

MUSIC TO THEIR EARS!

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

One of the variety of things enjoyed by the visitors for the summer season at Richfield Springs was the many forms of music that were provided not only by local musicians but also by our leading hotels. This was a 'must' in the line of entertainments offered to amuse those who came to rest and otherwise enjoy the area.

Realizing that, the owners of the largest hotels at the time got together and arranged for noted musicians to spend their summer vacations at Richfield in return for room, board, gratuities and access to all of the health benefits offered here.

One of the most popular leaders of the orchestra that was hired in the late 1800s to early 1900s was a gentleman by the name of Professor Daniel H. Stubblebine. He was the oldest living son of Peter and Elizabeth Stubblebine who lived for many years in Pottstown, NY before moving to Troy.

The Professor was considered a self-made man, growing from the ranks of iron workers of Pennsylvania. At sixteen he worked in the rolling mills of Birdsboro, Pennsylvania. Here he began playing the cornet and spent most of his leisure hours practicing. At the age of twenty-one he moved to Reading and became leader of the famous Ringgold Band, one of America's first community bands founded in 1852. He afterward took

charge of the Milton Band in Milton, PA. and when the war began, the band was attached to the Fourth Pennsylvania Regiment. At the end of three months, he enlisted with a band of twenty-four pieces and was attached to the Fifty-third Pennsylvania Regiment under Col. John R. Brooke during the Civil War.

His summer visits to Richfield began about 1887 when he was engaged as a coronet soloist with conductor Lombard who was then leading the orchestra. By 1888, Stubblebine, then living in Albany, had been asked to take over the summer orchestra. Four of the most popular musical publishers were engaged by him to furnish publications for the group. Twice daily veranda concerts were given at the Spring House and New American (later the Earlington) alternately as had been the custom, with one parlor concert in the evening at alternating hotels. A list of those included in the orchestra in 1890 included: George Becker, first violinist, a leader of much experience in the orchestras of the east; George Franklin of the Providence Opera House orchestra of Boston who played second violin; Thomas F. Ware, formerly of Boston who played viola and was also a first-class pianist; Carl Riebi, the violin-celloist of the celebrated Boston Symphony Orchestra who was a German University

educated musician and master of his instrument; W. W. Howe, of Albany, a musician of much experience both in military bands and orchestras played trombone; Bert Stubblebine (brother) of Cleveland, Ohio, a first-class violinist and cornetist; Sig. Antonio Giosoia of the Leland Opera House of Albany played flute and piccolo; Williams Zench of Cincinnati, Ohio, instructor in the conservatory of music there, played clarinet; Fred Hass of Philadelphia, a popular musician, played the double bass.

It was reported that no pains or expense was spared by Mr. Stubblebine in securing the best talent available with his intention being to sustain the splendid reputation gained during his previous engagements here and always to improve. The number of musicians varied from season to season, the average number being ten. The efforts of the orchestra and its director were highly praised for excellent music furnished. Few orchestras of ten pieces would undertake to play such standard works as the William Tell Overture and a score of others. The music chosen catered somewhat to the public taste but the Professor also endeavored to educate his listeners by giving morning concerts devoted to such classics as Haydn's work for string quartets. The variety of music that was rendered included



classics, waltzes, polkas, sacred and sometimes requests from the listeners. Favorable comparisons were drawn between Stubblebine's orchestra and the orchestras of New York City and Saratoga with twice their number of instruments. Their popularity showed in the requests they received to play for other events in the area such as music for the field sports events.

Each year a complimentary benefit ball for Professor Stubblebine was given not only as a social event but also as a means of raising extra funds to be used toward defraying the expenses of the orchestra members and new music.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about this group can be found in the following quote: "When do you find time to rehearse those difficult

selections you render in your concerts?" was the quest an inquisitive person asked Mr. Stubblebine. His reply was, "We do not rehearse; the program is made out and the orchestra play it through at sight. This is what tells the kind of musicians that are here. They are artists of the most skilled class."

At the end of the 1902 season, notice was given that Professor Stubblebine would be obliged to give up the direction of the organization because of ill health. He would remain in charge until the end of the season in October. He had suffered from rheumatism and had hoped that the treatments at Richfield would help. He died at his home in Albany on December 20, 1903. His wife survived him.