



ROCKBRIDGE EPILOGUES

NUMBER 60



SPRING 2026

A ROLLICKING BAND OF PIRATES WE; or, GILBERT AND SULLIVAN IN ROCKBRIDGE

By Suzanne Barksdale Rice

THE GILBERT AND SULLIVAN repertoire has been a staple of Rockbridge performances for generations. In fact, in 1944 and again in 1947, *Trial by Jury* was presented, fittingly, in the courtroom of the Rockbridge County Court House on Main Street, Lexington. The two 1940s productions were organized and directed by the remarkable Mary Monroe Penick, Lexington Presbyterian Church organist and choir director. The well-known artist Pierre Daura and his art students, including Cy Twombly Jr., created posters and publicity for the 1944 production. And the 1944 printed

program (see page 7) is filled with small local ads with trial-themed, humorous quotes such as the Southern Inn's "We have been Tried by Jury and found GUILTY of serving the best food in Lexington." Both 1940s productions were presented by the Blue Ridge Garden Club. The club hoped to raise \$150 each time — in 1944 to plant the grounds at the Woodrow Wilson Hospital in Staunton and in 1947 to benefit British Relief.

The Golden Age of Gilbert and Sullivan arrived in Lexington with the full-scale production of five operettas in five years, from 1964 through 1968. It began with *H.M.S. Pinafore* in 1964 and was followed with *Iolanthe* in 1965. After the success of the latter, the troupe of enthusiasts formed a board and baptized themselves as the FROGS (Friends and Relations of Gilbert and Sullivan)

The author grew up in Lexington and returned home in retirement after a life spent in arts organizations.

Above: Curtain call for *The Mikado*, FROGS production, 1967

Rockbridge County News.

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA, THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 1944 NUMBER 26

Cast of "Trial by Jury" Here This Week-end "Trial By Jury" Is A Legal Sensation In Audiences' Eyes



Excellent Cast In Real Court Much Applauded

Audiences Friday, Saturday and Monday nights at "Trial by Jury" sat charmed in a never-never land of legal fantasy. From the entrance of the charwoman, played by Mrs. George A. Derbyshire, with a contagious humor and real showmanship, to the chorus finale, when with true judicial astuteness the Judge (Dr. Mowbray Veltz) makes his decision, the house applauded solos and choruses alike.

In the court of justice where Edwin (Capt. Flournoy Barksdale) is being sued by Angelina (Mrs. Edward Allen) for breach of promise of marriage, the usher (Capt. T. Lyston Fultz) instructs the jury that "from bias of every kind" the trial must be tried, adding that they need pay no attention when the ruffianly defendant speaks.

Capt. Barksdale, who "loves this young lady tomorrow," skips and sings his way winningly through his trial, capturing the amused support of his audience, but losing his case with the court. Mrs. Allen, in the role of Angelina, and costumed as a perfect bride, constituted a major bias of opinion. Neither judge nor audience could re-

Reading from left to right, and from front to back: Mr. Rex Criminale, Mrs. Eugene Terry, Miss Louise McComb, Mrs. Leon T. David, Mr. Alex Walker, Miss Ann Allen, Miss Ruth Fooley, Miss Carolyn David, Mr. William Guthrie, Miss Jean Clemmer, Miss Jane Murray, Miss Julia Lewis Smith, Mr. Tom Lee, Miss Eleanor Moses, Miss Rosa Fletcher, Miss Mary Stuart Brugh, Capt. Flournoy Barksdale, Miss Albertina Ra...herst, Mrs. Edward Allen, Miss Mary Lauderdale, Dr. Mowbray Veltz, Miss June Reynolds, Miss Joyce Hamilton, Miss Gertrude Weaver, Dr. Fitzgerald Flournoy, Mr. Lewis Williams, Miss Elsie Brown, Col. R. C. Weaver, Mrs. George Irwin, Mr. George Lauderdale, Mr. Joe Mingioli, Mr. Robert Goodell, Mr. George Irwin, Mr. Francis Drake, Col. H. M. Read, Mr. Hugh Davis. On the judge's stand: Capt. Lyston Fultz and Mrs. George A. Derbyshire. Members of the cast omitted from the picture were Miss Mary Monroe Penick, director, Mr. John A. Graham and Mrs. T. A. E. Moseley, Jr., stage director.—Photo by Ewing.

