

HISTORY OF THE STEVENS OPERA HOUSE,
GARDEN CITY, KANSAS 1886-1929

511

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The last half of the nineteenth century was a time of expansion for American theatre. The theatre reflected the temper of the land and its people. It grew in size and spread across the continent as the population multiplied and settled the wide plains, high mountains and west coast. The discovery of gold in California was, of course, a vital factor in this expansion, and so, too was the development of railroads. Barnard Hewitt, in his book, Theatre U. S. A., 1668 to 1957 wrote:

By 1858 one could travel by rail from New York to Chicago. Before the beginning of the Civil War, rail service was available from New York to Pittsburg and from New York to St. Louis. This improvement in transportation tremendously stimulated the traveling star all the way to the Mississippi. Even before actors could cross the continent by rail, enough actors reached the Pacific Coast to provide drama little below that available in the East. As soon as East and West were linked by rail, the vast area between the Mississippi and the Pacific was opened up to traveling stars just as soon as the rapidly growing population would support them.¹

Now it was possible to move entire troupes with all their equipment as units. Thus, the pattern became the self-contained touring attraction, usually a single play led by a star and supported by a company ensemble in order

¹Barnard Hewitt, Theatre U. S. A., 1668 to 1957 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1959), p. 217.

to keep cost low. In his book, The Making of American Theatre, Howard Taubman tells us:

Road shows were ubiquitous, with casts close to the Broadway originals or, more often, diluted versions of glamorous successes. Rare was the performer, however famous who did not travel across the land.²

As the nation grew, theatres mushroomed. Every town which today supports a motion-picture theatre then had a live theatre or two. It became a matter of pride for any community, large or small, that was proud of its position in the region, to have its own "op'ry house."³ Some were crude affairs. Others like those thrown up in booming mining centers of Virginia City, Nevada; Aspen, Colorado, and Central City, Colorado, were well equipped, comfortable and attractive in the manner of Europe's provincial theatres and opera houses.

From 1870 to 1890 the art of the actor was seen at its best. Theatre history books are full of the great names: Booth, Drew, Stoddart, Maude Adams and many others. But beginning with the last decade of the nineteenth century the theatre in America began to show a marked and steady decline. Arthur Hornblow laments:

The making of money became the one and only aim of

²Howard Taubman, The Making of the American Theatre (New York: Coward McCann, Inc., 1965), p. 126.

³Ibid., p. 94.

every effort. Of the great actors, not one remained. The stage was engulfed in a wave of commercialism that gradually destroyed the art of acting, elevated mediocrities to the dignity of stars, turned playwrights into hacks, misled and vitiated public taste, and the drama, from an art, became a business.⁴

Many artists turned to the road and the small local opera houses offered a refuge that had not yet been invaded by the big promoters and that new rival, the moving picture. Thus, while New York suffered, the frontier theatre prospered. One such frontier theatre was the Stevens Opera House.

The Stevens Opera House of Garden City, Kansas, was built in 1886 by John A. Stevens. The operation of this opera house in a town of six thousand is a story that reflects both the fortitude and the wild, speculative moods of the early settlers.

The Santa Fe Railroad was built through the present site of Garden City in 1874. This country was the land of the cowboy, large herds of cattle and diminishing buffalo and antelope. The first settlers were the Fulton brothers, William and James, who were soon joined by John A. Stevens and C. J. (Buffalo) Jones. As the population grew, about fifty large and small additions were laid out to the town,

⁴Arthur Hornblow, A History of the Theatre in America (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), Vol. II, p. 318.

there was much speculation in buying and selling lots.⁵ The largest additions were those of C. J. Jones and John A. Stevens. Both were true pioneers for a new country. Both were determined that their sections should become the business hub of the booming settlement. Their competition resulted in the building of the Stevens Opera House and two large hotels. The opera house attracted some of the finest actors and opera singers that the American stage possessed.

The opera house survived the "hard times" from 1890 to 1895, but Stevens lost the opera house in 1893. From 1893 to 1904 the opera house operated under weak management offering few professional touring companies.

A. H. Burtis purchased and operated the opera house in 1904. Electricity was installed and the road shows came again. From 1904 to 1914 many of the very best attractions were booked.

From 1914 to 1929 the opera house's doors were again often closed. World War I, a shortage of touring companies, and the addition of several motion picture theatres, definitely affected the communities interest in entertainment at the opera house.

⁵Leola Howard Blanchard, Conquest of Southwest Kansas (Wichita: The Wichita Eagle Press, 1931), p. 259.

Burtis sold the building in 1928 to J. B. Byers and it was then converted for commercial business in 1929. The story of the building and development of this theatre in the very center of the "wild west" was interesting, and should prove a valuable study for the student of American theatre history.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a complete lack of information on the development of the theatre on the frontier. History records that theatre followed the railroads and many towns had theatres. History indicates that traveling companies were formed and many toured the country. But any total history of the movement is missing. A study based on the history of one of the many frontier theatres in the United States should become an important reference in the development of an overall history of American frontier theatre. Mr. Elbert Bowen, a researcher for the University of Missouri, states that:

In recent years, research has produced the histories of theatres in the major cities of the United States. At present many works are available in published and manuscript form to serve as chapters in the yet-to-be written history of American Theatre. Cities, however, do not epitomize the full extent of America's theatrical scene, for many smaller towns of today could boast the presence of a theatre⁶

⁶Elbert Russell Bowen, Theatrical Entertainment in Rural Missouri Before the Civil War (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1959), pp.vii-viii.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The following terms have been used by the investigator in compiling this study.

Physical characteristics. The physical characteristics include size, seating capacity, design, and equipment.

Professional traveling companies. For the purpose of this study, professional traveling companies include national theatrical groups which toured cities to present entertainment.

Non-professional traveling companies. Amateur theatrical groups making short tours of neighboring cities.

Local amateur productions. Local amateur productions include those productions presented by local groups for local audiences only.

Non-theatrical events. All other events such as meetings, lectures, political speeches, concerts, and novelty acts fall into this category.

III. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

An investigation of Knower's "Index of Graduate Work in Speech," in Quarterly Journal of Speech, 1934 to 1967, and Educational Theatre Journal, 1948 to 1967 reveals

several studies encompassing the nature of the proposed study: "A Study of the Dramatic Productions of the Legitimate Stage in Sioux City, Iowa 1870-1919,"⁷ "Pioneer Theatres of Denver, Colorado,"⁸ "History of the Wheeler Opera, Aspen, Colorado, 1889-1894,"⁹ "A Study of the Greencastle, Indiana Opera House, 1875-1912,"¹⁰ "A History of the Coates Opera House, Kansas City, Missouri, 1870-1901,"¹¹ and "The Oxford Opera House, Oxford, Michigan, In Its Hour, 1891-1914."¹²

No previous study has been made of the Stevens Opera House, Garden City.

⁷Loretta Lyle Willson, "A Study of the Dramatic Productions of the Legitimate Stage in Sioux City, Iowa 1870-1919" (unpublished Master's thesis, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, 1937).

⁸Dean G. Nichols, "Pioneer Theatres of Denver, Colorado" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1938).

⁹Bertha Louise Shaw, "History of the Wheeler Opera, Aspen, Colorado, 1889-1894" (unpublished Master's thesis, Western State College, Gunnison, Colorado, 1964).

¹⁰Richard Barrett Brock, "A Study of the Greencastle, Indiana Opera House" (unpublished Master's thesis, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana, 1964).

¹¹Alice A. Mackey, "A History of the Coates Opera House, Kansas City, Missouri, 1870-1901" (unpublished Master's thesis, Central Missouri State College, Warrensburg, Missouri, 1965).

¹²Karen E. Bush, "The Oxford Opera House, Oxford, Michigan, In Its Hour, 1891-1914" (unpublished Master's thesis, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1967).

IV. SOURCES OF MATERIAL

Material for this study falls into six categories:

(1) general American theatre history reference books, (2) state and local history books, (3) examination of local newspapers, (4) interviews with local citizens (5) personal correspondence of D. W. Pitts, manager of the Stevens Opera House for eight years, (6) materials found in the Finney County Historical Museum.

Newspapers examined include: Garden City Herald, 1887-1929; Garden City Irrigator, 1882-1887; Garden City Imprint, 1889-1912; Garden City Telegram, 1906-1921. These were used in compiling both lists of the companies that played Garden City and when possible the views of the people that attended the productions. Complete files of these newspapers were found in the Kansas State Historical Museum.

Basic historical information on the founding and development of the opera house was found in such books as: Conquest of Southwest Kansas by Leola Blanchard, and History of Finney County Kansas, published by the Finney County Historical Society. Records from the office of Register of Deeds and the files of the County Clerk were used to verify information.

The letters of D. W. Pitts, although not complete, still gave a good insight into the actual business of the

opera house. Reference is made to such facts as the amount of money paid various companies, how it was paid, the seating capacity of the house and transportation problems encountered by the companies.

Other materials incidental but important to the study, such as pictures, programs, etc. were found in the Finney County Historical Museum.

Additional information was attained by personal interviews with Miss Helen Stowell and Mr. P. A. Burtis of Garden City. Miss Stowell moved to Garden City in 1906 and has been active in the local historical society for many years. Mr. Burtis is the son of Mr. A. H. Burtis, owner of the Stevens Opera House from 1904 to 1928, and helped run the opera house.

The interview with Miss Stowell was conducted on July 19, 1969. Mr. Burtis was interviewed on July 20, 1969.

V. METHOD OF ORGANIZATION

Chapter one presents the background and purpose of the study, the material used, the definition of terms, and the method used in completing the study.

Chapter two presents the history of the Stevens Opera House. Divisions included are: the founding of the opera house, a description of the size, architecture, and stage equipment used, and the operation of the opera house

under John A. Stevens, James Milwain, and A. H. Burtis, the three owners.

The appendix lists in chronological order the theatrical and non-theatrical events which took place in the Stevens Opera House. The events listed in this chapter include only those mentioned in the newspapers investigated. When possible the names of the production company and leading actors are included in this list.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF THE STEVENS OPERA HOUSE

Erection of Theatres in Kansas. Opera houses reached their peak around the turn of the century. Between 1870 and 1900 more than seventy-five opera houses in Kansas offered a variety of professional and amateur entertainment and served as cultural centers for their communities.¹

The opera house was not a phenomenon related to just the large Kansas community. The finest theatres in Kansas were the Crawford Opera House in Topeka and the Princess Opera House in Wichita, but communities of all sizes could boast of local theatrical centers almost as elaborate. The Whitley Opera House in Emporia, Hoover Hall in Dodge City, and the Olympic Theatre in Fort Scott were hailed by local newspapers as grand centers of culture for the communities.²

A random listing of Kansas communities in which opera houses were found by 1912 included: Columbus, Sedan, Caldwell, Sterling, Chanute, Delphos, Great Bend, Oberlin,

¹Rae Jean Matlick, "Culture Comes to the Prairie," Wichita Eagle, June 29, 1969.

²James C. Melvin, "Theatre in Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXIII (Winter 1956, No. 4) pp. 347-49.

Plainville, Coffeyville, Colby and Greensburg.³

Some communities were more active than others depending upon factors such as population, location, and management. Some of the opera houses were short lived, some were transformed with the coming of the motion picture, but each was a center of community entertainment and civic pride. If the old actors' ghost returned to Kansas, it would find few of these theatres still standing; but the nostalgic memories of the "old timers," who as children laughed, cried, booed, hissed and cheered in the galleries at the Saturday matinee, would surely make the spirit feel that the magic of the theatre survives the passing of time.

The Stevens Opera House no longer stands, but as stated in chapter one, its' history is a part of the history of theatre in America.

I. THE FOUNDING OF GARDEN CITY AND THE STEVENS OPERA HOUSE

The Santa Fe Railroad was built through the present site of Garden City in 1873.⁴ The first settlers to arrive

³Frank Blackman (ed.) Kansas (Chicago: Standard Publishers Co., 1912), Taken from an alphabetical listing of Kansas cities and their features.

⁴J. O. Carter, A Short History of Garden City (Garden City, Kansas: Finney County Historical Society, 1958), p. 1.

were the Fulton brothers, William and James, with their families. Their claims were to become the original part of the town. William D. Fulton settled the southeast quarter of the section and James R., the southwest quarter.⁵ In 1874 they were joined by John A. Stevens, who took the northeast quarter of the section, and C. J. (Buffalo) Jones, who bought the settlement rights of four Civil War veterans to the northwest quarter.⁶

Prospective claim holders began moving to Garden City in 1879 to secure government land. Later that same year Garden City became a delivery point for mail, express, and passengers on the Santa Fe Railroad. This important milestone was accomplished through the efforts of the Fultons and Jones. Garden City was to be the only stop for the Santa Fe trains west of Dodge City and east of Santa Fe.⁷

The railroad brought prospective businessmen to the town and population reached about 6,000 by 1885. District Judge J. C. Strong issued the order incorporating the village as a city of the third class on January 13, 1883.⁸

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 2.

⁸Ibid.

John A. Stevens. John Stevens, the founder and original owner of the Stevens Opera House, came to Garden City in 1875 as an employee of the Fulton brothers. At this time the Fulton brothers were engaged in the capturing and selling of wild horses and buffalo.⁹ After the Fultons filed on the south half of section 18-24-32 and proposed making it a town site, Stevens filed on the northeast quarter of the same section. This quarter was to become the center of the Garden City business district and is still known as the Stevens Addition.

No record is available of Stevens' life before he came to Garden City, but he was certainly one of that city's leading citizens. On February 10, 1879, at Dodge City, Kansas, John A. Stevens was united in marriage to Sadie A. Fulton, William Fulton's daughter.¹⁰ During the 1880's he built the opera house, the Windsor Hotel, and donated a church and park site to the city. Today the park bears his name.

Stevens' building speculations plus drought, blizzard and national depression forced him to declare bankruptcy in 1896.¹¹ Stevens career was as short as it was

⁹Ralph T. Kersey, History of Finney County Kansas (Garden City, Kansas: Finney County Historical Society, 1950), Vol. I, p. 15.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Carter, op. cit., p. 3.

spectacular, but Garden City was to profit from his speculation for many years. Stevens died in Garden City in 1902.

C. J. Jones and John A. Stevens became involved in keen competition in the development of the business district. This competition resulted in the building of the Stevens Opera House. The following notes from the newspaper, The Daily Irrigator, gives some insight as to how this came about:

Mr. Stevens bought a strip of land just west of the Buffalo Hotel, paying \$1,500. He now owns the outlet to Grant Avenue, and intends to hold it to prevent any more buildings going up in that direction, and thus force the business to go to Main Street, where his property is. Signed, C. J. Jones.¹²

At this point it should be noted that Jones was running for the town council. Stevens introduced a personal note into the campaign with the following statement, "If Jones is elected, I will not build the opera house."¹³ Jones was not elected, but Stevens made no progress on the opera house, prompting these remarks from Jones.

Mr. Stevens would have abandoned this months ago if he could reasonably have gotten out of it. The facts are it looks as though the opera house has all been a myth, as he has advertised the third time for bids, and each time has cancelled them, except the last, and it will go as before, no doubt.¹⁴

¹²The Daily Irrigator, July 16, 1885.

¹³Ibid., Sept. 27, 1885.

¹⁴Ibid., Dec. 21, 1885.

