

CHECK YOUR HAT!

THE VAUDEVILLE YEARS

PALACE THEATER, MANCHESTER NH

1915 - 1955

John Patrick Jordan

Cover design: Pamela V. Manney

DEDICATION

To my wife, Irene, for putting up with me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank all the staff of the Manchester NH City Library for their help in my research of this book.



AUTHOR'S NOTE

The advertising programs and photographs included in this book are attributed to the Manchester Mirror and Manchester Union Newspapers of many years past. As previously mentioned, newsprint, in some cases, darkens with age. Before being microfilmed, some newspapers occupied the Manchester Library basement for close to a century. The microfilm machines, due to budget constraints, are in a sad state of repair, this compounded by the unavailability of parts, made printing of these advertisings impossible in some cases. We have given extra effort to digitally clean them as best as possible and have succeeded in most cases.

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*Newspaper clippings were copied from both the
Manchester Mirror (up until 1924) and Manchester Union.*

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INTRODUCTION

APRIL 9, 2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the Palace Theater. The timing of this book, about the vaudeville years, is to celebrate that milestone. It contains photographs of the advertising programs of that era.

ON NOVEMBER 4, 1915, a 16 year old dancer named Fred Astaire and his sister, Adele, made an appearance at the Palace in "Of the Varieties." Among other notables to grace that stage were George Burns and his wife, Gracie Allen; Bill "Bojangles" Robinson; Milton Berle; Zasu Pitts; Boxer James J. Corbett, sixteen year old Lillian Roth, whose bouts with alcoholism and failed marriages would be made into the movie, "I'll Cry Tomorrow"; "Pop" Anson, baseballs first superstar; Houdini's brother, the Great Hardeen; the child actor, Freddie Bartholomew; Bobby Jordan of the Bowery Boys; Al Lewis who years later would play Grandpa on the hit television shown, the Munsters; and a host of others.

A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF MANCHESTER TALENT appeared there, among them two, three-time winners on the Ted Mack Original Amateur Show, Fay Gelinias and Bucky Searles, Patty Allen, the dancer, young Clyde Joy, the country singer, Ernie Golden, the band leader, who left Manchester to become a favorite in New York city, and Vincent Ferdinando and his Syncopators who made his first appearance in vaudeville at the Palace on December 3, 1923.

SOME ACTS HAD HUMOROUS NAMES such as Nip and Tuck, Top and Bottom, Here and There, Trip and Fall, Hill and Dale and Spic and Spam were some of them.

Across the stage of the Palace passed acrobats, gymnast, high wire walkers, comedians, singers, dancers, jugglers, pantomimist, mind readers, and hypnotist. The circus played there on numerous occasions bringing a large variety of animals as well as others brought by entertainers.

IN SUMMATION, through our research of the vaudeville acts at the palace, we can impart to our readers that we gained knowledge that chimpanzees could be educated, elephants could ride bicycles, women are bullet proof, you could see through a man and dance on one leg.

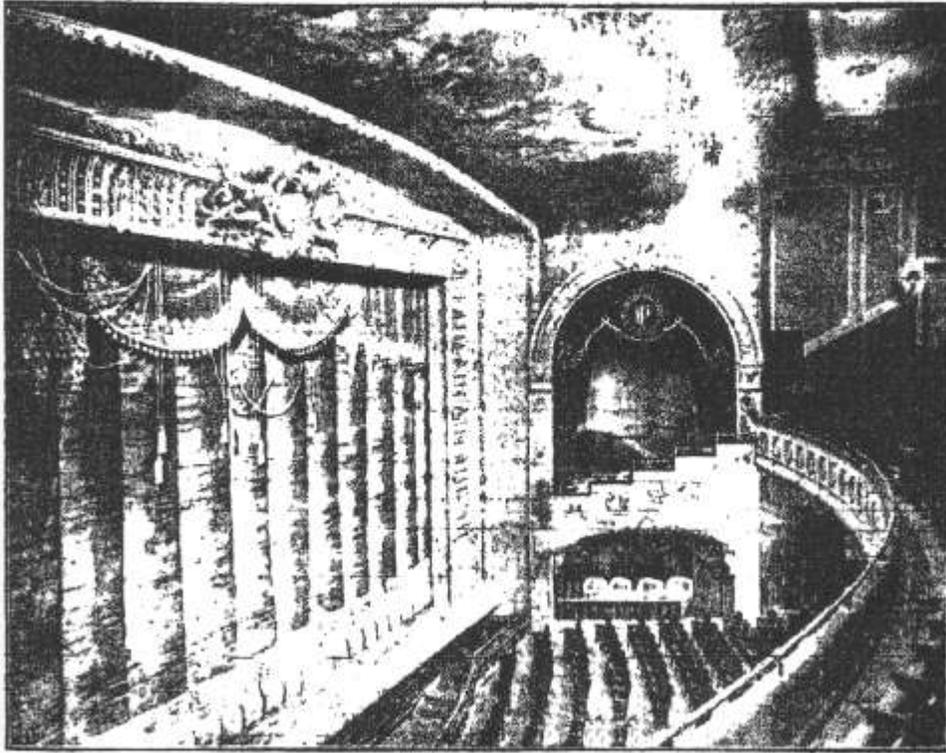
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HISTORY

MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 1915.