A front-page review in 1944 of *Trial By Jury* said the performers achieved "near-perfection . . . a professional smoothness and unity not often seen in amateur performances."

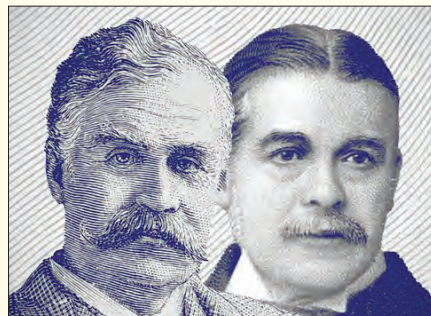
and produced *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1966, *The Mikado* in 1967 and *Patience* in 1968. Beginning with *Pinafore*, the first four operettas took place at Waddell School, the last at Lylburn Downing School.

All five FROGS productions were sponsored by the Lexington Kiwanis Club to benefit its scholarship fund.

In total, as many as 1,000 people attended the three performances of each production. Tickets were sold in Lexington at Leggett's, McCrum's, Campus Corner, Bierer's Pharmacy and J. Ed. Deaver & Sons; in Buena Vista at Morgan's Pharmacy; and by Kiwanis Club and FROGS members. In the beginning, tickets were priced at

NOTHING COULD POSSIBLY BE MORE SATISFACTORY *

Over a period of 25 years, Gilbert and Sullivan produced 14 comic operas. Lyricist W. S. Gilbert (1836-1911), left, was responsible for the witty words, and composer Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900), right, the memorable melodies. Together they used the rapid-fire lyrics and fast tempo of patter songs to poke fun at pretense and create an absurd, enchanting world.



The British duo was promoted by theatre manager Richard D'Oyly Carte, who built London's Savoy Theatre expressly to stage G&S productions. These operas were wildly popular in their own time, reaching an apex in the late 1870s and 1880s. But their appeal has proved timeless, with productions to this day everywhere that English is spoken.

* *The Mikado*

Gillette W. Campbell Collection



Above: Following its 1944 success, *Trial by Jury* was performed again in the Rockbridge County Courthouse in 1947.

Below: The FROGS *H.M.S. Pinafore* cast took a bow, March 25, 1964.

\$1 for adults and 50 cents for children. Later the ticket prices rose to \$1.50 for adults and 75 cents for children. Local businesses added to the coffers through in-kind contributions and program ads. Expenses included costumes (some rented, some handmade), lumber for sets, space rental, orchestra parts and more. After expenses, from \$700 to \$1,000 was netted each year for the Kiwanis scholarship fund.

These productions received extensive newspaper coverage (with previews, reviews and photographs) in

Lexington's *News-Gazette*, the *Buena Vista News*, the *VMI Cadet*, Washington and Lee's *Ring-tum Phi* and the *Roanoke Times*. Headlines such as "Trial By Jury" Is A Legal Sensation In Audiences' Eyes" (*Rockbridge County News*, April 27, 1944; page 2) trumpeted the



"SAIL THE OCEAN BLUE"—After taking many curtain calls, the cast for the local production of "H. M. S. Pinafore" assembles on stage for this picture. The highly successful event, staged Friday and Saturday nights at Waddell

School, was sponsored by the Lexington Kiwanis Club. Director of the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta was L. George Atkins. Principals, in front left to right, are B. S. Ford as Bob Becket; Philip Booth as Dick Deadey; Col. F. H.

