

**Clyde Van Noble (1881-1955)** became a jeweler's apprentice as a teenager and had a promising career in his chosen trade. However, that career was put on hold when he became beguiled and enamored by the trapeze and acrobatics. Clyde quit his apprenticeship with a Bloomington watchmaker and jeweler, and joined the circus in 1904, following in the footsteps of his older brother Charles. It was in the circus that he met and married Emily Vecchi, an established circus performer herself. In 1909, they embarked on their own circus career together—first with their own bicycle act featuring Emily and her two sisters, and later with Clyde returning to flying himself. After returning to Bloomington permanently in 1918, Clyde resumed his first trade in the jewelry business where he owned and operated a store in downtown Bloomington. During this same time, Clyde became very active in the community and was well known for his honorable service to the organizations to which he belonged. However, he did not leave the “center stage” completely behind. He helped organize the Community Players Theatre, of which he was president for several years, and he and Emily were active in their productions. He also served as the makeup man for the American Passion Play, among other theatrical activities in the area. Clyde's “ability, willingness, and energy were always available” to his community—both his Bloomington community and the circus community too.<sup>1</sup>

Clyde Van Noble was born on August 30, 1881, the youngest of 11 children born to James K. and Sarah Ann (Johnston) Noble.<sup>2</sup> Clyde's father, James, was born in Ohio in 1829. When James was about two years old, Clyde's grandfather, David, moved the family to Illinois, settling in Randolph township. In 1850, James was living in Bloomington working as a plasterer. By 1860, James had returned to Randolph Township where he and his wife Sarah (whom he had married on August 31, 1854) had started their own family, and he was engaged in farming.<sup>3</sup> By 1870, the family moved back to Bloomington permanently, settling at 513 E. Locust Street, and James was working as a plasterer again.<sup>4</sup> The Noble family lived at this address until about 1873 when they moved for the final time, settling at 604 E. Taylor Street.<sup>5</sup> The home on East Taylor Street remained in the Noble family for many years.<sup>6</sup> James was also appointed a deputy sheriff in 1874 by Sheriff James Goodheart and served for four years in this position. In 1882, he was elected a constable and served in that capacity for many years.<sup>7</sup> James was a well-respected member of the community.

Little is known about Clyde's early years. He attended Emerson School (located at the corner of Taylor and Evans streets) and graduated from there on June 11, 1896.<sup>8</sup> Emerson School was

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<sup>1</sup> “Clyde Noble Leaves Impressive Record,” *The Pantagraph*, May 6, 1955, 4

<sup>2</sup> World War I draft card for Clyde Noble, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), date accessed September 3, 2018; “Mrs. Sarah Noble Dead,” *The Pantagraph*, February 23, 1918, 6; The names of Clyde's siblings are as follows (from oldest to youngest): Mark, Rebecca (sometimes known as Eugenia), Frank, (Ira, who died at age four), William, Charles, Lillie, Carrie, Hattie, and an unknown child who died in infancy.

<sup>3</sup> “James K. Noble, Dead,” *The Pantagraph*, September 26, 1898, 7; 1850 United State Census, [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), date accessed September 2, 2018; 1860 United States Census, [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), date accessed, September 2, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> 1870 United States Census, [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), date accessed, September 2, 2018; *Holland's Bloomington City Directory, 1870*, 163

<sup>5</sup> The address was also known as 606 Taylor for a few years; *Bloomington City Directory, 1873*, 145.

<sup>6</sup> *Bloomington and Normal City Directory, 1919*, 386.

<sup>7</sup> “James K. Noble, Dead.”

<sup>8</sup> “The Schools and Colleges Closing the Study Year, Students Splendid Showing, Wesleyan, Ward, and High School Commencements,” *The Bloomington Leader*, June 11, 1896, 15; *Bloomington and Normal City Directory, 1897*, 50.

formerly known as the Fourth Ward School, where several internationally renowned circus performers, most notably Harry Green (known professionally as Harry LaVan), attended.<sup>9</sup>

Clyde was also a newspaper carrier boy for the *Bloomington Leader*, one of Bloomington's newspapers, for an unknown length of time.<sup>10</sup> While he was a newspaper carrier, Clyde won a prize for bringing in a large number of subscribers during *The Leader's* subscriber drive from October 20 to November 8, 1896.<sup>11</sup> On the afternoon of Tuesday, November 10, the group of carriers who brought in the most new subscriptions, Clyde included, gathered in the private offices of *The Leader's* proprietor, Levi A. Cass. Cass made a short address, complementing the boys on "their good work" and emphasizing the fact that they were "co-workers with the editor, reporters, and manager of *The Leader*, and an important factor in its success." For Clyde's contributions towards the 360 new subscribers taken in during that time frame, he was given "a splendid suit of underwear."<sup>12</sup>

The following year, when Clyde was 15 years old, he left home for Chicago. While there, he spent the next two years training in the art of engraving and jewelry making. He returned to Bloomington in 1899 where he lived with his mother in the family's home on Taylor Street. His father had passed away in 1898.<sup>13</sup>

In 1900, Clyde began working for Frank Parritt, a jeweler who was the owner and operator of Parritt Jewelry, located in downtown Bloomington. It is plausible that Clyde began working for Parritt around April 1900. Parritt had placed an advertisement in *The Pantagraph*, which appeared on April 28, 1900. The ad stated that he was looking for a "boy," but that none under the age of 15 should apply. Clyde could have responded to that ad and subsequently been hired by Parritt.<sup>14</sup>

Not long after Clyde began working for Parritt, catastrophe struck Parritt and many other business owners in downtown Bloomington. During the early hours of June 19, 1900, 45 buildings and five and a half city blocks (west from East to Madison Street and south from Monroe to Washington Street) were destroyed by fire within eight hours in downtown Bloomington. It is not exactly clear where Parritt's jewelry store was located in downtown at the time of the fire. In 1897, Parritt's business was located at 533 N. Main Street.<sup>15</sup> By 1899, it appears that the business was located on the "east side of the square."<sup>16</sup> Wherever it was located downtown, it appears that the Great Fire did have some kind of impact on the business. According to an article published in *The Pantagraph*, Parritt gave Clyde a "beautiful gold watch and chain... as a token for faithful work done during the night of the fire." The article reported that Clyde succeeded in rescuing a large portion of Parritt's most valuable jewelry.<sup>17</sup> By all accounts, Clyde was a loyal and hardworking employee.

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<sup>9</sup> *Bloomington City Directory, 1889*, 79.

