One of the extraordinary activities that helped to make Philadelphia famous was the old Philadelphia Forum, no longer in existence, which had its beginning in 1921. Roland S. Morris, distinguished Philadelphia attorney, ambassador to Japan, and professor of International Law at the University of Pennsylvania, was the first chairman. Mrs. Edward Biddle and Edward W. Bok, famous editor of the Ladies' Home Journal, were vice chairmen, and Joseph H. Hagedorn was the secretary and treasurer. Serving on the Board of Governors were such persons as Charles E. Beury, later to become president of Temple University, Dr. Laura E. Carnell, at that time associate president of Temple University, George Wharton Pepper, attorney and U. S. senator, Mr. S. Burns Weston, founder of the Contemporary Club and head of the Ethical Culture Society of Philadelphia, Thomas Raeburn White, and Miss Frances A. Wister, who was descended from a leading German colonial family of Germantown, and who played a role in the founding of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

The Philadelphia Forum grew out of the University Extension Movement, established in Philadelphia by William Pepper, about 1889. He was then provost of the University of Pennsylvania, and incidentally also he was the founder of the Free Library System in Philadelphia. He got the University Extension idea from England, where it had been pioneered by the University of Cambridge.

The purpose of the Forum was to provide the public with diverse programs of an educational and cultural nature at a very low cost. The programs were to be presented at the Academy of Music through an entire season. The Academy had a seating capacity of just under 3,000. Only season tickets were sold, and the price at the beginning, unbelievably, was only $10. A Forum member could bring a guest, but for this the price was $15 for the season. In the first season in 1921-2, a total of 75 programs were offered, so it can readily be seen from this that the public was getting a terrific bargain. Later in the 20's, the price went up to $25.
I stated that the programs were given at the Academy of Music. In the later Twenties, some of the programs, particularly musical programs other than those of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and also some lectures, were presented at the old Metropolitan Opera House, located in North Philadelphia at Broad and Poplar Streets.

In addition to the University Extension Society, other sponsoring organizations that were instrumental in the formation of the Philadelphia Forum were the City Club, the Women's Civic Club, and the Academy of Music Corporation, which was then headed by Edward Bok.

All who had a hand in it, felt the desirability of presenting a well-rounded program of civic and cultural events, supplemented by programs giving wholesome pleasure, as well as enlightenment. "We will be human", the Board said. The Board aimed to get the best obtainable talent, and it must be said that they succeeded gloriously.

Very much credit for the success of the Forum must go to executive director, Mr. William K. Huff, a well cultured gentleman, who held this position throughout the existence of the Forum, over thirty years.

For this tape, I am talking only of the initial period of the Twenties. It must be remembered that radio, not to speak of television, did not exist at the beginning of the Twenties, and it was not widely accessible and popular until the end of the Twenties. People in those days were accustomed to go outside the home to see plays, moving pictures, and to hear concerts and lectures of all kinds.

So, the Philadelphia Forum got under way, and it was an immediate success. It was the largest Forum in the United States, and although there were others in the country, they were rather specialized, whereas the Philadelphia Forum offered an unrivaled variety of programs in almost all fields. It was the greatest popular adult education enterprise in the nation. It was a kind of People's University, or rather the extension of a university.

Another fine feature of the Forum was the Board policy of equality for all. There were absolutely no reserved seats, and the whole enterprise was non-profit. And to repeat, no single program tickets were sold... only season tickets.

It is interesting to note that the first program in the initial season of 1921 presented none other than Calvin Coolidge, Vice President of the United States. Mr. Coolidge had taken office only in the previous March of that year. At the time he was a greatly admired man, and was widely popu-
lar throughout the country. In the first year of the Forum, he appeared in a series of evening programs explaining current events from his point of view.

Then there followed other currently popular lecturers of the time...like John Kendrick Bangs, and Professor Earl Barnes, the latter a psychologist. Then came the extremely popular Walter Damrosch, who was the founder and conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra, who talked on music, illustrated on the piano.

Another widely popular lecturer was Edward Howard Griggs, who in the first season, lectured on Dante, the great Italian poet. Incidentally, questions from the audience were encouraged at Forum lectures, which added greatly to their educational value.