Jones began expansion of his property and this applied ever more pressure to Stevens as this note in the newspaper indicates. "Jones is going ahead with his stone block and that compels me to build."¹⁵

Thus, the competition began. Jones built the "Buffalo Block" and Stevens, not to be outdone, began the opera house. The Daily Irrigator informed the citizens of Garden City of Stevens' progress.

Mr. Stevens returned from Emporia last week and on Tuesday exhibited the plans of the new opera house. We are putting it mild when we say this is going to be an elegant building. Many towns the size of Garden City, when they start to build an opera house in order to cut down expense sacrifice the beauty and value of the house. Mr. Stevens does not propose to do this. He has the money to build it and says he proposes to build it right, and count the cost afterward. He is not building it expecting to profit from it, but simply as an enterprise for the benefit of the city.¹⁶

Once Stevens made up his mind to build the opera house for Garden City, work progressed quickly. By April the contracts were let and ground had been broken for the building.

Ground was broken Monday morning for the Stevens new opera house. P. H. Hall got the contract for everything except the stage which will be built under supervision of competent authority without regard to cost. The estimate is upward of \$30,000.00.¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., Jan. 12, 1886.

¹⁶Ibid., March 6, 1886.

¹⁷Ibid., April 24, 1886.

Opening of the Opera House. The eagerly awaited grand opening of the Stevens Opera House occurred on October 6, 1886. The Andrews Opera Company opened the theatre with a performance of the Mikado, only one year after it was originally produced in England. Judging from the following review by Mr. Warren E. Layne, editor of The Daily Irrigator, the performance was not a complete success: "the first company impressed the audience as being decidedly amateurish. We can only hope for better companies in the future."¹⁸ The performance may have fallen short of the audience's expectations, but Garden City opened the opera house in style. A capacity audience of 500 persons filled the private boxes, auditorium and gallery. A committee of Mr. Stevens' friends presented Stevens with a sixty-five dollar goldheaded cane; the tribute was purchased from W. G. Dickinson, a local jeweler. Stevens accepted the cane, made a short speech dedicating the opera house to the city, and the Stevens Opera House was officially opened.¹⁹

II. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STEVENS OPERA HOUSE

The citizens of Garden City could show just pride

¹⁸Ibid., Oct. 7, 1886.

¹⁹Ibid.

in the Stevens Opera House. It was an outstanding example of the theatre architecture of its time. John A. Stevens deserves full credit for seeing that the opera house achieved such high stature in the area. Stevens never considered the opera house a business investment. The theatre was built as a community project to enhance the image of the city, and perhaps help attract more settlers into the area.²⁰

The P. H. Hall Construction Company, contractor, was a local firm. A stage designer from St. Louis, whose name was not available supervised the construction of the stage.²¹

Construction was of "brick," trimmed with native stone, both attainable in Garden City. The building was three stories high with a fifty foot front. Over all length was 116 feet. The theatre proper was located on the second floor. Two business establishments, a drug-store and a men's clothing store, occupied the ground floor.²² A stairway approximately six feet wide, located between the two stores, led up to the ticket booth. Two entrances then greeted the customer, one on either side

²⁰The Daily Irrigator, March 6, 1886.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

of the ticket booth. The entrance on the right led up another flight of stairs to the gallery on the third floor, while the entrance on the left opened to the auditorium's main floor.²³

The Theatre Interior. Mr. Burtis described the interior color as a "light tan" with the proscenium arch painted off-white. He recalled large murals painted on each side wall with small statues mounted on either side of the paintings.²⁴ The Daily Irrigator gave this description: "The walls are profusely frescoed and ornamental with fine sculptured work."²⁵

Four private boxes, each seating about eight, framed the stage. The red velvet drapes on the boxes matched the act curtain and the upholstery on the auditorium seats. The seats in the boxes were upholstered in tapestry of a red and gold design.²⁶

The main floor had 370 seats divided by two aisles.

²³Ibid., April 24, 1886.

²⁴Interview with Mr. P. A. Burtis (Mr. Burtis is the son of A. H. Burtis, third owner of the Stevens Opera House.) Garden City: July 20, 1969. All further reference to statements by P. A. Burtis refer to this interview.

²⁵The Daily Irrigator, April 24, 1886.

²⁶Carter, op. cit., p. 2.

The circular gallery seated around 120 customers on bench seats. The seating capacity of the Stevens Opera House was to never exceed 600.²⁷

Gas lights lined the gallery, box seats and both side walls of the house. Illumination was also supplied by a large gas chandelier suspended from the high ceiling over the auditorium.

The building was heated with steam and ventilated by windows high on both sides of the auditorium.²⁸

The Stage. The stage was thirty-five feet deep with a twenty-two foot proscenium opening. The act curtain was made of red velvet-like materials. There was also a traditional drop curtain, decorated with local merchants' advertisements. Gas footlights and overhead lights illuminated the stage. The addition of electricity and other lighting improvements will be discussed later in this chapter.

Scenery used on the stage cost Stevens about \$800.00. It is best described by this article taken from The Daily Irrigator.

L. P. Culberson Company, celebrated scenic artist of Kansas City, have displayed good taste and ability.

²⁷Interview with P. A. Burtis.

²⁸Carter, loc. cit.

Mr. C. L. McFarland, who is representing the firm here and superintending the placing of the scenery, says that Garden City without doubt has the finest setting of scenery as there is in the state. It being equalled by only one other house that being the Crawford in Topeka.

There are twelve complete settings as follows: horizon, wood, landscape, garden, cut wood, parlor, chamber, oak chamber, kitchen, prison, and rocky pass. Combining these over one hundred different scenes can be presented and much credit is due to Mr. McFarland for the excellent manner in which he has accomplished his portion of the work. There is no play be it ever so difficult and scenery so gorgeous it cannot be placed on the boards of the opera house in a satisfactory manner.²⁹

The Stevens Opera House, a beautiful addition to the community, equipped with the best stage money could buy, was ready to bring entertainment and culture to the citizens of Garden City.

III. JOHN A. STEVENS, OWNER 1886-1896

John A. Stevens was to be a theatrical entrepreneur in Garden City for ten years before he was forced to sell the Stevens Opera House. These ten years contained some of the brightest and dimmest years in the history of both the Stevens Opera House and Garden City. Stevens' brief ownership was by no means a reflection upon his business ability. The very fact that he was able to operate the opera house for ten years in the face of a

²⁹The Daily Irrigator, October 18, 1886.

severe local economic crisis is a tribute to Stevens.

When Stevens built the opera house in 1886, Garden City was a boom town boasting a population of 6,000.³⁰ Special events, such as the local fair, drew over 8,000 people. By 1890, dust, grasshoppers, depression and general discouragement had depleted Garden City's population to about 1,000.³¹

Stevens ownership then can be divided into two periods labeled, simply, "the good times," and "the bad times."

The Good Times. As it has already been pointed out, the Andrews Opera Company's production of The Mikado was not well received. One week later, however, the Louie Lord Company was to play for six "good houses" in six days.³² The Stevens Opera House soon became an important addition to the community, and by the end of 1886 had been host to many types of events. Local musical programs, political speeches, lectures, local theatrical programs and even revivals vied with the professional touring companies for use of the opera house. The

³⁰Ibid., Oct. 11, 1886.

³¹Carter, op. cit., p. 1.

³²The Daily Irrigator, Oct. 13, 1886.

history of this period was, nevertheless, dominated by the theatre professionals.

Frank Tannehill's production of the Stranglers of Paris came to town on December 10, 1886, with "the biggest, grandest spectacle ever to be seen in this part of the state."³³ Tannehill brought three "carloads" of scenery and a cast of fifteen to the opera house to play before a packed house.³⁴

The first star of national prominence appeared at the opera house the next year. Emma Abbott, a nationally known opera singer, brought her company to Garden City on March 16, 1887, to present the opera Martha. Much excitement preceded her arrival, but reviews expressed severe disappointment in the performance:

. . . by Act III it became obvious to a very disgusted audience that the actors were rushing swiftly through their lines and singing only part of some songs in order to catch the train. Those who had paid high prices to see this show left with mighty angry feelings.³⁵

Miss Abbott won back her audience with a production of Carnival of Venice in December of the same year. This opera was preceded with public apologies and the promise of a complete show.

³³Ibid., Dec. 11, 1886.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., March 18, 1887.

A second star of some magnitude made an appearance in Garden City in 1887. Caprice, starring Minnie Maddern [Fiske], "a young star from the stage of New York,"³⁶ was presented at the opera house on the ninth of May. This was the first of two successful appearances for Miss Maddern in Garden City that year. The Maddern company also presented In Spite All Day to a Garden City audience in November. The following review followed that performance.

A large audience was again given a good show by that fine young actress Miss Minnie Maddern and her very capable company. Any time she wants to return she can be assured of a large crowd in Garden City.³⁷

The first of many productions of Uncle Tom's Cabin appeared also in 1887. The performance received what was to become typical, a bad review. No production of Uncle Tom's Cabin in the entire history of the Stevens Opera House was well received and the first was certainly no exception. The Daily Irrigator panned the show calling it, "more of a minstrel show than a drama." The reviewer went on to say that: "The actors would do well to learn their lines and put in singing and acting practice before they brought their show around."³⁸

³⁶Ibid., April 28, 1887.

³⁷Ibid., Dec. 2, 1887.

³⁸Ibid., Nov. 27, 1887.

The action packed production of The Count of Monte Cristo, produced by Horace Lewis and Company, was the most popular show of 1888. The review, however, contained more praise for the script than for the company. "If you missed it you were one of the few who did. The story of The Count of Monte Cristo is being talked about all over town."³⁹

The outstanding event of 1888 was the appearance of Frederick Warren in Richard the Third. School was dismissed for a special matinee. Admission was high, \$1.50 for a reserved seat, but a full house greeted the actors. The next day, according to a letter written by Mr. John Gibson, "the halls and play ground resounded with the battle cry of Richard III, 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse.'"⁴⁰

The appearance of Frank Mayo in his famous title role of Davy Crockett, closed the curtain on the years of plenty for the Stevens Opera House, Garden City and John A. Stevens. Mayo's company appeared on October 9, 1889.⁴¹ "Hard times" had already forced the opera house to close for long periods of time in 1889. Indeed, only seventeen

³⁹Ibid., Feb. 21, 1888.

⁴⁰Carter, op. cit., Letter from John Gibson to Raymond E. Stotts, p. 61.

⁴¹The Daily Irrigator, Oct. 19, 1899.

events were publicized as having taken place in the opera house that year.

The Bad Times. Dust began to blow and the settlers moved out as if they, like their crops, were being scattered with the wind. By 1890 The Daily Irrigator had been replaced by a weekly paper and Garden City could no longer boast of being the only city west of Hutchinson to have a daily paper.⁴² Merchants closed their doors and the new weekly paper, The Garden City Imprint, was filled with announcements of sheriffs' auctions, rather than commercial advertisements.

Still the opera house remained, and to the tribute of the remaining citizens, theatre did not die in Garden City. The hard times seemed to encourage the development of local theatre companies. As Garden City could no longer afford entertainment from the traveling professional company, the local citizens set about supplying theatrical events of their own.

Local productions had been presented by groups in the opera house as far back as 1886, but by 1891 they became the most frequent entertainment offered by the opera house.

⁴²Carter, op. cit., p. 34.

The Shoe String Dramatic Club, founded in 1891, and the Esmeralda Company, 1892, accounted for many of these local productions. Nothing is known about the personnel of these companies, but their efforts were well attended and well received by the citizens of the community. The Garden City Imprint contained many comments of praise, typified by the following remarks:

The Shoe String Drama Company gave a fine rendition in the opera house last night. We understand they are hard at work on a play for July 4th. All citizens will be looking forward to their next effort.⁴³

The amateur companies were highly active from 1891 to 1895. Local productions numbered nine in 1891, seven in 1892, five in 1893, and six in 1895. During 1895, only five professional companies appeared in the opera house.

Only two of the professional companies appearing at this time deserves special mention. One of these, Turners English Girls, was not an outstanding company, but rates importance because it gave the city its first theatrical shock. This article in the Garden City Herald, another weekly paper operating in the community, not only sums up the attitude of the community toward the show, but also represents the cleverest review discovered by the investigator. The following appeared under the

⁴³Garden City Imprint, April 10, 1892.

headling, "Rather Tight":

Turners English Girls were at the opera house last Friday evening. The show had been written up, or rather down, in Wellington; roasted in Wichita, and virtually skinned alive in the highly moral town of Dodge City. Even the bills on the bulletin boards were not calculated to make people think any too well of the prospects for seeing a moral show. Anyhow, the people went there expecting to see something awful. In the audience were many old gray headed men, or at least, they would have been gray if they possessed any hair. They occupied the orchestra chairs, and wore solemn faces. Of course they attended so that they would know how to warn their children against such shows in case this was a bad one. But we intended to say something about the show itself. The house was beautifully lighted with gas, the galleries were well filled and the pit contained a fair sprinkling of people. There was nothing wrong with the audience. They were a well behaved set of people, and all were well dressed and no one could take exceptions to a single action of theirs. When the curtain rose they beheld the English girls, in fact they saw more of women than is generally seen of them in public. But we have this to say about the show and don't care who reads it--Turners English girls undoubtedly gave an exhibition in the opera house last Friday night.⁴⁴

Adelaide Moore's London Company production of Romeo and Juliet appeared in the opera house on Oct. 6, 1893. The company was nationally known, but no review of the show was published. The critic attended the production, but his comments were directed away from the company to a sad accounting of the condition of the opera house.

Last Saturday night the auditorium and gallery was reeking with a somewhat obnoxious smell that

⁴⁴Haywen Norris (ed.) The Garden City Herald, Oct. 24, 1891.

might be likened unto a combination of carbolic acid and castor oil. The auditors, whether blessed with good eyes or not were compelled to study their programs and view the play by the light of a number of gas jets varied at times from thirteen to seventeen. Visible, and it is a notorious fact that the lights around the balcony have never been lit with but few exceptions--the chandelier in the gallery has disappeared entirely. The ventilation does not exist. The two or three windows on the south in the upper heights are seldom lowered, and those on the north are entirely closed since the building of the Windsor. It may have been a part of the play, that whenever a stage fall was made that the person should be enshrouded in a cloud of dust rising from the stage carpet. It is a duty, the manager or proprietor owe the public who pay their money for admission to see that the house is properly cleaned, heated, lighted, and ventilated for their reception and comfort. This is not the state of affairs at the opera house.⁴⁵

Despite this criticism the Stevens Opera House remained open and continued to host an occasional road company. Effie Ellsler, who had starred on Broadway in one of America's best loved plays, Hazel Kirke,⁴⁶ appeared in As You Like It. This was another of those performances marred by a rushed and abbreviated rendition for the sake of a train.⁴⁷

Summers brought on the booking of cut-rate stock companies with low admission prices. The Weber Company is a typical example of this type of cheap entertainment.

⁴⁵Garden City Herald, Oct. 10, 1893.

⁴⁶Daniel Frohman, "486 Times," Stage (January, 1937), p. 104.

⁴⁷Garden City Herald, Dec. 19, 1895.

They appeared in the opera house on June third, fourth, and fifth in 1893. The admission price for such plays as The Pond, The Woods and The City, was ten, fifteen, and twenty cents.