<sup>10</sup> *The Bloomington Leader* was a Republican newspaper that began publishing weekly editions in 1868. The newspaper quickly added daily, evening editions the following year. *The Leader* continued publishing until 1899; *The History of McLean County, Illinois*. (Chicago: William LeBaron, Jr. & Co, 1879), 823.

<sup>11</sup> "Happy Carrier Boys," *The Bloomington Leader*, November 11, 1896, 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> "James K. Noble, Dead;" "Clyde V. Noble, Retired Circus Aerialist, Dies," *The Pantagraph*, May 4, 1955, 2.

<sup>14</sup> "Wanted" *The Pantagraph*, April 28, 1900, 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Bloomington-Normal City Directory, 1897*, 666.

<sup>16</sup> "We Are Going Out of Business," *The Pantagraph*, April 13, 1899, 4.

<sup>17</sup> "Given A Reward," *The Pantagraph*, July 4, 1900, 8

After the fire, Parritt reopened his store, first at 317 N. Main Street, before opening a brand new store at 106 W. Washington Street on April 15, 1901.<sup>18</sup> Clyde continued to work faithfully for Parritt until sometime in 1904, when he decided to follow in the footsteps of his older brother Charles and become an aerialist in the circus.<sup>19</sup>

Clyde's older brother Charles most likely began his career in the circus because of his acquaintance with Harry Green, professionally known as Harry LaVan. Charles and Harry both attended the Fourth Ward School. However, Charles did not immediately begin a career in the circus. As a young boy, he carried messages for the Western Union Company in Bloomington. He then became a telegraph operator in the late 1880s, eventually moving to Springfield, Illinois to continue his work for Western Union.<sup>20</sup> As described by *The Pantagraph*, Charles was "skillful and careful" in his work.<sup>21</sup> By the 1890s, Charles had left his position as a telegraph operator to take up aerial acrobatics, with the hope of overcoming his asthma.<sup>22</sup> He began to train and work with Harry LaVan and another Bloomington flyer, Ed Foreman (who took the stage name of Ed LaMar). Charles performed with the LaVan Brothers (Harry and his older brother Fred) for a time, until about 1892 when he joined the troupe that would aid in his achieving aerial greatness, the Fisher Brothers, also known as the Flying Fishers.<sup>23</sup>

The Fisher Brothers/Flying Fishers was founded in the mid-1870s by Horace Frederick Miltimore, better known by the stage name of Fred Fisher, who lived in Bloomington briefly during the early to mid-1870s. Charles (who adopted the stage name Charles Fisher) performed with the Fisher Brothers in numerous circuses throughout the country including: Walter L. Mains' Circus, Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Circus, Bob Hunting's Show, the Wallace Show, Ringling Brothers' Circus, and Barnum and Bailey Circus.<sup>24</sup> In 1900, Charles bought out Fred

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<sup>18</sup> "Grand Opening Parritt Jewelry Company," *The Pantagraph*, April 12, 1901, 3

<sup>19</sup> *Bloomington-Normal City Directories*, 1902 and 1904.

<sup>20</sup> "Charles Noble, Famous Acrobat, Is Dead," *The Pantagraph*, January 21, 1908, 6.

<sup>21</sup> "Fragments," *The Pantagraph*, December 18, 1886, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Maureen Brunsdale and Mark Schmitt. *The Bloomington-Normal Circus Legacy: The Golden Age of Aerialists*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2013) 31; "Charles Noble, Famous Acrobat, Is Dead."

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 23 and 31; It has been argued that two brothers, Fred and Howard Green, are the origin of Bloomington-Normal becoming known for the circus industry. According to local lore, they began their career by training on a trapeze they built in their father's barn in the mid-1870s. This has since been dispelled. Researchers with the Milner Library Special Collections, Circus and Allied Arts Collection discovered that Fred and Howard (and younger brother Harry) were members of the first dedicated gymnasium in Bloomington (established by I.P. Fell in 1875 above the offices of the *Bloomington Leader*). This gymnasium touted having a trapeze as an available apparatus. According to an 1876 article in *The Pantagraph* about a performance at the gymnasium, the three brothers performed "feats now in vogue among the professionals," which included horizontal bars and tumbling. Having an easily accessible practice space, their skills developed exceedingly well. Fred and Howard went on to become the "La Van Brothers," with Fred being about nineteen at the time and Howard twelve. When Howard later retired due to an injury, the act came to include their younger brother Harry; Steve Gossard, "The Flying La Vans of Bloomington, Illinois," *Bandwagon* 54, no. 4 (July-August 2012), 2-3; Email correspondence between Candace Summers and Mark Schmitt, June 5, 2018; "Muscle," *The Pantagraph*, February 25, 1876.

<sup>24</sup> "Bloomington Circus Talent," *The Pantagraph*, July 29, 1892, 5; "A Family Reunited," *The Pantagraph*, July 20, 1893, 7; "Town Talk," *The Pantagraph*, January 30, 1894, 5; "Town Talk," *The Pantagraph*, February 22, 1894, 7; "Town Talk," *The Pantagraph*, July 12, 1895, 5; "Charles Noble III," *The Pantagraph*, September 27, 1897, 7; "Western Farmers Prospering," *The Pantagraph*, August 6, 1898, 8; "Visiting in Alabama," *The Pantagraph*, December 5, 1898, 3.

Fisher's share of the act after Fred sustained an injury in a performance and retired. Charles then hired fellow Bloomington flyer, Ed Foreman, to replace Fred (Miltimore) Fisher.<sup>25</sup>

A legend grew up around the origin of the name of The Flying Fishers because of the need to set up some kind of protection under the flyers while they were performing. Miltimore and Charles traveled to Pekin, Illinois to talk to a fisherman about potential ways to create a net.<sup>26</sup> One was eventually made out of hemp rope that was tied together in knots.<sup>27</sup> After the net was set up, an onlooker joked that the performers "looked more like fishermen than they did actors," thus inspiring the name of the "Fisher Brothers."<sup>28</sup> It was eventually changed to the "Flying Fishers" after they became a flying act. It has been found, however, that "the historical record does not support this legend, but it is important to note that the community fostered such a myth as part of the local culture."<sup>29</sup>

While Charles was in the circus, he made visits to see his family in Bloomington when he was nearby, and even performed in Bloomington occasionally.<sup>30</sup> Plus, he, like other area circus performers, would spend the off-season winter months training in Bloomington. They would rent barns, theaters, gymnasiums, even buildings in railroad yards, where ever they could find space to train.<sup>31</sup> Charles's career in the circus likely had a strong impact on Clyde, leading Clyde to make the decision to leave his career as a jeweler behind and join his brother in the circus.

