

Revisiting the Life and Music of Julia D. Owen (1868-1964): Composer and Educator

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Possible Portrait of Owen, Date Unknown

Introduction

Julia D. Owen (1868-1964) was an active composer and music educator in the state of Texas whose career was active for more than fifty years. She wrote secular and sacred music. While Owen's compositions were well received during her life, almost no scholarly research of her or her music currently exists. Owen's busy performance schedule and consistent publishing of new music allows for details of her life to be uncovered from the many newspaper articles mentioning her. She was also extremely active in multiple Texas music organizations such as the Texas Federation of Music Clubs, leaving behind mentions of her in many musical journals and magazines from the early twentieth century. While primary sources suggest that Owen composed a vast number of pieces, few can be easily found and some are unavailable completely. This poster presents a brief biography of Owen and methodology for locating musical scores and biographical information.

Julia Owen's Known Compositions and Their Location

Score Titles and Year of Publication	Location
<i>Dear Lord, I Come to Thee</i> (1896)	The British Library
<i>I Only Know I Love Her</i> (1896)	Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at The University of Texas at Austin
<i>Sleep Little Eyes</i> (1905)	WFAA Collection at The University of North Texas Music Library
<i>Texas Bluebonnet Song</i> (1922)	Amaranth Publishing Company
<i>Love's Serenade</i> (date unknown)	Location unknown
<i>Roses Red and Violets Blue</i> (date unknown)	Location unknown
<i>Since I Have You</i> (date unknown)	Location unknown
<i>At Fall O'Dew</i> (date unknown)	Location unknown
<i>The Milkmaid</i> (date unknown)	Location unknown
<i>Song of Gladness</i> (date unknown)	Location unknown
<i>My Heart</i> (date unknown)	Location unknown

