



Anna District
Historical Society
Anna • Kettlersville • McCartyville

Skipping Village Gazette

Anna's Own Vaudevillian

Written by Carol Wentz

Information taken from From Farm to Fame

A Biography of Rosa Bertsch Phillips edited and compiled by B.W. Fridley



Rosa Bertsch Phillips

farm near Anna where she had grown up.

By age 19, after skipping high school to instead memorize classical piano music, she was already an accomplished pianist. In fact, she was given the opportunity to study at the Cincinnati College of Music (now known as the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music) even though Rosa had never attended high school. She turned the offer down because she felt she would spend all her time there learning and playing scales. Rosa knew she was already an expert at scales and didn't need to spend more money on that training.

Instead, she was drawn into the world of vaudeville and medicine shows by her stint in Anna as a temporary pianist.

"There's no business like show business," certainly rang true for young Rosa Bertsch. She began her career in vaudeville in Anna in 1925 when she was asked to temporarily fill in for the regular pianist of Harter's Medicine Show which was performing on the second floor of the Anna Town Hall. And that was Rosa's introduction to a life very different from the Bertsch family

Vaudeville was a very popular form of entertainment in the United States and Canada from the 1880s to the 1930s. The shows, which moved from town to town, were basically variety shows featuring comedy, singing, dancing, magic, puppetry, acrobatics, and short plays. While the medicine shows were much the same, they also focused on the sales of questionable medicines for all types of illnesses, as well as liniment and soap to make money.

Rosa played piano for the Harter Medicine Show for a week in Anna, and when the other pianist soon quit, she joined the troupe at Scottsburg, Indiana. Rosa played for the rest of the summer at various towns earning \$25 per week.

For one of the vaudvillians (as vaudeville performers were called), it was love at first sight. Eddie Phillips soon realized that while he was taken with Rosa Bertsch, she didn't feel the same way. Rosa had no idea that she had just met her future husband.

After performing with the Harter Show in the summer of 1925, Rosa returned to her parents' home in Anna, and the troupe traveled on to Florida. It would have been scandalous for Rosa, as a single woman, to travel alone with the troupe that winter. However, Eddie and Rosa wrote many letters to each other, the romance flourished, and they were married at the Lutheran parsonage in Anna in the spring of 1928.

Eddie had left the Harter Medicine Show before he and Rosa were married. But he continued to look for show business work where they could be together after they were married. He found a traveling drama group that would take them on as a couple. He and Rosa left right after the ceremony for Niles, Michigan to join the



Rosa and Eddie shown with their collection of musical instruments used during their vaudeville years. Musical saws, funnels, chimes, and other unusual instruments

New Lifetime Memberships...

Shirley Finkenbine

Dan Schneider

New Yearly Membership...

Cheryl Christman

**Thanks for your generous support of the
Anna District Historical Society!**

John F. Stowe Company. Stowe's show was doing one-nighters of a drama called "Ten Nights in a Barroom," and Eddie and Rosa were both hired to play in the pit orchestra. Eddie played the violin and Rosa the piano.

In the winter of 1930-1931, Eddie and Rosa joined the Kinsey Komedý Kompany, a circle stock group which performed weekly in St. Marys, Celina, Piqua, and Wapakoneta with new plays each week. Rosa and Eddie both were playing various characters onstage.

Their first child, Edward Bertsch Phillips, was born in the summer of 1931, and when he was nine months old, Rosa and Eddie joined the Bartones Comedy Company. They brought little Eddie with them since this company traveled with trailers that they towed behind their cars.



Rosa and Eddie's trailer behind their Peerless

During the winters, the Phillips stayed with Rosa's parents and took as many opportunities as they could to perform locally in schools and town halls. During the spring and summer months they left Anna and traveled around the Midwest to perform with other vaudeville groups.



Two of Rosa and Eddie's puppets

By 1940, Rosa and Eddie had three children to raise: Edward, Mary, and Viola, who was born that year. They decided it was time to give up show business and settle down in Anna. Many vaudeville companies were also winding down by then; the tastes of the public had changed over the years to radio, television, and movie theaters.

