

In Wichita the first portion of the program included duets from *Martha* and Verdi’s *Attila*, and arias from *Tannhauser* and *Ernani*. Part 2 consisted of the fourth act of *Trovatore*, staged and in costume. In Topeka the troupe performed the same selections, except that the *Attila* duet was replaced by a trio from the same opera. Although newspaper accounts in other cities were less complete, the *Trovatore* excerpt was always mentioned as being part of the evening’s entertainment, and it can be assumed that essentially the same program was adhered to.

The second concert troupe to tour Kansas in 1889 was new to the state. Known as the Camppanini-Whitney Concert Company, the group was remarkable in that it had not one, but three eminent singers on the roster: Italo Campanini, tenor; Clementine de Vere, coloratura soprano; and Myron W. Whitney, bass. Others in the company were Clara Poole, contralto; Enrico Duzenski, tenor; and Charles Pratt, pianist. The tour comprised Crawford’s Opera House in Topeka, November 25; the Leavenworth Opera House, November 26; and Price’s Opera House in Atchison, November 27.

There were a number of operatic selections on the first part of the program: Duzenski and Bologna sang a tenor-baritone duet from *Meyerbeer’s Robert le diable*, Poole rendered “O mio Fernando,” Duzenski returned for an aria from *La juive*, de Vere sang one of the two arias of the Queen of the Night from *The Magic Flute*, Bologna gave a rendition of “Di Provenza,” and the first portion of the concert 85.

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84. Topeka city council minutes for December 30, 1889, on file at the Kansas State Historical Society, manuscript dept., Microfilm, Box 814.
85. Italo Campanini (1845-1896), Italian tenor, made his London debut at Dury Lane in 1872, singing Cenaro in *Lucia di Borgia*. His American debut, in the same role, occurred at the New York Academy of Music in 1873. He sang the role of Faust at the opening of the Metropolitan Opera House on October 22, 1883. Clementine de Vere (1864-1954), born of an English lady and a Belgian nobleman, debuted in Florence in 1881 as Marguerite de Valois in *Les Huguenots*. After singing for a number of years in Europe, she appeared regularly at the Metropolitan Opera, singing the roles of Violetta,ilda, Marguerite (in *Faust*), and Lucia.
86. Myron W. Whitney (1836-1916) was born in Ashby, Mass., and studied in Boston, London, and Florence. Though primarily a concert andatorio singer, he sang with the Boston Ideal Opera Company (1870) and the National Opera Company (1886).
ended with the Lucia sextette. Part 2 consisted of the second act of Faust, with Campanini in the title role, de Vere as Marguerite, Poole as both Siebel and Marthe, and Bologna as Mephisto.

Drawing a sizable audience in each city, the troupe generally received enthusiastic reviews. The Topeka Journal called the concert "one of the greatest musical feasts which Topekans have ever had," and the Standard reported: "A more enthusiastic concert audience was probably never seen in a local auditorium." A sour note, however, was added by the Atchison Champion. After commenting approvingly that Whitney and de Vere "gracefully responded to encores," the critic complained that "the others would not come back when called, the prices paid for the entertainment causing the people to feel that they should have their wishes reasonably well gratified." 86

VI. THE 1890'S: YEARS OF DECLINE

From 1887 through 1889, the frequency of opera performances had diminished markedly in comparison with the period from 1880 to 1886. This trend continued in the 1890's. Although Kansas theaters were as busy as ever, visits by professional grand opera troupes declined in proportion to other types of entertainment.

In 1890 the C. D. Hess Opera Company made a short tour of the state, visiting Topeka, September 22-23; Leavenworth, September 24; and Atchison, September 25. La traviata and Lucia di Lammermoor were originally scheduled for Topeka; however, in compliance with a petition signed by 80 Topekans, Hess substituted Trovatore for Lucia. Traviata was presented in Leavenworth, Trovatore in Atchison.

Following the Hess tour, nearly six years elapsed before another complete grand opera was heard in the state. In the interim only one concert company of note visited Kansas. This was the Sofia Scalchi troupe, which came to Topeka on November 15, 1893. The program included an aria by a certain Rossi, and a duet.

88. Atchison Champion, November 29, 1889, p. 4. The Emma Abbott Opera Company made its last appearance in Kansas at the Leavenworth Opera House on November 15, 1889, presenting Balfe's The Rose of Castile.
89. This statement excludes an amateur production of Trovatore which took place in Wichita December 16, 1882, and January 3, 1883. Mrs. Estelle Ewing of Topeka sang Leonora.
from *Don Giovanni*—probably “Là ci darem la mano.”

Complete productions of grand opera made a brief return to Kansas in April, 1896, when the Marie Tavy Company presented *Carmen* at Topeka and a *Lucia-Cavalleria rusticana* double bill at Leavenworth and Atchison. However, the company sang to less than full houses. No grand opera was presented in the state in 1897.

In January of the following year, Sofia Scalchi led a concert troupe that performed in Lawrence, Topeka, and Leavenworth. The program included a staged, costumed fourth act of *Trovatore*, but only modest-sized audiences attended. In November the Andrews Opera Company gave a double bill of *Cavalleria rusticana* and an abridged *Mikado* to audiences in Lawrence, Topeka, and Wichita.

