

Scroggin Opera House Setting For Many Events

Some of the Best Talent In Country Appeared Here.

(May 30, 1935)

They have boarded up the entrance and put a door with a strong lock in front of the broad steep stairs that have spelled happiness to so very many people down thru the years.

How many of us remember climbing that stairs to the old Opera House, to see some long anticipated show? Who recalls the "nigger heaven" and the little wire racks under the seats, used for hats? The curtain with the advertisements: Beidler's Drug Store, W. H. Clear, Farm & Stock Auctioneer, J. P. Fowler Dry Goods Store, Snyder & Beidler Millinery, Smoke Graner & Stuckel's Plantation 5 Cent Cigars; E. A. Danner & Son Clothing Store; Myers Brothers, Fall Opening of Suits; W. J. Mann, Leading Meat Market; Scroggin & Sons, Bankers; Union Coal Co; Bekemeyer & Clear; P. D. & E. Railway; Dr. Swain, Veterinarian; J. D. Gordon, City Drayman; R. S. Hershey, Furniture and Undertaking; Kerns Bros; Tallow & Meat & Sweetmeats. All tastefully arranged in graceful ads around the edge of the curtain with a lovely "scene" in the center.

Spittoon Hazards

Those enormous brass spittoons placed at strategic points along the aisle. They were a terrible thing to stumble over in the dark as you blindly followed mother and father to your seat. No trim little usherette with a flashlight in those days.

The span of my memory is short, a mere 30 years. But the tales I've heard from my mother and grandmother, just start reminiscing a little. The high spots for me, of course, were the Tom Thumb Weddings. I was the preacher's wife. The old hotel at the rear is connected with the Opera House with many curious little passages and odd rooms. Stairs start in at such unexpected places to lead one away off to some strange and remote part. Doors, leading everywhere to most anything. The dancing classes I've attended — two-step, Schottische, waltz and bow and thank you.

They had electricity, of course, even 30 years ago, which I can remember. But try to picture the scene as it appeared in the times of our grandmother's youth when the Opera House was the new pride of our city. Imagine the actors of a bygone day as they went thru their parts while the footlights were illuminated by a dozen kerosene lamps set in little places along the front edge of the stage with reflectors to throw the light on the actors and keep it from shining in the eyes of the audience. Around the walls of the big room at intervals were more lamps in brackets.

I can imagine how grandma felt as she carefully gathered her full skirts in her hand and daintily picked her way to her seat where a dexterous twist and wiggle placed her comfortably seated with her bustle eased to one side where it wouldn't be crushed too much. She greeted her friends seated around her and saw the seating of the children and father and then sort of divided her attention between the entertainment and the hanging lamp that was nearly directly above and kept one eye on the path she'd take if a fire should happen. And the children then as now, had peanuts and pop corn and some of the boys had gum. (Gathered from peach and cherry trees and wax tops from jam jars.)

Who remembers the time when the cement sidewalk on the south side of the building was a board walk? Who remembers when a barber shop occupied the basement? With steep stairs leading

down to it? Mr. Shrader has a few shaving mugs on display in his shop on the south side of the square that may have possibly at one time been in the shop under the bank.

The two rooms over the bank, that were at one time occupied by the Mt. Pulaski Public Library were once sumptuously furnished as a lounge and gentlemen's smoking room. Across the stair head landing was another room, where people could leave their lanterns and so have a good light to find the buggy (if you happen to be a young gentleman escorting a young lady) or the wagon, if you happened to have a wife and eight children and a mother and a few uncles and aunts and cousins to 'taxi' home. But you couldn't run your 'taxi' into the garage. You had to unharness him and give him a drink at the trough and lead him into the stall, then throw a blanket over him and throw down a fork-full of hay for him. Then, put away the harness and buggy or wagon and after a good drink of water from the pump, finally retire upon a big fat featherbed with a pile of quilts, all home-made, and sometimes homewoven, to hold you down.

Home-Talent Plays

Home-talent plays were much in vogue then. All sorts of entertainments. Lyceum courses and debates. It is possible and very probable that Abraham Lincoln may have attended shows or participated in them in our Opera House.