As you might expect, the great Philadelphia Orchestra under the conductorship of the incomparable Leopold Stokowski was a Forum feature from the beginning. 750 seats in the Academy were set aside for Forum members to attend a regular orchestra season program, and this occurred three times each season.

To go on with some of the other lecturers, there was the remarkable William Jennings Bryan, three times the unsuccessful Democratic party candidate for President, and Secretary of State in the first Wilson administration. He was also noted as a Fundamentalist in religion, and later in 1925, he achieved notoriety in tangling against Clarence Darrow in the famous Scopes evolution trial in Dayton, Tennessee. He along with Will Hays, then Post Master General, and Governor Henry J. Allen of Kansas spoke before the Forum in separate programs on religious and ethical themes.

One of the outstanding themes in the musical field in the first year of the Forum was the concert given by the famous Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. This concert was very memorable to me because I was a member of the 300 voice choir, being a student at Lehigh University in Bethlehem at the time. We sang part of Bach's Mass in B Minor, and several Bach Chorales under our great conductor, Dr. J. Fredd Wolle, in a Saturday afternoon program. I recall how ecstatic Mr. Edward Bok was over our concert. He spoke at a luncheon given for us in the Academy Foyer. In the evening the entire choir were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Curtis at dinner in the Curtis Building, at which both he and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bok spoke. The choir was invited again to appear
in the 1922 Forum program. They were marvelous experiences for me, a teenager from a small town in Western Pennsylvania.

One of the most popular American lecturers of all time, was Professor William Lyon Phelps, professor of English at Yale. Year after year he appeared on Forum programs in Philadelphia to packed houses. In the first year of the Forum he spoke on the Bible, but in succeeding years, year after year, by popular demand, he spoke on books, mostly current fiction. "What Books Are Worth Reading?" was typical of his topics. In the earlier years he spoke at the Academy of Music, but public interest became so great that in later seasons he lectured at the Metropolitan Opera House on North Broad Street, which had a much greater seating capacity than the Academy of Music.

Irvin S. Cobb, the journalist, was one of the Forum speakers, very popular.

As a variation, Julia Marlowe and E.H. Sothern, as a team, gave two afternoons of scenes from Shakespeare's plays. They were the greatest Shakespeare team in the nation at that time. Incidentally, I would like to mention here the extraordinary beauty of the women of the stage at that time. This was generally true of the first quarter of this century, and to my mind, has not been equaled since then.

The Forum gave a program on the theme; "What Is the Matter with Our Public Schools?", with Glenn Frank, Arthur E. Morgan, who was then president of Antioch College, and David Sneden, a school superintendent.

Of unusual interest in the early Twenties was the appearance of Judge Florence E. Allen, of the Cleveland Ohio courts. She was the only woman of the kind in the United States at that time.

Incidentally, it is of interest to mention some of the persons who served voluntarily in introducing prominent speakers on Forum programs. For example, there were the Governor of Pennsylvania, Honorable William C. Sproul, who later became vice chairman of the Forum, Dr. Russell H. Conwell, the famous Baptist minister and founder, and president of Temple University, Honorable Judge Robert von Moschiszer of the Philadelphia courts, Mayor J. Hampton Moore, Roland S. Morris, Esq., John Wanamaker and Edward Bok.

Simultaneously with the Forum programs, there was published monthly the Philadelphia Forum magazine. It was a distinguished publication, under the editorship of Mr. Huff. In addition to announcements of programs, sketches of speakers,
and digests of lectures given, it also carried highly interesting articles on varied subjects, local, national, and international. In recently leafing through the file of the magazine, I recall one article that interested me greatly. It was written by the head of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mount Airy in Philadelphia, who told of how, as a boy, he stood on front of the platform on which Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous address on the battlefield at Gettysburg in 1863.

Walter Hampden, one of America's top serious actors of that period, brought his company to Philadelphia to appear before the Forum in an Ibsen play. Pablo Casals, the greatest cellist of all time, played. All this was in the Twenties, when these performers were much younger. It can be seen at once that Forum audiences were getting the best obtainable, as promised by the Forum Board of Directors.

Back in the early Twenties Philadelphia department stores had choruses made up of singers among their employees. The Strawbridge and Clothier Chorus, under Dr. Herbert J. Tile, the manager of the store, was famous. Wanamakers also had one, and Snellenburgs had a choral society. And then there was the Choral Union of Philadelphia. All these organizations appeared on Forum programs.

