

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

THEATRE IN IDAHO 100 YEARS AGO

Number 107

June 1971

These excerpts from the IDAHO TRI-WEEKLY STATESMAN of 1871 give an interesting picture of theatrical entertainments and entertainers of that day:

THE BARTHOLOMEW MINIATURE CIRCUS

February 4, 1871

"This evening, at which is to be played "Box and Cox," and "The Morning Call," Mr. Bartholomew has secured the services of an entirely new performer, who makes his first appearance this evening, and his name is "Sinbad." We shall see how complete dominion Mr. Bartholomew has acquired over the brute creation, in the performance of his bearship this evening."

August 19, 1871

"We understand that Bartholomew's Miniature Circus Co., who fitted out at this place in the spring for a tour of the Eastern states, "Collapsed" on reaching Cheyenne. Too many shows on the line of the railroad."

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THE CARRIE CHAPMAN TROUPE

April 13 - June 8, 1871

"This evening the Carrie Chapman Troupe will give an entertainment at the theatre, corner Front and Sixth streets."

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Repertoire of the Carrie Chapman Troupe

The Wind and the Whirlwind
Mr. and Mrs. Peter White
The Stranger by Bulwer
Retribution
The Double-bedded Room
The Spectre Bridegroom

Caste
 How Far is It to the Next Ranch
 The Actress of All Work
 The Artful Dodger
 Miser's Legacy
 Still Waters Run Deep
 also interludes of dancing and singing.

* * *

"The Carrie Chapman troupe, by request of many citizens, propose giving a minstrel performance this evening at Good Templar Hall. Mr. Evans, who will be remembered for the good impression he made last winter as a delineator of negro character, has been added to this troupe. Himself and Lon McCarty as the tambourine and Bones will be a strong team, and will make plenty of fun. Among the principal attractions on the programme are, a double dance by Miss Carrie and Mace Chapman, which we can promise will be good; and a song with Shakespearian recitations by Lon McCarty. Altogether, the bill is a rich one, and we are satisfied that the management are capable of making it go off successfully. See the programme around town and you will be made of sterner stuff than we think, if you stay away."

* * *

"The Theatre was not overly crowded Saturday night, at the minstrel performance. The singing and dancing was good, and generally loudly encored. The double song and dance, by Miss Carrie and Mace Chapman, was exceedingly well done, as was the song and dance by Evans. Johnny Moss, in his banjo solo, was loudly cheered and twice encored. The character of the performance deserved a better house, and we hope to see a good turnout at the next show."

* * *

"The Theatrical Performance, announced to take place last evening for the benefit of Mr. Ellerton, was postponed on account of the ball. It goes this evening. The beneficiary proposes to spread a feast before his patrons this evening, and we believe he is competent to do it."

* * *

"The benefit of Mr. Ellerton on Tuesday evening was very well attended and the acting excellent. Mrs. McCarty, in the Rifle Volunteer, was a performance that has rarely been equalled in Boise City. The troupe will appear at Middleton next Saturday night."

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THE PIXLEY SISTERS TROUPE
June 16 - September 21, 1871

"The Pixley Sisters' Theatrical and Variety Troupe arrived in town yesterday evening. They propose giving a series of entertainments in this place. They bring with them from Portland, Sacramento, and other cities on this coast an excellent reputation, and we have observed in our exchanges from those places that their performances always drew full houses. Our citizens will have an opportunity to judge for themselves next Monday as to the merits of this company, as their first appearance will be made at that time in Good Templar Hall."

* * *

"Performance this evening - the beautiful play of "Caste" Miss Annie and Miss Minnie are at home in the Characters of "Esther" and "Polly," occurring in this play . . ."

* * *

Serio-comic two-act drama, entitled "Charles the Second," or the Merry Monarch.

Cast: Miss Annie
Miss Minnie
Mr. Ellerton
Mr. Campbell

* * *

"Crossing the Line" and "The Rough Diamond," at theatre tonight. Other members of cast mentioned: Miss Annie, Miss Minnie, Mr. Ellerton, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Clinton, Mr. J. H. Neville, Miss Gillespie.

* * *

Last Night - The beautiful play, "Colleen Bawn."

* * *

TO IDAHO CITY . . .

"The Pixley Troupe will perform at Idaho City on Monday evening. We guarantee a rich treat to those who may attend."

* * *

Pixley Troupe performs Coleen Bawn to full house. Acting good, but sets and size of the company did not do justice to the play. (Too many "doubles")

The singing and dancing of the "Sisters" drew forth rapturous applause and showers of boquets (sic)."

* * *

"The Pixley Troupe will return here about Thursday or Friday, and will probably give one or two more of their excellent performances. They are said to be doing a lively business in the Basin, and giving entire satisfaction."

* * *

"The Pixley sisters are still playing the Boise county, and will probably play there the balance of the week."

* * *

MEANWHILE . . . BACK IN BOISE . . .

