## Songs from Starke County

I received the following note from Marty Lucas the other day about a composer of music with connections to Starke County. He said, "Just learned a tidbit of Starke Co. history I'd never heard before. And it's pretty cool, in my opinion...it requires some explanation, so bear with me...

You're no doubt familiar with the American Songbook classic "Georgia On My Mind". Everybody knows Ray Charles' 1960 rendition, and probably lots of people assume he wrote the song. But no, the music was composed by Hoagy Carmichael (who also wrote Stardust, Buttermilk Sky, Heart and Soul, the list goes on), well suffice it to say he was one of America's greatest songwriters of the first half of the 20th century.

Carmichael was a native of Bloomington, received his undergraduate degree from IU in 1925 and his law degree there too, in 1926. At a party in Bloomington in 1930 Carmichael came up with a melody, and then stayed up all night with his friend Stuart Gorrell, working on it.

Stuart ended up writing the lyrics for the song, which became 'Georgia on My Mind'. Here's the local connection. According to Wikipedia, Stuart Gorrell was born in Knox, Indiana, in 1901. [Ed Hasnerl says that Stuart's father, Samuel M. Gorrell was the publisher of North Judson and Knox newspapers. The Knox paper was later sold to Henry F. Schricker.] He (Stuart Gorrell) went on to become a banker and never wrote another song lyric.

Stuart said the lyric was about Hoagy's sister, <u>Georgia</u> Carmichael. Nevertheless, it's the Georgia state song.

Actually, the song was a mostly forgotten oldie when Ray Charles recorded it. I've heard his producer didn't want to do some tired old song from 30 years earlier, but Ray Charles generally did what he wanted to do. And he did it well."

Some of you may not have heard of the song writer, **Leo Friedman**. He was born in Elgin, Illinois in 1869 and died in Chicago in 1927. I would say that his and your age difference would be a reason for not knowing him. However, you might have heard of some of his songs. He is best remembered for composing and publishing the sentimental waltz, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart", with lyrics by Beth Slater Whitson in 1910. Another one of his popular compositions was "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland."

The local connection of "Let Me Call You Sweetheart", is **where** is was composed. It was composed on the east side of Bass Lake at the Center View Hotel, (see the attachment) which is now the home of Bill and Nancy Sonnemaker, and they are proud to tell the story about Leo Friedman.

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Another song writer that I am sure you haven't heard about is Alice Prettyman Shilling. Prettyman Street in Knox is named after her father. She wrote the words to "Yellow River" with music by **Leo Friedman**. Yes, it is our Yellow River in Starke County. And yes, it is the same Leo Friedman. And yes, she was my great aunt. You can access this song by clicking on our website --- <a href="http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/yellow\_river/yellow\_river.pdf">http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/yellow\_river/yellow\_river.pdf</a>

If you know of other Starke County composers, let me know.

Jim Shilling
Starke County Historical Society

http://www.starkehistory.com
http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/