The opera house offered limited entertainment, but could not attract good audiences. On June 30, 1896, a group called the Cooper Quartette from Cooper College in Sterling, Kansas, came on stage, looked at the size of the audience, sang two songs, and gave the audience back their money. The Garden City Herald stated that "there just weren't enough people there for them to bother to sing."⁴⁸

By 1896 Stevens had lost all his holdings excepting the opera house and some farm land.⁴⁹ A Southerner Never Shows the White Feather was the last play Stevens booked into the opera house. Bankruptcy forced him to sell to James Milwain of Albany, New York, on October 13, 1896.

Though Stevens owned the opera house for only ten years he had succeeded in establishing a theatre in Garden City that was to bear his name throughout its history.

IV. JAMES MILWAIN, OPERA HOUSE OWNER 1896-1904

Details of just how a man in Albany, New York,

⁴⁸Garden City Herald, July 2, 1896.

⁴⁹Blanchard, op. cit., p. 262.

became the owner of the Stevens Opera House are unavall-able. The times of boom and bust on the high plains were days of many strange business transactions. During the four years Milwain was an absent owner of the opera house, two local men served as managers. They were, C. A. Schneider and D. W. Pitts. Mr. Schneider served from 1896 to 1898 and Mr. Pitts from 1898 to 1904.

These eight years were not busy times for the opera house. Professional touring companies appeared infrequently, and Jones Hall, built in 1897, housed most public meetings.⁵⁰ Only nineteen events appeared in the opera house in 1898 and by 1902 the number had dropped to seventeen. The years 1903 and 1904 picked up somewhat, but a glance at the activity in the opera house over these four years discloses little to substantiate any hint at commercial success for the owner.

Local newspapers ignored most of the companies playing the opera house during this period. Only two groups, one a professional company, the other a local company, and one speaker caused any stir in the press.

The local company, called the Histrionic Society, gave its first production on July 17, 1897. The group met with instant success drawing a good house and good

⁵⁰Garden City Imprint, April 7, 1897.

reviews. The Garden City Imprint had this to say:

The Executor, as played by the Histrionic Society at the Opera House last Saturday evening was a decided success from the standpoint of an excellent rendition. It was a good play, and was well played. It deserved a big house, and merited the generous applause that it received. This society is a credit to the town, and if they use as good judgment in the selection of coming plays as they did in choosing The Executor, they will draw big houses. The play they will put on the board Saturday night, July 31, is highly commended as a comedy sparkling with fun and wit. Go see it. The name of the play that they are going to do Saturday is Captured, The Old Maid's Triumph.⁵¹

The second show also met with success.

The Histrionic Society covered that theatrical organization with glory Saturday night in the production of the amusing Captured. The audience was larger than two weeks before and the laughter practically unceasing from the rise to the fall of the curtain.⁵²

The Histrionic Society produced one other play that summer, then ran five plays in five nights during the week of the Garden City Fair. One of these productions prompted these remarks from a representative of the Syracuse Journal, weekly newspaper of Syracuse, Kansas.

The Garden City Histrionic Society added much to the pleasure of the amusement loving public by its faultless presentation of popular dramas at the opera house during the dates of the Garden City Fair. The Society is far ahead of any home talent troop we have ever seen and is a credit to Garden City Society.⁵³

⁵¹Garden City Imprint, July 24, 1897.

⁵²Ibid., July 22, 1897.

⁵³Syracuse Journal, Oct. 17, 1897.

Having produced eight plays in one year the Histri-
onic Society was never heard of again. Perhaps the members
all suffered acute exhaustion. Other groups occupied the
opera house, presenting plays and musicals at a fantastic
rate. Local newspapers mentioned seventeen locally pro-
duced events in the opera house in the years 1897 and 1898.

Sam Jones, identified only as, "a lecturer,"
appeared in the Stevens Opera House on July 15, 1899.
This event merits mention only because of the following
review from the Garden City Imprint. The comments give an
interesting insight into the impression made by the
speaker.

Sam Jones has been here. A packed house heard him
Saturday night. Sam's moral perceptions being of such
a low grade, he has conceived that cynicism and bil-
lingsgate are the proper things with which to reach
people and he does reach them as a low comedian who
provides something to laugh at. There is not a man in
Garden City who could use the vulgar language, and
call names as Jones did and remain in town thirty
seconds afterward without getting hurt. Jones com-
bines in himself a team, which he described as a kick-
er, butter, stinger, and stinker. He said that there
were four things by which a boy could be reached--
through his intelligence, conscience, pride or his
hide, and he seemed to think there was nobody with
intelligence, conscience, or pride present and so went
for their hides. Parts of Jones' speech were fine and
impressive, but there are so many better than he in
this line that he could not hope to gain a big reputa-
tion by a manly Christ like appearance before an audi-
ence, and it wouldn't bring in the dollars, which,
of course, Sam isn't after very hard.⁵⁴

⁵⁴Garden City Imprint, July 22, 1899.

One of the very few good reviews received by the professional companies during this period was published in the Garden City Herald. A play entitled Resurrection, starring Aiden Benedict was praised by the paper.

It was too bad there was so few of those who can appreciate a powerful play and good acting out to see Resurrection at the opera house Wednesday night. Some may object to the bold words and actions of the play but it is not a bit worse than to suggest immoralities in a round about way. But aside from such things the play is a masterpiece and affords great latitude for the better class of acting. The company was a good one and thoroughly competent. The scenery was good and the show was highly entertaining.⁵⁵

Most of the professional companies' appearances were hardly mentioned by the local newspapers and some, such as the Schubert Symphony Club and Lady Quartette, probably wished the local papers had not noticed them. The Garden City Herald summed up their performance in two sentences: "As a musical burlesque it was a success; as a professional effort it was pitiable. There is more excitement and enthusiasm in the music of a bass drum."⁵⁶

One of the most unusual companies ever to play the opera house appeared for three weeks commencing on February 13, 1899.⁵⁷ Billed as the German Vaudevilles, the

⁵⁵Garden City Herald, March 7, 1903.

⁵⁶Ibid., Jan. 14, 1903.

⁵⁷Ibid., Feb. 20, 1899.

group was made up of the following acts: May Floyds' Parisian Dancers; The Keatons, comedians; Brooks and Floyd, sketch artists; Guy Oliver and the Oliver Sisters, singers; The Colbys; Master Frank; Miss Beryl; Dr. Clark, lectures and talks; The Doctors, psychic and surgical; and a play, The Gentleman Burglar, starring Corney Brooks.⁵⁸

Such a combination and the length of the booking combine to make this a very unusual event. A piece of correspondence from Dr. Clark to D. W. Pitts, with Mr. Pitts' answer written on the bottom, gave an interesting insight into the financial operation of this company. Mr. Clark asked for \$110.00 for the three week engagement. For some unknown reason Pitts offered \$115.00.⁵⁹ A very rough count would disclose at least fifteen individuals made up the troupe. That means each individual could expect to receive only \$7.00 for three weeks work before any deduction for expenses.

The Stevens Opera House had fallen into such disrepair by 1904 that after an August performance of the Lyceum Stock Company, the Garden City Herald complained of large pieces of plaster falling on the audience during

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Letters of D. W. Pitts, Finney County Historical Society Museum.

the show.⁶⁰ Finally, one month later the paper demanded, "fix it or close it."⁶¹ Mr. Milwain solved the problem by neither fixing it or closing it; instead, he sold it.

V. A. H. BURTIS, OPERA HOUSE OWNER 1904-1929

A. H. Burtis, a highly respected citizen and successful businessman, bought the Stevens Opera House in October of 1904. Again the opera house was owned by a local man, but this time the local owner intended to run the opera house as a money making business.⁶²

The history of the opera house under this owner can be divided into three stages. The first stage being the years Burtis, concentrating on other business interest, employed R. S. Cone to manage the opera house. The second stage beginning when Burtis managed the opera house himself, and competition, in the form of moving picture houses, arose. The third stage, a time of decline for the opera house as the competition began to tell and Burtis turned his interest again to other businesses.

The First Stage, 1904-1906. Under the new owner, the first order of business was the closing of the opera

⁶⁰Garden City Herald, Aug. 24, 1904.

⁶¹Ibid., Sept. 10, 1904.

⁶²Interview with P. A. Burtis.

house for badly needed rejuvenation. The month of November, 1904, was spent repainting and applying over \$1,000.00 worth of improvements to the Stevens Opera House. Among these improvements was the installment of electricity. The old gas fixtures were used and the direct current supplied light not even as bright as the old gas lights.⁶³

The refurbished opera house opened with four bookings in December, all well attended.⁶⁴ Garden City's population had been slowly growing and was to reach 5,000 by 1907. This increase in population made the ownership of the opera house a good, if not outstanding, investment for Burtis.⁶⁵

The Stevens Opera House was host to about two shows a month for the next two years. Twenty-three bookings occupied the opera house in 1905, and twenty-five in 1906. December and January were the busiest months while heat forced very light schedules during the summer. Most of the bookings were professional touring companies, sixteen of them in 1905, and seventeen in 1906. An unscheduled closing in November and December of 1905, (a result of extensive remodeling of the Windsor Hotel next door)

⁶³Garden City Herald, Dec. 17, 1904.

⁶⁴Ibid., Dec. 30, 1904.

⁶⁵Interview with P. A. Burtis.

forced cancellation of several shows.⁶⁶ Two events of historical interest took place in the Stevens Opera House during 1905 and 1906. Buffalo Jones returned to Garden City from his extensive travels to deliver a lecture in the opera house bearing his old rival's name. The first Garden City High School senior class play, The Merchant of Venice, was presented in the opera house on May 30, 1905.

The professional companies visiting Garden City at that time were not strong. No actors of national prominence were involved. Indeed, little mention of the companies was made in the local papers. The biggest change in operation of the opera house at this time to be noted in the press was the use of rather elaborate advertising of the attractions, a practice other owners had not used, depending instead upon news items to attract customers.

By 1906, however, productions were beginning to again attract the attention of the press. Reviews began to appear with more regularity. Two Merry Tramps, a show that appeared on November 19, drew this blast from the Garden City Herald:

Two Merry Tramps at the opera house Monday night was about as bum a show that ever came down the pike. The disgust of the large crowd was manifest, and

⁶⁶Ibid.

there was sufficient cause given for them to have risen and mobbed the Two Merry Tramps. The chorus was about as poor as could be found, not one of them being able to sing. The only good features about the show, the costumes and scenery.⁶⁷

Large crowds were attending in spite of reviews like the above and better times were coming.

The Second Stage, 1907-1917. The next ten years were the most active in the history of the Stevens Opera House. There were two important reasons for this increase in bookings. First, Burtis took over personal management of the opera house, determined to make it a paying operation; and second, competition, in the form of the motion picture, appeared in Garden City.

Burtis decided the best business formula for the operation of the opera house involved the booking of about five or six companies a month. These companies were booked on a percentage basis with the owner collecting 40 per cent of the box office receipts when stock companies were booked, 30 per cent for the average show and only 20 per cent for the "hot show." A rental fee was charged for the use of the opera house for events sponsored by groups other than the management.⁶⁸ Admission cost ranged from two dollars and fifty cents, for the

⁶⁷Garden City Herald, Nov. 24, 1906.

⁶⁸Interview with P. A. Burtis.

best seats at the top shows, to ten cents for gallery seats during stock company performances. Cost of tickets fell into three divisions for each type of company booked. Stock company tickets cost ten cents for gallery seats, twenty cents for non-reserved house seats, and thirty-five cents for reserved seats. Average admission for most shows was twenty-five cents for gallery, fifty cents for non-reserved, and seventy-five cents for reserved seats. The big shows, usually containing a star of national prominence cost the theatre-goer seventy-five cents for gallery, one dollar fifty for non-reserved and two dollars and fifty cents for reserved seats. Usually only one show of this caliber was booked each year.⁶⁹

Attendance was good and the business formula worked well for about ten years. One of the causes for its eventual failure was already on the scene in 1907.

The Lyric Theatre opened for business in July of 1907. The Lyric was the first moving picture house opened in the community. The novelty of seeing the movies, plus the low admission price, ten cents, helped the Lyric attract huge crowds. The following article from the Garden City Evening Telegram marks this event.

Motion pictures came to Garden City July 10, 1907

⁶⁹Ibid.

with the opening of the Lyric Electric Theatre. The theatre opened next to the postoffice, with a change of program every other night, with high grade moving pictures and illustrated songs.⁷⁰

Early in 1907, Burtis made important additions to the opera house that helped him meet the competition offered by the Lyric. The Garden City Evening Telegram reported on January 1, 1907, that Mr. Burtis was having the electrical system of the opera house changed to meet underwriters' requirements. While this was being done a number of improvements were added to the lighting system. A twenty circuit fuseable switchboard with two dimmers was added, along with a follow spot and a motion picture machine. Two rows of lights were added in the loft of the stage and the number of foot lights increased. A row of lights was installed around the edge of the gallery and additional lights placed in the ceiling above the gallery.⁷¹ The newspaper had definite ideas about the value of these electrical additions.

A new switchboard has been installed and this with the aid of the dimmer enables the electrician to produce almost any scenic effect desired and the gloomy scene where the heroine tells the mournful story of her life and the poor blind father is turned out in the cold to the full chorus effect with brass band accompaniment.⁷²

⁷⁰Garden City Evening Telegram, July 11, 1907.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Garden City Evening Telegram, March 16, 1907.

The early popularity of the Lyric moved Burtis to drastic action in the fall of 1907. Burtis had booked very few shows during the summer of that year but that was to change according to this story in the Garden City Evening Telegram of August 6, 1907.

A. H. Burtis is planning to spring some surprises on the theatre going public. He has already spent considerable money in improvement, especially in electrical effects, and has decided to spend considerable more in offering the public a wide range of music demanded by Garden City's growth. He will try the experiment of keeping the house open every evening during the season, expend a thousand dollars in preparing for this, but believes that Garden City is large enough to support a house more than five or six nights a month. On nights when a company is not booked, he will present a popular program of vaudeville illustrated songs and motion pictures. "I may spend some money foolishly, but I don't think so," said Mr. Burtis. "Garden City is a live enough town to demand amusement regularly, anyhow I intend to try the experiment, and if it doesn't go it won't be because the public isn't furnished the best there is." The new arrangement will probably begin about September 1.⁷³

Movies then came to the Stevens Opera House fulfilling most of the nightly entertainment promised the public by Burtis. They would be booked, off and on, for the remainder of the opera house's existence but were never a success. P. A. Burtis, in an interview, said, "People just didn't seem to want to go upstairs to see a movie."⁷⁴

⁷³Ibid., Aug. 6, 1907.

⁷⁴Interview with P. A. Burtis.

The experiment was short lived, lasting only about two months. Mr. P. A. Burtis in an interview, remembered that this attempt at nightly entertainment lost money. It is interesting to note, however, that on October 14, 1907, his competition, the Lyric Theatre, was up for sale. Perhaps the experiment was not a complete failure.⁷⁵

By November of 1907, the Stevens Opera House was back on the old booking schedule used since Burtis had become owner. This schedule seemed to compete well with other entertainment enterprises opened in Garden City in 1907. Three such businesses were opened: a bowling alley, a roller skating rink, and a dance hall. The high school also began inter-scholastic football and basketball competition.