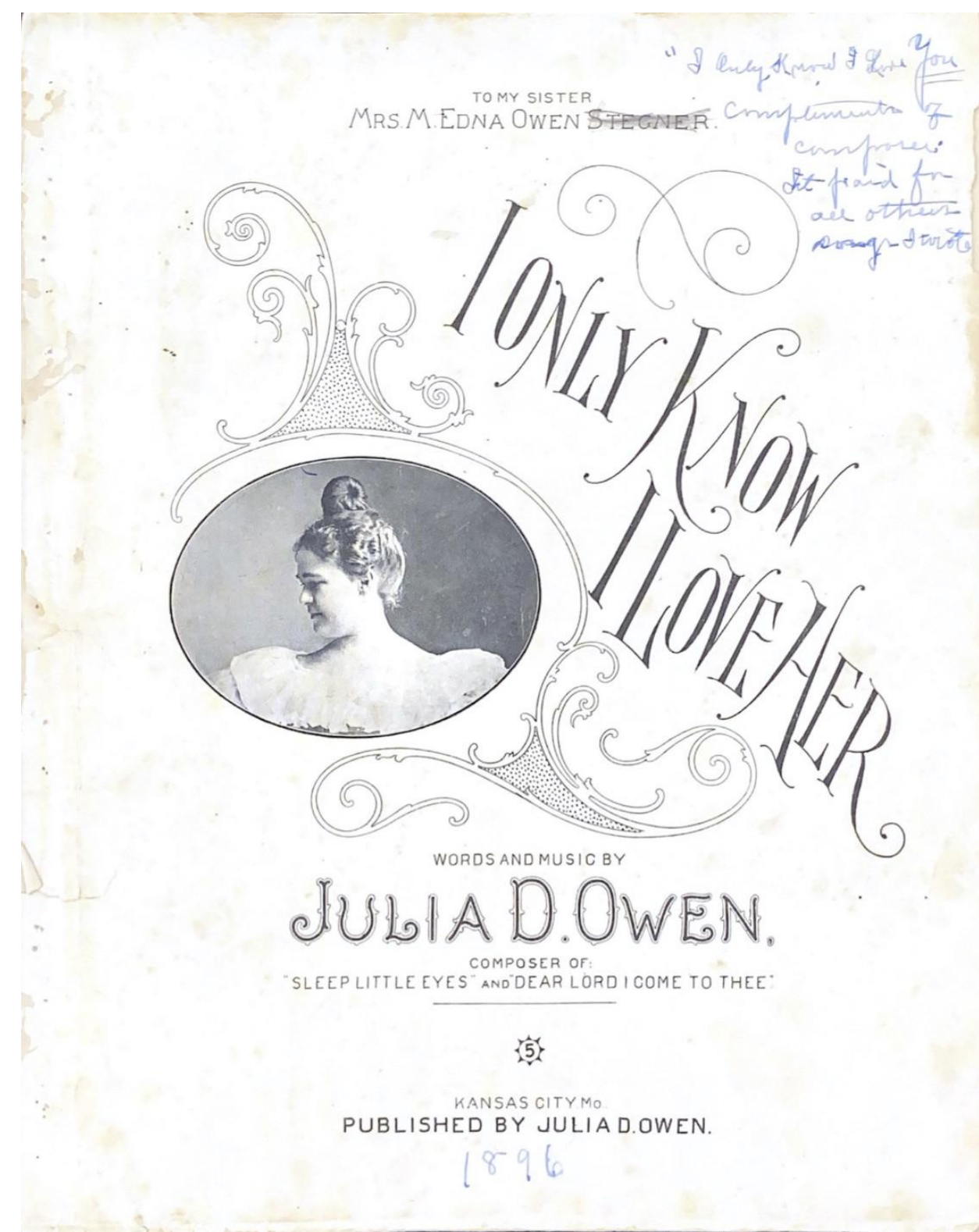


Clipping from *The Musicale*, December 1926

Navasota Musician, And Composer Honored

"Texas Bluebonnet Song," composed by Miss Julia D. Owen of Navasota, Texas; has been recommended by the State Federation of Music Clubs to the schools of Texas as one of the State songs. This song was adopted as the official song of the summer course students at A. and M. College last year. Miss Owen is one of the prominent musicians of the State. She is a singer, composer and teacher. Houstonians will remember her for her delightful contributions on the guests program at the Fair here last year. Miss Owen has won several medals from the Federation of Women's Clubs. She is also a member of the Supervisors' National Conference and the founder of the Navasota Music Festival in 1920. This festival, sponsored by the Music Study Club of which Miss Owen is a past president, was the first held in Texas extending over a week's time.

