



RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

ALL BABA

OR MORGIANA and the FORTY THIEVES.

AS PERFORMED BY
DAVID HENDERSON
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1. I wonder if dreams come true. A TYPICAL NIGHTMARE 4
 2. I'm a detective. 4
 3. Laughing Song. 4
 4. Walking Telephone. 4
 5. I'm now a Millionaire. 4
 6. Cobbler's Song & Chorus. 5
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ON THE COVER: "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" was one of the musical extravaganzas of the late Nineteenth Century which often depended upon feminine charm for their appeal. Reproduced is a portion of the cover for one of the musical numbers. From the private collection of Kenneth Carley, editor of Minnesota History.

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This was the St. Paul of 1857 to which Henry Van Liew came with his dream of a year-round theater. His People's Theatre is the long building not yet roofed over, standing behind the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of Third Street and St. Peter.

Theater In Old St. Paul

Extravaganzas, Melodramas

BY FRANK M. WHITING

ACCORDING to old-time theatrical troopers, there were three bad weeks in show business: Christmas week, Holy Week, and St. Paul. Although such a reputation has not been entirely unfounded during much of St. Paul's history, it was far from true during the early, booming years before the Civil War, for in the summer of 1857, St. Paul,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Frank M. Whiting is director of the University Theatre at the University of Minnesota and "captain" of the University's Showboat. Winner of the Evans award at Brigham Young University in 1930 as "the most distinguished graduate in dramatics," he received his master's degree from the University of Utah in 1932, and his doctorate from the University of Minnesota in 1941. He is the author of the widely used text, An Introduction to the Theatre. Material for his article was taken largely from his doctoral dissertation and was used in a speech he gave to a dinner meeting of the Ramsey County Historical Society in January of 1968.

with a population of 10,000, was supporting three professional theatrical companies, a minstrel show, a circus, a professional tent show, and an amateur dramatic society.

The history of theater in Minnesota Territory begins some thirty-six years earlier. Chief figure in these early theatrical efforts was that frontier jack-of-all-trades, Joseph R. Brown — fur trader, lumberman, land speculator, legislator, newspaper editor, inventor, founder of cities, and the Old Fort Snelling Dramatic Club's first leading lady. Brown, himself, confessed to the latter achievement in an editorial in the *Henderson Democrat* of June 12, 1856, when he commented on a professional performance of *Pizarro* at Market Hall:

"The representation of this tragedy caused our mind to wander back to the winters of 1821 and 1822 when a thes-

pian corps used to murder Rolla in the Barracks at the mouth of the St. Peters. We were one of the performers; we done Elvira."

Records indicate that Brown was a drummer boy at that time and about 14 years old. The rival newspaper, *The Weekly Pioneer and Democrat*, seized upon his confession with glee:

"Our corresponding editor (Joseph R. Brown) must permit us to indulge in a larf . . . He measures nearly six feet in height and about as much in circumference . . . We don't think that even thirty-five years ago he was very delicately formed or strikingly handsome. The idea of his representing tragedy at any time of his life, in any character, strikes us as being sublimely ridiculous, but to attempt the impersonation of a female character; to bind himself up into stays and bodices and shroud himself in petticoats and other unnamable female gear . . . to try to pass himself off as a woman; why, Brown, this was the most graceless, impudent imposture ever perpetrated by you in any character you ever assumed."

Brown was not the only player who made his debut at Old Fort Snelling. In a well-worn copy of *Othello*, Harry Watkins, one of the prominent professional actors of the last century, wrote the following:



JOSEPH R. BROWN

"This book belonged to the Post Library at Fort Snelling, Minnesota (then Iowa territory). I joined the Fifth Infantry in 1838. (Company I) The Library was an excellent one and I was its best patron. It contained a large number of plays from which we selected all we needed for representation in the Post theatre. The company was made up from the soldiers stationed there. I played the principal female characters. We gave performances every fortnight. Major Plympton commanded the Post. His daughter loaned me her dresses. I was there three years, 1838 - 1841.