The closing of the Lyric Theatre was only a temporary set-back for movies in Garden City. By January 1908, the Electric Theatre opened, showing movies with a change of bills every three nights.⁷⁶ This theatre was to remain in Garden City long after the demise of the Stevens Opera House.

Some outstanding productions played the opera house in 1907 and 1908. Sanford Dodge starred in Romeo

⁷⁵Garden City Evening Telegram, Oct. 14, 1907.

⁷⁶Ibid., Jan. 8, 1908.

and Juliet on February 13, 1907.⁷⁷ Other titles included such well known plays as: Ben Hur, The Little Minister, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and Jane Eyre.

Sanford Dodge returned to the Stevens Opera House in 1909 in a production of Faust.⁷⁸ Miss Helen Stowell, in an interview conducted on July 19, 1969, stated that she recalled seeing this production and remembered the audience hissing at the villain.⁷⁹

Chautauqua began in Garden City in the summer of 1909. This annual week of entertainment in outdoor comfort was responsible for long periods of inactivity in the house in this and following summers. The Chautauqua in Garden City consisted of seven afternoon and seven evening performances. These usually consisted of a lecturer in the afternoon and a play or musicale in the evening. A season ticket cost only two dollars and fifty cents. The shows took place in a large tent placed right uptown.⁸⁰

Burtis booked only six companies from May to

⁷⁷Ibid., Feb. 13, 1907.

⁷⁸Ibid., Feb. 26, 1909.

⁷⁹Interview with Miss Helen Stowell (Miss Stowell has been a resident of Garden City since 1906) Garden City: July 19, 1969. All further reference to statements by Miss Stowell refer to this interview.

⁸⁰Garden City Evening Telegram, June 18--July 20, 1909.

December of 1909 and the local paper wondered if, "movies and Chautauqua had closed the opera house."⁸¹ This rumor was eventually squelched by Burtis with this announcement in the paper.

Manager Burtis of Stevens Opera House says it's all a mistake about the house being closed, and in proof of it cites the fact that the very interesting play, The Man on the Box, by a good company, will be here next Friday night, Dec. 10. This play, from the well known and popular book, is a fine one. Mr. Burtis said bookings have been very hard to land.⁸²

One of the busiest years for the Stevens Opera House was the year 1910. Over fifty events were booked that year. The reason for the increase was the formation of a unique local organization, The Garden City Concert Company. The company was formed in the summer of 1910 and was made up of local amateur musicians. The Garden City Concert Company became a combination orchestra and booking company. Acts, plays, and movies were booked into the opera house by this company and the orchestra played during these acts or during breaks in the performance. Often a free concert was presented outside the opera house before the shows started.

At least fifteen events were booked by this company.⁸³ The idea was doomed financially almost from

⁸¹Ibid., Nov. 24, 1909.

⁸²Ibid., Dec. 10, 1909.

⁸³Ibid., Oct. 5, 1910.

the start. Besides the admissions percentage paid each event, the Garden City Concert Company had to pay Burtis for the use of the opera house. To secure these bookings the company turned to a Kansas City booking house which in turn took a cut of the earnings.⁸⁴ The majority of the events booked turned out to be movies and movies still did not draw well at the opera house. By May 9, 1911, the Garden City Concert Company was out of business.⁸⁵

A second motion picture theatre, the Alamo, was opened May 10, 1910. This false front, open air theatre, was operated by the owners of the Electric Theatre during the hot summer months, another good reason for the prolonged closing of the opera house in the summer.

According to both Mr. P. A. Burtis and Miss Helen Stowell, 1910 was the year in which the most popular play ever presented in the opera house was booked. Stubborn Cinderella was presented on December 10, 1910. The Garden City Evening Telegram had this to say about the show:

People were standing and more wished they could just get in to stand when the curtain went up on Stubborn Cinderella last night. It's only a shame the play was booked for only one night for more of

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., May 10, 1911.

our citizens should get the enjoyment the audience at the Stevens Opera House had last night.⁸⁶

The Galvin Company came to Garden City on October 16, 1911, for a five night stand. The following comments, taken from the Garden City Evening Telegram, give a good insight to some of the elaborate productions being presented on the stage of the Stevens Opera House at this time.

. . . it is metropolitan in every sense of the word. The scenery, a sixty foot car load of it, is the work of the best artist in New York, and the costumes are novel in design, gorgeous in color, and costly in material while the mechanical and electrical effects are more sensational than ever seen outside New York City. The grand finale of the first act of The Bellboy is a big, spectacular, patriotic ensemble number employing the entire strength of the company, and accompanied by a brilliant series of electrical effects that are fairly dazzling in their sensationalism. It is appropriately called The Spirit of Seventy Six. Another great electrical effect that is present in The Man Question is the famous red mill scene introducing Ella Galvin leading a Dutch number from a practical thirty foot, red mill with gorgeously illuminated revolving fans. The company is carrying thirty people and nothing will be repeated during the entire engagement.⁸⁷

Another play booked that year was a play called The Aviator, which promised to present the take off and landing of a real plane on stage during every performance.⁸⁸ This was either a very lucky or very shrewd

⁸⁶Ibid., Dec. 11, 1910.

⁸⁷Ibid., Oct. 18, 1911.

⁸⁸Ibid., Oct. 26, 1911.

booking as the play appeared the same week that Garden City hosted its' first real airplane.

Bad weather was responsible for the most unusual booking at the Stevens Opera House. A bad snow storm stranded a train in Garden City on February 28, 1912. Passengers on the train included the Three Twins Company. The complete story was related in the Garden City Evening Telegram.

One of the pleasures of the stormy week, not only to the storm bound train people whose time dragged idly by, but to townspeople as well, was when Manager Burtis of Stevens persuaded Manager Wade of the Three Twins Company to put the play on at Stevens Tuesday night. It was a fine night; the play was great; the crowd simply jammed the house. Mr. Wade was trying to get to Dodge City with his play, and was on one of the trains stalled here. When he consented to play here, an enthusiastic committee from the trains went through each of the six trains and sold tickets to everyone. At the same time Manager Marsh of the telephone company put one of his operators to work calling up every house in town. The thing was done in a few hours hard work Tuesday afternoon, and a packed house greeted the players. It was a pleasant event.⁸⁹

Burtis leased one of the business areas below the opera house to J. T. Gilman of Lamar, Colorado, on March 2, 1912. Mr. Gilman opened the Edison Theatre there soon after. The Edison Theatre was one of a chain of motion picture theatres operated by Gilman. The theatre offered motion pictures at popular prices,

⁸⁹Ibid., March 1, 1912.

five and ten cents.⁹⁰ This business was short lived, lasting only until December of 1913. Possibly one of the reasons for the quick demise was the opening of the Grand Theatre on October 1, 1913.

The new Grand Theatre was drawing favorable comments by November. The Grand's format of vaudeville acts combined with motion pictures seemed to be a great success, in spite of the fact that Burtis had lost money on the same combination only six years before. The following newspaper article testified to its' success.

The new Grand Theatre gave the public a treat in the way of a novelty musical act last Friday and Saturday and record breaking crowds attended it at every performance. In fact the management had to turn many away for the lack of seats, no standing room being the rule at the Grand Theatre. The management tells us that they will give none but high class refined vaudeville acts at their theatre. This in connection with the mutual moving picture program showing the world's best movies, through the latest flickerless fire proof machine, on a new gold fiber screen just being installed is making the new Grand Theatre very popular. An artistic drop curtain has been put in and the new scenery and footlights will be installed in a few days.⁹¹

Burtis continued to book about the same number of professional touring companies into the opera house despite heavy competition until 1917. Business, however, was not as good and more and more newspaper reviews mentioned poor attendance.

⁹¹Garden City Telegram, November 16, 1913.

The Third Stage, 1918-1929. It seemed almost ironic that in the first year of decline for the Stevens Opera House, the Garden City Telegram should run these comments.

While the movies seem to be on the decline, and the theatre going public are demanding big feature pictures that cost more than the manager of the theatre can pay, or else that he intersperse the picture with vaudeville entertainment, still the drama goes merrily on its way, and the public is coming back to its first love, the good old reliable drama.⁹²

The paper was at least partly correct. The Grand Theatre closed in 1917 probably for the very reasons given in the above article. The Electric Theatre continued, offering a modest one picture a week.

Stock companies made up most of the twenty-three bookings offered by the opera house in 1917. The impact of World War I was felt as four events (only two of which were professional touring companies), were booked in 1918. Both 1919 and 1920 were years of a small comeback for the opera house. Bookings numbered twelve in 1919 and twenty-three in 1920, but it was a short rally before the death of the opera house. Bookings were again, mostly stock companies giving insignificant plays, such as Mutt and Jeff's Dream, Bringing Up Father, and Mutt and Jeff at the Races.

⁹²Ibid., Nov. 16, 1917.

The final blow was struck on March 18, 1921, when the Garden City Theatre opened its door. This was a motion picture theatre offering first run Hollywood productions at popular prices.⁹³ The competition of this well-equipped theatre plus the scarcity of road companies forced the closing of the Stevens Opera House in October of 1921.

Appropriately enough, the last production given in the Stevens Opera House was a unique experiment for the city. The Town Fool was sponsored by local merchants. Three members of the company played the leads and about twenty local citizens played supporting roles. The play was written so that many lines could be pointed at local situations and personalities. The show played to a "packed house."⁹⁴ Miss Stowell, in an interview, stated that she remembered, "many people were worried about whether or not the old building would be safe for that many people."⁹⁵

The opera house was opened only twice in 1922. Both times it was, as Mr. P. A. Burtis said, "just because no place else could be found to house the events."⁹⁶

⁹³Ibid., March 21, 1921.

⁹⁴Ibid., April 2, 1921.

⁹⁵Interview with Miss Stowell.

⁹⁶Interview with P. A. Burtis.

The building was condemned in 1923,⁹⁷ but still used for one church meeting in July in spite of this.⁹⁸

Burtis sold the building in 1928 to J. B. Byers of Denver, Colorado, who immediately leased it to his old friend J. C. Penney.⁹⁹ Penney converted Stevens Opera House for business occupancy that same year and this business is still located there.

The last light had dimmed and though faint applause still rang in the ears of some old-timers, the curtain had fallen on the old Stevens Opera House.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Garden City Telegram, July 9, 1923.

⁹⁹Interview with P. A. Burtis.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

PERFORMANCES GIVEN IN THE STEVENS OPERA HOUSE

The following is a list of productions which were presented in the Stevens Opera House between October 6, 1886 and April 2, 1921. The listing has been compiled from issues of the Sentinel from October 1, 1886 to August 30, 1888; the Herald from October 1, 1886 to April 1, 1890; the Imprint from August 20, 1889 to December 20, 1912, and the Garden City Telegram, from December 10, 1906 to December 31, 1929.

The listing includes each performance reviewed or advertised in the papers. Often news stories mentioned events taking place that were neither advertised or reviewed; these events are also listed.

Each entry will follow the following pattern: first, the event or play title; second, the name of the tour company; third, the names of leading actors or actresses in the company; fourth, any additional information pertaining to the event. The above order will be used throughout the chapter and a division will be omitted when no information is available.

The following key will be used to categorize the events that took place in the Stevens Opera House:

- (A) a local amateur production

- (B) a non-professional traveling company
- (C) a professional traveling company
- (D) a non-theatrical event

One of these appears in front of each entry.

1886

- | | | |
|-------------|-----|---|
| October 6 | (C) | <u>Mikado</u> ;* Andrews Opera Company |
| October 11 | (C) | <u>Forget-me-Not</u> ; Louie Lord Comedy Company |
| October 12 | (C) | <u>Linwood Case</u> ; same company |
| October 13 | (C) | <u>Modern Godiva</u> ; same company |
| October 14 | (D) | Col. Tom Moonlight; Democratic candidate for governor |
| October 14 | (C) | <u>A Member of Congress</u> ; Louie Lord Comedy Company |
| October 15 | (C) | <u>Madcap Peg</u> ; same company |
| October 16 | (C) | <u>Bankers Daughter</u> ; same company |
| November 18 | (D) | Ex-Governor St. John; speech |
| November 22 | (C) | Professor Address Carnival of Novelties Magician |
| November 23 | (C) | Professor Address Carnival of Novelties Magician |
| November 25 | (A) | Ladies Musical Society |
| November 30 | (D) | Temperance Revival, Hughes and Ward |
| December 10 | (C) | <u>Stranglers of Paris</u> ; Frank A. Tannehill Sr. and company |

*Titles of plays presented will be listed as they appeared in the newspapers examined.

1886 (continued)

- December 20 (A) Sequoyah United Mastadon Minstrels
- December 21 (C) Barney's Disguises or A Trip Through The Old Sod
- December 26 (C) Mascott; Casino Opera Company
- December 27 (C) Olivette; same company
- December 28 (C) The Mikado; same company
- December 29 (C) Chimes of Normandy; same company

1887

- January 20 (C) A Cold Day or The Laplanders; Fisher and Hassan's company
- January 27 (C) Swiss Bell Ringers; Will L. Smith
- January 28 (C) Swill Bell Ringers; Will L. Smith
- January 29 (A) Spelling Bee
- February 8 (C) Peck's Bad Boy; J. H. Barnes Company
- February 18 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; McFadden's Company
- February 19 (C) Ten Nights in a Bar Room; Charles Clark's Company
- February 22 (C) The Black Flag; Edwin Thorne's Company
- March 3 (C) Queena; Clair M. Pattee Dramatic Company
- March 4 (C) Queena; same company
- March 5 (C) Queena; same company
- March 7 (C) Georgia Minstrels
- March 16 (C) Martha; Abbott Opera Company; Emma Abbott

1887 (continued)

- March 21 (C) Carnival of Novelties; Elliott and Canaris Company
- March 24 (B) Penelope; Kinsley Church Choir Opera Company, Kinsley, Kansas
- March 28 (C) Shamus O'Brien; W. J. Winterburn Company; Charles Verner
- April 3 (D) Grand Republican Rally
- April 16 (C) The Roman Father; Hudson and O'Neill Company, Frederick Ward
- April 18 (C) Davy Crockett; Edwin Clifford Drama Company
- April 19 (C) Monte Cristo; same company
- April 20 (C) Ingomar the Barbarian; same company
- May 9 (C) Caprice; Maddern and Company; Miss Minnie Maddern
- June 10 (C) Equescirriculum; W. C. Coup's Company
- July 25 (C) Neck and Neck; E. T. Stetson and Company
- July 26 (C) Lady of Lyons; same company
- July 27 (C) Olive Branch; same company
- August 10 (D) D. W. Voorhees; Lecture on Thomas Jefferson
- August 19 (D) Railroad Meeting
- September 1 (A) Charcoal Burner; Garden City Dramatic Association
- September 2 (D) Railroad Meeting
- September 19 (C) Mabel Heart; E. T. Stetson and Company; E. T. Stetson

1887 (continued)