On March 20, 1904, Clyde left for Chicago to join the Ringling Brothers Circus. It was reported by *The Pantagraph* that Clyde had "been training for some time and [was] remarkably well developed." He joined his brother Charles, who was the head of the trapeze department at the time and whose act, the Flying Fishers, had been performing with them for several seasons.<sup>32</sup> When Clyde joined his brother's act, they expanded to five members (Ed Foreman, Clyde Noble, Charles Noble, Charles Waller, and Fred Johnson) and became known as the Five Flying Famous Fishers.<sup>33</sup> It was during this time with Ringling Brothers that Clyde met his future wife, Emily Vecchi.

Emily Vecchi was born in London, England and began singing and dancing when she was six years old. By the age of eight, she was performing on stages all throughout Great Britain, eventually branching out as a vaudeville and bicycle performer. It was sometime in 1900 that Emily embarked on the next stage of her career by joining the Kaufmann Bicycle Troupe, which put her on track to become "the world's most accomplished lady bicyclist."<sup>34</sup> Emily made appearances with the Kaufmann Troupe in circuses all over the world. She emerged as "Miss Emily, star of the Kaufmann Troupe," in Holland, Russia, Denmark, Bohemia, Scotland, Germany, Belgium, and Ireland, along with many others.<sup>35</sup> Outside of Europe, she performed in Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Cuba. The Kaufmann Troupe performed as a specialty act during the second season of the famed New York Hippodrome in 1905. The Hippodrome

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<sup>25</sup> Brunsdale and Schmitt, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Clyde V. Noble, "Bloomington, Illinois: the Home of 'The Man on the Flying Trapeze'," 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Steve Gossard, "The Greatest Little Show on Earth; the YMCA Circus of Bloomington, Illinois," 1997 (unpaged), McLean County Historical Society Circus Collection, Folder 4; Lisa Elleson, "Emily Noble," 2016, 4.

<sup>30</sup> "Was Circus Day," *The Pantagraph*, June 30, 1903, 6.

<sup>31</sup> "Ready for Practice," *The Pantagraph*, February 24, 1899, 5.

<sup>32</sup> "To Join Ringling Circus," *The Pantagraph*, March 22, 1904, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Brunsdale and Schmitt, 31-32.

<sup>34</sup> "The Kaufmann Lady Cycle Troupe," *Variety*, May 1909, 15.

<sup>35</sup> "Noted Troupe's Star Visited Many Lands," *The Pantagraph*, June 24, 1928.

served as “the largest and most successful theater in New York” for two decades, allowing a great deal of exposure for the Kaufmann troupe in the United States.<sup>36</sup> Another appearance by the troupe at the Western Canada Industrial Exhibition in July 1906 received rave reviews. The troupe was “recognized as the stellar act of the attraction programme.”<sup>37</sup> Performing at the Lyric Theatre in Altoona, Pennsylvania in December 1906, it was reported that the troupe “[proved] another hit of very large proportions and [had] become the talk of the town.”<sup>38</sup> Amidst all of her other performances, Emily even appeared before royalty.<sup>39</sup>

The Kaufmann Troupe joined the Ringling Brothers Circus in 1904. It is not clear exactly when during the season that Clyde and Emily met. But, it is clear that it was not easy for Clyde and Emily to get to know each other outside of performances due to the restrictions that were placed on young women who worked for Ringling Brothers. The Ringling Brothers Circus was unofficially known as the “Sunday School Show” due to the clean, family-oriented atmosphere.<sup>40</sup> Emily was placed under even closer supervision by the Kaufmann Troupe given her age (she would have been 18 years old at the time) and the fact that she was a solo rider in the act. A governess, usually someone who teaches and trains a child in a private household, accompanied her wherever she went.<sup>41</sup> Young women who were not allowed to interact with young men outside of professional performance and were given a warning the first time they violated this rule, a \$25 fine the second time, and barred from the show altogether if they were caught disobeying a third time.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the barriers that were put between them, Clyde and Emily found a way to foster their budding relationship. Later in her life, Emily told of instances when Clyde would sneak a box of candy to her as they passed each other on horseback during the show’s preparations. Knowing the consequences for both of them should they get caught, she would always hide the presents under her robe right away.<sup>43</sup> Much of the two years their acts worked together for the Ringling Brothers, from 1904 to 1905, were spent like this. However, there were a few rare occasions when the two were allowed to spend time together. These outings were always spent with another couple, and in the company of additional supervision. By the time the Kaufmann Troupe left the Ringling Brothers Circus in early 1906, Emily and Clyde had only interacted privately a few times.<sup>44</sup>

Clyde continued to perform with the Flying Fishers around the United States and Canada. During the 1906 and 1907 seasons, Clyde and the troupe were performing with the Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Circus, which was also owned by Ringling Brothers. At one performance in Marshalltown, Iowa, the Fishers were listed as having six members and “known the world over as daring aerial stars,” performing one of the best stunts (though the stunt was not listed).

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<sup>36</sup> “Hippodrome Theatre,” *The New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists*, <http://www.nycago.org/Organs/NYC/html/HippodromeTheatre.html>.

<sup>37</sup> “Big Crowd in the Evening,” *Manitoba Morning Free Press*, July 26, 1906.

<sup>38</sup> “At the Lyric Theatre,” *Altoona Tribune*, December 27, 1906.

<sup>39</sup> The royalty she performed before included the Kaiser of Germany, the King of England, and the Czar of Russia. Betty Holzauer, *Circus Lore*, 1965.

<sup>40</sup> Conversation with Maureen Brunsdale (Head of Special Collections and Rare Books at Milner Library, Illinois State University) on April 6, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> “Local Couple’s Experience Reads Like Story Book.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> “Official Program for Ringling Brothers’: World’s Greatest Shows,” (Chicago, 1906, First Edition), *Illinois State University, Milner Library Special Collections, Circus and Allied Arts Collection*; Elleson, 3.

