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Article Summary: The Table Rock opera house was the most versatile building in town when it was built in 1893 and thus became a small-town community center. Following an extensive listing of events held at the opera house, the appendix includes a detailed physical description of it.

Cataloging Information:

Names: G Royce (Rice) Martin, George M Lane, Robert Furnas, James Hinto, John Flemming, C W Giddings, C R Judkins, R Wellington Hood, C J Wood, Henry Shaw, Elmer Wood, George Scott, S E Roberts, Miss Mamie Sutton, Miss Hattie Goodel, Miss Linnie Layman, J N Hopper, J F Kemper, Eli Perkins, P C Johnson, William Combs, Grace Talcott, Charley Linn, C C Covert, Lotta Talcott, W S Turman, Louis Johnson, Ruby Allen, Bishop Bowman, Peter W Howe, Charles M Shepherd, Lilo Berlin, H C Moore, S Edward Roberts, S Edward Roberts, Henry B Ward, Grace Talcott, Elmer J Burkett, A B Whitmer, Charles M Shepherd, C S Dudley, Pastor St John, George R Roemer, C H Colson, Emme M Clema, R Rusicka, Norris Brown, Hugh O Rowlands, Henry B Wharton, Gordon Bethel. Ammi L Bixby, William C Quantrill, H D Fisher, John M Thayer, H C Russell, Johnny and Ida Pringle, Elmer J Burkett, George Hibner, James Manahan, Myrta Howe, Frank Gregory, W H Parker, Laura Holmes, Miss Kate Moore, M V Johnson, John William (Blind) Boone [This is a partial listing of names associated with performances / events at the opera house.]

Keywords: *Argus* [newspaper]; *Herald* [newspaper]; The Table Rock Dramatic Company; "The Victims of the Bottle"; Canfman's Merry Makers; The Gross Brothers' Company; scientific boxing exhibition; "The Mikado"; DuBois Columbia Band; American Odd Fellows; Kittello Electric Comedy Company; Epworth League; Pond-Berlin Theatrical Company; the Women's Suffrage Association; Wade Opera Company; Burk's Big Uncle Tom's Cabin; *Wayne Herald*; Tennessee Jubilee Singers [Fisk University Negro choir]; "Citizens for Cubans"; Maypole Dance; Noble Dramatic Company; Lewis Carnival of Wonders, Nights of Enchantment; Women's Christian Temperance Union; Conklin acetylene gas; LaRenos; Quaker Medicine Company; Blind Boone Concert Company; Royal Neighbors; Pawnee Concert Company; Cooper's Musical Comedy Company; Arthur Dayton Show; Bohemian CZBJ Lodge

Photographs / Images: West side of square, Table Rock, about 1910 showing Opera House above the drugstore; Playbill from the *Table Rock Argus*, February, 1898; Political ad "Two Republican Meetings" from the *Table Rock Argus*, October 18, 1900; portrait "John William (Blind) Boone; Floor Plan of the Table Rock Opera House

THE TABLE ROCK OPERA HOUSE, 1893-1900: A SMALL-TOWN COMMUNITY CENTER

By Duane Fike

The plain, red brick building sits unobtrusively on the west side of the town square. Two little shops within the building are separated by weathered double doors, over which hangs a hand-painted sign announcing the entrance to the "Old Opera House Museum." Behind these doors are steep, foot-worn wooden steps, divided by an iron pipe railing, with another set of double doors one flight up. Entering the top doors into the main auditorium, a visitor to the Table Rock Opera House sees the gilt-framed stage, dressed with forest scenery and peopled with mannequins garbed in the style of the 1890's.

While many of Nebraska's opera houses have burned or been razed in the last eighty years, the Table Rock Opera House is preserved as one of the seven museum buildings belonging to the Table Rock Historical Society. Antique museum pieces have been placed in the auditorium, but many opera house items have never been removed from their original home: a dozen or more wooden chairs, two large, black heating stoves, several painted backdrops. In fact, the interior is much like it was when built in 1893.

The 1894-1895 *State Gazetteer and Business Directory* lists ninety-nine opera houses in Nebraska, including the Table Rock Opera House, with G. Royce (Rice) Martin and George M. Lane as proprietors. The history of the auditorium in its first decade provides an insight into its use—that of a small-town community center. Nebraska's more grandiose opera houses in larger cities performed more nearly their traditional dramatic role. But in Table Rock's opera house, the most versatile building in town, there was a pot pourri of entertainment: dramatics, musicals, self-

improvement courses, school events, religious and temperance programs, socials, political pow wows, athletics, religious services and educational events. Some were home-grown, others were professional imports. Occasionally there was a program of fine quality.

For the most part, the programs pumped life into the town's economy, as well as added to its culture. Although not used since 1950 for public gatherings, the opera house-museum is still very much a part of Table Rock, providing a link between past and present while reminding its citizens of the town's cultural heritage.