Barksdale as Ralph Rackstraw; Mrs. James Allen as Josephine; Mrs. William Sauder as Hebe; Dr. Dean Foster as Sir Joseph Porter; Miss Ann Johnson as Buttercup; Robert Vaughan as Captain Corcoran; and William Supon as Billy Bobstay.—Andre photo

Lexington News-Gazette

Lexington News-Gazette

Lexington Kiwanis Club
Presents
H. M. S. Pinafore
or
The Lass That Loved A Sailor
Book by W. S. Gilbert Directed by George M. Atkins, Jr. Music by Arthur Sullivan
March 20-21, 8 p. m. — Waddell School
ADMISSION: Adults \$1.00, Children 50c

CAST

The Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Porter, K. C. B., First Lord of Admiralty	Dean Foster	Robert Vaughan
Captain Corcoran, Commander of HMS Pinafore	Robert Vaughan	Flournoy Barksdale
Ralph Rackstraw, Able Seaman	Philip Booth	William Supon
Dick Deadeye, Able Seaman	B. S. Ford	Anna Clare Allen
Bill Bobstay, Boatswain's Mate	Nana Lou Sauder	Ann Johnson
Bob Becket, Carpenter's Mate		
Josephine, The Captain's Daughter		
Cousin Hebe, Sir Joseph's First Cousin		
Little Buttercup, A Portsmouth Bumboat Woman		

SIR JOSEPH'S RELATIVES		
Janet Jarrard	Mary Raine Paxton	
Betsy Letcher	Jane Rushing	
Katie Letcher Lyle	Charlotte Wilson	
Louise Moore	Natalie Sue Wilson	

CHORUS OF SAILORS		
James Cox	Royster Lyle	
David B. Dickens	G. Otis Mead	
John M. Dixon	Fred T. Taussig	
William Hoover		

ORCHESTRA		
George M. Atkins, Jr., conducting		
CLARINETS	Betty Atkins	TRUMPETS
John Czyzowski	David Kaliski	Chris Hopkins
		Will Scott
CELLO	Insee Grainger	TROMBONES
		Frank Prosch
HORN	Donald Cummings	Bob Rushing
		Jim Stoke
TIMPANI	Phil Taylor	PERCUSSION
		Spencer Wilkinson

COMMITTEES		
Kiwanis Show Committee	Pickral, Bollenback, Beebe	Jimmie Willis
Sailors' Costumes	Janet Jarrard, Jane Rushing, Nana Lou Sauder	Houston Harlow, Ray Hamm
Ladies' Costumes		Mae Patterson
House Arrangements		Brooke — Van Horn
Publicity		Pickle Newcomer
Costumes		A. Y. Choeklett
Advertising		Dan Tetlow
Properties		Charlie Barger
Lighting		William Wells
Set		Lois Wilson
Stage Assistant		Mrs. Max Tracy, Miss Ellen Barrett
Accompanist		
Makeup		

A full-page announcement celebrating the cast, orchestra and committees responsible for the *Pinafore* production appeared in the local newspapers.

performances. There were local WREL radio interviews and an occasional Roanoke television appearance. In 1966 an ensemble from *The Pirates of Penzance* appeared in costume on a WSLS-TV morning show.

The FROGS embraced its role in education, introducing children and teenagers to the delightful world of Gilbert and Sullivan. In 1966, several *Pirates of Penzance* cast members presented a selection of scenes and songs at a Lexington High School afternoon assembly. And the FROGS opened its final *Penzance* dress rehearsal to children, with admission of 25 cents collected at the

door. Sixth and seventh graders from Lylburn Downing School attended.

PERHAPS the most remarkable aspect of the FROGS productions was the substantial community involvement from Lexington, Buena Vista and Rockbridge County. Faculty and spouses as well as students from Washington and Lee, Virginia Military Institute, Southern Seminary and Lexington High School participated. Each production required a large cast of principals, chorus and orchestra, as well as a musical director, conductor, stage director, choreographer, set designer and production coordinator.

An army of volunteers was enlisted: costumers, set painters, stage assistants, props people, makeup artists,



Top: Anna Clare Allen and F. H. "Pinky" Barksdale in the FROGS production of *Iolanthe*, March 1965

Bottom: The cast of *Iolanthe* takes a bow after a performance at Waddell School.

publicists, ticket sellers, ticket takers, house managers, ushers, refreshment workers, ad and program sales reps — not to mention coordinators for the obligatory cast party. The Kiwanis Club drew upon its business and professional membership to fill many of these logistical roles. Charles F. Phillips, Washington and Lee professor, Lexington mayor and Kiwanis member, spearheaded the club's involvement. The printed programs reflect a veritable who's who of town and gown. On stage and off, the massive community effort brought together individuals who might otherwise not have had an opportunity to work together.