"From this book I studied Iago to play with Forrest as *Othello* — studied *Othello* to play with Junius Brutus Booth, the elder, as Iago. I have played every part in *Othello* excepting only Brabantio, and including Desdemona and Emilia. Harry Watkins."

The record of soldier shows at Fort Snelling is incomplete, but enough fragments remain to remind us how fundamental the theatrical impulse is. Children on playgrounds, soldiers in World War II, Korea, Vietnam instinctively turn to the theater when they have time on their hands, and it was no different in the early days of Fort Snelling. Except for New Orleans, St. Louis and Cincinnati, these soldier shows appear to have been the earliest performances west of the Allegheny Mountains.

THE FIRST professional theatrical performance in Minnesota Territory took place in St. Paul, August 12, 1851, when seven players from Placide's Varieties in New Orleans opened a two-week engagement at Mazurka Hall. The little troupe was under the leadership of one of the outstanding comedians of the day. George Holland, the man under whom Joseph Jefferson received his training. Holland also was the man for whom "The Little Church Around the Corner" in New York later was named. Jefferson, searching for a church where a funeral service might be conducted for his old friend, was informed that he might try "the little church around the corner."

But in St. Paul in 1851 George Holland was very much alive. In the last piece on the program, "*A Day After the Fair*," Holland played six roles, including a French maid. The company was a great success and *The*



Minnesota Pioneer for August 28 reported that the house was "crowded to suffocation" on the last night.

That statement was only too true, to judge by the following undated letter, probably written in 1852 by Sara Fuller of St. Paul:

"There was no windows, excepting in front, and the staging took those off, and all the air there was for the audience were the skylights overhead. We had been there about ten minutes when it commenced raining and they closed the skylights, and it was an oppressive warm night and they had been closed about five minutes when I began to grow faint and Sam went out with me to the door, and went for a tumbler of water for me and when he came back I had fainted and fell upon the doorstep . . . My bonnet was completely covered with mud, (I) lamed one side of my face and had to wear a patch for more than a week. I did not attend any more theatre parties."

All the early theatrical seasons were summer rather than winter seasons. Companies from St. Louis, New Orleans and Cincinnati could come up the river only during the

Mazurka Hall, built in 1850, was the scene of the first professional theatrical performance in Minnesota, August 12, 1851.

summer and this, moreover, was at a time when their own winter seasons were closed and the players were on vacation.

Star of the 1857 season was Sally St. Clair. Young men fell in love with her, critics argued about her, and the public flocked to see her. The adulation heaped upon her may be seen in this excerpt from a long article which appeared in the *Daily Minnesotian* on June 22, 1857:

"This accomplished lady proudly stands upon the very summit of that gorgeous temple of renown, the priestess of its glories, and guardian of its fame . . . The highborn genius of Miss St. Clair flings a glory upon the drama . . . To all these she adds a perfect physique and charming grace — a fine musical voice, and clear enunciation — which make her the embodiment of that ideal, which only one in a thousand of candidates for histrionic honors can ever attain."

Five days later, Joseph Wheelock, writing in the *St. Paul Financial, Real Estate*, and

Railroad Advertiser answered the *Daily Minnesotian* as follows:

"If she has enthusiastic admirers in more appreciative circles, it is not the first time that an enchanting figure and a ravishing ankle have created a sensation among very young men. She simply capers gracefully. She holds her head well, with a superb arching of the neck, and prances with a splendid curvette through the routine of the Thespian menage . . . Yet it must be confessed that Sally has some talent. If her powers had been concentrated in a particular line of characters, instead of being squandered in ambitious but shallow displays of versatility it is not impossible that she might have become an artist."

Though Sally St. Clair may not have been an actress of the first rank, she was a glamorous stage personality. At the close of her first season in 1855, the prominent citizens of St. Paul, headed by Governor Willis A. Gorman, gave her a great farewell benefit. At Muscatine, Iowa, in 1856 a gentleman offered to fight a duel on her behalf.

