

# Dr. Louis E. Pete – Ashland’s “Mr. Music Man”

By Lori Adams

Dr. Louis “Louie” E. Pete (1895-1971) was born in Tiffin, Ohio, and spent some of his early childhood years in Loudonville. His family left Loudonville and relocated to Hope, Arkansas. A few years later, the family moved to Donora, Pennsylvania.

Donora, which was located in a valley along the Monongahela River, was hit especially hard by the Spanish flu in 1918. His doctor suggested Dr. Pete move elsewhere because of the poor air conditions that often enveloped the valley.

Dr. Pete, who at the time was a cost accountant in a large steel mill, moved to Ashland later in 1918 and was hired at the Faultless Rubber Company as a cost accountant. But Dr. Pete was never destined to spend a lifetime career in accounting.

As a child in Loudonville, Dr. Pete stated he “played a little fiddle” in an elementary school orchestra in about 1905. He believed this was the first grade-school orchestra in Ohio history. Dr. Pete also sang in a quartet that traveled the Chautauqua circuit and played in other bands.

In 1924, Dr. Pete was hired by Ashland City Schools as the “teacher of vocal and instrumental music.” Through his efforts, he elevated the school’s music program into a model to be followed throughout the United States. He retired from his position in 1965. He also attended Ashland College and graduated in 1927.



Dr. Pete with the All-Ohio Boys Band at the Ohio State Fair (photo from 1950)

In 1932, Dr. Pete helped to organize the All-Ohio Boys Band at the Ohio State Fair and continued to direct it for the next 35 years. The Ohio All-Boys Band was made up of 200-300 young, top musicians throughout Ohio and played two concerts daily during the Ohio State Fair.

In 1939, Ashland College presented Dr. Pete with an honorary Doctorate degree in music. He became an associate professor in music education at Ashland College, and for many years he directed the a cappella choir.

## DR. LOUISE E. PETE – ASHLAND'S "MR. MUSIC MAN"

In 1936, along with the help of Mrs. T.W. Miller, Dr. Pete founded the Ashland Symphony Orchestra and often utilized musicians from the Cleveland Orchestra to play with them.

The Myers family was generous in helping the community expand Ashland's music history. When Dr. Pete expressed a wish for a Band Shell at Brookside Park, Mrs. Guy C. Myers responded by building the facility at a cost of \$112,000. Pete directed and oversaw the summer band concert series for many years.

John C. Myers purchased new instruments for the Ashland High School Band while under the direction of Dr. Pete.

For 40 years, Dr. Pete also served as choir director at the Christian Church and later at Trinity Lutheran Church. He also was a guest conductor of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra and served as director of the Ashland-Mansfield Area Union Band.

The number of awards given to Dr. Pete are staggering and his accomplishments are endless. They include the Ohio Music Association's Distinguished Service Award for Outstanding Music Education; and in 1994, he was inducted into the Ohio Band Directors Hall of Fame. He also received many plaques, honors, and recognition from Ohio Governors Frank Lausche, William O'Neill, and James Rhodes.

National awards were bestowed upon Pete and the high school band from 1931 to 1933; the high school orchestra from 1931 through 1937; and the high school choir in 1937.

Dr. Pete was a past president of the Ohio Music Education Association and often judged music competitions in Ohio, Missouri, and Georgia. He also held music clinics at the



Dr. Pete with student Weldon Carpenter

Ohio State University, University of Michigan, Georgia State College for Women, Oberlin College, and Western Reserve University. He also lectured and directed many other performances and musicians over the years.

Dr. Pete lived on Sandusky Street with his wife, Lula, and daughter, Henrietta, and is one of the true success stories in Ashland. He was admired and respected by his students and all music lovers, and fostered the tradition of music excellence in Ashland.



### Ashland County Historical Society

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