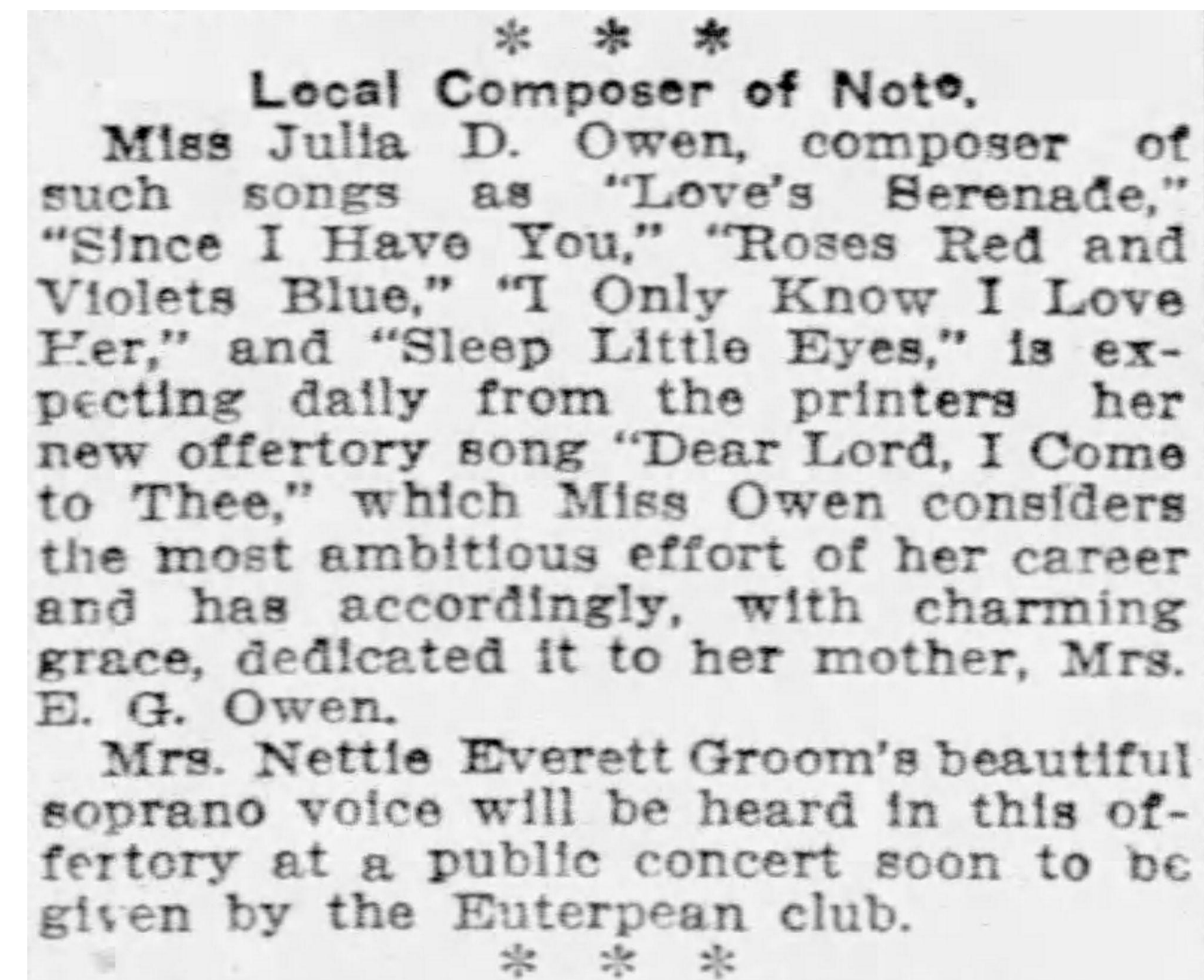
Clipping from *The Houston Post*, May 15, 1922



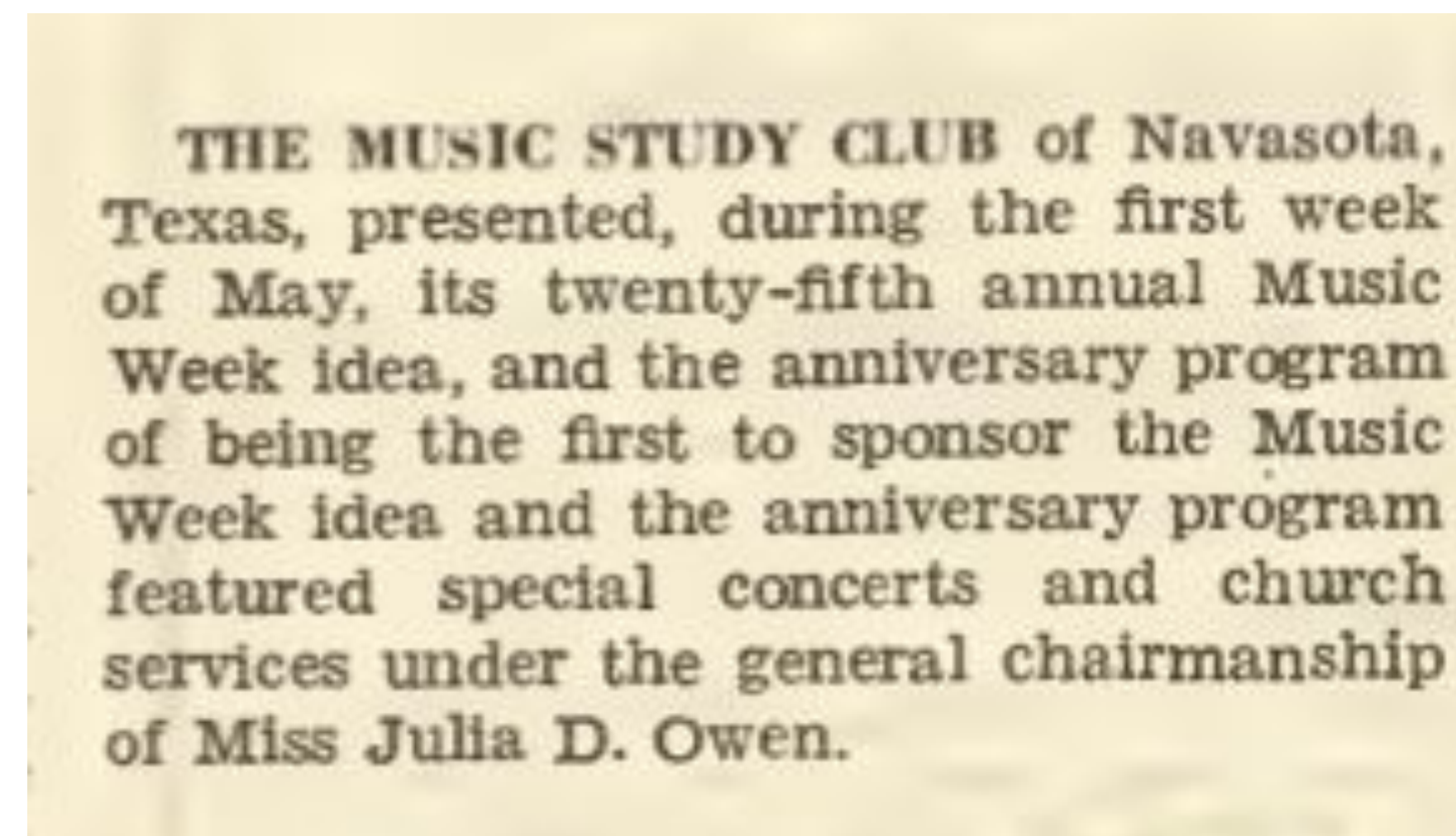
Cover Page of "I Only Know I Love Her" (1896) by Julia D. Owen