Our town was an up and coming town in the days when our old decrepit Opera House was new. There were about 15 saloons around our square, and our churches were so active that their various notices filled over a column in the Weekly News. We had two depots and were considered quite a railroad center. Train service was good then and when an attraction was advertised people came from Lincoln, Latham, Chestnut, Kenney, Lake Fork and Cornland and even from farther towns to attend the gala performances in Mt. Pulaski's Opera House.

Today, the entrance is closed and the big room is an empty dusty shell. Pigeons nest and coo among the eaves and the young sapling that sprung up from a stump just south of the Farmers Bank, is a tall tree and not a vestige of the stump remains. The Hotel that once housed such an active community of busy traveling salesmen, barbers, printers, preachers and lawyers, is moulding away into the dust from whence it sprang.

1895 Graduation Held In Scroggin Opera House

In looking back 66 years it is interesting to see how school activities were conducted at that time. The 8th annual commencement exercises of the old Mt. Pulaski high school, in the east part of the city were held in the Scroggin Opera House, on Wednesday evening, May 8, 1895. In those days of long long ago, each member of the graduating class had to write an essay and deliver same at the commencement exercises. Quite a contrast from the present day method when the graduates wear caps and gowns, and listen to an address by a special speaker.

The Times-News was given the 1895 program, and it will bring back memories to a number of persons who knew all the graduates, most of whom have passed away. Following is the information on the commencement invitation, giving first the Class Motto, "Our Boats Are Launched: Where Is The Shore?"

Program

Invocation, Rev. J. H. Hartwick
Song, "The Holiday," by Veazie
"Thrill," Warren J. Lincoln.

"Straws Float on the Surface,
But Pearls Lie on the Bottom,"
Anna B. Kelling.

"Voices of the Past and Present," Anna M. Bergold.

"The Hopes of Tomorrow Have
A Foundation In What We Are
Doing Today," Oubri A. Poppele.
Music: "Mandolin Serenade
Waltz," Mandolin Club.

"The Aim of Life," Dora Z. Lucas.

"What Is Fate," Hallie B. Rowe
"We Build The Ladder By
Which We Climb," Emma M. Zah.

Song, "Come To The Wild-
wood," by Taylor.

"The Flight of Time," Minnie
S. Weidenbacher.

"Chaise," Cora E. Bostic.
"On, Forever On!" Jennie T.
Hassett.

"Aspiration," Fred A. Allspach.
Music, "Ariel Galop," Mandolin
Club.

"What Next?" Blanche L. Ran-
kin.

"Every Man Is Architect Of
His Own Fortune," Cora M. Clark.
"Stepping Stones," Alma M.
Connolley.

"Curiosity," Grace E. Fryer.
Presentation of Diplomas.
"Class Parting Sing," Class.

Benediction, Elder L. M. Robin-
son.

HOME TALENT FEATURED 55 YEARS AGO

Many readers of Mount Pulaski Times-News will enjoy reading of an event that took place 55 years ago, as it brings back memories of other days and the names of many people you knew.

In this case we refer to the presentation of "Bibi, or a Comedy of Toys", given in the old Scroggin opera house in Mount Pulaski on Thursday and Friday evenings, July 19 and 20, 1906, for the benefit of the public library. The parts were all taken by home talent. Included in the large cast of characters were Glue-Pot, the Toyman: Ward Harper.

Kathy, Toyman's Daughter:
Stella Clear.

Bibi, the French Doll: Winni-
fred Obermiller.

Angelica, Ray Doll: Jeanette
Ralston.

Topsy: Bess Wacaser.

Prince Caramel, a gentleman
doll: Eugene Clear.

Captain Tellerope, a Sailor
Doll: Henry Mayer.

Sergeant Bonbon, a Soldier
Doll: Charles Roberts.

Sylvania, a retired fairy: Edith
Duff.

Miss Pudding Head: Fannie
Ralston.

The Sandman: Virgil Fenton.
The Man In The Moon: Loren
Evans.

Cat: Linn Swain.

Owl: Willard Snyder.

Jumping Jacks: Linn Swain,
Paul Hubbard, Cordie Starr,
Willard Snyder, Fred Glose,
Lyle Fowler.