Forum audiences had the pleasure of listening to a symposium on art, participated in by such well-known artists as Charles Dana Gibson, Violet Oakley, Philadelphia's famous artist, also Cass Gilbert. John Frederick Lewis, who was president of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, presided.

Each season for several years, there was a Music Week in Philadelphia sponsored by the Forum. Programs by fine artists were given in several places besides the Academy of Music. Olga Samaroff, pianist, wife of Leopold Stokowski, always appeared on these programs.

In a special program Lorado Taft, nationally known sculptor of Chicago, illustrated his art on the stage of the Academy of Music. I remember that program vividly. And how can I ever forget Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago, who appeared in a solo lecture. She was the pioneer settlement house worker, and also a leader in the international peace movement, and the women's movement.

The Philadelphia Award, one of the notable civic events of each year, began as a program of the Philadelphia Forum in 1921. The first recipient of the Philadelphia Award was Leo-
pold Stokowski. He was followed in 1922 by Dr. Russel H. Conwell, who I thought should have been the first one.

George Wharton Pepper was among those who each year presented the award to the recipient. I remember one year in particular when he spoke and presented the award to Dr. Chevalier Jackson of the Jefferson Medical College, internationally known. James M. Beck was another presenter, congressman and U. S. Solicitor General, a silver-tongued orator, one of the greatest I've ever heard, in an age of orators.

Edward Howard Griggs, to mention 'him again, appeared many times in lectures on Shakespeare. He was a superb lecturer and made a fine personal appearance.

Then there were opera performances by the San Carlo Opera Company. They were given at the Metropolitan Opera House. The Boston Symphony Orchestra played for Forum audiences. Benjiamino Giglie and Tito Schipa, premier Italian singers, appeared.

(WMP: How about Caruso?)

No. They didn't get Caruso. He died in 1921.

On religious themes, Forum audiences were treated to talks in a symposium by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise of New York, the best known rabbi in America. He was flanked by Protestant and Catholic speakers. Locally, Dr. William H. Fineshribber of Temple Keneseth Israel, one of the most eloquent and gifted speakers I've ever heard, spoke at one of the Forum platforms on what Judaism has contributed to civilization. Reverend Joseph Forth Newton was a Protestant speaker.

Mrs. Gifford Pinchot presided at one program; I've forgotten what it was. Charles P. Steinmetz, the wizard of electricity, spoke on that topic.

(WMP: He was a wizened up little bid fellow, wasn't he?)

Yes, yes, he was.

Getting back to art, imagine seeing the great classical ballet dancer, Anna Pavlova, as I did. Unforgettable!

Roald Amundsen, discoverer of the South Pole, also an Arctic explorer, gave a lecture, as did FriAjof Nansen, also a Norwegian Arctic explorer. They were both impressive men.
Admiral Richard E. Byrd, who has always been one of my most favorite heroes, spoke on his polar expeditions... ...a great man and a great gentleman.

Paul Robeson sang Negro spirituals...quite an innovation in the early Twenties.

John W. Davis spoke on the World Court.

There was a Forum on the subject, "Has Prohibition Failed?", which was a burning topic, as the Twenties wore on. And David Sarnoff gave a talk on that new phenomenon called radio.

Now I think I have given a pretty fair sampling of the kind of programs that were presented by the Philadelphia Forum during the Twenties, when I first came to Philadelphia.

The Forum continued through the Thirties and Forties, and finally went out of existence in the early Fifties.

Now following this, I would like to mention two or three other cultural and educational activities in Philadelphia back in the Twenties, other than our schools and universities. There was another little forum called the Young Democracy Forum, which held Sunday evening lectures at the old Broad Street Theater, which was located almost across the street from the Academy of Music. This was back in the Twenties. I eagerly attended those lectures when I came to Philadelphia, and I heard, among other people, Dr. John Haynes Holmes, of the Community Church of Philadelphia. I remember being surprised and shocked in one of his lectures when he said that among the greatest men of the Twenties were, not only Woodrow Wilson, which I approved, but also Lenin, the leader of the Russian revolution. And to my surprise, being a youngster in those days, he mentioned Gandhi as one of the greatest men of all time.