Additionally, the “three LaVans” were billed as performing with Forepaugh-Sells that season too, doing a “casting act.”<sup>45</sup> When the troupe performed in Baltimore, Maryland, it was reported that they executed “double somersaults and a circumvolution of the body midair, catching outstretched hands of companions.”<sup>46</sup> In Fort Wayne, Indiana, it was reported by the local newspaper, *The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, that a member of the Flying Fishers successfully completed a “triple twisting somersault” and “is the only one who has ever accomplished this feat,” though the identity of the flyer was not listed.<sup>47</sup>

Tragedy struck the Flying Fishers on January 20, 1908. After finishing the season with the Forepaugh & Sells Bros., Clyde and Charles returned to their home in Bloomington in November 1907 to stay with their mother at the family home on East Taylor Street. The brothers were renting the Bloomington Coliseum to use as a practice area when Charles became ill. His obituary reported that he had been ill some three or four days before his death, with the direct cause of death being listed as heart disease.<sup>48</sup> A notice in *The Decatur Herald* also reported he had been ill with pneumonia in the days leading up to his death.<sup>49</sup> Charles was only 39 years old at the time of his unexpected death.

Despite this huge loss for the troupe, Clyde took control of the Flying Fishers, quickly reorganized the troupe, and began practicing for the new season. Prior to Charles death, they engaged in a contract to perform with Barnum and Bailey (also owned by Ringling Brothers at the time) for the upcoming season, set to open at Madison Square Garden in New York City on March 15, 1908. After Charles’s untimely death, Clyde “visited the Ringling Brothers and arranged with them to carry out the contract that had been made for the appearance of the ‘Flying Fishers.’”<sup>50</sup> In addition to himself and Ed Foreman, being “old members” of the troupe, Fred Johnson of Oklahoma City (who had been with the Fishers for some years) took over the position once occupied by Charles, and Charles Miller of Quincy, returned for his second year with the troupe. Clyde filled the empty spot in the troupe with Frank DuBois, also of Bloomington. Additionally, George Conners, of Columbus, Ohio, traveled with the team as a substitute in case any of the members were incapacitated by illness or injury. Along with the reorganization of the troupe, came new tricks incorporated into the act. As they practiced at the Coliseum, they tried a new stunt “in which the lighter members were flipped about through the air and, holding onto nothing, ascended to high points as easily as the rest of the world would go down.” They wanted to dazzle their audiences with “impossible feats.”<sup>51</sup>

During this entire time, the Kaufmann Troupe traveled and performed all over the world. But this did not put an end to Clyde and Emily’s relationship. They kept up their long distance

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<sup>45</sup> “Forepaugh-Sells Draws Big Crowd,” *Evening Times-Republican*, June 26, 1906, 7; A casting act consists of the flyer being thrown by another member of the troupe, on or off a still or moving trapeze. Casting acts often use a double barred trapeze so the caster can hook his/her feet under the bar in back and his/her knees over the bar in the front. The casting catchers stand face to face with the flier in space between them. At least 3 performers are needed for this act; “Aerialists,” Central Michigan University, Clark Historical Library, [https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Michigan\\_Material\\_Statewide/Circuses\\_and\\_Carnivals/Pages/Aerialists.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Michigan_Material_Statewide/Circuses_and_Carnivals/Pages/Aerialists.aspx), date accessed September 4, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> “The Circus is Here,” *The Baltimore Sun*, May 1, 1907, 14.

<sup>47</sup> “Clown Stunts All New,” *The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, August 23, 1907, 3.

<sup>48</sup> “Charles Noble, Famous Acrobat, Is Dead;” “New Team of ‘Fishers’ Complete Training,” *The Pantagraph*, February 26, 1908, 6; Brunsdale and Schmitt, 31.

<sup>49</sup> “One of Flying Fishers Dead,” *The Decatur Herald*, January 21, 1908, 2.

<sup>50</sup> “New Team of ‘Fishers’ Complete Training.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

relationship through letters. While Emily was performing in Germany in 1908, Clyde sent her an engagement ring in the mail.<sup>52</sup> After Emily returned to the United States on November 7, 1908, the two were married in New York City on November 10.<sup>53</sup> This marked one of the few times during their five-year courtship that the couple was allowed to formally meet.<sup>54</sup>

Following Clyde and Emily's marriage, Clyde continued to perform, primarily on the vaudeville circuit. He and fellow member of the Flying Fishers, Fred Johnson, withdrew from the team to begin performing in vaudeville during the 1909 season.<sup>55</sup> Clyde and Fred turned the Flying Fishers into a trio, adding Frank Harrold (known professionally as Frank Smuggles or "Smugu") who performed as a clown. The new Flying Fishers debuted in Ottawa, Illinois, kicking off their summer engagements that would take them along the East Coast as well. Ottawa's local newspaper, *The Ottawa Free Trader*, reported that "a great audience watched them in open-eyed wonder, and held their breaths in silent admiration. IT was a great stunt—and at the same time was refined and clean in every way. No finer act of its kind has ever been seen on this or any other stage."<sup>56</sup>

By January 1910, Clyde had given up "flying," and he and Emily were organizing a new bicycle act called the La Petite Emilie Troupe. Clyde managed the act, which consisted of Emily, Emily's two sisters, Margherita and Roma (who had also been members of the Kaufmann Troupe), and Clyde himself.<sup>57</sup> The troupe was advertised as "the daintiest, most novel and pleasing trick bicycle act obtainable; wardrobe, ability and appearance unsurpassed; a real feature in every sense of the word and absolutely new for America."<sup>58</sup> It has been said that "Emily was the principal solo rider with this troupe and was considered one of, if not the greatest lady trick cyclist in the world."<sup>59</sup>

When Clyde and Emily returned to Bloomington during the off-season, Clyde—in addition to training for the coming seasons—also participated in several performances of the annual YMCA circus, which began in 1910. The new show, called Four Claws and Stingling Bros. Circus, debuted on January 1 of that year, featuring many well-known, local, male-only, circus performers and aerialists. In exchange for their performance, participating circus personnel "received extended complimentary YMCA memberships for training purposes," which would have been a great benefit for performers in the off-season.<sup>60</sup>

The YMCA had opened their new building at 200 E. Washington Street (which today is now the site of a parking lot, adjacent from Withers Park) in 1909. Their former home, located at 1302 N. Main Street, was not large enough to host an event of this sort. So this first circus was the largest event the YMCA had put on to date. The circus was directed by the Y's physical

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<sup>52</sup> "Local Couple's Experience Reads Like Story Book."

<sup>53</sup> New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 for Emily Vecchi, Ancestry.com, Date Accessed March 24, 2016; "Clyde V. Noble, Retired Circus Aerialist, Dies."

<sup>54</sup> "Local Couple's Experience Reads Like Story Book," *The Pantagraph*, November 14, 1937.