Paper Dollies: Irma Buckles,
Ruth Snyder, Mildred Scrog-
gin, Goldie Mason, Flossie
Fenton, Dorothy Danner,
Florence Capps, Elsie Zah.

Letter Blocks: Loren Harper,
Wilhelm Kautz, Walter Dro-
bisch, Paul Gruber, Ralph
Ferrin, Dean Duff, Dorr Lob-
berecht, Wallace Kautz.

Butterfly Fairies: Doris Grub-
ber, Tina Spitler, Louise Scrog-
gin, Josephine Webster, Viola
Clobes, Wilma Purviance, Al-
line Mayer, Beatrice Fenton,
Opal Cheek.

Flower Drill: Helen Obermiller,
Josephine Leahy, Marguer-
Leahy, Aerial Lobberecht,
Esther Lobberecht, Merle
Barlow, Norma Bozarth, Ruth
Defrees, Bess Ralston, Lois
Huck, Eula Gruber.

Fairy Attendants: Scotchie
Duff, Frances Schuler, Maz-
ie Jenner, Lois Stafford, Hil-
ma Shoup, Esther Obermiller,
Kathleen Clear.

Pianist: Merle Upp.

Editor's Note: After a little more than a half century has gone, in looking over the cast of characters, perhaps a dozen persons have passed away. Only a few of those living are still residents of Mount Pulaski, while the others are living in many different states of the union, ex-

1890 Performance Of Local Talent

During the 1890's, perhaps closer to the turn of the century, a program was given in the old Scroggin opera house that some will remember and enjoy reading about. Following is the old newspaper clipping account:

Some of the best theatrical groups in the country performed at the Scroggin Opera House.

.. Program ..

Musical, Scroggin Opera House,
Friday evening, July 21.

Selection, Mandolin Club

Exhibition of Humanophone, by
Prof. Baumgarten.

Violin Solo, Miss Taylor, Elkhart
Recitation, Mrs. Samuel Keys, of
Beason.

Piano Solo, Clarence A. Mayer.

Vocal Duet, Mrs. George W. Von-
derlieth and Mrs. W. H. Staf-
ford.

Debate: "Resolved, That Amer-
ican Politics Are Growing Bet-
ter." Affirmative, Henry Von-
derlieth and John Crane. Neg-
ative, Frank Wilson and Har-
vey C. Wood.

Recitation, Miss Keys.

Announcement of judges deci-
sion.

Selection, Mandolin Club.

Note: It was found necessary to postpone this musicale one week, hence it will be given as above stated, Friday evening, July 21. The home talent on the program will be assisted by Miss Taylor as violinist, and Mrs. Samuel Keys as elocutionist. Admission, 15 cents to any part of the house.

Editor's Note: In connection with the debate of more than 60 years ago, here in the year of 1960, three of the debaters are living, as follows: Henry Vonderlieth, of New York City, and Harvey C. Wood, who resides in New Jersey; and, John Crane who lives in Lincoln.

UNIQUE MESSAGE SENT BY J. C. SWINNEY

(April 28, 1938)

J. C. Swinney, who recently sold his grocery store, has set up a desk in the storeroom on South Washington Street between Royal Cleaners and Kratzers, which he will use in the collection of accounts due him. He offers the following collection plan to clear his books up:

First—Those who are able to pay their accounts and are honest, he expects them to call on him at their earliest convenience.

Second—Those who are unable to pay just now, but are honest, he will appreciate their coming in and talking it over.

Third—Those who do not intend to pay their grocery account and in no degree appreciate the credit that has been extended to them, he will gladly give them a receipt in full if they will call on him at his desk on South Washington street.

tending from California to Mass-
achusetts and from Texas to Wis-
consin.

IT'S A WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENT ...

for a City to attain the distinction of being 125 years old.

Our Congratulations to Mount Pulaski!

We are working here to achieve distinction in the
buying and selling of grains. Let us serve you.

LAKE FORK GRAIN CO.

Buying And Selling Of Grains

Wayne Feeds

Macon Hybrids

Pittsburgh Paints

LAKE FORK, ILL.

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