IN 1857 her power over young men became a choice topic of local gossip. A youthful St. Paul belle remarked in a letter to her sister that Joe Rolette was suffering from "Sonny Dayton's disease," a malady the nature of which may be surmised when one learns that "Sonny" had followed Sally St. Clair as far as Galena, Illinois, before being persuaded to turn back.

Clara Morris spoke of her as "the lovely blond star," saying, "I adored Miss St. Clair, as everyone else did." Many people believed that her husband's death, which followed closely upon her own, was not an accident but the deliberate suicide of a grief-stricken man.

The attraction of Miss St. Clair's company, "The St. Louis Varieties," was enhanced by music of the "Old Gent's Band." This was a local organization consisting of W. H. Munger, violinist; R. C. Munger, cornettist; R. S. Munger, cellist, and D. W. Ainsworth, flutist. If a second violin was needed, Dan Emmett or George Siebert was called in. For years the Munger brothers ran a music store in St. Paul, while Emmett became famous as the composer of "Dixie." Siebert organ-

ized one of the earliest orchestras in the Northwest.

AMONG THE STARS who appeared in rival companies was C. W. Culdock, one of the grand old tragic actors of the period. The strong point of his acting was the expression of intense emotion, particularly grief and frenzied rage. According to Clara Morris, he was utterly lacking in dignity, courtliness, or subtlety, but was the only creature who could blubber on stage without being either absurd or offensive.

Of all the theatrical personalities who left their mark on the theater of old St. Paul, the most important probably was Henry Van Liew, for he was not simply a summer visitor. He came to St. Paul in the spring of 1857 intending to make St. Paul his home. He set to work building The People's Theatre, the only building in Minnesota constructed primarily for theatrical purposes before the Opera House was built in 1867. Intended only as a temporary structure, it cost \$750, according to one account. The interior was primitive. Wooden benches served as seats; there were no galleries, and none of the usual theatrical elegance. But The People's Theatre did contain the most essential ingredient, a capable company which included William Forrest, brother of the great American tragedian, Edwin Forrest, as stage manager, and R.E.J. Miles as prompter. Miles later stepped into an acting role in *Mazeppa*. This was to make him nationally famous, for the climax came when Miles, strapped to the back of a "wild" stallion, was carried away over a specially constructed stage.

UNDER NORMAL circumstances, Van Liew's dream of giving St. Paul a permanent year-round theater of high quality probably would have succeeded, but circumstances were not normal. In early August of 1857 financial panic struck. Entertainment melted away, except for Van Liew who kept his doors open in spite of hard times and empty seats. Finally on October 19 he, too, was forced to close. He reopened in the summer of 1858, the hit of that season being Dion Boucicault's *The Poor of New York, or The Panic of 1857*. Again in 1859, Van Liew's determination gave St. Paul a summer season climaxed by the appearance of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Wallack, two of New York's most

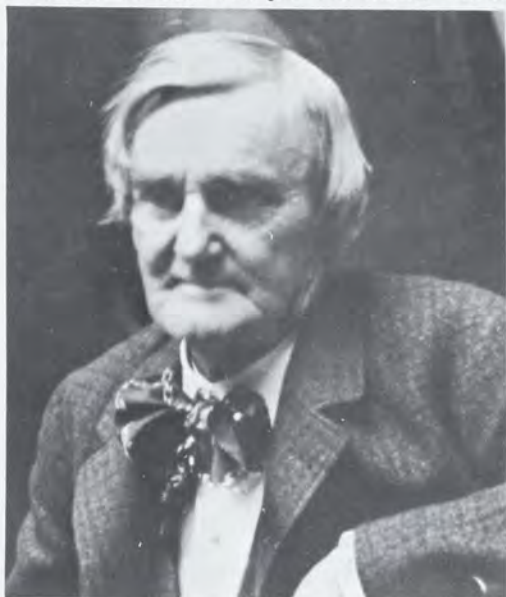


famous actors. The final blow came September 8 when fire broke out under the stage during a Republican political rally. A high wind quickly swept the flames through the building and Van Liew lost everything.