MANCHESTER'S NEWEST PLAYHOUSE



INTERIOR VIEW OF PALACE THEATRE, HANOVER ST. SHOWING HANDSOME FURNISHINGS OF PLAYHOUSE WHICH OPENS FRIDAY.

THE VAUDEVILLE YEARS WERE RICH WITH ENTERTAINMENT

VAUDEVILLE at the Palace Theater spanned a period of 40 years, from its opening in 1915 to 1955. During this period, the various acts were presented 3 days and 6 days each week. In the declining years, this fell to one day. In the latter years of the 1930's, it was nonexistent. Beginning in late 1940, though, it made an amazing comeback and in 1943, during World War II, it ran through the month of June and reopened in September. That would be the peak year for Vaudeville at the Palace theater.

BEGINNING IN 1923, movies of Manchester's famous Brownies, the swimmers and divers at Amoskeag Ledge were shown. Daniel Connor and the Brownies also appeared on stage of the Palace where they were given thunderous applause. Movies of Hubie McDonough's great Central High Football teams of the 1920's were often shown and the teams appeared live on the stage. Charleston and Black bottom dancing contest were held throughout the years. Election results in local, state and national elections were given by a special wire from Western Union. Both West High and Central High bands appeared together on the state in a combined concert. Movies of local Horse Shows were shown, the circus appeared live on stage with numerous animal acts on a least three occasions. The Palace Players were a repertory company that played at the Palace 1916 to 1929.

THE BUILDER AND THE CONTRACTOR



VICTOR CHARAS,
Builder of New Theater.

VICTOR CHARAS – *builder of Palace Theater*

Victor Charas built the Palace in 1915. It opened on April 9, 1915 with the play, "A Modern Eve". Accounts of that evening go like this: "The first opening of a gem of a theater added luster to the illusion that Manchester is beginning to arrive. This modern and artistic playhouse is the result of much planning of a man who came to this city from a foreign land. A Greek immigrant has given Manchester its first metropolitan theater. All Manchester should feel proud of the achievement of this man



HARRY MACRAPOLE,
The New Theatre Contractor.

HARRY MACRAPOLE

contractor of Palace Theater

THE MANCHESTER LEAFLET, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 1915

Hanover St.
Phone
3090

People of Manchester: We the Undersigned Have the Honor to Announce that The

PALACE THEATRE

Will be opened on Friday and Saturday, April 9 and 10, with the Carl Askin-Norris Latest Musical Success, "A MODERN EVE." This organization of fifty people is the best that money can buy and will have an entire new production and new elaborate costumes. This is not a road show and goes from Manchester to open The Court Theatre for a run on April 12.

The Palace Theatre

Mr. Leon Lempert & Son of Rochester, N. Y., Architects, were told:

"Give Manchester the finest Theatre you can build. Make it all steel, concrete, brick, and marble—nothing that can burn. Go to New York, Boston or anywhere and get the leading specialists and Artists in Theatre Construction to help you. Call for the best material—never mind the cost. We want Safety First, after that, comfort and luxury. Make everyone as safe and comfortable as in their own house.

"Don't Cramp Space to squeeze in a few more seats. Don't Have a Post or any other obstacle between any seat and the stage.

"Build a Stage fit to put on any production, and supply all latest devices for handling of scenery for Grand Opera or Tank Drama, a Frazee Act or a Symphony Concert. Let the Acoustics be perfect, have a Fly Gallery and Galleon of the latest type, the newest lighting and heating systems and a cooling plant for summer time, and ample dressing rooms for actors.

"We don't want a motion picture house. We want a complete Theatre that will be a credit to Manchester and be the foremost first class playhouse in the state of New Hampshire."

Ten months ago ground was broken and the commission given to the architects is fulfilled. We got what we called for and more. Results: We have a Theatre that the people of Manchester can take pride in.

When you see if you are sure to agree will be as that the Architect, Mr. Lempert, and the Builder, Harry Macrapole, have more than delivered the goods.

Our Policy will be to furnish to the public of Manchester the best in all classes of amusement that it is possible to obtain. If we offer any travelling attraction, you may rest assured it will be nothing but the best. Our Vaudeville Policy will be of the best that is obtainable. Our Picture will be the highest standard made, and the Manchester Theatre-going people can feel sure that whatever is advertised for THE PALACE THEATRE will be all that management can obtain for the PRICES CHARGED.

"Courtesy to all," will be the watchword for our staff. The patron who pays a dime will be treated the same as the one who gives a ten party.