"The Great Western Minstrel Troupe will arrive and give one of their entertainments on tomorrow evening, at Good Templar Hall."

* * *

"Eugene Holman, banjo and Frank Sparrow, dancing."

* * *

THE PIXLEYS RETURN . . .

"Those charming favorites of our people . . . have returned from the basin . . .

"This evening in new dresses, new scenery, and a new play: "Fair Maid of Croissy," and "To Oblige Benson"

"Owyhee tomorrow . . ."

A SUCCESS AT SILVER CITY . . .

"The Pixley Sisters' Troupe returned last Tuesday and Wednesday from Silver City, where they have met with the most flattering success. They propose to play a brief engagement here, commencing this evening, at Good Templar Hall, previous to their departure for Salt Lake City. The performance will commence with the amusing play of "Aladdin the Wonderful Scamp," and conclude with the laughable farce of "Little Toddleskins." For further particulars see small bills around town."

* * *

"The Pixley Sisters" troupe played last Thursday night at Good

Templars Hall to a very respectable house. They were reinforced at Owyhee by Mr. Frank Sparrow, of the disbanded Great Western Troupe, and Mrs. Clara Lewis."

"Mr. Wm. Ellerton takes a benefit next Monday evening, previous to his departure for Salt Lake. The play to be performed is that famous old one of Joe Jefferson, entitled "Rip Van Winkle, which had the longest run of any play ever put on the New York Boards . . ."

* * *

"The play of "Rip Van Winkle" passed off very pleasantly, considering the limited quantity and quality of scenery at hand. A scene of six-story brick houses, where "Rip" is supposed to be soliloquizing, solitary and alone, in the heart of the Catskill mountains, is not calculated to lend a very imposing effect to the play."

* * *

"Tonight the Pixley Sisters will positively appear for the last time, on which occasion a benefit has been tendered the Cemetery Fund. A little money is badly needed by the committee to complete the necessary repairs . . ."

* * *

"The Pixley Sisters farewell appearance before going to Oregon: "Family Jars," a rather trashy piece," and that excruciating farce "Betsy Baker." Cast: Annie and Minnie Pixley, Mr. Ellerton, Mr. Clinton, Mr. Sparrow, and "the immortal Neville."

* * *

Pixley Sisters closed last night, "will leave this week for Walla Walla and Portland."

* * *

"After his benefit in Boise City, Ellerton got roaring drunk--delayed Pixley performance at Walla Walla costing company \$300 in ticket sales."

* * *

THE PIXLEYS IN OREGON . . .

from the Oregonian:

"Returned.--The Pixley Sisters have returned from the Salt Lake Trip, without having been to Salt Lake. Their tour, we hear, was

attended with moderately good success."

* * *

"The Pixley Sisters, accompanied by Messrs. Ellerton, Clinton, and Sparrow, have returned from Oregon to Walla Walla, to play during the fair after which, we believe, it is their purpose to return to Boise City, and play during the winter season."

* * *

THE CONDITION OF THE THEATRE IN IDAHO . . .

Some Editorial Comments

A DEMORALIZED CROWD.--We think the crowd that generally assembles in the "pit" of our places of amusement the most badly behaved of any we ever saw. They seem perfectly regardless of what is going on in front on the stage, and amuse themselves by yelling and whooping whenever the spirit moves them. Not content with the continual cracking of peanuts, and demands for more from time to time in loud vociferations, but they must need indulge in unearthly shrieks, resembling the Coyote or Snake Indian, interrupting and confusing the actors, and preventing the more orderly of the audience from hearing anything of the play in progress. We have no doubt the "boys" intend such outbreaks of feeling as complimentary applause and that it is offered in a generous and kindly spirit, but for our part we hope hereafter there will be less of it.

* * *

IT IS A VERY EXHAUSTING THING for the management of theatricals in Boise City to put on pieces that have variety enough to keep up the interest of the people and the attendance. In large cities there is no such difficulty. There the same play has a run of sometimes a hundred nights or more, because there is an unfailling supply of new spectators. But here, it is the same audience over and over, so that, unless there is a continual changing of the scenes and characters, the thing palls on the taste, and the houses run down to nothing. Such has been the history of nearly every troupe visiting our city. Probably the truth is that we cannot afford to support for any length of time a theatrical troupe, however. Certainly our people will not, where the same round of characters, the same pranks, and the same songs and dances are gone through from night to night. The Nathan Troupe, now performing here, forms no exception to the rule stated above . . .

* * *

THE MERITS OF THESE PERFORMERS is not the question at issue.

They are not first class, and we have never pretended that they were. But they are engaged in a legitimate business, they played what they agreed to and they paid their way. Coming to us, we advertised their business, as it is our business to do. Our citizens are aware that the inducements are not here for the star performers, and they are too sensible to expect it. You can't get blood from a turnip; and they will not pronounce the humbler sort "bilks" and "mendicants," when they strive earnestly to amuse them, and honestly to earn their money.

* * *

CURTAIN . . .

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