With his departure, the first period in Minnesota's theatrical history came to a close. Civil War soon intervened to provide tragedy that was real. Recovery following the war was slow but the erection of an Opera House and the coming of the railroad made the Twin Cities an important road town for almost all the major companies.

Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, Sarah

The great stars of the era all played St. Paul. Above is Edwin Booth and his company, photographed at Minnehaha Falls; below is Sarah Bernhardt, and at lower left, Joseph Jefferson.



Bernhardt and other great stars could be seen in Minnesota as frequently as in New York. For a number of years Joe Jefferson and Dion Boucicault made it a practice to end their seasons in the Twin Cities (one in Minneapolis and one in St. Paul), so that they might spend a week or two fishing and vacationing together on Lake Minnetonka.

LESS DIGNIFIED, but perhaps more interesting was the part women played in the world of stage entertainment.

In 1867 the McFarland company decided

OPERA HOUSE.
 Manager, C. FLETCHER; Musician, J. HAINES
 Stage Manager, F. L. BENT; Musical Director, G. GIBBERT
 Prompter, W. H. SEYMOUR; Property Master, W. PALMER

Engagement of the Beautiful and Talented French Artist, **MILIE MARIETTA**

RAVEL!

NIECE OF THE CELEBRATED RAVELS,
 The Most Celebrated Pantomime, Danseuse, and Tight Rope Performer in the World!


Original Wild Arab Dance! and Great Broadsword Combat!
 Anticipation whenever she has appeared to be the most terrific and intensely exciting combat ever attempted.

During MARIETTA RAVEL'S engagement she will be supported by

MR. P. E. CONNOLLY!

Monday Evening, March 9, 1868,
 Will be presented, with all the original Combats, Tumbles and Startling Effects, the great Military Drama, entitled

**THE FRENCH SPY;
 OR THE FALL OF ALGIERS.**



MATILDA DE MERIQUE, a French Lady, } - Marietta Ravel
 HENRI ST. ALME, a French Legioner, }
 HAMEL, a Wild Arab Boy, FRENCH.

Matilda (Danceuse) W. HUBBELL
 Henri (Danceur) M. W. GORDON
 Hamel (Danceur) C. FLETCHER, Jr.
 Matilda (Danceuse) M. W. GORDON
 Henri (Danceur) G. GIBBERT
 Hamel (Danceur) CARL STORMS
 Matilda (Danceuse) M. W. GORDON

ALGERIENS.
 Henri (Danceur) W. H. SEYMOUR
 Matilda (Danceuse) P. E. CONNOLLY
 Hamel (Danceur) M. W. GORDON
 Matilda (Danceuse) E. MOULTON

During the Drama, a Terrible Broadsword Combat by Marietta Ravel and Mr. P. E. Connolly, which has proved to be one of the most terrific broadsword fights ever attempted on the stage.
 The power of resistance and execution of Mr. Ravel is fully equalled.

Grand Military Quadrille, M. RAVEL and Characters.

OVERTURE, ORCHESTRA.

To conclude with (for the first time here) the Piece of

TICKLISH TIMES!

See William Dowling, (a Justice of Peace) W. W. DUNN
 Duffin, (a Mutual Loan Broker) M. W. GORDON
 Landon-Croft, (a Mutual Loan Broker) M. W. GORDON
 James, (a Mutual Loan Broker) M. W. GORDON
 See Stage, (a Mutual Loan Broker) M. W. GORDON
 See Stage, (a Mutual Loan Broker) M. W. GORDON
 See Stage, (a Mutual Loan Broker) M. W. GORDON
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This newspaper clipping is typical of the era of the melodrama. On the opposite page is the title sheet from a musical number used in *The Black Crook*. From the private collection of Kenneth Carley, editor of *Minnesota History*.

to produce what is generally recognized as America's first musical comedy, *The Black Crook*. It was written by Sally St. Clair's husband, Charles Barras. McFarland's production was fraught with difficulties, the chief one being the lack of girls for a suitable chorus. Early in July he began running the following notice in the daily papers:

NOTICE: WANTED 25 YOUNG LADIES FOR BALLET. INQUIRE AT STAGE DOOR BETWEEN 10 and 12 O'CLOCK.

