

Gast's Orchestra

By Les Bakke



36-04 Gast Orchestra in City Hall. Art Gast, Freeman Olson on drums, Elaine Headrick on piano.

Gast's

orchestra also called Gast's Harmony Kings, was organized by Arthur Gast, youngest son of August Sr. and Albertine Schwinke Gast in the early 1920s. The orchestra was famous in the entire Red River Valley of the North. Ole Ihle's granddaughter, Ihleen Wold Goetz says her grandfather spoke of the orchestra in terms amounting to 'the world's best'. Ole Ihle loved fiddle music and Art Gast played the violin in the orchestra. Violet Gast Schultz and Iver Gonnering remember the orchestra but could not recall any particular incidents. Grace Gast Laken remembers the orchestra as a wonderful musical group. The Gast's Orchestra played the prelude for the Argyle High School graduation of Grace and her cousin Gladys Knutson Daugherty on May 29, 1924. The Gast's Orchestra played at the Strand Theatre in Warren, Minnesota on November 18, 1921 according to an advertisement that Neoma Laken has.

Performers in the orchestra were Art Gast, Freeman Olson, Ellsworth "Dutch" Robertson and Elaine Headrick Craik. We also believe William Gast played with the orchestra. Olson, Robertson and Headrick are all buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, Argyle, Minnesota. The orchestra instruments included banjo, piano, drums, violin, xylophone, trumpet and cornet. The following is a clipping from the Warren Sheaf, July 23, 1919.

Stop! Look! Listen! Gast's Harmony Kings will be at Big Woods Thursday, July 24th. This will be the last dance of the season. Everybody welcome.