All hands on deck was certainly a hallmark of these productions. David Dickens, a W&L professor of German, noted in a 1967 letter to FROGS that he in successive years had been a chorus member, producer and director, publicity chairman, set designer and president of the organization. While regulars continued to devote time and talents, the FROGS welcomed an evolving cast of characters, off-stage and on. Mary Monroe Penick continued her involvement, serving as chorus rehearsal director for *The Pirates of Penzance* and lending her talents in ways not always reflected in the printed programs. Piano teacher Lois Wilson assumed the role of rehearsal accompanist for all productions. Originally from New Zealand, she found herself coaching the cast in the use of British English. Flournoy H. "Pinky" Barksdale played the lead tenor role in the 1944 and 1947 productions of *Trial by Jury* and many years later in the 1964 *H.M.S. Pinafore*. There was new talent, too. Philip Booth, a Washington and Lee senior, performed in *Pinafore* and went on to sing more than 400 roles at the Metropolitan Opera.

ALAS, after its extraordinary five-year run, the FROGS folded when no one could be found to assume the organizational tasks required. But it had been a glorious run. And there was great fun along the way, as noted in this 1965 *News-Gazette* "This and That" tidbit: "The 'Iolanthe' dress rehearsal took an unexpected twist last week when Mrs. William Sauder who as 'Iolanthe' in the play had spent 24 years at the bottom of the stream, solemnly handed the Fairy Queen a jar con-



Above: "A Rollicking Band of Pirates We," proclaimed this FROGS ensemble in the 1966 production of *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Below: The many daughters of General Stanley, the very model of a modern major general, in the 1966 *Penzance* production



Washington and Lee Library Special Collections

Charles Mason for the News-Gazette



The Henry Street Playhouse picked up the G&S mantle in this 1982 production of *The Pirates of Penzance*.

taining a bull frog, live and kicking.” Nanalou (the aforementioned Mrs. William) Sauder and Alice Williams, both of whom performed in FROGS productions, reminisce that their children grew up familiar, via osmosis, with the wonderful world of Gilbert and Sullivan.

The 1980s saw a revival of interest in Gilbert and Sullivan when *The Pirates of Penzance* was produced in 1982, followed by *The Mikado* in 1988. Both were performed at the Henry Street Playhouse and Stock Company under the direction of Albert C. “Al” Gordon, W&L professor of fine arts. Local businessman and civic leader A. W. “Buster” Lewis played roles in both Henry Street Playhouse productions and says that G&S was always fun and popular, brought people together, and softened the hearts of Lexington. Artist and musician Virginia Lloyd-Davies sang the lead in the 1988 *Mikado* and is still active in the Rockbridge Chorus today. William McCorkle was musical director for that 1988 production. He relates that at the age of 14 he was engaged by Nanalou Sauder as her rehearsal pianist while she prepared the title role of Iolanthe. For him, that early

experience planted the seed for his love of Gilbert and Sullivan.

Let us then “give three cheers and one cheer more”* to the delightful world of Gilbert and Sullivan!

* *H.M.S. Pinafore; or, The Lass That Loved a Sailor* (1878)

Author’s Note: A version of this article appeared in the *News-Gazette* on April 9, 2025, in advance of a Rockbridge Chorus presentation of “An Evening of Gilbert and Sullivan,” whose director, William McCorkle, asked me to write this story. As I researched the history of Gilbert and Sullivan in Rockbridge, we garnered recollections from former G&S participants. I found records and photos pertaining to FROGS that David Dickens had placed with Special Collections at the Leyburn Library of Washington and Lee University. And Rose Gordon graciously shared Henry Street Playhouse G&S photos and memories. Perhaps most of all, I am grateful that my father, F. H. Barksdale, sang Gilbert and Sullivan patter songs around the house in my childhood and that he saved newspaper articles and photos from productions in the 1940s and 1960s in his old Army trunk. —SBR

Gordon Collection

THE 1944 TRIAL BY JURY PROGRAM
chronicled not only time, date and place, but cast, committees and local business support

The Blue Ridge Garden Club
presents
TRIAL BY JURY
by Gilbert and Sullivan
April 21 and 22, 1944
8:30 p. m.
ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY COURT HOUSE
Lexington, Virginia

THE STORY

In a COURT OF JUSTICE, Edwin is being sued by Angelina for breach of promise of marriage. The Usher instructs the jury that “from bias of every kind” the trial must be tried, adding that they need pay no attention when the ruffianly defendant speaks.