Somehow a group was selected. On July

15, 1867, the spectacle opened and the public flocked to see what has been remembered as "St. Paul's first leg show." While a few of the fairer sex had made solo appearances in tights, no one before had offered the public an entire chorus of beauties in such form-revealing garments.

NEWSPAPER REVIEWS indicate that the company had to rely mostly upon the spectacle and the naughty novelty of the idea, rather than upon artistic merit for its appeal. Yet, in spite of grave deficiency in the art of dancing, *The Black Crook* made history, for it ran three consecutive weeks — a record which remained unequalled until the University's Centennial Showboat played almost a hundred performances of *Under the Gaslight* in 1958.

In 1869, a burlesque opera company featuring Alice Oates arrived at the Opera House. The opening performance of her troupe was a sensational success. The *Daily Pioneer's* review the following day, August 3, 1869, carried these headlines:

THE BEST ENTERTAINMENT EVER GIVEN IN ST. PAUL AUDIENCE WILD WITH DELIGHT

A return engagement beginning August 19, 1869, met with equal success. Alice Oates did not return to St. Paul for nearly three years, although her husband, James A. Oates, managed the Opera House during the summer of 1870. When she did come back in 1872 she had won more than her share of fame throughout the nation and was described as having "half the world at her feet."

Although she was still very young, this engagement seems to have marked the climax of her popularity. By 1885, her hold upon the public had begun to decline, and when she returned in 1886, the *Pioneer Press* for May 9, 1886, was openly hostile:

"Alice Oates and her alleged burlesque company will appear at the Olympic again this week. When there are so many good people and attractions to be secured, it is a wonder that the Olympic management inflicts such combinations on the public."

A cryptic note in the *Pioneer Press* of January 2, 1887, concludes her story:

"Miss Alice Oates is said to be dying and in great agony at the Philadelphia

You Naughty, Naughty
Men.

COMPOSED FOR, AND SUNG BY
MISS MILLIE CAYENDISH,

in the

"BLACK CROOK,"

at

NIBLO'S GARDEN.

Poetry by

T. KENNICK.

Music by

G. BICKWELL.

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NEW YORK:

Published by DODWORTH & SON, 6 Astor Place.

Between Broadway and Cooper Institute.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, A. D. 1886, by Dodworth & Son, in the Clerk's office of the U. S. district Court for Southern New York.



St. Paul's Grand Opera House was built in 1867 on the east side of Wabasha, between Third and Fourth Streets.

residence of her father-in-law; . . . Miss Oates is thirty-seven years old."

The highlight of burlesque opera, as far as St. Paul was concerned, probably occurred on February 18, 1875, when Mlle. Lameriaux and her "Can Can Dancers from Paris" invaded the Opera House. The legislature was in session, but instead of a protest from this august body, it is reported that almost all of the lawmakers found it expedient to attend important committee meetings that night — at the Opera House. Nor were they alone, for the city council, including not only the mayor but also the ex-mayor, were in the crowd which packed the Opera House to capacity.

NOT ALL the early troupes depending upon feminine charm were so successful. On February 1, 1876, Madame Rentz came to town with her "Great Original Female Minstrels." A fairly large audience of men assembled only to find an entertainment without a suspicion of vulgarity. It was reported to resemble "the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out."