<sup>55</sup> "Acrobats Leave For Season's Work," *The Pantagraph*, March 23, 1909, 5; After Clyde and Fred left the group, Ed (Foreman) LaMar formed his own group known as "The LaMars," Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> "Fishers in Vaudeville," *The Pantagraph*, May 8, 1909, 5

<sup>57</sup> A. Morton Smith, "Circus Stars of Yesteryears, V. Clyde V. Fisher & Emily Vecchi," *Hobbies*, November 1950, 24-25; "European Trick Bicyclist," *The Pantagraph*, January 17, 1910, 11.

<sup>58</sup> "La Petite Emilie Troupe of Cyclists," *The Billboard*, March 19, 1910.

<sup>59</sup> Clyde V. Noble, "Bloomington, Illinois: the Home of 'The Man on the Flying Trapeze'," 7.

<sup>60</sup> Brunsdale and Schmitt, 60-65.

director, Lloyd Eyer, who had come to Bloomington when he was just two years old.<sup>61</sup> Clyde also served on the organizing committee for the circus.<sup>62</sup>

Two performances of the YMCA circus was held that New Year's Day; one at 3:00 p.m. and the other at 7:15 p.m. Between the two performances, 1,500 people were in attendance, which was much larger than anyone expected. The circus featured a wide variety of events, several of which Clyde participated in. In an article about the inaugural circus, Clyde was listed as participating in the clown band, leaps, the dynamite box (which Clyde's former partner Frank Harrold participated in as well), tumbling, roller skating, and comedy boxing.<sup>63</sup> Clyde performed in the YMCA circus at least one more time, on New Year's Day in 1912. During that circus, Clyde, Johnson, and Harrold performed once again as the Flying Fishers. During this performance, Clyde served as the catcher for the team, with Johnson as the leaper and Harrold as the clown.<sup>64</sup>

After the 1911 season, during which Clyde and Emily played the Keith and Orpheum vaudeville circuit throughout the United States, Emily's sisters returned to England. This set back forced Clyde to reorganize the act. Clyde and Emily, along with Johnson and Frank Cadiff, reorganized the troupe as a flying return act, resurrecting the Flying Fishers.<sup>65</sup> In April 1912, the troupe was performing in Minneapolis, Minnesota, when it was reported that they would return to Europe with six months of bookings.<sup>66</sup> Their first booking in Europe was in August of that year at the Empire Theater in London. The booking lasted eight weeks. Reports, however, indicate that though a member of the troupe, Emily was not doing professional work that year.<sup>67</sup> While in Europe, Clyde had contracted five years of bookings for the act, but this was cut short with the outbreak of World War I in 1914.<sup>68</sup> This forced Clyde, Emily, and the rest of the act to return to America on the last ocean liner to leave Europe after the war began.<sup>69</sup> In 1915, the Flying Fishers comprised of Clyde, Harry Foreman, and Clarence Birdsall (who hailed from New York and performed as the clown in the trio). During this iteration of the group, Clyde served "as the heavy in the act," or catcher.<sup>70</sup> Clyde and Emily continued to perform their acts throughout America for vaudeville and outdoor engagements until 1918, at which time they left their nomadic lives as circus performers behind, and retired to Bloomington.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Lloyd Eyer began his career at the YMCA coaching gymnastics classes. He became the physical director of the Y and continued in that capacity until 1917. He was considered to have been "one of the chief factors in making the 'Y' so popular," especially after the organization constructed the new building. As physical director, Eyer was responsible for organizing numerous events, tournaments, and competitions, "ranging from grade school games for small boys to state championship contests for college teams," as well as the popular YMCA Circus; Hannah Johnson, "Biography of Lloyd Eyer, 2013," 2-3; "Community Service Award Won by Sport Goods Man; Fellow Citizen's Honor Lloyd Eyer for his 'Outstanding and Unselfish' Activity in Interest of Town," undated. Eyer, Lloyd – Newspaper Articles Vertical File, McLean County Museum of History Archives.

<sup>62</sup> "Indoor Circus A Big Success," *The Pantagraph*, January 3, 1910, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> "Indoor Circus Again Pleases Spectators," *The Pantagraph*, January 2, 1912, 9.

<sup>65</sup> A. Morton Smith, "Circus Stars of Yesteryears, V. Clyde V. Fisher & Emily Vecchi" *Hobbies—The Magazine for Collectors*, November, 1950, 25; "Flying Fishers to London," *The Pantagraph*, August 8, 1912.

<sup>66</sup> "Mr. and Mrs. Noble Here," *The Pantagraph*, April 12, 1912.

<sup>67</sup> "Flying Fishers to London."

<sup>68</sup> Smith, "Circus Stars of Yesteryears, V. Clyde V. Fisher & Emily Vecchi," 25.

<sup>69</sup> "Clyde V. Noble, Retired Circus Aerialist, Dies"

<sup>70</sup> "Professional Acrobats Are Now In Training," *The Pantagraph*, March 19, 1915, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Smith, "Circus Stars of Yesteryears, V. Clyde V. Fisher & Emily Vecchi," 25; Elleson, 5.



Life after the circus was just as satisfying as the countless days spent leaping through the air and performing grand bicycle tricks for Clyde and Emily. Although it was reported that the couple saw their new home in Bloomington as “superior to the nomadic type of home they had known as stage people,” the two certainly remained connected to their lives in the circus and continued to perform in many local theater and vaudeville shows.<sup>72</sup> They originally lived at 305 S. McLean Street, but moved several times over the years. In 1920 they lived at 402 E. Market Street. In 1923 they moved once again to live at 214 ½ E. Washington Street. By 1928 they were living at 507 S. Moore Street, where Emily lived until 1962, a year before her death.

After they settled down permanently in Bloomington in 1918, Clyde returned to his former occupation and utilized the skills he learned as a jeweler’s apprentice. He took a position as a clerk and jeweler in Will Homuth’s store on the south side of the Courthouse Square at 108 W. Washington Street (which had been the location of Clyde’s former employer, Frank Parritt).<sup>73</sup> He worked for Hormuth until 1919, at which time he accepted a position with the Mayer Livingston Company. Clyde was the head of the jewelry department at the new Mayer Livingston & Co.’s Newmarket Department Store, which opened on December 15, 1919.<sup>74</sup> The Newmarket was located at 102-108 N. Center Street and took up the entire frontage of Front Street between Center and Madison streets.<sup>75</sup> An advertisement in *The Pantagraph* during the Newmarket’s opening week stated that, “Mr. Clyde Noble and capable assistants will in their utmost ability help you select the ‘Premiere’ of all gifts.” His jewelry department sold everything from solid gold bracelets, to scarf pins and brooches, cuff links, men’s belts, ivory toilet sets, perfume bottles, and silver and plated flatware in a variety of designs.<sup>76</sup> Emily helped Clyde as a sales worker in the store, which he managed for almost 18 years.

