

## OPERA HOUSE / MEMORIAL HALL

When the new opera house was finished and the lovely dances and operettas the schools "put on" there?

"At the time of the fire that destroyed Springville's beautiful opera house, which stood where the Art City Publishing company building now stands( This is not correct it is where the Memorial Hall Senior Citizens Hall is now located. I recall the desperate effort this bucket brigade made to save it, water was passed down the line in pails, from hand to hand, to the ones nearest the fire. Water was dipped from a ditch that ran along Main Street. A hopeless task it was, for it burned to the ground!"

This spectacular fire was a great loss to Springville, as it was a theatre next in beauty and size to the Salt Lake theatre.

Adele Hatch Johnson contributes this memory of the opera house:

"Beautifully decorated, its walls were of deep red velvet, the ceiling frescoed in gold, and its curtain a huge painting of Windsor castle and grounds. Its orchestra pit was considered the finest of its kind; a gallery, and boxes, a parquet, and all the most modern furnishings for that era.

"The opera house played all the famous talent - drama, concert, comedy- that appeared in the Salt Lake theatre.

"Such famous actors and actresses as Joe Grismer and Phoebe Davis; the Litchfield troupe, featuring the 'Man of any Faces', all the large companies of celebrated artists, troupes, that came from New York, Boston, Chicago, and other eastern points.

"Many minstrel shows, melodramas and grand opera were played in the much-loved Springville opera house.

Springville started out being a city of culture, even when the paths it trod were lined with sagebrush, and paved with mud and cobblestones, and it has never gone backward - for that we are very proud!

The Shepherd String Band played in the famous-for-its-beauty orchestra pit of the opera house. This group's music always thrilled the hearts of all the troupes entertaining there.

The large companies played at the Provo opera house after the big fire.

All of Utah mourned the loss of beautiful and famous Springville opera house. The origin of the fire was never determined.

Charles Conover adds this: "A meat market next to the opera house was saved by the bucket brigade. It was owned by Frank Whitmore, and it was a miracle that it was not burned, ,

Do you remember the melodramas at the old opera house-the kind where the villain still pursued her? The wicked looking moustaches they wore, and how the heroine cried, "desist, foul fiend," and "No, no! I would not marry you were you the last man on this cruel old earth!"

When scenery sometimes fell down on the heads of the players during the most thrilling love scenes? Oh, oh!

Do You Remember?

August 14, 1941

From Richfield, Utah, came an old handbill of the Johnson Bros. Theatre days, so we are publishing it in its entirety:

TO-NIGHT  
Springville Dramatic company

(Don't fail to see them)  
Will appear in the thrilling  
Melo Drama  
"WENLOCK of WENLOCK"  
or  
"The Spirit of the Black Mantle"  
New Scenery, Costumes, Etc.  
With

Cast of Characters

Herbert Lyle.....	Wesley Watson
Friar Phillop.....	John H. Halford
Osrick (a young farmer) .....	N.T. Watson
Nickles (The Village tailor).....	D.C. Johnson
Wild Wenlock.....	Harry Rogers
Wolf.....	Aaron Johnson
Ossa (the Serf).....	Anna Kearns
Hugh (the Sensechel).....	Jas. Alexander
Wittol Wittle (the Doran's Jester)...	Mose Johnson
Lady Rowena.....	Miss Lula Boyer
Eva (the rose of Langley Dale)...	Pearl Ethier
Rose Allison.....	Miss Seymour

To conclude with the famed, funny farce—

"Nature and Philosophy"

(or the youth who ever saw a woman)

Doors open at 7 - Curtain at 8

Tickets for sale at all the stores, and cash taken at the door.

Johnson bros., Managers.

This show was put on the stage about 1885. Some of the characters call to mind many other plays they produced, among the memoirs the talented Ethier family of Springville— Fonz, Pearl, Anthony and Horace, of the same family.

Do you remember the handsome Fonz Ethier? Anthony, it will be remembered, was a musician and actor as well. He was drowned or in some accident and met a untimely death years ago.

And do you remember the remarkably strong, beautiful voice of little Ethel Smith, daughter of Basset and Lou Mason Smith? She sang patriotic songs and one remembered was "The Flag Without a Stain," at a Fourth of July program on the stage of the Opera House.

# Opera House

## MEMORIAL HALL

1908 Built Mary Chase Finley p.125      Springville Herald has it 1905 ???????

1909 shop classes were held in the old Elder's Hall; basketball in the basement of the opera house.

1926 Exercise at Opera House for commemoration of Memorial Day May 28 P.1-

1926 H.T. Reynolds Jr. Was at a meeting in Opera House in the afternoon. Sunday 30 May 1926. Reynolds Diary.

1927 March 8 and 9 "the Marriage of Nannette" In the Springville Opera House . March 3 1927 Herald

Alberta Mendenhall in the role of Yvonne did some splendid acting and her singing illicite hearty applause from the audience. (Herald 10 March)

1927 March 24 Play cast for the Opera House "If I Were King" to be held in April.

1927 "Prince of Artland Promises to be fine Entertainment Best of Talent Prepared Opera by Myron E. Crandall to be staged in the Opera House (June 2,1927)

1927 Senior Prom held in the basement.

### **Springville Opera House Completely Destroyed by Fire**

Springville Herald August 29, 1929

The Springville opera house, one of the largest structures in this city, was destroyed by fire Wednesday afternoon (August 28, 1929)

The origin of the fire is not definitely known, but several boys were seen coming out of he building about noon, and since the roof of the structure above the stage scenery burst into flames at 1:15, the theory is advanced that boys were playing in that part of the building, and that a "boy-match' blaze was the result.