Clipping from *The Daily Express* January 4th, 1904



Clipping from *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 14th, 1909



Clipping from *The Etude Magazine* (1944)



Measures 1-10 of "Dear Lord I Come to Thee"

Measures 11-18 of "Dear Lord I Come to Thee"

Measures 19-25 of "Dear Lord I Come to Thee"

Brief Biography

Julia D. Owen was a vocalist, violinist, composer, and educator. Born on April 13th, 1868 in Anderson, TX, Owen but spent much of her life living in Navasota and was often referred to as being "of Navasota." She was one of thirteen children and she had a twin sister, Jessie. They both began music lessons at a young age. Owen performed her first composition, a nocturne for piano, during a program given at the Chicago World's Fair. For this nocturne, she received a first prize gold medal for piano compositions from the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. Following the turn of the century, Owen composed and had many pieces published, while also traveling for performances throughout Texas. For the next 20 years Owen spent time living in San Antonio and then Fort Worth until 1919-1921 when she returned to Navasota. Owen was president of the Navasota Music Study Club and in 1921 served as the presidential delegate of the club to travel to Dallas for a state convention of music teachers. Recognized throughout Texas for her compositions, Owen would often give performances at programs specifically given to honor Texas composers, sometimes as the guest of honor. In 1920 that Owen founded the Navasota Music Festival with support from the Navasota Music Club, and this festival is said to have been the first musical festival in Texas that lasted longer than a week. In 1922, Owen composed the "Texas Bluebonnet Song" for piano and unison or two-part chorus. This song would prove to be the most popular composition of her lifetime. Owen continued teaching voice and violin well into her older years and often organized recitals for her students.

Death Certificate of Julia D. Owen

Research Methodology & Databases Accessed

- Newspapers Databases
 - Portal to Texas History from The University of North Texas
 - newspapers.com (subscription required)
- Ancestry / Genealogybank Databases (subscriptions required)
- Digital Sheet Music Collections
 - "Music Published in 19th Century Texas" available for purchase from Amaranth Publishing
- Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) - contains information on the location and details of archival and museum collections throughout the state of Texas.

References