When the Newmarket was sold to Montgomery Ward & Co., Clyde opened up his own store at 111 N. Center Street in 1938. During the first Thanksgiving that he owned and operated his own store, Clyde advertised a special sale where customers could choose from one of six silver plated serving pieces for \$5.95 each (regularly \$9.00 each), which he could engrave for you as well.<sup>77</sup> Clyde also advertised his diamonds as being “unconditionally guaranteed perfect, of fine color and full brilliancy.”<sup>78</sup>

In September 1941, an article in *The Pantagraph* announced the incorporation of Clyde’s jewelry store. Clyde was now in partnership with Melvin S. Sorg and his wife of Eureka, Illinois

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<sup>72</sup> “Noted Troupe’s Star Visited Many Lands.”

<sup>73</sup> *Bloomington-Normal City Directory, 1905*, 412; *Bloomington-Normal City Directory, 1907*, 823; World War I Draft Card for Clyde Noble, September 12, 1918, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), date accessed September 3, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> “Mayer Livingston & Co. Open New Store Monday,” *The Pantagraph*, December 11, 1919, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Mayer Livingston & Sons had operated a store in Bloomington since the 1890s, first located at the corner of Front and Main Streets. In 1896, the company purchased a building that once housed the post office and the masonic temple for Bloomington, located at the corner of Front and Center Streets and moved the department store there. A fire broke out on Christmas Day 1918 that completely destroyed the building that housed the Newmarket (although newspaper accounts claim that Livingston had intended to tear down the building all along to erect a new and more modern building). The company reopened in a brand new building on December 15, 1919, almost exactly one year from when the fire had destroyed the previous building. The Newmarket continued to operate until 1937 when it was bought out by Montgomery Ward & Co. in 1937; Gene Smedley, “Christmas Sparks Glowing Memories,” *The Pantagraph*, December 14, 1997, C4; “Going Out of Business,” *The Pantagraph*, November 16, 1936, 9.

<sup>76</sup> “Advertisement for Newmarket,” *The Pantagraph*, December 17, 1919, 5.

<sup>77</sup> “Advertisement, Clyde V. Noble, Jeweler and Silversmith,” *The Pantagraph*, November 18, 1938, 6.

<sup>78</sup> “Bluebird Registered Perfect Diamonds—Clyde V. Noble,” *The Pantagraph*, June 10, 1943.

(who moved to Bloomington the following year). Less than two years after this incorporation, Clyde's store was robbed. Thieves broke into his store by "battering in a sheet iron covering which had been bolted over a second floor window on the south side of the building, adjoining an alley." The thieves apparently used gloves, as police reported that few fingerprints were found at the scene of the crime. In Clyde's report to the police, most of the jewelry taken was "relatively inexpensive 'card' jewelry," but that some irreplaceable articles were also taken. In all, about \$2,000 worth of merchandise was stolen, which in 2017 would have been worth a little over \$28,000.<sup>79</sup> It is not known if the items were ever recovered. The store continued to operate as "Clyde V. Noble," but in July of 1944, it was formally announced that Clyde had sold the store to Melvin Sorg, and the business was officially renamed "Sigmund Sorg, Inc."<sup>80</sup>

Beyond the jewelry business, Clyde and Emily were active members of the Bloomington community. They maintained their lives as performers by taking part in many area theatrical shows, both on stage and behind the scenes. A 1922 issue of *The Pantagraph* reported that Emily's performance in *The Jollies of 1922* was "a novelty and rigorously applauded."<sup>81</sup> *The Jollies of 1922* was put on by the Young Men's Club.<sup>82</sup> Clyde was a member of this club, served on the entertainment committee for a time, and was elected president in 1932.<sup>83</sup> In 1926, Clyde and Emily both did the makeup for *The Sword of the Samurai*, a production put on by Second Presbyterian Church.<sup>84</sup> And in 1928, Clyde did the makeup for the musical quartet and comedy troupe, The Lyttleville Fire Department, when the group performed at the Illinois Fire Chiefs convention and several other performances that year.<sup>85</sup> He reprised his role as makeup man for the troupe in 1939 as well. Clyde and Emily's involvement in local theater broadened when they helped found and organize the Bloomington Community Players.<sup>86</sup> The two remained active members of the theater for many years.

The Community Players was formed in 1923 by the Bloomington Women's Club. The women involved wanted a place where they could showcase their talents in amateur theatrical performances. Like most groups first starting out, the Community Players was without a permanent building for their performances. They had to rely on various theaters throughout the community (Turner Hall, Illini Theatre, Bloomington High School, Normal High School, Illinois State Normal University, the Majestic Theater, and the Scottish Rite Temple) before they found

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<sup>79</sup> "Thieves Make \$2,000 Haul at Jewelry Store," *The Pantagraph*, July 12, 1943, 3; Consumer Price Index (CPI) Conversion Factors for Dollars of 1774 to estimated 2028 to Convert to Dollars of 2017, <https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2017.pdf>, date accessed September 3, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> "Clyde V. Noble, Retired Circus Aerialist, Dies;" "Announcement," *The Pantagraph*, July 19, 1944, 3.

<sup>81</sup> "Jollies Feature Local Comedians: Annual Production of Young Men's Club Plays to Packed House," *The Daily Pantagraph*, February 1, 1922.

<sup>82</sup> The Young Men's Club, founded on October 24, 1916, was originally known as the "Young Business Men's Club of Bloomington, Illinois," a service club active in many local charitable events. Hannah E. Johnson, "Lloyd Eyer Biography," McLean County Museum of History, <http://mchistory.org/research/resources/lloyd-eyer.php>.

<sup>83</sup> "Past Presidents," *Young Men's Club*, <http://ymcbloomington.org/awards.html>; "Young Men's Club Will Hold Annual Party at Hotel Illinois Feb. 20," *The Pantagraph*, February 8, 1928, 8; "Club Elects Clyde Noble," *The Pantagraph*, January 12, 1932, 3.

<sup>84</sup> "Gave Japanese Play on Sunday," *The Pantagraph*, December 6, 1926.

<sup>85</sup> "Lyttleville Department to 'Do Stuff' for Fire Chiefs," *The Pantagraph*, June 19, 1928, 3; "Lyttleville Fire Boys—Hot Stuff—Are Being Kept Busy," *The Pantagraph*, May 15, 1928, 9.