Paul Haymond, an employee of the Headquist Drug company of Springville, saw smoke issuing from the doors and windows, and the roof burst into flames, at 1:15 o'clock. He notified Ethel Taylor, telephone operator, who called he Springville fire department, and later the Provo and Spanish Fork departments.

Every hose of the three departments was turned on the flames, but it was impossible to save the doomed structure. Only the outside brick walls were left standing, the roof and everything on the interior being completely demolished. The combined efforts of the three departments got the fire under control about 2:10 p.m.

Insurance of \$5000 will partially cover the loss

One man was overcome by heat and smoke while fighting the flames, but he soon recovered and will suffer no ill effects

The building was erected in 1905 by a group of Springville citizens. Among he original incorporators were S.L. Mendenhall, H.T. Reynolds, R.L. Bird, T.R. Kelly, Ed Childs, G. W. Mendenhall, Ike Brown, Jame E. Hall, and L.D. Deal

The men operated the building as an opera house and theater for some years, but the project was never successful, and after continuous losses, the building was sold to the L.D.S. Church 15 years ago for \$12,000. The church used the building as an amusement hall, but during the last five years only the basement of the structure-the dance hall- has been utilized,

the theater proper being abandoned.

1931 Legionaries may re-build Opera House Nov. 26, p.1 col. 7

1932 On July 4, 1932 the memorial Hall, built on the foundation of the Old Opera house, was formally dedicated. The occasion called for a big celebration including a big parade and an appropriate pageant. Those in charge were Joe Grant, Edwin Johnson, George Barron, and Virgil Hafen. (MCF hist)

## THE OPERA HOUSE -MEMORIAL BUILDING

by Edward Boyer

When I started the 7th grade in the then new Jr. High and High School building on 400 south 2nd East; we had the assignment to sell tickets for the Springville High School annual opera that was presented in the (Opera House on Second South. I was not a good salesman but it was fun trying to find someone with enough money to buy a seat in the huge balcony.

The main floor sloped down to the front, like any grand Opera house. The balcony was circular in the front, the sides coming toward the stage. It was sloped down and was about one third as large as the main floor.

We attended many High School operetta's where my cousin Lela Boyer sang the lead as in the ("I Dreamt That I Slept in Marble Halls") The Bohemian Girl.

The dance floor was below the main floor. One had to enter by going down a covered stair on the west side. It was on springs and had a hardwood floor. Our Ag. Club ball was held there in 1928.

In November of 1928 I went on a mission to Holland. When I returned in 1931 I was told that the brick walls had been used to help build an addition on the old Second Ward building at 445 South Main Street.

The veterans of World War I got busy and applied for federal money to rebuild the building as a Memorial building. With the main floor flat where it is now. With the rooms and kitchen to the north where the stage used to be. The rest rooms were on the South end under the entrance. Later others thought it a good idea to use the old basement for a shooting range

March 4, 1995

Max Alleman also confirms that as a young man he helped load and haul bricks from the burnt out Opera House to the Second Ward Chapel where they were used to make a new addition on the building. He also stated that as a young man he watched a Ku Klux Klan attempt to gain membership and it was held in the old Opera House... Only one person joined the Klan but he does not know his name.

Jesse Dalton.... Drama in Early Springville.

In 1907 a movement was started by the Commercial Club to erect a new opera house. A company was formed, and stock subscribed by about 150 citizens. The building was finished a year later at the cost of \$40,000 and stood where the present memorial hall now is (Second South and First East). It opened Christmas night with the play, the "Girl of the Golden West," by a Salt Lake company. The ever popular "Two orphans" followed later with Eliza J. Thorn,

Aaron Johnson, Ray Maycock, John Alleman, Howard Johnson, and Dora Coffman taking part. It was directed by Don C. Johnson, Jr.

This building was surpassed by few in the west and was the scene of many plays, musical comedies and operas, among them were: "The Alaskan," "Stubborn Cinderella," "Prince of Tonight," the "Lion and the Mouse," the "Gamblers," "Taming of the Schrew," and many others. Professor Mark Robinson developed a number of excellent singers in the high school and during his years as teacher in Springville he produced such outstanding operas as "Chimes of Normandy," the "Mikado," "Red Rose" and "Robin Hood." Featured singers were Hannah Condie, Cora Thorn, Eliza Thorn, Floss Packard, Bert Smith, Reed Gammell, Lew Mar Price, Lela Boyer,.. Elmo Coffman, and Dora Coffman.

This building was later leased for a movie house as public interest moved from the legitimate theater to the screen, but it was too large for such purposes. Finally, it was purchased by the L.D.S. Church and used by the Mutual Improvement Association as an entertainment center, but it too, was laid waste by fire in 1929.

March 3, 1932

#### RECONSTRUCTION OF RECREATION HALL PROGRESSING NICELY

With the coming of spring weather the work of reconstructing the old Springville opera house into a modern recreation hall is going rapidly forwards.

Considerable debris left in and around the building since the fire is being removed. The upper part of the two story brick walls are being torn down as the structure will be but one story high. The project is expected to give considerable work to unemployed men of the community.

Members of the Springville Legion post, who sponsored the project and who will lease the building when it is completed, are planning now to give the opening ball in the dance hall on the eve of Memorial day, 30, it is said. Men who are assisting with the work are contributing to make the project possible with the limited funds available for the project.