In 1887 the New York Specialty Company, "composed largely of ladies," made an appeal to the "beardless young men and bald headed old sinners" by offering an attraction entitled "Living Art Statues." Instead of furthering the feminine cause, these "Living Art Statues" all but destroyed it. The entertainment was not "vulgar enough to suit the majority, and lacked the merits that

would have satisfied the minority." In other words, the statues, although too far back on the stage to give much satisfaction to those who came to enjoy the show, were too close to escape the eye of those who came to censor it, and as a result, a notice was published in the papers on the following day that the company would be arrested if the statues were shown again. Besides this unpleasant dilemma, one of the players, Mrs. Allen, swore out an attachment against Mrs. Doyle, the manager, which was served that night as the curtain was about to rise. The performance was cancelled and as the small audience passed out, each person was presented with a ticket entitling the bearer to the return of his money. When the patrons reached the box office on the lower floor, they found it closed and the manager vanished.

THE REPUTATION of such troupes was only slightly improved in 1877 by the return of the Madame Rentz troupe which produced *The Forty Thieves* under the new and appealing title, *Forbidden Pleasures*. But the climax of misfortune came July 28, 1879, with the arrival of May Fisk's "Famous Original Troupe of English Blondes." They hardly had entered the city before the leading man and another actor had writs of attachment served on Miss Fisk for overdue salaries. The unfortunate lady was thrown into jail, her cell caught fire, she was rescued by the jailor, her company was disbanded, and for several days thereafter the papers featured her trial.

While there were no more failures of such dramatic proportions, feminine companies did not fare well in St. Paul for several years. Then, in 1883, the turning point came. On September 4, 1882, Colonel J. H. Wood had opened a small, popular-priced playhouse on the corner of Jackson and Seventh Streets. The next year he engaged Ida Siddons and her Female Minstrels for a run of one week. Whether the small playhouse gave such entertainment an appeal that had not been possible in the more dignified surroundings of the Opera House or whether times had changed is not certain, but Ida Siddons was a phenomenal success. Long

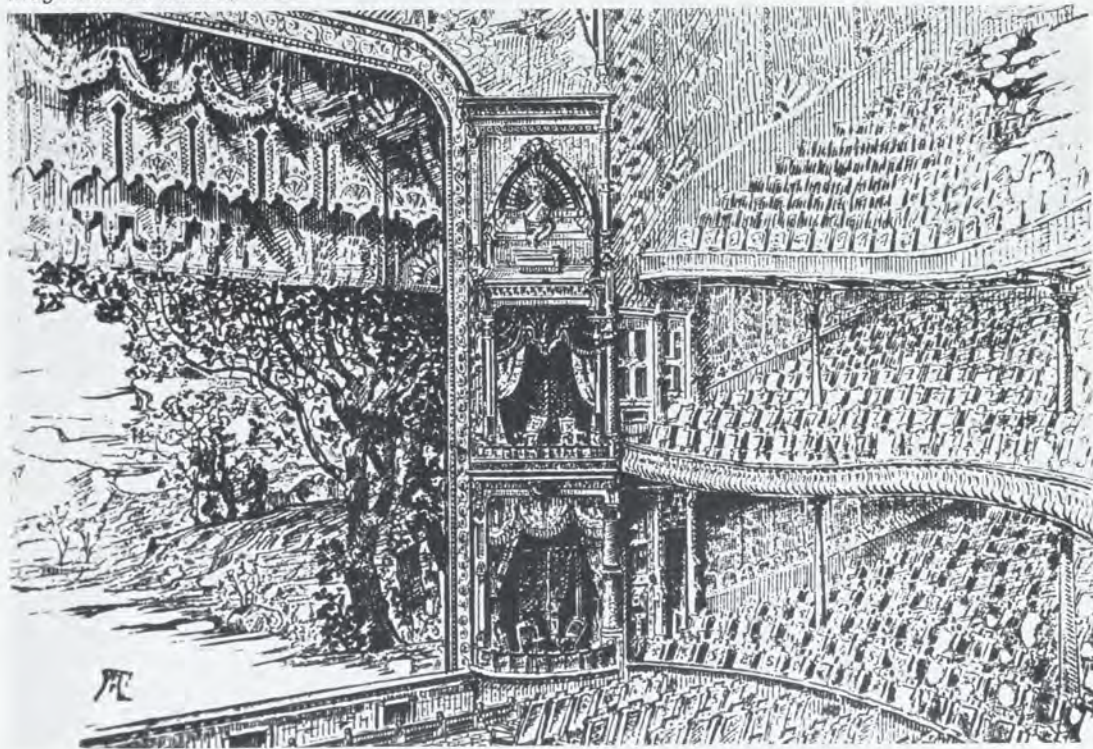
before the evening performance, the 1,400 tickets had been sold and "standing room only" signs set out. Latecomers "stood on tip toe in the foyer and caught glimpses of the stage when they could." More than

