Clare Fisher, author of the story on the first dramatic productions, in costume. The play, in which this costume was used, was given so long ago Mr. Fisher says he has forgotten its name. Miss Hattie Jones was the first piano teacher for the University of Oklahoma and participated in the first dramatic productions of the university.

Yesteryears

BY CLARE W. FISHER, '06

The copy for a cut in the October issue of The Sooner Magazine recalled to the operator who set the cut lines what are real old times in the early days of the college of fine arts—the pre-historic days of stage productions at the University of Oklahoma.

The opera Chimes of Normandy, or the Bells of Cornville, was first produced here about 1900. It was under direction of Grace King, now Mrs. J. D. Maguire, who was then head of the fine arts department. Albert Seawell, Lem Martin, Ben Davis, and the writer sang the men's solo roles. Miss King and Maude Watts were two of the lady soloists. Miss Hattie Jones had charge of the music. Pinafore, The Merry Milkmaids, Pirates of Penance, Queen Either, and several other operas were produced on the stage of the old Franing theatre, and let us say here, always to full houses and were usually taken to Oklahoma City, Guthrie, and Purcell. In those days, I think, from productions viewed lately, that we had as good if not some superior performers in some parts, but of course we did not have the scenic effects of today.

Later, under Professor Gulich, the fine arts department turned to straight drama and produced such plays as The Lion and the Mouse, Lover's Lane, Charity Ball, The Girl I Left Behind Me, and many other dramas. In these we had "Deak" Parker, the famous newspaperman, Walter Ferguson, Ralph Campbell, Cortland Fequay, the writer, who did some of the directing, and all of the stage managing. Among other things, this bunch had the pleasure of presenting the Lion and the Mouse to dedicate the first Masonic temple at Guthrie. This was only one of the many trips taken to neighboring cities.

When Professor Holmberg became the dean of the college of fine arts, his first production was the Bohemian Girl which I directed, and one other opera, which I have forgotten, in the spring of 1908 or 1909. This was the last of the real old time productions with which I am familiar. We had lots of fun in those days, put several dollars in the treasury and I believe we gave the general public their money's worth, at least I know we always played to SRO, which in the language of the show business means standing room only and the students loyally supported the play. There were no empty seats as I have seen at several productions in the last few years. If you want to know the fun we had corner Dean Holmberg some day when he is in the right mood and get him to talking of those days.

I remember one incident in connection with a rehearsal for the Chimes of Normandy. In those days the automobile had not been heard of, and there were no buses making regular fifteen minute rounds. There was only one rough road leading from town to the campus. We had all assembled for rehearsal of solo parts and about nine o'clock it started one of those downpours for which Oklahoma is famous, and at twelve it was still raining. There was not a rain coat or a parasol in the entire crowd. So what was to be done? Finally some one discovered a rubberized covering for the grand piano, and the question was solved. The boys formed a square holding up the cover and the girls marched in the center and thus each and every one was delivered safely and dry to her rooming house. But every one of the boys would have made a wet exponent's heart glad.

The scenery at the old Franing consisted, in the early days, of a kitchen and prison, a parlour interior and one exterior. Later a road show went broke and as it had some particularly beautiful scenery Mr. Franing bought it. There was a beautiful interior and exterior and two other sets that were fair. By planning and working one could produce many different settings out of this bunch of scenery.

In the old stock bill, a military play, The Girl I Left Behind Me, in which Walter Ferguson had the lead, it was necessary to have a stockade with a "breakway" for the Indian attack and the big rescue at the "blow off." It sure was some job to build as it had to run from the front to back of the stage with action taking place on both sides of it. By using lath and blind stop covered with grey cloth and painted a stockade (T ripe 7110, P! I)
YESTERYEARS

(continued from page 109)

was finally produced that faintly re-
sembled the genuine article. But my
heart was in my mouth when the time
came for the break in the Indian attack,
the whole fence was just as liable to go
as part of it. But it held staunchly, all
but the part that was supposed to give
way and the climax went over big.
The same was true in these days, al-
dways gave a class play, to help defray
expenses of graduation. They usually
produced something like Sheridan's The
Rivals, or some other classic. These.
As a usual thing, were a little too heavy for
the available talent to handle, although
several very creditable productions were
given. But it was a jolly last get-to-
gether meeting for those who had spent
four years together, and was something
for them to remember in after life.
How would some of the present day
performers like to have to make up an
entire cast, or at a single stroke, and in
from twelve to one hundred peo-
ple with a few sticks of grease paint, a
wig or two, a little crepe hair, a bottle of
spirit gum and a box of talcum powder?
And only one person had any idea how
to use what he had. That was the com-
mon occurrence at every performance un-
til the year 1907, when we had three or
four more who knew something of make
up. Yet we produced plays ranging from
The Merchant of Venice down to the
Merry Milkmaids, the lightest of light
operas, with a correctly costumed cast
and the details of make up faithfully fol-
lowed.
Perhaps one of the most enjoyable
occasions in the pre-historic period was
the trip to Guthrie to dedicate the first
Masonic temple erected there. The play
chosen was The Lion and the Mouse,
then in the heyday of its popularity. A
crowd of about fifteen were in the cast,
and with the orchestra, consisting of
around forty or fifty pieces, was—don't
tell anybody—wined and dined for two
days and gave two performances to a
packed house on both occasions. And
as the small town papers say "A fine
time was enjoyed by all."
There were no try-outs for parts. The
students were asked if they cared to take
part in the play, and if so to report for
rehearsals. Then an almost professional
rule was followed. Usually the leads
were understudied, and when on two or
three occasions they tried to get too
temperamental they were removed at
once and another given the part. After
this had been done a few times there
never was any trouble with any one in
the respect of not obeying the stage man-
ager.
In these "good old days" you could see
Guy Y. Williams, John Darling, Roy
Kingkade and Roy Cook put on a
tumbling act that was as good as any of
the high class circus performances. And
the night after the show at a dance,
you would see Professors Paxton, Par-
rington, Buchanan and other members
of the faculty, vicing with the students
for the pleasure of a dance with or that
card co-ed. Those were happy days
when faculty and student body were
members of one big family.
Did any of you ever see "Gov." Ferguson
embarrassed, or at loss for a ready
verbal "comeback." Well if you see him
ask him what he said to Alice Brittain
when looking for his hat, and see him
turn red and stutter. And ask "Deak"
Parker why the old Transcript could
never keep a waterbucket longer than
one week. This will probably be "over
the heads" of the present generation, but
it is beery unlikely that the old timers
will fail to understand.
Back in the "good old days" there
was plenty of pep and fun on the cam-
pus. One Hallowe'en a bunch of students
procured all the wagons and buggies
that could be found in town and after
bringing them to the football field,
which was located where the fine arts
building now stands, carefully took them
all apart. It was about two days before
all the parts were assembled and re-
moved. There was a bright freshman
from New York here that year, and
one night he packed up his clothes and
gone with two or three of us to the
movies, and after this we would get to
make up the parts of any...