- September 20 (C) Lady of Lyons; same company
- October 3 (C) McKanlass Company; colored specialty
- October 5 (C) The Dropping Snare; Adelaide Russell Company; Adelaide Russell
- October 14 (C) Huge Joke Comedy; Mr. John Thompson
- October 20 (C) Jacquine or Paste and Diamonds; Mattie Vickers Company; Mattie Vickers
- October 21 (C) Cherub; same company
- October 27 (C) Queen; Clair Patee Drama Company
- October 28 (C) Bitter Wrong; same company
- October 29 (C) A Celebrated Case; same company
- October 29 (C) The Upper Ten; same company; matinee
- November 9 (C) Colored Georgia Minstrels; J. J. Holliday Company
- November 10 (C) Colored Georgia Minstrels; same company
- November 18 (C) Swiss Bell Ringers; Will L. Smith
- November 25 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; Gathhold's Big Version
- November 30 (C) In Spite All Day; Minnie Maddern Company; Minnie Maddern
- December 2 (C) A Cold Day or The Laplanders; Singing Comedians Company
- December 14 (C) Carnival of Venice; Emma Abbot Company; Emma Abbot
- December 28 (C) Michael Strogoff; Andrews Company; Atkins Lawrence

1888

- January 13 (C) Billy Arlinton's Famous Minstrels
- January 18 (C) Called Back; Hugh Conway Company
- January 21 (C) Called Back; same company
- February 2 (A) Musical Show; local talent
- February 20 (C) The Count of Monte Cristo; Horace Lewis Company; Horace Lewis
- February 22 (A) Sentinel Band; local band
- March 23 (C) Fred and Queen; Samul Rosen Company
- March 24 (C) Miss Emic Lascelles; same company
- April 3 (C) L'Eclair; Kate Bensbury English Opera Company; Kate Bensbury
- April 4 (C) L'Eclair; same company
- April 10 (A) Ladies Musical Society; local talent
- May 2 (C) Frou Frou; M'ille Rhea Company; M'ille Rhea
- May 12 (C) The Rajah; Madison Square Company
- May 17 (B) Mexican Military Band
- June 11 (A) Young Ladies Guild of Episcopal Church
- June 25 (C) Richard III; Frederick Warren Company; Frederick Warren
- July 9 (C) Patty Warrell Company; Irene Warrell
- July 10 (C) McLiss; same company
- July 11 (C) Little Ferret; same company
- July 12 (C) Streets of New York; same company
- July 13 (C) Stricken Blind; same company
- July 14 (C) Luncky Ranch; same company

1888 (continued)

- July 23 (C) Escaped from the Law; A. R. Wilbers
Company of Comedians
- July 24 (C) Three Wives to One Husband; same
company
- September 12 (C) Around the World in 80 Days; Marshall
Company
- September 25 (C) Plum Pudding; Plum Pudding Company
- October 12 (C) Ranch King; Jos. D. Clifton's Ranch
King Company
- October 13 (C) Myrtelle Firns; same company
- October 19 (C) Dad's Boy; Eunice Goodrich Company;
Eunice Goodrich
- October 20 (C) Wanted a Husband; same company
- October 20 (C) Cinderella; same company; matinee

1889

- May 12 (D) Hon. D. C. Bridges; lecture
- May 16 (A) Deestriect Skule; local play
- May 23 (D) High School Closing Exercises
- May 24 (C) Montezuma; R. E. French Company
- May 25 (C) Lend Me Five Shillings; same company
- May 26 (C) Davey Crockett; same company
- May 29 (A) Naval Engagements; Gem Dramatic Club;
local play
- July 17 (D) Exposition Meeting
- July 30 (C) Goodyear Cook and Dillson's Minstrels
- August 29 (D) Noble Prentis; lecture

1889 (continued)

- October 19 (C) Davy Crockett; Frank Mayo and Company; Frank Mayo
- October 26 (C) East Lynne; Charlotte Thompson Company; Charlotte Thompson
- November 9 (C) Keep It Dark; George Hosys Company
- November 25 (D) Gilmore Band
- November 29 (C) Kerry Gow; Buffalo Academy Company
- December 16 (C) Around the World in Eighty Days; Fleming Company
- December 20 (C) A Bunch of Keys; Louise Raymond Company

1890

- March 31 (D) Democratic Party Meeting
- April 1 (C) Out of Bondage; Hyers Sisters Comedy Company
- April 25 (C) The World; Little Drama Company
- May 17 (D) High School Graduation
- May 21 (C) Said Pasha
- May 23 (D) Miss Ida C. Clothier; WCTU lecture
- August 29 (C) Professor Frank Robinson
- September 15 (C) McCabe and Youngs Minstrels
- September 22 (D) Col. Stone; lecture
- October 2 (D) Charles Robinson; political speech
- October 13 (D) Col. Stone; lecture
- October 22 (D) Democratic Meeting Rally
- October 23 (C) Aamold Concert Company

1890 (continued)

- November 10 (C) Only a Farmer's Daughter; Grace Hezlep Company
- November 11 (C) Passion's Slave; same company
- November 27 (A) The Congress of 1,900; Ruthear Society
- December 12 (D) "That Foreign Immigration Should Be Prohibited;" High School Debate
- December 25 (C) Swedish Quartet Concert Company

1891

- January 15 (C) McKanlass Specialty Company
- February 3 (C) Heywood Concert Company
- February 13 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; McFadden's Company
- March 27 (C) Si Plunkard; J. D. Lewis Company
- April 2 (D) Temperance Meeting
- April 22 (C) Marion Lowell Company
- April 23 (A) Musical and Dramatic Entertainment
- April 27 (C) The Wedyer Quartette
- May 6 (A) The Champion of Her Sex; local play
- May 22 (D) High School Commencement
- June 11 (D) Professor Jennings; lecture
- June 25 (A) Rebecca's Triumph; local play
- June 27 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin
- June 30 (D) Children's Aid Society Entertainment
- July 4 (A) Rebecca's Triumph; local play
- July 17 (C) Oliver Novelty Company

1891 (continued)

- July 18 (C) Oliver Novelty Company
- October 7 (C) A Legal Document; Beebe Barbour Opera Company
- October 8 (C) She; same company
- October 17 (C) Turner's English Burlesque and Vaudeville Company
- November 6 (C) Shulty Colored Specialty Company
- November 13 (C) Lost in London; Newton Beers Company
- December 15 (A) The Colored Cyclone Jubilee Company; local talent
- December 21 (A) The Flower of the Family; Shoe String Dramatic Company; local talent
- December 22 (C) Enoch Arden; Newton Beers Company
- December 24 (A) Esmeralda; local play
- December 25 (A) Esmeralda; local play
- December 31 (A) Local Musical Show

1892

- January 15 (C) The Marty; Golden Troupe
- January 16 (C) The Marty; same company
- January 30 (C) Richard and Pringle's Minstrels
- February 2 (C) The Noss Family
- February 12 (C) Wanted, The Earth; John Dillon Company
- February 16 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; Suttons Grand Double Company
- February 20 (A) The Streets of New York; Shoe String Dramatic Company; local talent

1892 (continued)

- April 2 (A) Nevada or The Lost Mine; Esmeralda Dramatic Company; local talent
- April 6 (C) Sanford Peerless Company; musical group
- April 9 (A) The Boston Dip; Esmeralda Dramatic Company; local talent
- April 16 (C) Professor Vitale's Family Concert Company
- May 22 (C) Duncan Clark's Female Minstrels
- May 23 (C) The Diamond Mystery; McCutcheon and Cooley Company
- May 24 (C) The Diamond Mystery; same company
- May 25 (C) The Diamond Mystery; same company
- May 30 (A) The Confederate Spy; Shoe String Dramatic Company; local talent
- July 4 (A) Jedediah Judkins; Shoe String Dramatic Company; local talent
- August 20 (D) Republican Rally; F. B. Dawes, speaker
- September 23 (C) The Counters; Mrs. General Tom Thumb Company
- October 19 (D) Jerry Simpson; lecture
- November 5 (D) Senator B. W. Perkins
- November 22 (A) Mother Goose; local talent
- December 3 (C) Long Brothers Parlor Circus Canine Wonders
- December 9 (C) Peck's Bad Boy and His Pa; Griffen and Wilson Company
- December 14 (C) Skipped by the Light of the Moon; Alba Heywood Company

1892 (continued)

- December 15 (C) Edgewood Folks; same company
 December 22 (B) Kansas University Glee Club
 December 29 (A) Down by the Sea; local talent

1893

- January 26 (C) Beebe Barbour Company
 January 28 (A) Down by the Sea; local talent
 January 31 (C) Richard and Pringle's Minstrel Company
 February 2 (A) A Manager's Troubles; local talent
 February 18 (C) Our German Word; Middaugh's Musical Comedy Company
 February 23 (C) Professor Borton; Phonograph Concert
 March 4 (A) McSnath's Bad Break; local talent
 March 6 (C) Major Peck; Carrie Tutein Company
 March 11 (A) Grand Musicale; local talent
 April 20 (C) The Fireman's Word; Barnard Brown Company
 May 1 (C) Octoroon; Bradball Comedy Company
 May 2 (C) Uncle Daniel; same company
 May 3 (C) Burr Oaks; same company
 May 4 (C) Our Dorothy; same company
 May 5 (C) Bitsy Brunette; same company
 May 6 (C) Only a Woman's Heart; same company
 May 25 (D) High School Graduation
 May 28 (D) G. A. R. Memorial Service

1893 (continued)

- June 3 (C) The Pond; Weber Comedy Company
- June 4 (C) The Woods; same company
- June 5 (C) The City; same company
- October 6 (C) Romeo and Juliet; Adelaide Moore's London Company; Adelaide Moore
- November 7 (D) Rep. Sutton; speech
- December 9 (C) Two Bad Boys; Great Show Company
- December 26 (A) Crawford's Claim; Garden City Drama Club

1894

- February 17 (A) Under the Spell; local talent
- March 17 (A) Ladies Musical; local talent
- April 12 (A) Band Concert
- April 18 (C) The Woodmen
- April 26 (D) Miss Moy Howard and Company; Spiritualism
- May 4 (D) High School Commencement
- May 30 (D) Decoration Day Exercises
- June 1 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; Grisworld Company
- June 14 (C) C. Blackmore; humorist
- August 6 (D) Chester L. Long; speech
- October 9 (A) A Kettle of Fish; Shoe String Dramatic Club; local talent
- October 13 (D) Chester L. Long; speech
- October 14 (D) Jerry Simpson; speech

1894 (continued)

- October 23 (D) Laura Johns; speech on suffrage
- October 27 (C) Frost and Freeze; Eunice Goodrich Company
- November 19 (C) The Fast Mail; Lincoln J. Carter Company
- November 24 (C) On the Potomac; Ellis Brothers Drama Company
- November 25 (C) Five Sacks of Flour; same company
- December 6 (A) Ladies Musical; local talent
- December 24 (A) Christmas Show; local talent

1895

- January 3 (A) Sentinel Band Concert
- February 7 (A) Ye Olden Times; local talent
- March 9 (A) Placer Gold; local talent
- April 9 (C) The Gold Cure; Americus Opera Company
- April 27 (B) Spanish Orchestra
- May 26 (D) Memorial Day Services
- May 28 (D) High School Commencement
- June 30 (D) Temperance Meeting
- August 10 (A) Singing Class Concert
- October 18 (C) The Old Tennessee
- October 30 (C) A Chase for a Wife; Stetson's Comedians
- November 4 (D) Republican Rally
- November 14 (C) Heywood Concert Company

1895 (continued)

- November 30 (A) The Lightning Rod Agent; local talent
 December 19 (C) As You Like It; Effie Ellsler Company

1896

- January 17 (C) Chicago Ladies Quartette; G. L. Miller
 Company
 February 18 (D) G. A. R. Post Entertainment
 February 19 (C) Alpine Concert Company
 March 6 (C) The Schubert Quartette
 March 7 (C) The Schubert Quartette
 March 8 (C) The Schubert Quartette
 May 11 (D) N. K. Griggs; Minister to Germany
 under Garfield; lecture
 June 20 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; Dick P. Sutton's
 Double Mammoth Company
 June 22 (C) A Farmer in the City; same company
 June 28 (D) High School Commencement
 June 30 (B) Cooper Quartette; Cooper College,
 Sterling, Kansas
 July 4 (A) Her Girls in Camp; Garden City Young
 Ladies Theatrical Company
 August 15 (D) Republican Rally; Chester I. Long,
 speaker
 September 12 (D) I. R. Burton; orator
 October 9 (C) A Southerner Never Shows the White
 Feather; Thaddeus Perkins
 October 28 (D) Rev. Grant; colored orator
 Nov. 12 (C) The Buckeye; Pringle Company

1896 (continued)

- November 13 (C) The Buckeye; Pringle Company
 November 14 (C) The Buckeye; same company
 November 30 (C) Kempton Komedý Company; James Kempton
 December 1 (C) Kempton Komedý Company; same company
 December 2 (C) Kempton Komedý Company; same company

1897

- January 19 (A) Pilgrim Progress; local talent
 February 21 (C) George W. Oles, violinist
 February 25 (C) Arion Ladies Quartette
 April 7 (C) Spartacus; Magenbals and Kemper Company; Louis James
 May 7 (D) High School Commencement
 May 22 (A) The King's Daughters; Misses Dramatic Club; local talent
 May 29 (A) Spy of Gettysburg; Military Company; local talent
 June 12 (A) Engaged; Misses Dramatic Company, local talent
 June 19 (C) Mrs. Ida Gray Scott; singer
 July 1 (A) Not the Miner's Daughter or What One Cup of Wine Did; Alpine Company; local talent
 July 17 (A) The Executor or Grandfather's Mistake; Historionic Society; local talent
 July 31 (A) Captured, The Old Maid's Triumph; Historionic Society; local talent
 August 21 (A) The Showman's Word; Historionic Society, local talent

1897 (continued)

- September 3 (A) Dot the Miner's Daughter or One Glass of Wine
- September 20 (A) The Cheerful Liar; Historionic Society
- September 21 (A) The Executor; same company
- September 22 (A) The Showman's Word; same company
- September 23 (A) Captured; same company
- September 24 (A) The Cheerful Liar; same company
- November 15 (C) Stricken Blind; Edna Mae Forshay Comedy Company; Gus Rapier, Norton Heath
- November 16 (C) German Hero; same company
- November 17 (C) Dick; same company
- November 18 (C) Tressa; same company
- November 19 (C) Liza, Where is You; same company
- November 29 (D) George Kennan; lecture
- December 27 (C) East Lynn; Edna Paige Company; Edna Paige, Charles Harrison
- December 28 (C) Play unknown; same company
- December 29 (C) Play unknown; same company
- December 30 (C) Play unknown; same company
- December 31 (C) Play unknown; same company

1898

- January 1 (C) Play unknown; same company
- February 19 (A) The Sweet Family; The Cemetery Club
- February 23 (C) Richards and Pringles, Rusco and Holland's Minstrels

1898 (continued)

- April 29 (A) Shubert Lady Quartette
- May 9 (C) George's Operatic Colored Minstrels,
and The Georgia University Graduates;
Al Watts, Jack Oliver, James White,
John Pamplin
- May 21 (D) High School Commencement
- May 29 (D) Memorial Services
- May 30 (D) Memorial Services
- September 1 (C) Kempton Komedy Kompany and Wonderful
Magniscope
- September 2 (C) Kempton Komedy Kompany and Wonderful
Magniscope
- September 3 (C) Kempton Komedy Kompany and Wonderful
Magniscope; matinee
- September 12 (C) Variety Show; Charles Harrison Drama-
tic Company
- September 13 (C) Variety Show; same company
- September 14 (C) Variety Show; same company
- September 15 (C) Variety Show; same company
- October 4 (D) Senator Baker; speech
- October 21 (C) Si Perkins Company; Sam J. Burton,
Lillian Coleman
- November 7 (D) Republican Rally; Mrs. J. Ellen
Foster, speaker
- December 12 (C) George W. Oles; violinist