Friday and Saturday, with Saturday Matinee—"A MODERN EVE." Tickets will be placed on sale at Palace Theatre Box Office Saturday at 10 A. M.—There will be no fancy prices charged for the Opening. The Regular Box Office Prices for this attraction will prevail. Prices—\$2.00, \$1.50, \$1.00, 75c, 50c; Matinee, \$1.00, 75c, 50c, 25c.—Phone Orders will only be held for Opening Tickets three hours.—Mail Orders will be put up in order received if check or money order is inclosed. No seats a sold prior to Saturday morning.

MANCHESTER AMUSEMENT CO. (INC.),
WILLIAM H. O'NEILL
Manager.

Commencing April 12th our regular Vaudeville Policy will begin, announcement of which will be given in the papers later.

THE MANAGERS



MR. WILLIAM H. O'NEIL,
Manager of Palace Theatre.

WILLIAM O'NEIL - *First manager*

William O' Neil was the first manager of the Palace Theater from its opening in April of 1915 until his death nearly four years later of a heart condition at age 50. A native of Cambridge, Massachusetts he was a veteran theatrical manager having taken two plays "Quincy Adams Sawyer" and "The Lotteryman" from Boston to San Francisco and touched about every town in the country. At one time he owned the Palisades in Fort Lee, N.J, and was manager of the Park theater here in Manchester before his assuming management of the Palace Theater.



WILLIAM E. CANNING.

WILLIAM CANNING - *Second manager*

William Canning took over management of the Palace in August of 1919. He had previously managed the Park Theater on Elm Street. He was well-informed on theatrical matters and knew just about everyone on the vaudeville circuit. That year he hired girls as ushers. The girls were prettily and smartly uniformed and a decided novelty in Manchester, NH. It was during his management that the stage was moved to the Chestnut Street side and the seating capacity increased to 2,180 in 1927. He eventually left Manchester to take over management of a theater in Fall River, Mass.



IRENE CANNING.

IRENE CANNING was the wife of William and deserves some mention in this book. She played the organ at the Palace, wrote for vaudeville acts and composed music. One of her songs, "Just Been Wondering", was first introduced by the famous bandmaster, John Phillips Souza, at the Practical Arts Auditorium of Central High School in September of 1924.

IN THE NEWS

The Palace Theater was often times the subject of many a newspaper story. Here's some that we found uniquely noteworthy.

PALACE OPENING SOCIAL SENSATION WITH 'MODERN EVE' SCORING STRONGLY

Owner and Management of Manchester's Newest Playhouse Lauded by Mayor Spaulding at Premier Performance

From streets ablaze with light, lined with curious onlookers and throbbing with automobiles and carriages, patrons of the Palace theatre at its premier performance last evening crushed through the elaborate foyer and into the theatre itself, where every seat was filled with an audience which made of the occasion a veritable social sensation.

The first offering of this gem of a theater added luster to the illusion that Manchester is beginning to arrive. "A Modern Eve," a proven metropolitan success, all dressed up with a fresh scenic production and with costumes newly designed for the opening of the Berlin operetta in Boston proved as fitting and happy a selection as could be desired for a house which combines quiet beauty, security and comfort to the extent found in the Palace.

The rose and ivory tinted decorative scheme of the interior, the modest use of delicately carved stucco borders and figures, the high quality of mural paintings and the simple richness of the theater's furnishings impressed upon every spectator of the capacity house the idea that at last Manchester has arrived theatrically.

The words of Mayor Harry W. Spaulding, who was introduced to the vast house by Manager William H. O'Neil entre acte, voiced the opinions expressed in all parts of the crowded auditorium.

"This modern and artistic playhouse is the result of much labor and planning by a man who came to this city, to this country from a foreign land, a Greek who came to Manchester and has given it its first metropolitan theater. Mr. Charas and Mr. Manropol another Greek contractor, under whose direction the structure has risen, are entitled to receive the credit which is their due," said Mayor Spaulding.



WILLIAM H. O'NEIL,
Palace Theater Manager.

April 10, 1915

65 Aspiring Amateurs Learning Lore of Stage at Unique Weekly School of Palace Theatre



Members of the dramatic class who receive professional instruction each week through the courtesy of the Palace theatre management. William V. Dimock, director of the Palace Players, who volunteers his time and skill as instructor. First row, from left to right—Mr. Dimock, Virginia Wagner, Rosalind Gould, Ruth Flanders, Doris Chisburg and Rita Reedy. Second row—Dorothy Brodie, Germaine Ducharme, Corinne Noblet, Violet Griffin, Evelyn Spurr, Virona Reid and Alice Fillion. Third row—Marion Frost, Helen Trudeau, Ovide Duval, Charles Soucy, D. J. Pelletier, Millicent Pasquill, Elizabeth Rogers, Violet Parent and Herbert Gardner. Last row—Elmer Marsh, Philip Martin, Francis Kenney, Vera Burroughs, Elva Gleason and Kay Shay.

August 29, 1920