

Prof. V. P. Hunt Observing His 89th Birthday Continues Interest in Music

Hunts (Prof.) V-P

Sixty years ago, in the days of the circuit-travelling Methodist ministers, had you been in the vicinity of Toronto, you would have noticed a dapper young man who accompanied him with his ministerial father.

The minister of that era was the late Rev. John Hunt, a native of Lincolnshire, England, and the young man who accompanied him from one charge to another for over three years, was Vincent Perry Hunt.

Today, the young man of three-score years ago, now the dean of Belleville musicians, Professor V. P. Hunt, is quietly observing the 89th anniversary of his birth, at his Pinnacle Street apartment.

The near nine decades of life has been lenient with its toll of this quiet-spoken gentleman. He is as physically alert as he was thirty years ago. The long delicate fingers, that bespeak the artist of the piano have lost none of their suppleness. Even today they ripple over the keyboards of the Hunt piano "just to keep in touch". For Prof. Hunt retired from his profession of piano artist and teacher several years ago.

Youthful Appearance

In the warm comfort of his apartment this morning, Prof. Hunt with natural reticence and modesty, hesitatingly gave an Ontario Intelligencer representative a brief resume of a colorful life spent in the realm of music. His keen eyes, well modulated voice, physical appearance and his well-tailored figure, gave the impression of a man many years his junior.

Born in Whitby, Ont., eighty-nine years ago today, received his education there and until he was twenty he accompanied his father over the ministerial circuits. His natural musical instincts asserting themselves at an early age, he started to study piano when he was eight years old. One of his teachers was Dr. Torrington, Toronto.

In further pursuance of his piano studies, the youthful Hunt went to Leipzig, Germany, where he became a pupil of the famous Dr. Carl Reinecke.

Heard Famous Musicians

While there for a period of two years, he sat in rapt awe as famous artists such as Grieg, Rubenstein, Joachim, Moskowski and other piano masters performed at the famous Gewand Haus concerts.

Returning to Canada, he went to Toronto and in 1885 joined the Conservatory of Music there in its infant stages. He opened a studio and taught piano until 1899 when he came to Belleville as Director of Music at Albert College, and organist of Bridge Street Methodist Church.

In 1908, Professor Hunt went to Edmonton, Alta., remaining there until 1916 when he returned to Belleville and resumed his

former position. He retired in 1940.

During his sojourn here, Prof. Hunt founded the former Belleville Philharmonic Society, which became famous in this district with its presentations of Handel's Messiah, Haydn's "Creation" and other notable works. The Philharmonic was also responsible for the bringing to the city many concert artists.

Two Children

Professor Hunt married the former Miss Ellen Robinson, of Milton Ont. They have two children, a son Harry K. Hunt, of the Imperial Life Insurance Co., Toronto, and a daughter, Mrs. Richard (Helen) H. Allen, Pittsburgh, Pa. Mrs. Allen is a well known violin virtuoso, who travelled extensively in the United States and Canada until five years ago when an accident destroyed her bowing arm.

Three grandchildren are a part of the family, Patricia Hunt, who recently graduated from the University of Toronto with a B.A. degree; John R. Allen, graduate of Brown University, Rhode Island, and William Perry Allen, of Utah University, Salt Lake City. Both grandsons are at present serving as midshipmen in the United States Navy and are on instructional cruises in the Pacific.

Better Appreciation of Music

While the world generally is moving at too rapid a rate for a large number of young people to take good music seriously, Prof. Hunt believes that this is not an indication of decline of interest. Through the media of radio, concert hall, and artists, he feels there is a greater appreciation of the better class of music.

While Prof. Hunt is retired, he has lost no interest in the piano. Physically capable as he was three decades ago, he has acted in a supply capacity at the organs of city churches.

"I play daily," he smiled. "I have no rheumatism. I do it just to keep in touch."

The Intelligencer
Aug 12, 1948