There were many other speakers at this Young Democracy Forum and most of them, I would say, were on the somewhat radical side....radical as it appeared to be at that time. And for me it was a great education.

Francis Fisher King, an attorney, for a time the United States attorney in Philadelphia, I think under the Wilson administration, was the founder and the leader of that forum. And he did a noble work. And he was one of the finest gentlemen Philadelphia has ever known. I think he was a
Philadelphia native, graduate of Princeton University, and I regarded him as a good personal friend, who helped me on more than one occasion.

I would like to mention another institution in Philadelphia with which I early became acquainted, although I settled down here only in 1927, I did spend the winter of 1924 and '25 here. And I discovered this organization called the Philadelphia Ethical Culture Society. I was passing down along Broad Street one day, past the Academy of Music, and I noticed an announcement of their Sunday morning lecture and meeting. So I made it a point to attend. The speaker was from London, Dr. Stanton Coit, the leader of what he called the London Ethical Church. And he spoke on the topic, "Patriotism and World Peace". And I remember a point he made in that very fine address, in which he said that patriotism was not enough. He was one of those among the older generation and the oncoming younger generation who were disillusioned by the outcome of the First World War. I'm not going to dwell on that point, but I want to say that time and time again, I went back to attend those Sunday morning lectures at the Philadelphia Ethical Culture Society in the Academy of Music. Upwards of 1,000 persons would be attending there each Sunday. The great majority of the attendees were not members of the society, but they were from the general public, who came there to be enlightened on subjects of ethical importance.

Then there is another institution which existed in the Twenties, with which I became acquainted. I went here, there, and everywhere I could whenever a lecture was announced, anywhere in the city. It was called the Labor Institute Forum, and was held on Sunday afternoons during the fall and winter seasons at the old Musical Fund Hall, near Eighth and Locust Streets. It was for a generation, the finest hall in Philadelphia, from the standpoint of acoustics. It was in that hall, when it was first built, that the first Republican national convention was held, and General Fremont was nominated as the Republican candidate for President... in that hall.

But at any rate, I attended ever so many of the Forum lectures there...the Labor Institute Forum, and I heard for the first time Mr. Norman Thomas, who immensely stimulated me and gave rise in my mind to a great admiration. Here was one of the finest speakers in America at that time, and as most people know, he ran six times as "the Socialist candidate for President of the United States."
There were many other speakers I heard there. For example, Judge Ben Lindsay of Colorado was speaking on the problems of juvenile delinquency in that day. And he was noted, at that time, for boldly proposing an institution, or a device which he called companion-in-marriage, in an effort to solve what he said was the catastrophic condition of the marriage institution in the United States at that time. He was far, far ahead of his time.

There were people like Paul Blanshard, who later became famous for his books on America and Catholic power, or something like that...and many other well-known speakers of the day.

The Labor Institute Forum was established by a few of the trade unions in existence in Philadelphia at the time...I think the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was one of them, and also by the Socialist Party. And I remember that in 1928, which was a Presidential election year, Norman Thomas came there, in one of his campaign talks. He knew very well that he didn't have a chance to become President. But that didn't deter him a minute from putting on a vigorous, intellectually 'honest campaign.

Also in that same hall, I heard James Maurer of Reading, Pennsylvania, who was in his day, the only Socialist legislator in Harrisburg. And he was the vice-presidential candidate of the Socialist party in 1932. He was a plain appearing and plain speaking Pennsylvania Dutchman. And you couldn't help admiring him for his spunk and for his persistence in carrying along the Socialist ideal in Pennsylvania...sometimes almost alone.

And so it goes.

In the Twenties, I want to repeat again, that there existed in Philadelphia, and I suppose in many other cities, ever so many opportunities of all kinds to hear lectures by prominent speakers from all over the country. It was a day of public lectures, and as I've said before, it came prior to the age of radio and television.

I would like to make one more remark about what I was saying concerning the Philadelphia Forum. If any serious student or researcher wishes to make a thorough study of that institution and what it accomplished in Philadelphia, he or she can do nothing better"than to search the files of the Philadelphia Forum Magazine, which ran for about thirty years. You can find that at the main Free Library on Logan Square in Philadelphia.