1899

- February 4 (C) Rip Van Winkle; Charles Harrison
Dramatic Company

1899 (continued)

- February 5 (C) Captain Racket; Charles Harrison Dramatic Company; Louise Fierce and Beatrice Thorne
- February 6 (C) Play unknown; same company
- February 7 (C) Play unknown; same company
- February 8 (C) Play unknown; same company
- February 9 (C) Play unknown; same company
- February 13 (C) German American Vaudevilles; May Floyds, The Keatons, Parisian Dancers, Brooks and Floyd, Oliver Sisters, Guy Oliver, The Colbys, Master Frank, Miss Beryl, Dr. Clark, The Doctors, Corney Brooks; three week engagement
- March 4 (C) The Gentlemen Burglar; same company
- March 20 (C) The South Before the War; The South Before the War Company; Mr. Martell
- May 20 (D) Republican County Convention
- June 10 (D) Brigadier Henry Stillwell; Salvation Army
- July 4 (C) Grand Musical Concert; George Abram Smith assisted by local talent
- July 15 (D) Sam Jones; lecture
- August 26 (D) Governor Stanley; lecture
- November 16 (C) Oliver Scott's Big Minstrel Carnival
- December 11 (C) Man and Master; Curtis Comedy Company; Mr. S. M. Curtis and Miss Victore Harrison
- December 12 (C) Play unknown; same company
- December 13 (C) Play unknown; same company
- December 14 (C) Play unknown; same company

1900

- January 13 (D) Rev. Stauber; lecture
- February 3 (A) Minstrel Show
- March 24 (D) Republican County Convention
- March 28 (C) Herminie or The Cross of Gold; Mathes Comedy Company; John Robish, Clara Mathes
- March 29 (C) Shadows of a Great City; same company
- March 30 (C) Brown's in Town; same company
- March 31 (C) Purely Personal; same company
- April 24 (C) Wrights' Original Nashville Students; Gideon Company
- May 2 (D) High School Commencement
- May 17 (C) Craig-Way Stock Company; Marie Barborka
- May 18 (C) Same company
- May 19 (C) Same company
- May 30 (A) Ladies Minstrel Show
- July 4 (A) National Female Minstrel Show
- September 27 (D) Fred Smith; lecture
- September 30 (D) I. E. Lambert; speech
- October 27 (D) W. W. Fisher; colored orator
- October 29 (C) A Man of Mystery; Leary and Hagan Company; Forest Flood and Lillian Burkhart
- November 5 (D) Republican Rally; James Troutman, speaker
- November 11 (D) George Kirkpatrick; temperance lecture

1900 (continued)

December 20 (C) Beach and Bowers Minstrels

1901

January 12 (C) Hottest Coon in Dixie

February 2 (C) Tom Thumb Minstrels

February 6 (C) My Daughter's Husband; Dan Sherman

February 9 (C) New Railroad Jack; New Railroad Jack Company

March 6 (C) Si Plunkard; Mr. J. C. Lewis, Dora Page, and Felix Smart

March 16 (C) Knoles O'Tennessee

April 2 (C) Il Trovatore; Andrews Opera Company

April 29 (D) High School Commencement

May 14 (C) Held by the Enemy; Homestead Company

May 30 (A) Professor Pinkerton; Cemetery Club

July 4 (A) Queen Esther; D. R. Hill, director

August 19 (C) Crust of Society; Ella Grosjean and company

August 20 (C) Silver Star; same company

August 21 (C) Nell Gwynne; same company

August 22 (C) Woman in Red; same company

August 23 (C) Under Two Flags; same company

August 24 (C) An Innocent Sinner; same company

November 30 (C) A Home Spun Heart

December 20 (C) Too Rich to Marry

1902

- January 2 (C) The Pretty Persian; Boston Ideal Company
- April 12 (C) Romeo and Juliet; Miss Francesca Lafayette and C. J. Tyler
- April 13 (C) Hamlet; same company
- April 23 (C) The Other Peoples Money; Hennesey Leroye
- May 14 (C) A Hoosier Daisy; Miss Bessie Clifton and Company
- May 19 (C) Embassy Ball; Noble Dramatic Company
- May 20 (C) play unknown; same company
- May 21 (C) play unknown; same company
- May 22 (C) play unknown; same company
- May 23 (C) play unknown; same company
- May 24 (C) play unknown; same company
- September 6 (C) The Denver Express; Holden Brothers Company
- September 30 (C) A Chicago Tramp
- October 15 (C) Woman Against Woman; Lillian Hale Emery
- October 31 (C) The Hottest Coon in Dixie; Billy Miller
- December 4 (C) McCarthy's Mishaps; Ferguson and Mack
- December 10 (C) The Convict's Daughter; Specially Selected Company

1903

- January 12 (C) For Her Sake; E. J. Carpenter Company

1903 (continued)

- January 14 (C) Schubert Symphony Club and Lady Quartette
- February 2 (C) A Little Outcast; The Original New York Company
- February 13 (C) The Telephone Girl
- February 17 (C) Eva Bartlett Macey Entertainers
- February 23 (D) Byron W. King; orator
- February 26 (C) Said Pasha; Olympia Opera Company; Edward Eagleton, E. F. Seamans, and Lucille DeVoll
- March 2 (D) Ash Davis; cartoonist artist
- March 4 (C) Resurrection; Aiden Benedict Company
- March 26 (C) Davy Crockett; Ed Redmond Company; Edmond Redmond
- April 13 (C) The Sleeping Beauty; Thurston Stock Company
- April 14 (C) My Uncle from New York; same company
- April 15 (C) The Pulse of Greater New York; same company
- April 20 (D) Professor John B. DeMott; lecture
- April 28 (D) High School Commencement
- June 10 (D) Byron W. King; orator
- June 18 (C) Ed Redmond Company
- June 19 (C) same company
- June 20 (C) same company
- July 4 (A) Open entertainment; Cemetery Club
- August 3 (C) A Wicked Woman; Lyceum Stock Company

1903 (continued)

- August 4 (C) In Arkansaw; Lyceum Stock Company
 August 5 (C) play unknown; same company
 August 6 (C) play unknown; same company
 August 7 (C) play unknown; same company
 August 8 (C) play unknown; same company
 November 12 (D) Mr. Albert Armstrong; lecture
 December 28 (D) Band Concert

1904

- January 5 (D) Band Concert
 January 13 (C) Richards and Pringles Famous Georgia Minstrels; S. H. Dudley and Jim Jackson
 January 19 (D) Dr. A. W. Quayle; lecture on Hamlet
 February 18 (C) Jolly's Jolly Side of Life; Franklin Pierce Jolly
 February 22 (D) Washington Exercises
 February 25 (C) Slayton Jubilee Singers
 April 9 (D) Grand Band and Orchestra Concert
 April 27 (D) High School Commencement
 May 30 (D) Memorial Services
 June 14 (C) Tom Thumb Company
 June 21 (D) Common School Commencement
 June 28 (D) Robert J. Burdett; lecture
 June 30 (D) Elecution Contest
 August 23 (C) Lyceum Stock Company

1904 (continued)

- August 24 (C) Lyceum Stock Company
- August 25 (C) same company
- August 26 (C) same company
- August 27 (C) same company
- September 23 (C) Rip Van Winkle; Eilders Company
- October 17 (C) Mahora's Big Minstrel Carnival
- October 29 (D) Republican Meeting
- December 5 (C) J. H. Balmer's Kaffir Boy Choir
- December 13 (D) Col. George Bain; lecture
- December 15 (D) Spillman Riggs; lecture
- December 18 (C) Hans Hanson; James T. McAlphin

1905

- January 5 (D) Mrs. Bertha Kunz; lecture
- January 19 (C) Marten Family; Samuel S. Partello Company
- February 6 (D) Mr. William Sterling Battis; lecture
- March 9 (C) The Hills of California; Frank Bacon
- March 20 (C) A Country Politician; Keller-Caldwell Stock Company
- March 21 (C) The Page and the Knight; same company
- March 22 (C) Make the World go Round; same company
- April 10 (D) Bigley's Band
- April 11 (D) George W. Ellis; lecture
- April 15 (C) Alphouse and Gaston; Mathews and Ashely, comedians

1905 (continued)

- April 20 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; John F. Stowes Company
- April 29 (A) Ladies Quartet Concert
- May 5 (C) A Modern Othello; The Campbell Scotch Specialty Company
- May 6 (C) A Modern Othello; same company
- May 30 (A) Merchant of Venice; Senior class play
- June 3 (D) High School Commencement
- August 11 (C) Miss America; Irma Opera Company; Emma Abbott DeBold
- September 25 (C) Home and Honor; Keller Stock Company; Miss Alma Keller
- September 26 (C) The Dollar; same company
- September 27 (C) Cute; same company
- September 28 (C) Hopeless Case; same company
- September 29 (C) I'm the Boy; same company
- October 28 (C) Si Plunkard; J. C. Lewis Company

1906

- January 30 (D) George W. Bain; lecture
- February 6 (C) Richard and Pringles Famous Georgia Minstrels
- February 19 (C) Dorna Thorne; Rowland and Clifford Company; Miss Cuba Niblo
- March 1 (C) Whitney Brothers Quartette
- March 8 (B) Bigley's Military Band

1906 (continued)

- March 14 (C) Parsifal, Il Trovatore, Carmen, and Faust; National Grand Opera Company; J. F. Knehne, Duchess Gertrude Dudley and M'lle Antoinette Conterenie; scenes from these operas were presented
- March 30 (C) The Missouri Girl; Fred Raymond Company; Bessie Clifton and G. Harris Eldon
- April 6 (C) Trip to Egypt
- May 19 (C) Polmatier Sisters
- May 25 (A) All the Comforts of Home; senior class play
- July 14 (D) Buffalo Jones; lecture and exhibit of pictures
- July 14 (D) Buffalo Jones; matinee
- July 23 (C) Famous Georgia Minstrels
- October 15 (C) My Friend Arkansaw; Mr. Sherman
- October 17 (C) Midland Jubilee Singers
- October 19 (D) Marvin Williams; lecture
- October 20 (A) Outris Meeting
- October 20 (D) Congressman Curtis; lecture
- November 6 (C) The Palace of Alladin; Hi Henry's Greatest Minstrels
- November 19 (C) Two Merry Tramps; Wood and Ward, comedians
- November 22 (C) A Mad Love; Edward R. Salter Company; Maretta Smart
- December 20 (C) The Holy City; LeComte and Flesher Company; Luella Morey

1906 (continued)

- December 27 (C) The Royal Slave; H. E. Humphrey Company; Mae McDonald
- December 29 (C) Wilburr Starr Company; Rudolph Hunt, Adelaide Lynam, Mr. And Mrs. Wilburr Starr
- December 31 (C) The Little Homestead; William McCauley

1907

- January 11 (C) The Kings of Tramps; Victor Faust
- January 17 (C) Railroad Jack; Lewis B. Choist Company; Chris Nelson
- January 26 (D) Fred Emerson Brooks; humorist
- January 29 (C) A Messenger Boy; George D. Sweet Company
- February 2 (D) Dr. Dent Atkinson; lecture
- February 8 (C) As Told in the Hills; F. W. Mann Company
- February 13 (C) Romeo and Juliet; Sanford Dodge Company; Sanford Dodge and Louise Marshall
- February 14 (C) Damon and Pythias; same company
- February 25 (C) Mahora's Minstrels Carnival
- March 9 (C) The Mikado; Boston Ideal Opera Company; A. C. Burgess
- March 14 (C) The Convict's Daughter; Metropolitan Production Company
- March 25 (C) A Prince of His Race; Edwin Barrie Company, Oscar Graham
- March 26 (C) Nebraska; same company
- March 27 (C) A Broken Heart; same company

1907 (continued)

- March 28 (C) The Pet of the Circle C. Ranch; Edwin Barrie Company
- March 29 (C) Down Where the Cotton Blossoms Grow; same company
- April 3 (C) The Player
- April 9 (C) The Fast Mail; Lincoln J. Carter
- April 13 (D) H. W. Campbell; speaker
- April 14 (C) Jerry from Kerry; Patten and Fletcher Company
- April 17 (C) Nettie the News Girl; Isabelle Lowe
- April 25 (C) Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; Wrights Company; Frederic Rella
- April 27 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; Burk's Company
- April 30 (C) The Banker's Child; Harry Shannon Company
- May 10 (D) J. R. Burton; lecture
- May 13 (A) May Festival
- May 23 (A) A Night Off; senior class play
- May 24 (D) High School Commencement
- June 7 (C) Scott Sisters Concert Quartette
- June 25 (C) A. G. Allen's United Minstrel Show
- June 26 (C) A. G. Allen's United Minstrel Show
- June 28 (C) Ben Hur; R. H. Waldraths Company
- July 18 (C) Big White All American Minstrel Show
- August 26 (C) Bradshaw Huston Vaudeville Company; also moving pictures and illustrated songs

1907 (continued)

- August 28 (C) Bradshaw Huston Vaudeville Company; also moving pictures and illustrated songs
- August 29 (C) same company
- August 30 (C) same company
- August 31 (C) same company
- September 10 (C) Woman Against Woman; Hollingsworth Twins Company
- October 8 (C) Uncle Josh Sprucely Company
- October 10 (C) Lyric Glee Club
- October 14 (C) The Village Vagabond; Robert Sherman Company
- October 19 (C) Old Arkansaw; Fred Raymond Company
- October 24 (C) The Little Minister
- October 30 (C) Girl of the Streets; Miss Berna Reinhardt and Vera Ludlow
- November 19 (D) Dr. Austin DeBlois; lecture
- November 25 (C) Prince of Patches; Goldie Cole Stock Company
- November 26 (C) Midland Route; same company
- November 27 (C) The Lighthouse Robbery; same company
- November 28 (C) Yale Yale; same company
- December 5 (C) Don't Tell My Wife
- December 11 (C) Wizard of Wall Street; Edwin Patterson Company; Phyllis Day

1908

- January 4 (C) Blind Boone Concert Company

1908 (continued)

- January 11 (C) The Show Girl; J. P. Goring Company; Lillie Sutherland, Grace Wilson, Rose Wilson and Rose Langdon
- January 20 (C) Missouri Girl
- January 25 (C) Thorns and Orange Blossoms
- February 5 (C) Ma's New Husband
- February 8 (C) Uncle Josh Perkins; H. H. Frazee Company
- February 12 (A) Held by the Enemy
- February 13 (A) Held by the Enemy
- February 19 (C) A Millionaire Tramp
- March 4 (C) The Holy City; LeComte and Flesher Company; Luella Morley
- March 9 (C) Why Girls Leave Home; E. J. Carpenter Company
- March 19 (C) The District Leader; Frank J. Sardam Company; Miss Ethel Dovey and Mr. Fred Truesdell
- April 9 (C) The Denver Express; Holden Brothers
- April 25 (C) A College Boy; Ralph Riggs
- May 1 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin
- May 8 (A) Band and Orchestra Concert
- May 21 (D) High School Commencement
- May 21 (D) Grade School Exercises; afternoon
- May 30 (A) Esmerelda
- June 14 (D) Senator J. L. Bristow; speech
- June 29 (D) Christian Science Lecture