<sup>86</sup> "Rites Thursday for Mrs. Noble, Circus Star," *The Pantagraph*, March 6, 1963.

their current home at 201 Robinhood Lane in 1962.<sup>87</sup> The Community Players have produced a wide range of plays, musicals, and children's productions. Clyde and Emily took part in many of the productions, both on the stage and behind the scenes.<sup>88</sup>

Clyde made his first Community Players appearance in 1929 when he emerged as "Morgan, the tramp," in *The Haunted House*. The program described Clyde as having "more recently identified with the Community Players as a director and expert make-up man."<sup>89</sup> The program's description of Clyde went on to suggest that the other members of the Community Players had been trying to persuade him to act in one of the plays for a long time and had finally succeeded.<sup>90</sup>

Clyde served as president of the Community Players from 1933 through 1936.<sup>91</sup> It was reported in *The Pantagraph* that, during Clyde's tenure as president, the theater had become so successful that in 1935 the Community Players decided to present five plays in the following season, instead of just four.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, Clyde also directed at least one play during his association with the theater, *Three Cornered Moon*, which was the final play of the 1935-1936 season in April 1936.<sup>93</sup> Along with acting as makeup artist for Community Players, Clyde also served as one of the makeup men for the *American Passion Play*.<sup>94</sup>

As active as Clyde was in the Bloomington community, his loyalty to the circus community remained steady and true. Whenever presented the opportunity, Clyde promoted the circus industry and reminisced about his time in the circus. Throughout the rest of his life, Clyde gave numerous talks to community groups such as the Rotarians, Kiwanis, to his own fellow members of the Young Men's Club, the Exchange Club, the Optimist Club, and programs open to the general public.

But, he did more than just talk about the circus, he tried to help the local circus industry continue to thrive. In January 1936, Clyde was elected to serve a two-year position as a director for the Association of Commerce (today known as the McLean County Chamber of Commerce). By March 1938, Clyde was appointed the chairman of a special committee that was tasked with surveying "the matter of better accommodations for professional acrobatic troupes making their winter training quarters" in Bloomington.<sup>95</sup> Clyde was appointed to serve another year as a director in 1939, during which time he continued to work on helping circus performers secure winter training facilities in town and helping encourage more aerialists and other circus performers to come to Bloomington. The ultimate plan of the committee was to construct a permanent wooden structure for aerialists to use as practice facilities; to be used both by those

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<sup>87</sup> Bruce Parrish, "At Community Players Theatre: People Artistically Change the World," *About Community Players Theatre*, <http://www.communityplayers.org/about-cpt/>.

<sup>88</sup> Elleson, 6.

<sup>89</sup> "Bits About The Cast," *The Haunted House* program, April 10-11, 1929.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> "Miss Ethel Gunn to Direct Drama Given Two Nights," *The Pantagraph*, December 3, 1933; "H.W. Hodgens Named for Title Role in 'Grumpy,'" *The Pantagraph*, September 18, 1933, 6.

<sup>92</sup> "Amateur Theatrical Productions Given in Large Numbers During Last Year," *The Pantagraph*, January 16, 1935, 58.

<sup>93</sup> "Community Players to Hold Rehearsal," *The Pantagraph*, April 26, 1936, 8.

<sup>94</sup> The Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts is the home of the *American Passion Play* which has been presenting the teachings of Jesus for ninety-three years. "Where Christian History Comes to Life," *The Original American Passion Play*, <http://www.americanpassionplay.org/about.html>.

<sup>95</sup> "Closer Farm, City Relations Are Favored," *The Pantagraph*, April 26, 1938, 5.

who already spent their winters in Bloomington, and to encourage more to come to Bloomington.<sup>96</sup>

The proposed training barn was to cost an estimated \$7,500 to \$10,000 to construct (or an estimated \$131,000 to \$175,000 in 2017 dollars), and be approximately 60 by 120 feet with a 50-foot roof.<sup>97</sup> It was to be large enough to permit two aerial acts to practice at one time. Current facilities open to any circus performers to practice in were located at the YMCA and the Majestic Theater, which were no longer sufficient based on the needs of performing groups.<sup>98</sup> The construction of such facilities was promoted as a boost to the local economy, as “this class of professional people are good spenders,” and was a project that would more than pay for itself.<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately, the barn was never built and the plans were abandoned.<sup>100</sup>

Another opportunity to encourage more aerialists and circus performers to spend the off-season in Bloomington came about in early 1948. In January of that year, George Valentine, of the Flying Valentinos, presented the Town of Normal Council with a petition for a permit to operate a trailer camp on property he recently acquired, the Happy Acres barn on Grove Street. It was his intent to use the property as a winter practice barn for the “flying return” and other aerial acts. Valentine asserted that since “many performers travel in trailers” he would like permission to open a trailer park on his property and to build a recreation building that would contain sanitary facilities for the performers to use. Clyde appeared at the town council meeting with Valentine to support this endeavor.<sup>101</sup> However, after much debate, the town council rejected Valentine’s proposal, particularly because it meant getting electricity and city water to the site.<sup>102</sup>

In addition to all of these activities that Clyde was involved in, he became very active in the McLean County chapter of the American Red Cross. Clyde’s association with this organization appears to have begun in April, 1938 when he was elected to the board of directors. He was then reelected to serve a term of three years on the board in 1940.<sup>103</sup> In addition to serving on the board of directors, Clyde also served on the general arrangements committee for a number of years, which was in charge of making all the arrangements for annual meetings of the local Red Cross.<sup>104</sup> By January 1943, Clyde was the first vice-chairman of the organization.<sup>105</sup> In December of that year, Clyde was made the new chairman of the organization upon the resignation of William Munro, who took a position in Chicago to engage in national Red Cross Work.<sup>106</sup> It was a very busy time for the Red Cross when Clyde took over leadership of the local chapter. At the time, the United States was embroiled in World War II. And the Red Cross, like most organizations, was engaged in active fundraising for the war effort. It was part of Clyde’s

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<sup>96</sup> “A. of C. Pledges Help in Keeping Farming Courses,” *The Pantagraph*, November 21, 1939, 8.

<sup>97</sup> “Plans Underway To Build Large Training Barn,” *The Pantagraph*, December 31, 1939, 3; Conversion Factors for Dollars of 1774 to estimated 2028 to Convert to Dollars of 2017, <https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2017.pdf>, date accessed September 3, 2018.

<sup>98</sup> Plans Underway To Build Large Training Barn.”

