People have always loved music. It is said that almost anywhere one goes in the world, there will be somebody playing some kind of rhythm and tune, even if it is just hitting two sticks together!

In the early 1900s, pianos were very popular because if people wanted to be entertained, they had to make their own music on the parlor piano or on a reed organ, the kind where you used your feet to pump the bellows to make the sounds. People sang at school, and at church from song books that had many selections of music that people knew and loved. Sheet music was popular, too. It was called "sheet music" because it was printed on a two or three large sheets. Every town of any size has a music store that sells instruments and sheet music.

In the early 1900s sheet music sales of 100 copies were considered good, but there was one song in that era that sold many, many copies, over a million we are told. It was featured on the stage in big cities and its popularity spread around the country. Both the tune and the words were interesting. It was titled After The Ball Was Over. The song tells the story of a man and his bride-to-be at a ball. When he returned from getting a drink of water for her, he found her kissing another man. She tried to explain, but he would not listen, and the wedding was called off. She died of a broken heart and it was only after her death that he discovered the man kissing his love was her brother!!
The song *Over There* was so popular during that war that it was published in both English and French. It was a great tune with words that encouraged the Allies that the United States troops would be there to help them win the victory. Another great song of World War I days was, *Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag* (And SMILE, SMILE, SMILE!)

After World War I was over and the troops were back home, the music moved to more relaxed! and pleasant themes. One of the favorites was *Let The Rest Of The World Go By*. Another popular number was *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*.

Cartoon characters even made the popular music scene. Barney Google and his horse Spark Plug were enjoyed by many in the paper and the song *Barney Google* was equally popular.

[Click here to sing-a-long.](#)
Pretty girls and love have always been a popular theme for songs. Photographs were seldom used in the early 1920s, but there were beautiful covers done by skilled painters. Such a one is the cover to this 1919 song entitled *Dear Heart*. The painting on the cover of *Peggy O'Neil* is also lovely.

Two other artists of the era used cute drawings instead of pretty girls for their covers, *Thanks For The Buggy Ride* and *Jelly Roll*.

By the late 1920s, radio was beginning to be a big part of the home entertainment scene. The reception was not excellent in some areas of the country, but radio was an important factor in the lives of most of the populace. It was a force that tied together city and rural dwellers, and it opened a new era in the entertainment world. People could actually hear the professionals singing the popular music. It created a desire to have the music to play on their own piano, and sales of sheet music increased. Many so called "Five and Dime" stores had a sheet music department with a pianist ready to play any selection you wanted to hear, and might want to buy. Also, "talking movies" had become popular, and the films of this era featured many new and pretty songs, and the pictures of the "stars" graced the covers of the music.
A very popular song of 1928, *Carolina Moon*, pictured a fine young tenor, Gene Austin.

This number, titled *Who Do You Miss?*, had special interest to the people of Wichita. It is autographed by local talent, Sue Fulton, who sang as "The Jayhawker Girl," on the local Wichita station KFH.

Irving Berlin was one of 14 great composers of the 1900s. His lovely composition, *Remember*, has his own photograph on the front. Instead of his photo on his always popular *Always*, we see his signature.
Walter Donaldson's fine song, *Blue Kentucky Moon*, features the photo of Guy Lombardo.

*When The Moon Comes Over The Mountain* was a big success for Kate Smith, who was called "the song-bird of the south."
A young and handsome Bing Crosby adorns the front of *When The Blue Of The Night Meets The Gold Of The Day*, and *Just An Echo In The Valley*.

Ben Bernie is pictured on *Tell-Tales*, and Lanny Ross sings for NBC in *Here's Hoping*.

These are but a few of the many fine songs that made us laugh and cry in the 1920s and 30s, during the heyday of sheet music's popularity. The songs eased the longing for home and loved ones... touched our hearts with love, compassion, pleasure or desire... said the words that were in our hearts and gave us a way to reach out to others.

From babyhood to advanced age, music is the language that appeals to us all!