

CHAPTER 5

THE CHANGING COMMUNITY, 1967-1973

The previous two chapters have dealt with the rapidly changing and growing music department in the public schools of the Rosedale district of Kansas City, Kansas. Although this chapter will continue with the happenings in the schools of Rosedale, it will mainly deal with the changing climate of the community.

When the community of Rosedale had its beginning in 1872, it was a small town where the residents worked and played together as a family. School, church, and community activities were the focus of social life. A town band, a rolling mill band, and several vocal clubs were formed and served as the center of entertainment for the residents.

<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/wyandott/history/1911/volume1/312.html#031606>

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/thennow/TN53.htm>

Local History of Rosedale – KC Public Library:

<http://www.kclibrary.org/resources/sc/list.cfm?list=sub&SubjectareaID=2553>

As the city grew and the school system developed, school activities replaced the community music organizations with groups of their own. The parents and the citizens of Rosedale supported their children and the musical activities at the school and became very involved in the school system. A solid program was developed by the music educators in the schools.

The year 1922 saw the annexation with the larger first class city of Kansas City, Kansas. Although this change added many benefits for the city of Rosedale, it also contributed to the loss of community spirit. Rosedale seemed to have lost part of its small town identity.

The University of Kansas Medical Center, located in the community of Rosedale, brought many laborers and medical personnel to the area. Many of these workers found housing in Rosedale and enrolled their children in the schools. Consequently, the schools and the music programs grew. As the Medical Center expanded and thrived, so did the community. The Medical Center continued to be a dominant force in the area for many years with seemingly great effects on the community.

In 1966 an urban renewal project brought even further growth to the Medical Center, but it was a tremendous blow to the community of Rosedale. “The demolition of more than 300 houses and other structures in the University-Rosedale urban renewal project in Kansas City, Kansas, is under way¹ Many families had lost their homes and eventually moved away from the area. The people of Rosedale also lost two of its elementary schools to the expanding Medical Center. Maccochaque and Columbian schools were both abandoned to make way for the Medical Center growth. In March 1966, the University-Rosedale Renewal Agency paid \$173,000 for .87 acres which included the Columbian School at 519 Seminary Street, Kansas City, Kansas. In the redevelopment program, the school was razed in October, 1966.”² In June 1958, the Maccochaque building and property were sold to the Medical Center. Pupils from Maccochaque were transferred to Snow school and the Thomas A. Edison school. After those pupils were transferred, the school was used for classrooms for the University of Kansas Medical Center School of Practical Nursing.³

Margaret Landis, History of Rosedale, Kansas:

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/KSCOLL/lochist/rosedale/rosedale.htm>

Columbian School: <http://www.kckps.org/disthistory/closedbuildings/columbian.html>

¹ Kansas City Times, 14 April 1966, 6.

² Landis, History of Rosedale, Kansas, 25. <http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/KSCOLL/lochist/rosedale/rosedale.htm>

³ *Ibid.*, 26..

The History of the Music Program in the Public Schools of the Rosedale District of Kansas City, Kansas, 1872-1973 - by Suzanne H. Elliott, B.M.E., Kent State University, 1978 – Chapter 5 – Pg. 2

Maccochaque School: <http://www.kckps.org/disthistory/closedbuildings/maccochaque.html>

Snow School: <http://www.kckps.org/disthistory/closedbuildings/snow.html>

Thomas A. Edison School: <http://www.kckps.org/disthistory/openbuildings/taedison.html>

The Rosedale community which once to thrive on the Medical Center's growth was now feeling a big loss in community identity. Mr. George Todd, long-time Rosedale resident and former principal of Rosedale Middle School, gave these thoughts on the subject:

The Medical Centers covers approximately 5 square blocks, much of which used to be single family dwellings. Supporting entities such as labs, parking lots, out-patient care, motels, and apartments for workers and students have replaced many more single family homes. Due to this, the student body at Rosedale, once gathered into a tight knit, small-town like community is now spread and diverse.⁴

History of Rosedale Middle School:

<http://www.kckps.org/disthistory/openbuildings/rosedale.html>

The community that saw many single-family dwellings and boasted a small town atmosphere was now becoming an urban center. A pamphlet put out by Kansas City, Kansas verified that fact: "Because of the rapid growth of the Medical Center and its geographic and physical relation to Johnson County and the Country Club Plaza, Rosedale has great appeal for those socio-economic groups who prefer apartment living."⁵ The transition from a small town to an urban center brought changes, both positive and negative, to the Rosedale community and its schools.

The University of Kansas has not ignored Rosedale and its needs as a community. An effort on the part of the University to contribute to the performing arts in the Rosedale area was the building of Battenfield Auditorium in 1956. The auditorium, which is located at Olathe and Rainbow Boulevards, has seating available for 900 people. It is the current home of the Medical Arts Symphony directed for many years by Leopold Shopmaker. Although this facility is located in the Rosedale area, few of the residents seem to make use of it. Closer ties among the Medical Center, the community, and the schools should be established; but it would take a great effort on the part of the residents and community leaders of Rosedale, the faculty and administration of the schools, and Medical Center personnel. It is doubtful that this will happen.

The change in the community to an urban center brought new concerns for music education at Rosedale. The transition from single family homes to apartment housing and the busing of students for desegregation reasons has made the school of Rosedale into truly urban or inner-city schools.

At one time, urban school music programs were leaders in excellence and innovative practices. During the last few decades, however, many factors have come to bear on urban education, and the quality of both general education and music education has suffered. Although some individual urban music education programs function well and provide excellent music education for children, they do so because of the superlative efforts of individual teachers and administrators.⁶

⁴ George Todd, interview by author, 6 ay 1989, notes in possession of author.