1908 (continued)

- July 8 (D) Former Governor W. J. Bailey and Cyrus Leland, Jr., candidate for governor; speeches
- July 18 (A) Uncle Zeke
- September 10 (A) Library Benefit Concert
- September 29 (D) Henry McMillen; candidate for lieutenant governor; speech
- October 12 (D) J. D. Botkin, candidate for governor, and Samuel I. Hale, running for Congress; speeches
- October 24 (D) Senator Curtis; speech
- October 28 (C) Jane Eyre; Rowand and Clifford Company; Miss Dorothy Turner
- November 6 (C) Cat and Fiddle; Cat and Fiddle Company; Charles A. Sellon and Jennie ElMore
- November 26 (C) Mascotte; Boston Ideal Opera Company; Lillian Shattuck, Burgis Brothers, and Ed L. Weston
- November 27 (D) Dr. Thomas E. Green; lecture
- December 28 (C) The Night of the Play; Kathryn Osterman

1909

- January 6 (C) Ma's New Husband; Harry Scott Company
- January 12 (C) Hans an' Nix; Dixon and Bernard
- January 18 (D) The Floyds; magicians
- January 23 (C) The Flaming Arrow; Lincoln J. Carter Company
- January 28 (A) Little Buckshot

1909 (continued)

- January 29 (A) Little Buckshot
- February 4 (C) Don't Tell My Wife
- February 7 (D) William H. Lee; evangelist
- February 26 (C) Faust; Sanford Dodge Company; Louise Marshall and George E. Somms
- March 2 (C) All on the Quiet; Ralph Riggs Company
- March 10 (C) Hallowell Harp Orchestra
- March 19 (C) The Farmer's Daughter
- March 25 (C) A Knight for a Day; Eugene Moulan and Elsie Herbert
- April 12 (C) A Bachelor's Honeymoon; Alice DeLane
- May 17 (C) Damon and Pythias
- May 18 (C) Damon and Pythias
- September 23 (C) Uncle Josh Jenkins; Dave Derden and Clyde Long
- September 30 (C) The Funny Fellows of New York; John Thompson; one man show
- October 9 (C) The Wolf; Sam S. and Lee Schulerb Company
- October 12 (A) Down in Dixie; Garden City Dramatic Club
- October 13 (A) Down in Dixie; same company
- October 21 (C) Enderly Windsor Company
- December 10 (C) The Man on the Box; New York Company
- December 21 (A) The Charcoal Burner; Garden City Dramatic Club
- December 22 (A) The Charcoal Burner; same company

1910

- January 17 (C) A Girl at the Helm; Billy Clifford and Marguerite DeVorin
- January 31 (C) Faust; Porter and White Company; Frederick J. Wilson
- February 3 (C) The House of One Thousand Candles
- March 1 (C) The Flower of the Ranch
- April 9 (C) St. Elmo
- April 9 (C) St. Elmo; matinee
- April 28 (C) Held for Ransom; James Keene Vaudeville; James Keene and Anita Morretti
- May 12 (C) The Alaskan; William P. Cullen Company; Gus Weinbury
- September 2 (C) Mildred; Ida Weston Rae
- September 12 (C) David Garrack; Gilmore Brown Company; Sir Charles Wyndham, E. A. Southern, E. S. Willard, and Walter Whiteside
- September 14 (C) Romeo and Juliet; same company
- September 17 (C) The Lamb; Sone Company
- September 17 (C) The Sculptures Dream; same company; matinee
- September 21 (C) Eckert Family Concert Company
- September 22 (C) Eckert Family Concert Company
- October 6 (C) Sid; Garden City Concert Company
- October 10 (C) The Time The Place and The Girl; George Ebnar
- October 14 (C) The House of One Thousand Candles; Miss Clark
- October 15 (C) E. J. Stevens, clown; Garden City Concert Company

1910 (continued)

- October 20 (C) Vaudeville and Comedy Acts; Billy Weaver; moving pictures
- October 21 (C) same company
- October 22 (C) same company
- October 27 (C) Musical Springers; moving pictures; Garden City Concert Company
- October 28 (C) Professor Morris; Garden City Concert Company
- November 1 (D) Democratic Rally; Col. W. F. Sapp
- November 2 (C) LeRoy and Diamond, comedy artists; moving pictures; Garden City Concert Company
- November 3 (C) Cavanaugh and Lancaster; pictures and illustrated songs; Garden City Concert Company
- November 4 (C) same company
- November 5 (D) Judge William H. Thompson; speech
- November 8 (C) Honeymoon Trail
- November 10 (C) Lucky Tull's Dog Circus; moving pictures; Garden City Concert Company
- November 15 (D) Johnson and Jeffries; fight picture
- November 16 (C) Richard and Pringles Famous Georgia Minstrels
- November 17 (C) The Funny Welches; moving pictures; Garden City Concert Company
- November 18 (C) The Phelps; moving pictures; Garden City Concert Company
- November 19 (C) same company
- November 22 (C) Vagabond's Wife; Morey Stock Company

1910 (continued)

- November 23 (C) The End of the Trail; Morey Stock Company
- November 24 (C) The Singing Girl; same company
- November 25 (C) play unknown; same company
- November 26 (C) play unknown; same company
- November 26 (C) play unknown; same company; matinee
- November 28 (C) Graustark; Princess Yotive, Gene LaMotte; Atkins Lawrence, Alfred Swenson and Lorle Palmer
- December 1 (C) Bunker and Allen, impersonators; moving pictures; Garden City Concert Company
- December 2 (C) same company
- December 3 (C) same company
- December 5 (C) Senor LeRoy and Jugglers; Garden City Concert Company
- December 6 (C) same company
- December 7 (C) same company
- December 10 (C) A Stubborn Cinderella; Lillian Goldsmith

1911

- January 24 (C) Isle of Spice; F. A. Wade Company; Bobbie Woolsey and Jack Leslie
- January 31 (C) Girls; Clyed Fitch's Comedy
- February 9 (C) Along the Keenebec
- February 16 (C) The Traveling Salesman; Henry B. Harris Company; Diana Hunke
- March 1 (C) The Flirting Princess; Harry Bulger

1911 (continued)

- March 10 (C) A Busy Show; Jack Darling and Marie Earle
- March 16 (C) Miss Virginia Listermann and Harold Henry; music concert
- April 5 (C) Bachelor's Honeymoon; Gilson and Bradfield Company; Dwight A. Meade
- April 7 (C) The Popular Minstrels; Ben Simonds and Liza Jackson
- April 8 (C) same company
- April 19 (A) Polly of the Circus; Cemetery Club
- April 20 (D) Rev. U. P. Ewing; lecture
- April 21 (D) Rev. U. P. Ewing; lecture
- May 1 (C) The Climax; The United Play Company; Joseph M. Weber
- May 9 (D) A. W. Wyndham; lecture on Panama Canal; Garden City Concert Company
- May 11 (C) J. M. Busby's Colored Minstrel Show
- May 17 (A) Mose; senior class play
- May 18 (A) Mose; senior class play
- May 30 (D) Memorial Services
- September 20 (C) The Tyranny of Tears; The Associate Managers; Gilmore Brown
- September 22 (C) Ten Nights in a Bar Room; Elders Production
- September 27 (C) Old Theocaldi; violinist
- October 7 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; Burks Company
- October 16 (C) The Man Question; John and Ella Galvin Company

1911 (continued)

- October 17 (C) The Bellboy; John and Ella Galvin Company
- October 18 (C) Zira From Turkey; same company
- October 19 (C) Little Miss Mixup; same company
- October 20 (C) The Two Masqueradoes; same company
- October 23 (D) Norwood; hypnotist
- October 24 (D) Norwood; hypnotist
- October 25 (D) Norwood; hypnotist
- October 26 (C) The Aviator; Trousdale Brothers
- October 27 (C) Slaves of the Orient; Spence Theatre Company; Loraine Spence and Frank L. Redner
- November 16 (C) Life Portrayals; William Battis, one man show; portrayal of Dickens
- November 25 (C) The Rosary; Rowland and Clifford Inc.
- November 30 (C) Weary Willie Walker; Jones and Cane Company
- December 1 (B) Concert; Lindsburg students
- December 5 (C) The House Next Door; William Mong Cohan and Harris Production
- December 11 (C) My Dixie Girl; Morey Stock Company
- December 12 (C) Lena Rivers; same company
- December 13 (C) Cast Aside; same company
- December 14 (C) A Woman of Mystery; same company
- December 22 (C) Shungopavi, magician
- December 30 (B) Oberlin College Glee Club

1912

- January 5 (C) The Olivieri Trio
- January 10 (C) Flower of the Ranch; Jess Harris and Betty Caldwell
- February 8 (C) The Prince of Tonight; Mort H. Singer Company; Henry Woodruff
- February 28 (C) Three Twins Company
- March 1 (C) Miss Nobody from Starland; Miss Olive Vail, George Smith and Bertree Beauont
- March 11 (C) The Matinee Girl; Matinee Girl Company; Dan Russell and Marguerite Ray
- March 25 (C) Beauty Belles of Darktown; minstrel show
- April 18 (C) Introduce Me; Della Clarke Company
- May 4 (C) Oriental Ladies Minstrels; Chicago Enter Company; Charlotte Salome Kiefer, Charlotte Mary Kiefer, and Carl E. Kiefer
- May 17 (D) Professor Moler; lecture on Panama Canal
- August 23 (C) The Prisoner of Zenda; Mr. Gilmore Brown Company
- August 24 (C) The Devil; same company
- October 23 (D) Mrs. Carrie Clyde Holly; suffrage
- November 4 (D) Progressive Rally; Dr. John P. Latshaw; speech
- November 20 (A) High School Musicale
- December 11 (C) The Girl From U. S. A.; Woods and Chalker Company; Ouina Marion
- December 13 (C) Uncle Josh Perkins
- December 18 (C) The City; United Play Company; Hugo B. Koch

1913

- January 6 (C) A Quaker Tragedy; Morey Stock Company
- January 7 (C) The White Shaw; same company
- January 8 (C) The Delayed Letter; same company
- January 9 (C) Kidnapping the Fiddler; same company
- January 14 (C) The Old Homestead; Denman Thompson Company
- January 24 (C) Alma, Where Do You Live?; Joe Webber Company; Grace Drew
- January 29 (C) Busy Lizzy; George Sidney and Carry Webber
- March 11 (C) The Right of Way; Sanford Dodge Company; Adella Nickerson
- April 14 (A) Everywoman
- May 14 (A) Bulbul; senior class play
- May 15 (A) Bulbul; senior class play
- June 24 (C) What Happened to Mary
- November 24 (C) The Rosary; Edward Rowland Company
- November 29 (C) The Rose Maid; Florence Miller, Lew Lederer and Howard Marsh
- December 15 (C) The Girl From Mumms; Sheehan and Beck Company; Olive Vail

1914

- January 3 (C) Panama; Gus Hall Company; Mutt and Jeff
- January 9 (A) Grand Re-union and Homecoming in Pumpkin Ridge; Cemetery Club
- January 13 (C) Schubert Symphony Club Company

1914 (continued)

- January 14 (C) What Happened to Mary; Lee Morrison Production Company
- January 23 (C) The Pink Lady; Fisher and Stevens Company
- January 27 (C) Madam Sherry; Bobby Woolsey
- February 11 (C) The Girl in the Taxi
- March 10 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin
- March 10 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; matinee
- March 18 (C) Freckles; Daniel L. Martin Company; Julius Velie
- April 30 (C) The Wolf; John J. Holland Company
- May 22 (C) High School Commencement
- July 23 (A) Two Black Bears; Cemetery Club
- July 24 (A) Two Black Bears; same company
- October 12 (C) The Black Sheep; Dougherty Stock Company; Jim and Hattie Dougherty
- October 13 (C) play unknown; same company
- October 14 (C) play unknown; same company
- October 15 (C) play unknown; same company
- October 16 (C) play unknown; same company
- October 17 (C) play unknown; same company

1915

- May 7 (A) Hicks at College; school play
- June 12 (C) A Prince for a Day
- June 23 (C) The World's Greatest Minstrel Show; J. M. Busy Company

1915 (continued)

- October 21 (C) Merry Minstrel Maids
- December 15 (C) The Trail of the Lonesome Pine; Klaw and Erlanger Company
- December 21 (C) Hans Hanson; Hans Hanson Opera Company
- December 29 (C) Kick In; Norman Hackett

1916

- January 3 (C) Broadway Jones; Arlington Stock Company
- January 4 (C) Girl in the Taxi; same company
- January 5 (C) play unknown; same company
- January 6 (C) play unknown; same company
- January 7 (C) play unknown; same company
- January 8 (C) play unknown; same company
- January 25 (C) Freckles; Broadway Amusement Company
- February 14 (C) The Cowboy Girl; Burke Sisters Comedy Ideals Company; Burke Sisters and Johnny Pringle
- February 23 (C) September Morn
- March 6 (C) Prancing Around; Milton Schuster Company
- May 16 (C) That Printer of Udell's; Sanford Dodge Company; Sanford Dodge
- May 24 (C) A Prince for a Day; Milton Schuster Company
- May 25 (C) play unknown; same company
- May 26 (C) play unknown; same company

1916 (continued)

- August 1 (D) Walter Thomas Mills; lecture
- September 16 (C) Charlie; Fatty Charlie Company
- October 14 (D) Jouett Shouse, congressman; speech
- October 16 (C) The Girl from the U. S. A.
- October 28 (C) Polly Primrose and her Merry Minstrel Maids; Primrose Company
- November 3 (A) Romeo and Juliet scenes; Miss Aurel Burtis
- November 10 (C) Skovgaard; violinist
- November 30 (C) Fred Byers Stock Company; Fred Byers and Miss Floy Mann
- December 1 (C) same company
- December 2 (C) same company
- December 9 (A) On Plymouth Rock; high school play
- December 18 (C) As You Like It; The Cambridge Players
- December 19 (C) The Royal Hawaiian Serenaders

1917

- January 8 (C) The Lucas Show Vaudeville Acts
- January 9 (C) same company
- January 10 (C) same company
- January 11 (C) same company
- January 12 (C) same company
- January 30 (C) Fair and Warmer; Selwyn and Company
- February 2 (A) Garden City Band Concert
- February 17 (C) The Girl and the Ranger; F. P. McCann Company

1917 (continued)

- March 12 (C) The Law of the Range; Franklin Stock Company
- March 13 (C) The Blossoming of Mary Ann; same company
- March 14 (C) Moveable; same company
- May 1 (C) Busby's Minstrels
- May 4 (A) The Blossoming of Mary Ann; senior class play
- May 5 (A) The Blossoming of Mary Ann; senior class play
- September 22 (C) Honolulu Lou; Honolulu Lou Company
- October 22 (C) Girl Without a Chance; Robert Sherman Production Company
- November 9 (C) A Good for Nothing Husband; Robert Sherman Production Company
- November 30 (C) The Russian Spy; Ida Weston Rae and Players
- December 1 (C) The Midget Wedding; same company
- December 2 (C) Water Works; same company
- December 3 (C) The Wild Girl of Borneo; same company
- December 4 (C) Raising Cane; same company
- December 29 (C) Ikey and Abey; George H. Bulb Company