10,000 tickets were sold during the week.

From this time on, such entertainment was abundant in St. Paul. The mere mention of the names under which the female troupes travelled indicates the source of their appeal. Among them were "Maggie Leclair's Lovely Ladies" in *The Deamon's Froliques*, a "Teasing, Tasty, Tantalizing, Burlesque!"; "Lilly Clay's Colossal Gaiety Company" in *An Adamless Eden*; "Rose Hill's English Follies;" "Mlle. Lee's British Blondes;" "Mlle. Bebe's Beauty Brights;" "The Mormon Queen's Female Company;" "The Floating Angels Company;" "The Female Magnets" and "Mlle. Sidonia's Frisky French Favorites."

EVEN A SHORT account of St. Paul's early theatrical history must include a word about the scenic spectacles, for these were the days before motion pictures had made scenic spectacle commonplace. For example, the *Pioneer Press* of April 10, 1887, carried the following:

In this interior view, the Grand Opera House looks both spacious and lavish. The picture originally was published in *The Northwest Magazine* for March, 1885.



THE WORLD!
\$10,000 For Scenery
and Effects Alone
The beautiful Harbor Scene
(Sunset)!
Deck of an Ocean Steamer
(Moonlight)!
The Lunatic Asylum!
The Revolving Stage!
The magnificent
Moonlight Panorama!
The Great Hotel Scene!

Or we can turn to a review of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, which often played in St. Paul and had reopened at the Harris in October, 1890.

"Perhaps one of the best portions of the play is a snow storm on the Union Pacific, the arrival of a train, fight with the Indians, capture of the women and then the representation of a mountain scene with the rescue of women and the slaying of the Indians. There was a decided realism about a portion of this, and the same may be said of some of the other tableaux . . ."

But of all the spectacles, the greatest were connected with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. *Uncle Tom* had played in St. Paul as early as 1858.

It was a great success, and was played quite seriously at that time, but through the years, the play was repeated again and again. In an attempt to revive its appeal, whole packs of bloodhounds were introduced and Eliza escaped with her child across whole rivers of frozen ice. Horses and donkeys were common. At St. Paul's Dime Museum, they once did a show called, *The Double Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with two "Eva's," two "Tom's," and two of everything else. The following appeared in *The Globe* on August 30, 1885:

"The bloodhounds of an Uncle Tom Company broke loose recently and killed the donkey. The manager, in dire distress, had the donkey's skin removed and sent an actor on in it to impersonate the part, but the accomplished artist, for the first time in his life, failed to make an ass of himself."

We may smile at the old Nineteenth Century theater of spectacle, thrills, laughter and tears but it had its merits. Students of

our present generation are beginning to find great charm and many values in this old-time theater and its players.

John Steinbeck's words at the funeral of John Henry, an actor who died not many years ago, apply beautifully to most of the old-timers of the theater.

"He was an actor, a member of that incorrigible band to which belonged gypsies, and vagabonds and against whom laws were once made, lest they cause living to be attractive, fear unthinkable, and death dignified, thereby robbing churches and state of their taxes on unhappiness. He was consistent, professional, and responsible. (Please remember the time on stage when he sprained his ankle and played, limping, until the curtain went down) . . . He played larger than life; he played small as a mouse. His profession was himself. We all of us hope to come to our curtain unstained, unstrained, and as worthily as he did."