<sup>99</sup> “Let’s Keep the Performers,” *The Pantagraph*, January 2, 1940, 2.

<sup>100</sup> Brunsdale and Schmitt, 129.

<sup>101</sup> “Zoning Board to Rule on Two Trailer Camps,” *The Pantagraph*, January 6, 1948, 2.

<sup>102</sup> Email correspondence between Candace Summers and Cherie Valentine, August 19, 2018.

<sup>103</sup> “Red Cross Again Names Miss Howard,” *The Pantagraph*, April 6, 1938, 12; “State Leads All in War Relief, Red Cross Told,” *The Pantagraph*, December 12, 1940, 5.

<sup>104</sup> “Major Dan C. Ogle Red Cross Speaker,” *The Pantagraph*, January 3, 1942, 6.

<sup>105</sup> “Red Cross Completes Most Successful Year,” *The Pantagraph*, January 22, 1943, 3.

<sup>106</sup> “New Chairman To Talk at Red Cross Program,” *The Pantagraph*, December 9, 1943, 13.

job to make sure that McLean County made its fund drive goals to support the war effort. During one particular fund drive in March 1944, Clyde urged citizens to not wait for solicitors from the Red Cross to knock on their door. "People should realize the urgency of the need and take initiative in getting their contributions to the Red Cross," he stated in one *Pantagraph* interview.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to fund drives, Clyde was also the chairman for a United Nations clothing drive in the spring of 1945. The Bloomington Rotary Club started the drive, but many organizations, including the Red Cross, were heavily involved. Tens of thousands of pounds of clothing were collected from all throughout McLean County, with an estimated 38,000 pounds of clothing collected by the close of the drive at the end of April that year. The clothing was to be sent to people living in foreign countries that were devastated by war.<sup>108</sup>

Clyde continued to serve as chairman of the McLean County chapter of the Red Cross until January 1, 1949. It was at that time that E. Douglas Laudeman was appointed to fill Clyde's unexpired term. Clyde decided to resign mid-term, stating that he and Emily had plans to leave for an extended trip to Florida on January 14, 1949,--a trip he expected to be gone for at least two months' time<sup>109</sup>

Clyde's passion for all things circus related continued right up to the last years of his life. About five years before his death, Clyde wrote a short history on Bloomington's contributions to the circus world called "Bloomington, Illinois the home of 'The Man on the Flying Trapeze.'" Written in about 1950, the article contains what Clyde believed to be an accurate account of how the aerialist industry began in Bloomington, starting with the Green Brothers (known professionally as the LaVans) in the mid-1870s, and continued to produce hundreds of performers for the next almost 80 years. The influential article was published in *White Tops* magazine, the publication of the Circus Fans Association of America (which is still published today).<sup>110</sup>

Clyde's article was also included in the five-volume history *Home Town in the Corn Belt: A Source History of Bloomington, Illinois 1900-1950*, compiled by Clara Louise Kessler, the longtime children's librarian at Wither's Public Library. Kessler created this set in honor of the centennial of the city of Bloomington in 1950 and, in her own words, "as an attempt to recapture those particular days of my childhood and make them live again."<sup>111</sup> The five-volume history contains 171 articles, which includes 39 biographies, and 52 poems contributed by 132 people in Bloomington and Normal.<sup>112</sup> Kessler did not edit or revise any of the submissions she received for this "encyclopedia" of 50-years' worth of Bloomington history. Over the course of the five years that it took her to collect the stories, she simply compiled the articles into the massive set of books, compiled the information, and retyped the information she received from contributors.

Though Clyde's published "history" in Kessler's collection provides some information on names of performers and some important factoids that may have never come to light should he

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<sup>107</sup> "Don't Wait for Solicitors, Red Cross Urges," *The Pantagraph*, March 22, 1944, 3.

<sup>108</sup> "38,000 pounds of Clothing Given in Drive," *The Pantagraph*, April 24, 1945, 9; "Only 5 County Towns Help in Clothing Drive," *The Pantagraph*, April 18, 1945, 5.

<sup>109</sup> "Laudeman Appointed Red Cross Chairman," *The Pantagraph*, January 1, 1949, 3.

<sup>110</sup> Brunsdale and Schmitt, 36.

<sup>111</sup> Clara Louise Kessler. *Home Town in the Corn Belt: A Source History of Bloomington, Illinois 1900-1950 in five volumes, Volume I*. (Bloomington: Self Published, 1952) 7.

<sup>112</sup> "Bulging 'Home Town' History Makes Bow," *The Pantagraph*, December 27, 1950.

not have included them in his account, it is largely filled with “glaring errors, confused chronologies, and a mishmash of facts.”<sup>113</sup>

In addition to all of the aforementioned activities that Clyde participated in and organizations to which he belonged, Clyde was also a member of several Masonic organizations, including Chapter 50, Order of the Eastern Star, the Order of Amaranth, the Mt. Olive Shrine, the Bloomington Consistory, the Peoria Shrine, and Wade Barney Lodge #512, Illinois AF&AM.<sup>114</sup> Both Clyde and Emily were members of the First Church of Christ, Scientist and members of the McLean County Country Club. Both Clyde and Emily loved to play golf.<sup>115</sup>

On Monday, May 2, 1955, Clyde Noble suffered a severe heart attack at the couple’s home on South Moore Street. He was taken to Mennonite Hospital where he was reported to have been in fair condition the next morning.<sup>116</sup> However, his condition deteriorated rapidly and he passed away later in the evening on May 3. Clyde was 73 years old at the time of his death. He and Emily had been married for almost 47 years, but never had any children.

Funeral services were held at Beck Memorial Home, located at 209 E. Grove Street. The service was officiated by Stanley E. Mahanna of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, with Mrs. C. E. Bock providing organ music. Following the short service, Clyde Noble was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.<sup>117</sup>

By: Candace Summers, 2018

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<sup>113</sup> Brunsdale and Schmitt, 36-37.

<sup>114</sup> “Clyde V. Noble, Retired Circus Aerialist, Dies.”

<sup>115</sup> “At the Country Club,” *The Pantagraph*, July 5, 1919, 8; “At McLean County,” *The Pantagraph*, August 3, 1920, 5.

<sup>116</sup> “Noble Suffers Heart Attack,” *The Pantagraph*, May 3, 1955, 2.

<sup>117</sup> “Funeral Notice for Clyde Noble,” *The Pantagraph*, May 5, 1955, 29; “Noble Funeral,” *The Pantagraph*, May 7, 1955, 3.