They therefore shake their fists passionately at Edwin when he enters and attempts to explain that he no longer feels about Angelina as he did when FIRST MY OLD, OLD LOVE I KNEW. The Judge, a self-made man and pretty complacent about it, enters and tells the story of his life from the beginning, WHEN I, GOOD FRIENDS, WAS CALLED TO THE BAR. He is entranced when beautiful Angelina, the plaintiff, the broken flower, the cheated maid, comes in with her bridesmaids. The note he had sent to one of the bridesmaids he causes to be returned to her; she reads it, kisses it passionately, and places it in her bosom. Listening to her counsel’s pitiful plea in her behalf, which he delivers WITH A SENSE OF DEEP EMOTION, Angelina is so moved that she falls sobbing into the arms

of the Foreman of the jury. While the Usher tries in vain to maintain silence in the court, the gallant jurors heap imprecations on Edwin and call for substantial damages.

In vain Edwin begs, SING, BRIDESMAIDS, LISTEN, I pray, and pleads with them not to bring a young fellow to sorrow, who loves this young lady today and loves that young lady tomorrow. But the plaintiff’s counsel, upon referring to a lawbook, discovers that

In the reign of James the Second, It was generally reckoned As a very serious crime To marry two wives at a one time.

And while Angelina embraces Edwin, maintaining that she loves him with fervor unceasing, Edwin repels her energetically, protesting that he is a terrible bully, a sot, and a ruffian. All is confusion—until the Judge can stand it no more. He bids the lawyers put their briefs upon the shelf; he will marry her, himself.

Buy your GILBERT AND SULLIVAN records through **Weinberg’s Music Store**

We have been TRIED BY JURY and found GUILTY—of serving the best food in Lexington

The Southern Inn

Compliments of **Grossman’s**

Greetings and best wishes to the cast of TRIAL BY JURY

Brown’s Cleaning Works

We not only avoid law suits, but win the good will of our customers by giving them the best values

White Front Grocery

If “Of ions you’re a judge and a good judge too” come to **The Mayflower Hotel** R. E. HARTMAN, Proprietor “Everybody’s Friend”

Just a step across from the Court House Come and “wet your whistle” **McCrum’s**

If you wish to look like the lovely chorus girls in TRIAL BY JURY go to **Nancy B**

We made the beautiful pictures of the cast of TRIAL BY JURY We can do the same for you **EWING Photographer**

TRIAL BY JURY, or any other way for the best value, means a directed judgment to **The Gift and Art Shop** Located at R. E. Lee Hotel

BRIDESMAIDS
Miss Elsie Brown, Miss Mary Stuart Brugh, Miss Rosa Fletcher, Miss Joyce Hamilton, Mrs. George J. Irwin, Miss Mary Lauderdale, Mrs. T. A. E. Mosley, Jr., Miss Eleanor Moses, Miss Albertina Ravenhorst, Miss Jane Reynolds, Miss Julia Lewis Smith, and Miss Gertrude Weaver
Bride’s and bridesmaids’ costumes by VAN HORN

Stage Director—Mrs. T. A. E. MOSLEY
Musical Director—Miss MARY MONROE PENICK
Assistant Musical Director—MR. JOHN A. GRAHAM

Committees
TICKETS—Mrs. F. J. Gilliam, Mrs. G. M. Brooke, and Mrs. J. D. Clothier
PROGRAM—Mrs. F. P. Gaines
ARRANGEMENTS—Mrs. J. E. Towles, Mrs. J. L. Campbell, and Mrs. S. M. Miller
COSTUMES—Mrs. C. E. Williams, Miss Elizabeth Barclay, Mrs. R. A. Smith, Mrs. F. H. Barksdale, Mrs. W. H. Elkerson, and Lt. R. T. Stevenson
PROPERTIES—Mrs. Paul Welles, Mrs. C. E. Kilbourne, Mrs. G. H. Denoy, and Sgt. Albert Hamilton
MAKE-UP—Miss Katherine Sieg, Mrs. J. B. Cozzy, and Col. T. A. E. Mosley
PUBLICITY—Miss Jennie Hopkins