The Wandering Skeleton of Charley Pitts

The story relating the "Saga of Charley Pitts' Body," published in the Spring, 1967, issue of Ramsey County History, brought two interesting letters from Carl J. Eide of St. Paul, a long-time member of the Ramsey County Historical Society. In a letter dated November 19, 1967, he wrote:

"I read with interest 'The Saga of Charlie Pitts' Body' in *Ramsey County History*.

"You probably are acquainted with the excellent biography, *A Frontier Doctor*, by Dr. Henry F. Hoyt. Dr. Hoyt was born on a farm where the Minnesota State Fairgrounds now are, and was head of the St. Paul Department of Health in the 1880s and 1890s. In the book he tells a story of Charlie Pitts' body that adds detail to that recalled by Mrs. LeVesconte.

"According to his story, Dr. John H. Murphy, Dr. Hoyt's uncle, turned the body over to him (Dr. Hoyt), who recently had returned from Rush Medical College at Chicago, Illinois, and need a skeleton. Dr. Hoyt and one of his brothers sank the box with the body in Lake Como. He then left St. Paul for the West and a series of adventures.

"During his absence, August Robertson discovered the box while hunting muskrats. August's father opened the box and found it contained human bones. This resulted in widespread rumors of foul play. After a good deal of publicity, Dr. Hoyt's brother heard of the incident and explained. The

bones were turned over to Dr. Murphy, who gave them to a young physician in Chicago. "At that time Dr. Hoyt was in Las Vegas, Nevada, and found out about the affair from letters and St. Paul newspapers. The two stories agree in all essential details."

In a second letter, written June 24, 1968, Mr. Eide reports on the further adventures of Charles Pitts' wandering skeleton. It now reposes, said Mr. Eide, at the Stagecoach Museum located on the highway between Shakopee and Savage.

The museum, which also houses one of the finest gun collections in the country, is owned by Osborne Klavestad. In a talk with him on November 10, 1968, the editor of *Ramsey County History* confirmed the fact that the museum is indeed the current repository of Mr. Pitts' skeleton, or what Mr. Klavestad believes to be this peripatetic skeleton. He does not, however, have any reason to doubt its authenticity, he said. The skeleton has not been on display there as yet and the museum is closed for the winter. However, Mr. Klavestad promised to reconstruct, insofar as possible, Mr. Pitts' rather tortuous route to his museum.



THE GIBBS HOUSE

Headquarters of the Ramsey County Historical Society, 2097 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul, Minnesota.

THE Ramsey County Historical Society was founded in 1949. During the following years the Society, believing that a sense of history is of great importance in giving a new, mobile generation a knowledge of its roots in the past, acquired the 100-year-old farm home which had belonged to Heman R. Gibbs. The Society restored the Gibbs House and in 1954 opened it to the public as a museum which would depict the way of life of an early Minnesota settler.

In 1958, the Society erected a barn behind the farm house which is maintained as an agricultural museum to display the tools and other implements used by the men who broke up the prairie soil and farmed with horse and oxen. In 1966, the Society moved to its museum property a one-room rural schoolhouse, dating from the 1870's. The white frame school came from near Milan, Minnesota. Now restored to the period of the late 1890's, the school actually is used for classes and meetings. In the basement beneath the school building, the Society has its office, library and collections. In 1968, the Society acquired from the University of Minnesota the use of the white barn adjoining the Society's property. Here is housed a collection of carriages and sleighs which once belonged to James J. Hill.

Today, in addition to maintaining the Gibbs property, the Ramsey County Historical Society is active in the preservation of historic sites in Ramsey county, conducts tours, prepares pamphlets and other publications, organizes demonstrations of pioneer crafts and maintains a Speakers' Bureau for schools and organizations. It is the Society's hope that through its work the rich heritage of the sturdy men and women who were the pioneers of Ramsey County will be preserved for future generations.