

HANDY BROTHERS MUSIC CO., Inc.

PUBLISHERS

"Genuine American Music"

1650 BROADWAY, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

AT 51st STREET
CIRCLE 6-8843



July 31st,

1957

Mr. Dwight Chapin,
1109 Burrell Avenue,
Lewiston, Idaho.

Dear Mr. Chapin:-

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter requesting my autograph which gives me delight in doing for more reasons than one. It may not be a fine specimen of handwriting since I am totally blind and approaching my 84th birthday after a stroke that left me partially paralyzed, but oh, the memories. It gives me a pleasure to send you more than my autograph because it was my good fortune to play your territory back in 1896, when McKinley and Bryan were the republican and democratic nominees for president.

The thing that interest me in writing you is my memory as a bandmaster with Mahara's Minstrels, of leaving a car in a town 30 miles from Lewiston and going over land with coaches and etc., to what I remember as Lewiston and if my description is wrong, please enlighten me. We had to drive down some mountainsides and I can remember looking down on trees in this town by a river, and the trees looked like a wheat field. We were Negro Minstrels and stopped at the hotels there and everybody treated us fine.

It seems as if we took a ferry boat to get across the river to Lewiston, so if Lewiston isn't the town, what is the town 30 miles away. How is my memory?

Well I am autographing a picture to you, a song, ST. LOUIS BLUES and a copy of a western song, PASADENA which I thought in those days to be one of the most beautiful towns in America, and also my musical setting to Walter Malone's poem, "OPPORTUNITY". I think that's a song which could be sung with much success in your school. Please give it a try.

I am delighted with the list of composers given in your letter and to be in their good company. Youngsters now-a-days don't get the kind of education we got out of Webster's Blue back speller down South, but there is a lesson about 'Old Dog Tray' that I would like to tell. A country dog that went to town and got mixed up in a dog fight and the merchant came out of his store and beat up Old Dog Tray, (the only thing he had done was being in bad company without knowing it)

I am sticking in one of our Handy News, but the latest one is coming off press

today, but I happen to be 18 miles out of the city, but will send our latest issue some time this week.

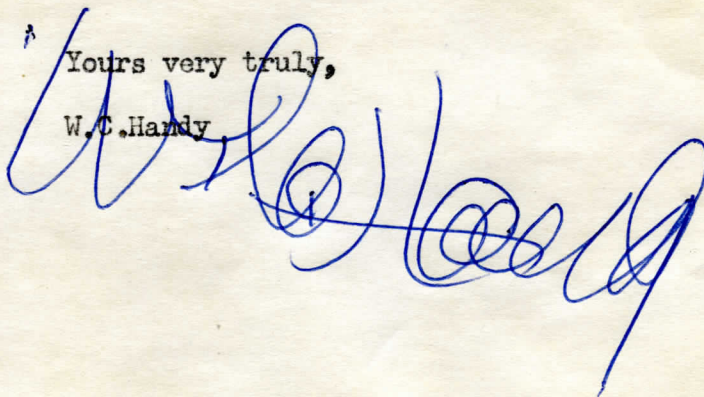
You may be interested to know that I have before me contracts for my signature covering a photoplay or moving picture of my life and work with my music as a central idea and they are planning for Nat King Cole who is a native of my state, Alabama to portray my life. They can't do this picture true to life in every degree because the boys who played with me through the state of Idaho 61 years ago have gone to the Great Beyond and the same is true of those who were first to play ST. LOUIS BLUES with me.

I hope you will find as much pleasure in the items sent you as your letter gave me mentioning Lewiston, Idaho, and I wish for you life's blessings to the fullest.

Yours very truly,

W.C. Handy

WCH:abb

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'W.C. Handy', written over the typed name.