One of the most notable North Dakotans is Lawrence Welk. Lawrence Welk was born in Strasburg, North Dakota in 1903, to immigrant parents, Ludwig and Christina Welk, who immigrated to the United States in 1892, from Odessa, Ukraine, part of the Russian Empire.

At the age of 21, Lawrence left home and made his way into the music and entertainment industry. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, he traveled the country with a band. They played dancing music and what was later coined “champagne” music.

In 1931, Lawrence married Fern Renner. They had three children: Shirley, Donna, and Lawrence, Jr.

The Lawrence Welk Show first aired on ABC in 1955. The format of easy-listening music, which Mr. Welk referred to as “champagne music,” and a family of wholesome musicians, singers and dancers had wide appeal. It ran for 16 years on the network. From 1971-1982, The Lawrence Welk Show ran in syndication. Reruns continue to be broadcast today.

The Lawrence Welk Show featured musicians, dancers, and vocalists. Lawrence was a very skilled accordion player. He often danced with the lead female vocalist. Lawrence called the lead female vocalist the “Champagne Lady.”

The Emily P. Reynolds Costume Collection houses dresses from Lawrence’s wife and daughter, Fern (Renner) Welk and Shirley (Welk) Fredricks. It also houses dresses from “Champagne Ladies” Lois (Best) Herman and Norma Zimmer.

The dress on the reverse side was donated by Lois (Best) Herman; she wore it in the 1970s. Lois Best was the Lawrence Welk Orchestra’s original “Champagne Lady,” or lead female vocalist.

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