There are still pleasing things in the world. TRIAL BY JURY is one of them. And the way we clean and press clothes is pleasing to the most fastidious customer

The University Cleaners
223 S. Main Phone 749

M. S. McCoy
Charwoman
Staple and Fancy Groceries
Fruits and Vegetables a Specialty
Old VIRGINIA Cured Ham
Quality Meats

The Cast
Charwoman—Mrs. GEORGE A. DERBYSHIRE
Judge—DR. MOWBRAY F. VETTER
Plaintiff (Angelina)—Mrs. EDWARD ALLEN
Counsel for Plaintiff—Mr. LEWIS D. WILLIAMS
Defendant (Edward)—Capt. FLORENCE H. BARRSDALE
Foreman of the Jury—COL. H. MONEY READ
Usher—Capt. T. LYSTON FULTER
Echo—? ? ?

THE PUBLIC
Miss Ann Allen, Miss Jean Clemmer, Mrs. Leon T. David, Miss Carolyn David, Miss Louise McComb, Miss Jane Murray, Miss Ruth Pooley, Mrs. Eugene Terry, Mr. Rex Crumaine, Mr. William Guthrie, Mr. Tom Lee, and Mr. Alex Walker

THE JURY
Mr. Hugh Davis, Mr. Francis Drake, Mr. Fitzgerald Flournoy, Mr. Robert Goodell, Mr. John A. Graham, Mr. George Irwin, Mr. George Lauderdale, Mr. Joe Mingioli, and Col. R. C. Weaver

You be the JUDGE and Try the **Drapery Shop**
The most beautiful curtains materials in town
5 W. Washington St.

You thought the bridesmaids’ flowers were real. We fooled you! They’re made of Demitson’s crepe paper purchased at **Boley’s Book Store**

Compliments of **R. S. Hutcheson and Co.**
BUILDING SUPPLIES
COAL—WOOD

“A nice dilemma that calls for all our wit” is where to send the laundry **The Rockbridge Steam Laundry** will solve this problem for you

Ruby’s Jewel Box
is responsible for the coiffure of ANGELINA, the beautiful bride

TRIAL BY JURY, in *Cupid’s Court*—You’ll win the Verdict if your Evidence is from **Mildred Miller’s Gift Shop** 8 West Nelson St.

Don’t let our name mislead you. We wouldn’t exchange a farmer for anybody or anything on earth! **The Farmer’s Exchange** 25-27 S. Jefferson St.

If there is a bride in the audience? If so, she would do well to see **Adair-Hutton** about her trousseau

When you have that lovely song from TRIAL BY JURY, “Come the broken flower,” remember that you’re not staging about flowers by **Shaner** Our flowers come whole, fresh and fragrant!

We’re friends to all gardeners **Harper and Agnor** Hardware Company

Our firm was founded in 1869 TRIAL BY JURY was written in 1875 We salute the infant!

Van Horn can outfit you in the style of 1870. But, gentlemen, this is 1944! Come to **Norman-Shepherd, Inc.** Complete Outfits for Officers and Enlisted Men 123 W. Nelson St.

When the Court has a Recess come to **The State Luncheonette**

The Blue Ridge Garden Club WISHES TO THANK Lt. Robert Stevenson and Sgt. Albert Hamilton of the soldier show section of the School for Special Service for valuable suggestions and invaluable aid in producing this “dramatic cantata in one act.” Mr. C. Harold Lauck for making these attractive programs.

The Officers’ Club of the School for Special Service for the use of the piano.

The Rockbridge County News and Mr. Pierre Daura and his art students for publicity.

All people who so kindly lent costumes. Our advertisers The Board of Supervisors for the use of the Court House.

This house is a member of the Poultry District Insurance Corporation

Let us solve your ration problems for you **Moore’s Grocery** 159 South Main

Compliments of the **Rockbridge National Bank**