Eddie worked at different jobs nearby until he opened his own store in Anna after WWII that sold milking machines and kitchen appliances. Rosie, as she was affectionately known in town, gave piano lessons, raised



HELP US PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

Please consider becoming a member of the Anna District Historical Society.

Name of member _____

Name of spouse (family memberships) _____

Children under 18 (family memberships) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Dr. Milliette Level _____ (\$50 per month)

Anna Carey Thirkield Level _____ (\$25 per month)

Lois Lenski Level _____ (\$10 per month)

Single Membership - \$20 yearly _____

Family Membership - \$25 yearly _____

Lifetime Membership - \$500 _____

Mail to: ANNA DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. Box 133, Anna, OH 45302

Contact Susan Bertsch at 937.394.3072 for more information on leveled giving.



A Main Street building that wore many hats: post office, Phillips Farm Store, residence of the Phillips family, and finally, the Anna town library. It is still standing today next to Ollin House.

the children and played piano and organ when needed for both churches in Anna.

In 1965, Rosie was named the librarian of Anna's new branch library. It was located where Eddie's farm store had been. She retired as

librarian in 1982 after serving the community for 17 years in that position. That same year Rosie was asked to be the Grand Marshall of the Anna Homecoming Parade. She only had one request, and that was to be in an open sports car and sit on the back just like the young girls vying to be queen.



Anna Homecoming Parade
Rosa Phillips, Grand Marshall

In Rosie's own words, "So I wore a large, bright pink hat with a large pink rose on it, gloves to match, and a white lace dress. I was given a large bouquet of roses, and the Anna Homecoming Parade began in show biz style. I surely gave them their money's worth!

Eddie would have been so proud of me; he had recognized my potential the first day we met, and he nurtured my flare for entertaining an audience."

Tree Planted at the Anna Village Park



Anna Village Mayor Cindy Naseman
Dedicating America 250 tree

To honor the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States the Shelby County America 250 committee has arranged to have a tree planted in each of the communities in Shelby County. This is only one of the activities the committee is sponsoring for the anniversary of our country, which takes place during 2026.

Anna's tree was planted earlier this fall at the entrance to the Anna Village Park. Anna's mayor, Cindy Naseman, as well as Tilda Philpot, director of the Ross Historical Center, Carol Carity, the president of the Anna District Historical Society, and Julie Ehemann, Shelby County Commissioner were all in attendance for the dedication.

Rededication of the Redman Family Cemetery *"A Walk in the Woods"*

On Sunday, October 26th, a ceremony was held at Bornhorst Woods to honor the memories of the Redman family with a rededication of their family cemetery. George Redman, Sr., a soldier in the War of 1812, was also given proper military honors for his military service, which included a 21 gun salute by members of the Heiland Legion Post 446, and the playing of Taps by Kyle Edelmann, a 2025 graduate of Anna High School and currently a student at the University of Dayton.

After their accidental discovery of one of the cemetery's headstones, Joe Bornhorst and his late father, Ralph



Joe Bornhorst at left, Jim Koppin, Heiland Legion Post 446

Bornhorst, spent countless hours finding eleven headstones of the Redman Family and clearing the years of brush that had overgrown the cemetery with help from an environmental group from Houston High School and also local Boy Scout Troop 301. Since his dad's passing, Joe has continued to work on restoring the cemetery and research the Redman family.

Save the date...

Joe Bornhorst will be sharing more of his research and other interesting information about the Redman family at the Packer Historical Center on **Thursday, November 20th at 7:00pm**. The new ADHS digital historical book will also be ready to share on the same evening.

Anna District Historical Society

112 West Main Street

P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

POSTAL CUSTOMER

ANNA, OH 45302



Honor guard from Heiland American Legion Post 446
behind the gravesite of George Redman, Sr.



Anna District Historical Society

112 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

Phone: 937-646-0011

**The Packer Center is now open by appointment
only. Call 937.726.8571 to schedule
a private tour.**

Rosa Bertsch Phillips' Family