⁵ "Community Renewal Program, Rosedale Community, Kansas City, Kansas Planning Department, 1969," TMs Wyandotte County Historical Society, Bonner Springs, Kansas.

⁶ Michael Mark, Contemporary Music Education (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 221.

Support for this statement by Michel Mark is very evident in the Rosedale schools. The music department at the high school for many years was an innovative and progressive program. The changing community, especially during the late 1960s, seemed to be the major factor in the decline of the music program.

Enrollment in the high school band and orchestra dropped considerably after Bill Stoskopf left the program. Also affecting the declining interest in instrumental music may have been the wider choice of extra-curricular activities not offered in Stoskopf's time. The drop in total school enrollment, which would eventually aid in the decision to turn the high school into a middle school, also had a great effect on the department.

Decrease in enrollment was not as noticeable in the vocal program for a while. The vocal department seemed to continue its growth under the direction of John Albertson. Activities and numbers in the program continued to increase. Emphasis was placed on the fundamentals of music and music appreciation. Student loyalty towards the program and Albertson was at an all time high. Marlene Strong Clevenger, a former student of the vocal music department commented: "Mr. Albertson was a perfectionist. He demanded the very best. We conquered literature that was far beyond our original capabilities."⁷

Albertson left Rosedale in 1968 and the vocal department then started to feel the results of the community change. Albertson was replaced in the department by Wayne Hillman who taught at Rosedale for only one semester, leaving the teaching profession to work for an insurance company.⁸ Hillman was replaced by Robert Ritschel who stayed at Rosedale only long enough to finish the school year. Enrollment in the vocal classes dropped considerably the next year following these two short term teachers.

The elementary program during this time continued its growth, seemingly unaffected by the community change. Elementary music teachers were now consistently being hired to replace regular classroom teachers in the instruction of music. Bill Stoskopf, who was appointed coordinator of the elementary string program in 1967, took on the task of replacing Philharmonic teachers with certified elementary string specialists. Raymond Samuelson, who had built the Wyandotte High School instrumental department, was now the coordinator of band classes. He successfully established an elementary band program for sixth grade pupils.⁹

Although a decline had started at Rosedale, Kansas City, Kansas, as a whole, still continued to have a large number of students involved in music. An article found in the Kansas City Kansan stated: "A total of 4,376 Kansas City, Kansas pupils are enrolled in special music classes, according to Milford Crabb, supervisor of music. Classes include: elementary violin, 788 students; wind instruments in grade six, 264; high school vocal and general music, 1690; and high school instrumental music, 1634."¹⁰

The instrumental music department at Rosedale would see two more teachers before the high school changed to a middle school. John Craine replaced Bill Stoskopf in the fall of 1967. The number of activities seemed to stay about the same under the two-year leadership of Mr. Craine, but the enrollment in the music classes continued to decline.

A very influential educator in Kansas City, Kansas, came to teach instrumental music in the fall of 1969. James Maier, who is currently the principal of Rosedale Middle School, came to Rosedale Junior-Senior High School after teaching instrumental music for five years in the Roanoke, Virginia, school system. Maier received his bachelor's and master's degree in music education from the University of Southern Mississippi.¹¹ The program under the direction of Maier showed a slight growth spurt. Although the enrollment in the instrumental classes never reached the numbers of prior years, activities and the quality of the program seemed to grow. The marching band was unusually active, performing for all home football games, University of Kansas Band Day, the American Royal Parade, and a few other parades and festivals.¹²

⁷ Marlene Strong Clevenger, interview 2 October 1989, notes in possession of author.

⁸ Rosedalian, 22 January 1969, 2.

⁹ Stoskopf, interview.

¹⁰ Kansas City, Kansas, 3 October 1966, 6.

¹¹ James Maier, interview by author, 21 April 1989, notes in possession of author.

¹² Mt. Marty Annual 1970, 56.

The marching band seemed to be the main focus during Maier's tenure. Activities were held in the summer and before and after school hours. Student interest and participation was high. A former student commented: "The activities and programs were up and above the normal marching band events. Maier was a very positive and hard working teacher. He challenged the band members to the limit with difficult and demanding activities, music, and performances."¹³

The vocal music department would employ two more teachers before the change to middle school. James Harris took over the department for the 1969-70 school year and continued to teach vocal music for the next three years.¹⁴ Dennis Rork taught for the final year of the high school.¹⁵

A significant development in the music department at this time was the creation of a fine arts society. This group was a joint effort between the music and drama departments. The society, which met after school hours, was responsible for providing the student body with assemblies and speakers relating to the arts. Activities of the group included field trips to the art museum, the ballet, and performances of the Kansas City Philharmonic.¹⁶ A three-day fine arts festival was the last musical event presented at Rosedale as a junior-senior high school. The activities included performances by the band, orchestra, choirs and small ensembles. An art fair and presentations by the drama department were also included in the activities.¹⁷

The close of the 1973 school year would signal the end of an era in the history of Rosedale. The high school that was organized in 1884 would no longer exist. Because of declining enrollments in both schools, Rosedale and Argentine High Schools merged to form a new school, J. C. Harmon. The new high school would have grades 10-12. Rosedale and Argentine both became middle schools housing grades 6-9. The music department continued to grow and change under this new organization as a middle school, providing further topics and considerations for historical research.

¹³ Clevenger interview.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵ *Mt. Marty Annual, 1973*, 33.

¹⁶ Maier interview.

¹⁷ *Rosedalian*, 18 May 1973, 1.