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Kathleen Kersting

Questionnaire categories incomplete or missing: list below with reasons for omission, i.e. whether material is still to be covered or whether the questions are not applicable to your territory,

1 manuscript of a series; perhaps a total of 30; balance to come

Signed Hugh Amick
~~Area~~ Supervisor

THE AMERICAN GUIDE - Growth and Development

S-254

NOTED PERSONALITIES, Women in Kansas History
By: Philip Aherne

345 words

Kathleen Kersting

One of Wichita's most important contributions to the world's art and culture is the internationally famous grand opera singer, young Kathleen Kersting, who, in 1937, had ingratiated herself into the hearts of the opera lovers of Nazi Germany. Miss Kersting was born in Enid, Okla., in 1908, the daughter of Henry Kersting, a native of Schlangen, Germany, who came to the United States in 1875, and Opal (Herrin) Kersting, of French descent. She came to Wichita with her parents at the age of one year.

Miss Kersting received her early education in the Wichita public schools, began to display the rare quality of her voice while still a child. When she was 13 years old, and a student in the Alexander Hamilton intermediate school, friends arranged an audition before Madame Rosa Calve, the famous singer and voice instructor, then on tour in the United States. Tremendously impressed by the girl's voice and delivery, Madame Calve insisted she should return with her to Europe to study music and voice culture at Calve's Chateau de Cabries in France.

After several years of study and constant association with Madame Calve, Miss Kersting continued her musical education with maestros in Paris, Milan and Berlin, gradually developing a proclivity for the Wagnerian type of roles -- the type especially popular with German audiences. Her European training was sponsored by the members of the Rotary Club of Wichita. She was the daughter of parents of limited means, and, if her fellow townsmen had not financed her musical education as an investment in culture, her exceptional talent would have been lost to the world of music lovers.

At the age of 19, Miss Kersting made her debut in grand opera in Milan, Italy, singing the role of Margherita in "Faust". Two years later she signed a contract for

a season with the Chicago Civic Opera company. In 1933, she signed the first of a series of contracts to sing grand opera in the principal cities of Germany, where she was acclaimed with enthusiasm. After a spirited tilt with Reichleader Hitler and his Nazi chieftains, in the course of which she was forced to prove, with the aid of frantic cablegrams to Wichita, that she was of gentile birth, Miss Kersting stepped into a permanent niche in Germany's operatic hall of fame. She came to the United States for a few months sojourn in 1936, visited relatives in Wichita and Oklahoma, then returned to Germany.

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Source: Who's Who in Wichita; interview with Miss Kersting.
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