

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Curtain!

The event of the theatrical season in Monterey was "The Great Divide" starring Henry Miller, which played to a packed house at the Work Theater, now the Monterey, on July 22, 1908. The New Era reported that the great actor and his much heralded play proved to be all that was expected of them. The week previous Nance O'Neill and her company presented "Magda" to a large and appreciative audience in the same theater. Ricard Jose had also appeared in a laughable farce comedy "Don't Tell My Wife," which brought out a large audience of townspeople.

About this time a Victory Theater opened which proved so successful that a larger building was soon needed. Manager C.A. Riffe secured the room in the Preble-Work building next to the post office (now gone). The new location had a seating capacity of 500 and was "well ventilated, cool, airy and pleasant," according to the news item in the New Era.

Kolb and Dill with their entire New York production of "Lonesome Town" came to the Work in July of 1908, and on August 17 May Robson came to Monterey to appear in her greatest New York success, "The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary," and played before a crowded house at the Work.

The Casper Music Hall, a new and attractive place of amusement opened on Saturday night, November 15, 1902. The Music Hall is now Mission Inn. The newspaper of the day described the Hall as "a permanent place of amusement where one can take his family and enjoy refined vaudeville and musical entertainment." C.D. Casper was the proprietor. The balcony had reserved seats, and the entrance was through the Casper Hotel. Seats were on sale for 25 cents and general admission was 10 cents to the lower part of the house. A California Ladies' orchestra played for the opening. By December 8th the Casper had been changed to the Orpheum Theater.

The opening performance at the Bagby Opera House for 1903, was the Allen Stock Company show, supporting the "phenomenal child actress, Little Verna Felton in high class repertoire." Miss Felton more recently has taken the part of the mother of the "Red Skelton" radio program.

Frank Bacon returned to the Bagby in August of 1903, in the rural comedy "The Hills of California." Specialties were introduced including Lee Johnson's latest ballad, "Don't Make Them Scandalous Eyes at Me."

Miss Pearl La Verne, the leading lady in the "Husband on a Salary" company which appeared at the Bagby Opera House on January 16, 1902, had a special appeal for the residents of Monterey who flocked to see her on the two nights she played in her home town.

"Miss La Verne is a native of Monterey, where she spent her childhood, and is better known as Pearl Soberanes," according to the item which appeared in the New Era. "She is the daughter of M.G. Soberanes, and when she left here some years ago was noted as a pianist. Later she developed a fine soprano voice, and went east with the Columbia Opera Company. After singing for the past five years in comic opera in New York and other eastern cities Miss Soberanes decided to take a western trip and visit her native state. She has many old friends and acquaintances who will witness her appearance before the footlights."

The earliest date we find for the opening of the Bagby Theater is March 13th, 1889, when the reports for that day were: "Notwithstanding the weather was extremely moist, a large audience greeted Royce and Lancing's Comedy Company. The lady members of the company acquitted themselves well and the various impersonations were immense."

In Pacific Grove the Bon Ton opened October 1, 1909 and advertised as "The home of refined moving pictures and illustrated songs." W.H. McConnell was the manager.

James Ward came to the Bagby for five nights in 1909 and played the famous war play "Old Glory," with a whole regiment of soldiers on the stage in uniform, good songs and up-to-date dances. During the remainder of the engagement he produced "Through by Daylight," "Ranch 10," "Streets of New York," and "After Dark."