1918

- January 23 (C) When Dreams Come True; Carrie Glenn
- February 22 (A) Band Concert
- May 19 (D) "The World Has Ended"; lecture
- May 20 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; Burks Company

1919

- March 3 (C) Harvey's Greater Minstrels; R. M. Harvey Company; Frank Kirk, Ed Tolliver and Alonzo Moore
- March 18 (C) His Bridal Night; John Roberts, Auf Bruce, Sheridan Sisters and Harry Lillford
- March 20 (B) Allied War Veterans Military Band
- March 27 (C) Great Zenith Company
- March 28 (C) same company
- March 29 (C) same company
- May 23 (A) The Spell of the Image; senior class play
- May 24 (A) The Spell of the Image; senior class play
- September 23 (C) Watch Your Step
- November 2 (C) Variety Show; Troupe of Native Hawaiians
- December 10 (C) Friendly Enemies; A. H. Wood Company
- December 22 (C) My Sunshine Lady; LeComte and Flesher Company; Guldrun Walberg

1920

- January 12 (C) Putting it Over; Triangle Players; Ruby Morgan
- January 13 (C) Turn to the Right; same company
- January 14 (C) The Hired Man; same company
- January 15 (C) Putting it Over; same company
- February 5 (C) Leon W. Washburns Minstrels
- February 13 (C) Mutt and Jeff's Dream; Gus Hill Production

1920 (continued)

- February 27 (C) Bringing Up Father; Gus Hill Production
- March 4 (C) Robin Hood; Ralph Dunbar Company; Lorena Doone Jackson and Albert Paar
- March 8 (C) The Open Road; Dubinsky Brothers Stock Company
- March 9 (C) And Here Came Ted; same company
- March 10 (C) Way to a Man's Heart; same company
- April 2 (C) Peck's Bad Boy
- May 31 (C) The Straight Road; Banks Comedians
- August 6 (C) Circumstantial Evidence; Grandi Brothers Stock Company
- September 18 (D) Congressman J. N. Tincher; speech
- October 3 (C) Harvey's Greater Minstrels
- October 11 (C) The Wise Guy; Triangle Players Company
- October 12 (C) Circus; same company
- October 13 (C) Gifts for You; same company
- October 14 (C) Greenwich Village; same company
- November 13 (C) Business before Pleasure; A. H. Woods Company; Potash and Perlmutter
- November 22 (C) The Brat; Mr. and Mrs. Monroe Hopkins Players
- December 28 (C) Uncle Tom's Cabin; E. T. Stetson Company

1921

- January 25 (C) Mikado; Ralph Dunbar Productions
- February 10 (A) Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch; Miss Aurel Burtis

1921 (continued)

- February 25 (C) Mutt and Jeff at the Races
- April 2 (C) The Town Fool; Walter Arlington Company
- April 10 (D) S. J. Toutjian; lecture
- October 16 (D) W. H. Pickering; evangelist

1922

- April 16 (D) W. H. Pickering; evangelist
- November 30 (D) Wrestling Match

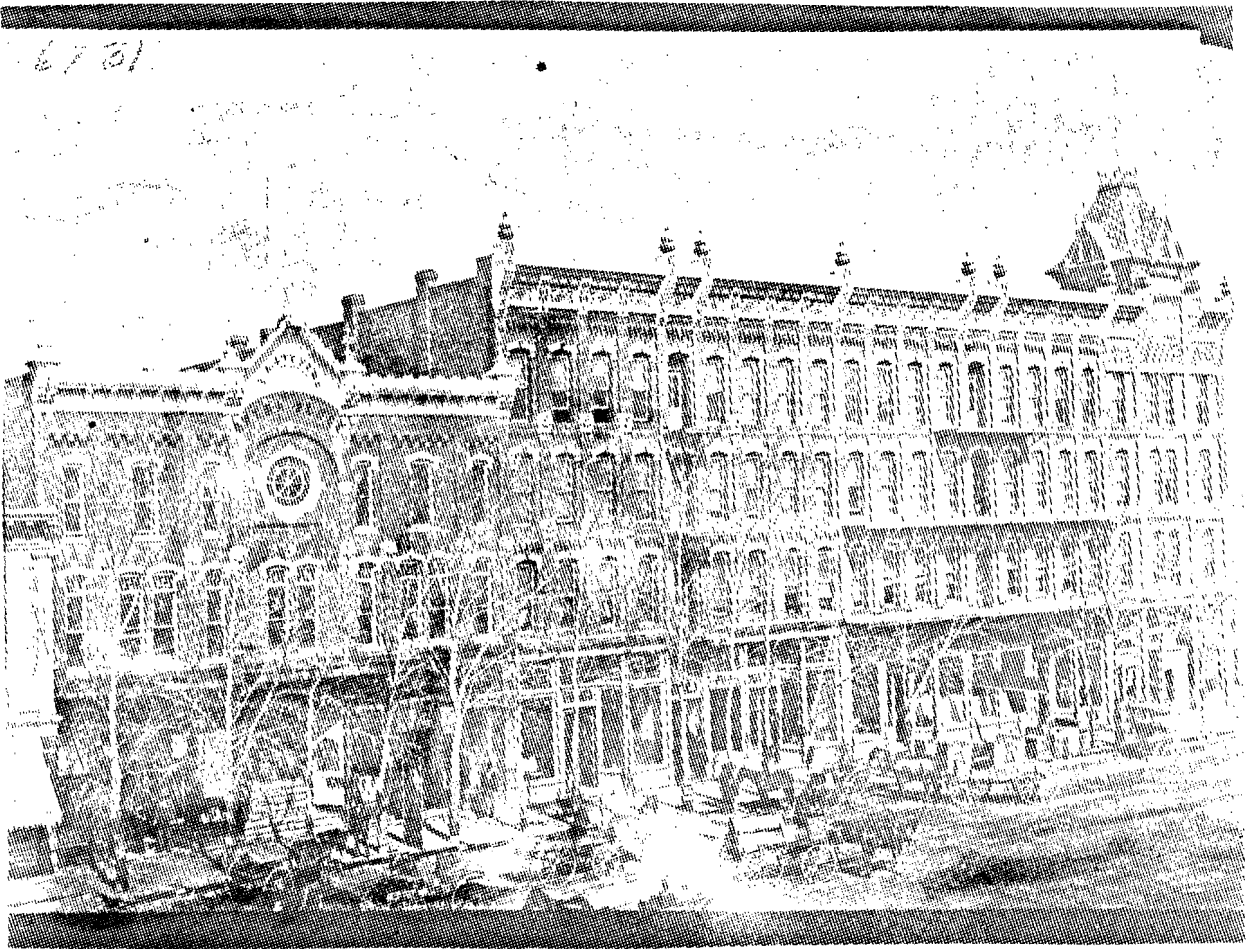
1923

- July 9 (D) G. R. Pollock; Bible lecture

APPENDIX B

Figure 1

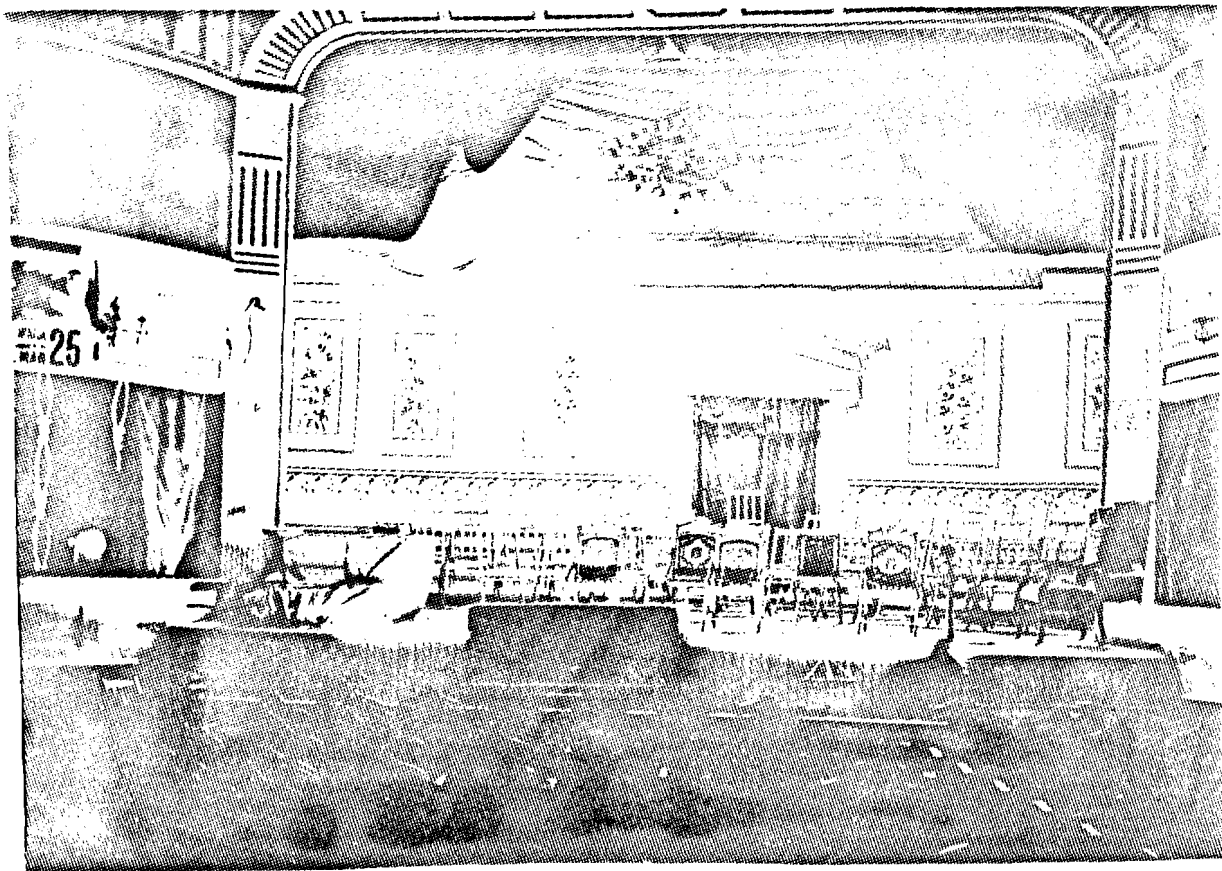
Exterior Picture of the Stevens Opera House



This picture of the Stevens Opera House and the Windsor Hotel was taken by Mr. P. A. Burtis in 1904. Taken from the private collection of P. A. Burtis.

Figure 2

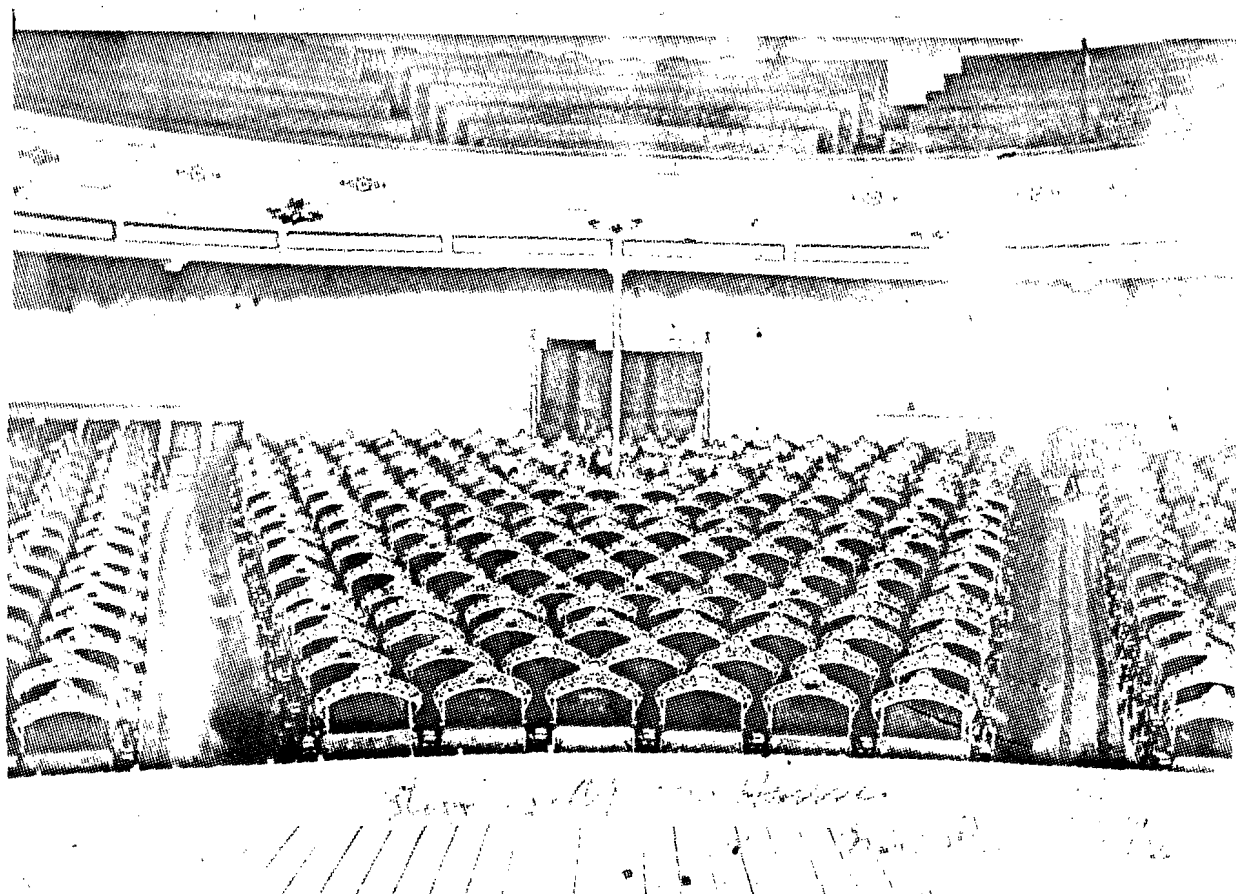
Stage of the Stevens Opera House



This picture of the Stevens Opera House stage was taken in 1904. The scene, a dining room, was one of the settings owned by the opera house management and used often as a background for meetings and speeches. Most of the folding chairs on the stage had been removed from the boxes for this picture. Taken from the private collection of P. A. Burtis.

Figure 3

House and Gallery of the Stevens Opera House



This picture was taken in 1904. Taken from the collection of P. A. Burtis.

Figure 11

Ellinwood, Kans., Dec. 15 - 1898

Mr. D. W. Pitts,
Garden City, Kansas.

Dear Sir:

Since writing you the last letter, I have booked the time desired. If you can see your way clear to book us for three weeks (with privilege of four ^{at same rate}) for \$110⁰⁰. Same to be paid in three equal installments, in advance, send me your open time for January and February and I will book the time, inside of one week. We have a big expense and the railroad fare to your town is considerable and requires a double back. Trusting we may be able to arrange, and awaiting an early reply, I am

Yours truly

J. T. R. Clark

Ellinwood, Kansas

(Dictated)

3 weeks \$115⁰⁰ payable
weekly in advance as follows
1st week \$50⁰⁰ 2^d week \$35⁰⁰ 3^d week
3^d week \$35⁰⁰

Copy of a letter from J. T. R. Clark, manager of the German Vaudevilles company to D. W. Pitts, manager of the Stevens Opera House. Taken from the Finney County Museum Collection.