

Ida Porter (1863 - 1947)

Ida Porter was born on September 19, 1863 in Normal, Illinois. She was the daughter of Solomon S. and Amanda M. Shueey Porter. Her father, Solomon, was born on December 25, 1828 in Muskingum County, Ohio. His parents were among the earlier pioneers of Ohio in 1806. Her mother Amanda was also born in Muskingum County, OH on October 20, 1839. After she and Solomon were married, they moved to LaSalle County, IL in the summer of 1857. In 1858 they moved to Normal, IL where he bought a large amount of land to farm, about 378 acres. Solomon was a very prosperous farmer in Normal, IL.

Ida had six other siblings, four of whom survived to adulthood: Walter G., (born September 8, 1867, died August 21, 1960), Weldon E., (born April 1871, died November 3, 1962), Bessie K., (born in 1873), and William H., (born June 10, 1875, died June 5, 1940). After the death of her father, Ida's mother and three brothers moved to Franklin County, Iowa. Her mother died on October 2, 1910 in Iowa and was brought back to Bloomington, IL for burial.

Ida was well educated. In 1889 at the age of 26 she traveled by ship to Paris, France to study. She traveled on the Red Star Line where she was listed as a cabin passenger. Only those people who had some amount of wealth could afford to book passage in one of the ship's cabins. While in Paris she studied at the Academy of Music under M. Ezio Ciampi and M. Lemaire, from the Italian schools of singing. She studied dance, piano, French, singing, and public speaking.

After Ida had completed her studies in France, she returned to the United States on May 10, 1890. She gave many recitals in various cities around the country including ones in Bloomington, Ottawa, Peoria, and Danville, IL, Lafayette and Indianapolis, IN, Omaha, NE, and Fort Worth, TX. Ida was a Soprano who could sing in English, German, French, and Italian; both classical and modern concert songs, cavatinas, and arias. In a program from one of her performances, she was described as "one of the recognized soloists of the West." She was praised with high reviews for her singing and musical ability by many newspapers around the country during the time. The Bloomington *Leader* stated that called her voice always full, rich, round, and sweet. One of her brothers, Walter G. Porter, an attorney, was her manager during her singing career.

Around 1893 Ida began teaching voice lessons and was the manager of the Bloomington Conservatory of Music located at 311 North Main Street. There she taught voice culture and singing. One private 45 minute lesson with Ida would cost \$12.45, which in today's economy would be almost \$254.

Towards the end of her life, she moved to Monona County, Iowa where her brothers Walter and William were living. She died on August 17, 1947 at the age of 84 in Onawa, Monona County, IA. She was brought back to Bloomington, IL where she was buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery with the rest of her family.

By: Candace Summers, 2005