

# LINDSBORG

LITTLE SWEDEN, USA



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SPOTLIGHT ARTICLE  
01/17/2012

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Carla Wilson  
888-227-2227  
Lindsborg CVB

## **Max Muller** *Founder of Broadway RFD*

LINDSBORG, KANSAS - 01/17/12 - Sometimes all it takes is one person's vision or literally "there-lack-of" to change the face of a community for numerous years and counting.

Max Muller, one-time area resident, World War II veteran and a budding opera singer moved to New York City in the 1950s to perform on the opera stage. Muller developed an eye complication after landing a spot in the Metropolitan Opera. Chronic Iritis caused him to go blind at various times with no warning. The disease developed rapidly and caused his operatic career to stall permanently after insurance companies would not insure productions with a lead that was not entirely able-bodied.



*Early Broadway RFD photograph*

Muller moved back to Lindsborg and joined the Salina Community Theatre. He did not understand why Lindsborg did not have a community troupe and set out to change that shortcoming. In 1959, Muller decided for *Svensk Hyllningsfest* to put on a production of *Annie Get Your Gun* in Presser Hall. Anton Pearson, a local artist, was the first person to donate \$100 out of nine people who contributed a total of \$900. It was a sold out performance with standing room only. Muller was able to pay all nine donors back and still have \$700 left for the next performance.

After that success, Muller concocted a plan of starting an outdoor theatre akin to the ones he experienced in New York. Muller directed *Oklahoma* and it was presented on the Band Shell in 1960 to a large audience. Henceforth, Lindsborg's Broadway RFD has been delivering Broadway to rural America for 52 years.

To advertise in those days, Muller would pack the acting company into a touring car and present remote performances in the surrounding area parks, gymnasiums and band shells to put on brief skits. In recorded remembrances, these were recalled fondly. Also, Muller definitely was a character who knew who to contact and would somehow get a week's feature in the *Wichita Eagle*, usually doubling the audience for the second weekend performance.

Muller possessed an artistic and creative mind but he left the actual engineering of props to Malcolm Esping. One of the more famous props being a windmill that actually pumped water in the production of *Oklahoma*.

The originality and professionalism that Muller exhibited is still seen in performances today. In subsequent years, sometimes there has been only a piano player, while some years a full orchestra. A number of productions have displayed ambitious sets while others have been sparse. They all have demonstrated a high level of sophistication that started with Max Muller.



Broadway RFD productions have been well organized since day one. While the cast of characters have changed, moving down the generations, the extensive Lindsborg and surrounding area talent pool of interested individuals are still given a chance to express themselves in a myriad of ways through Broadway RFD.

Annually the Broadway RFD presents "theatre under the stars" on the 3rd and 4th weekends in July. In recent years they have added spring, fall and winter productions as well. For a 2012 schedule of RFD events and ticket information, visit [www.broadwayrfd.org](http://www.broadwayrfd.org).

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