Scalchi’s company returned in January, 1899, performing in Lawrence, Topeka, and Wichita. This time the staged excerpts were act 1 of *Semiramide* (Rossini) and act 2 of *Martha*, but the attendance was as disappointing as that of the previous year.

The year 1899 did offer an abundance of complete opera performances. Leavenworth heard its second *Cavalleria* in May, presented by the Andrews Opera Company. However, the major opera harvest occurred in October, when the Lambardi Italian Grand Opera Company toured the state. The troupe first appeared in Wichita on October 2 and 3, giving *Carmen* and *Rigoletto*, respectively. The next day Emporia was treated to a production of *Trovatore*. This was followed by a presentation of the same opera in Lawrence on October 7. On October 16 and 17 the Lambardi troupe presented *Rigoletto* and *Trovatore*, respectively, to audiences at the Crawford Opera House in Topeka. The tour concluded with another rendition of *Trovatore*, this time at Leavenworth, on October 19. Despite the excellence of the Lambardi Company, attendance, in contrast to the 1880’s, was disappointingly low. The Crawford Opera House, which had been filled, or nearly so, on many such occasions during the previous decade, held an audience of only 287 people for the *Rigoletto* performance. The *Trovatore* audience on the following evening was not much larger. Only 400 people attended the opera two days later in Leavenworth.

Left, when Emma Abbott and William Castle sang *Romeo and Juliet* in Topeka in January, 1880, there was a full house and special trains brought patrons from Atchison, Lawrence, and Emporia. The round trip fare of $1.75 included the price of admission. The opera was enthusiastically received, one newspaper calling the soprano a matchless actress who sang the role of Juliet with “energy and feeling.” Tenor William Castle was praised also for his “wonderful dramatic powers” as Romeo.
The nadir of public interest, however, was yet to come. A concert by Emma Nevada, scheduled for December 25, 1899, at the Leavenworth Opera House, was cancelled because of an advance sale of only $20, at $2.00 per ticket.

Although opera stars continued to visit Kansas after the turn of the century (Topeka heard Nordica, Zelie de Lussan, Schumann-Heink, and Melba between 1902 and 1905), frequent, fully staged productions of grand opera or operatic excerpts by professional troupes were clearly a thing of the past.

Why did operatic activity diminish after the mid-1880's? The Abbott-Crawford quarrel may have been partly responsible for the decline, since it removed from the arena the only grand opera company which had been touring the state on a regular basis. After Abbott’s performance in Wichita in March, 1887, no complete grand opera was offered in the Sunflower state until the Hess troupe arrived on the scene in the fall of 1890.

The decline could be attributed to economic factors. The winter of 1886-1887 was especially severe. Many stockmen were wiped out by the blizzard that raged intermittently for several weeks on the high plains. Although the harsh winter may not have had much effect on eastern Kansas, where the opera-going public was located, the ensuing recession of 1887 was felt throughout the state. Hard times lingered for a number of years. Rail construction, which peaked in 1888, began to fall off precipitously thereafter, and crop failures in the latter years of the decade put many farmers on relief. In 1893 the entire nation suffered a depression; eastern Kansas did not recover from its effects until 1896.

Another occurrence had a more direct bearing on theatrical companies. In April, 1887, there was a substantial increase in railroad freight and passenger rates, which resulted in the cancellation of many tours and even forced some financially unstable companies to disband. Opera companies, which traveled with more personnel and baggage than other theatrical troupes, were particularly vulnerable to rate hikes. The new rates were a cause for concern in Topeka:

The inter-State anti-commerce law is already having its effect upon the theatricals of the country, the advance in railroad rates having caused the cancellation of a great many contracts, especially in the west, where the “jumps” are so long. The new law will especially affect cities like Topeka, which are in the category of “one night stands,” and therefore to be shunned by large companies that cannot afford to travel so much. . . .

Comic opera companies, which, as a rule, relied on local opera houses and musicians for their scenic and orchestral needs, were more able to withstand the increase in rates.

Aside from the rail fare increases and the end of the economic boom, there was a third and perhaps more compelling factor in the demise of grand opera in Kansas. This was an apparent decline in public interest, as evidenced by the low attendance figures in the 1890’s. The arrival of an opera company no longer produced the excitement that had resulted from such an event in the previous decade. People began to take the companies for granted, as did the newspapers, which no longer urged opera house managers to book at least one grand opera per year nor exhorted their readers to attend “the event of the season.”

In general, interest in live theater did not decline in the 1890’s. Opera houses still offered full seasons of bookings of various kinds. Operettas retained their popularity. Large communities received yearly visits from at least one comic opera troupe, and cities like Topeka and Wichita would typically host several such companies during the course of a season. As was pointed out earlier, light opera troupes were better able to endure periods of financial stringency. Compared to grand opera companies, their travel and production costs, including artists’ salaries, were considerably less.

Grand opera, that most expensive form of entertainment, was ill-constituted to survive both flagging public interest and a period of economic countercurrents. Consequently, grand opera troupes retreated to the relative safety of cities farther east. Grand opera was still popular and well supported as far west as Kansas City during the 1890’s, but tours into Kansas proved to be too much of a financial risk. The heyday of grand opera in the state, from 1880 to 1886, provided Kansans with a rare cultural opportunity, and one which, in the history of the Sunflower state, has so far remained unique.

90. Lance, April 9, 1887, p. 8.