A description of Table Rock, located in southeastern Nebraska, also was given in the *Gazetteer*. Its population was listed as 1,200:

Table Rock is situated in the northeastern part of Pawnee County, eight miles from Pawnee City, the seat of the government, at the junction of the A & N [Atchison and Nebraska] and Republican Valley division of the B & M [Burlington and Missouri] R.R. A magnificent farming country surrounds the town, while the little Nemaha river furnishes good water power for the Table Rock Mill. Its growth has been steady and substantial.¹

Table Rock received its name from a rock formation about a mile east of town at the time it was laid out in 1855. This "table rock" was hit by lightning years ago, and only unusual rock outcroppings remain in the area. Though the *Gazetteer* called the town's growth "steady," such was not the case in its beginning. Headed by Governor Robert Furnas, James Hinton, and John Flemming, the Table Rock Site Company failed to interest settlers, and in 1857 the Nebraska Settlement Company bought out the parent organization. Composed largely of Pennsylvania capitalists, with the Reverend C. W. Giddings as their agent, the new company laid out the town site and resettled several families from the East:

It is estimated that in 1856 and '57 between one hundred and fifty and two hundred families became residents of the town and vicinity. The financial panic of 1857 and the disastrous floods of 1858 which destroyed all the crops for that year so discouraged the people that all but fifteen families of the two hundred left for other places.²

In spite of catastrophies, the town grew: a flour and saw mill in 1857, a post office and a stone school house in 1861, the Atchison and Nebraska Railroad in 1871, a creamery in 1880, a brick yard in 1886. By 1890 several merchants had well-established businesses around the town square. Why "Rice" Martin decided

to build an opera house is not known, but by 1889 he had begun acquiring the site.³

Like most Nebraska opera houses, Martin's was planned as a three-story structure, providing rental space for business establishments as well as an auditorium and stage on the second floor. Two stores occupied the first floor and two offices were at the front of the second floor. The opera house straddles lots 8 and 9 of block 29, with the bank on the corner to the south occupying 23 feet of lot 8. The adjoining 22 1/2 feet of lot 8 is frontage for the south store in the opera house, while the north store uses 9 1/2 feet of lot 8 and 12 feet of lot 9. Thus, the opera house sits on property that is 25 feet long and 45 feet across the front; it shares the north wall of the adjacent bank building.⁴ (See Appendix for description of opera house.)

Business records of the opera house have been lost or destroyed. Only the names written on the walls backstage remain from its active days. Court records at Pawnee City and newspaper microfilm at the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln provide some documentation. Unfortunately, only one Table Rock newspaper is available during the period that the opera house was being erected, although two papers (the *Argus* and the *Herald*) were published. A fire at the *Argus* destroyed pre-1895 issues.

Except on rare occasions the local newspaper editor was good for a few superlatives describing opera-house offerings, both in advance and follow-up news stories. This was considered a part of his duty as a one-man Chamber of Commerce, a traditional role of the struggling editor, whose little hand-set paper prospered only as the town prospered. But the superlatives make it difficult for the researcher, who must discount much of what is said in the town press—the prime source of information for the 1890's.

The *Herald*, "the only Populist paper in the county," published from 1893 to 1894 only, carried items on the construction and early use of the opera house. As the building neared completion in May the *Herald* noted: "It is with pleasure we note that the home talent is getting up a splendid play, preparatory to the opening of the new opera house, and that the cast will be made up from no ordinary ability [as] our people have only to await the rendition to prove." The Table Rock Dramatic Company elected C. R. Judkins, business manager; Dr. R. Wellington Hood, stage manager; C. J. Wood, treasurer:

They open our new opera house with a play, to be given for the benefit of the band. The band needs more instruments, and have adopted this plan to raise the money. By attending

this entertainment you not only attend the opening of our new opera house and see a good performance, but you encourage the band.

The Table Rock Dramatic Company have selected that great, sensational, temperance drama, 'The Victims of the Bottle,' a play in five acts, highly endorsed both by pulpit and press. . . :

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Chas. Thornley	Dr. R. W. Wood
Dr. Slater	C. J. Wood
Harrold Hadley	Henry Shaw
Jno. Farley	Elmer Wood
Bob Brittle	Geo. Scott
Jas. Hollis	S. E. Roberts
Mrs. Eva Thornley	Miss Mamie Sutton
Nettie Nettleby	Miss Hattie Goodel
Mrs. Farley	Miss Linnie Layman ⁵

On May 25 the *Herald* carried this update: "The Table Rock Dramatic Company is under full headway now, and are making every effort to set an example for coming entertainments! They will give the people of Table Rock all that can be asked from a home talent play."⁶

Completion of the building came in late May or early June as Dr. J. N. Hopper of Pawnee City came to town to "see about roofing the new opera house with his patent roofing."⁷ If "The Victims of the Bottle" was the first offering in the new building, *Herald* files do not report it. If not, it appears a dedication oration of sorts was made about June 23, 1893, by the Reverend J. F. Kemper on a subject unfortunately not preserved. Continuing the trend to community improvement, citizens met on June 24 to discuss "the proposition to build a new school house."⁸

Events or entertainment offered in the opera house changed frequently. The ball held on the Fourth of July of 1893 was "a social success," and the ladies of the Christian Church served a supper which made \$42.00. There was a social dance the night of July 22.⁹ One July program was representative of the kind of local-talent offering frequently presented:

An excellent program is before us. Miss Irene Slayton, elocutionist, will present some of her choicest readings, and our people know that they will be excellent. The male quartette will sing some selections and this part of the program will be an unusual treat for our people. The new instrumental Quintette Club will also render some good selections of music especially arranged for the occasion.¹⁰

In August Canfman's Merry Makers came to town with the play "Fogg's Ferry" and the "especially attractive . . . dancing of



West side of square, Table Rock, about 1910. Opera house is above the drugstore.

Little Nina." Probably it was a tent show like another troupe—"The Gross Brothers" Company, which played under its own "large canvas" rather than in the opera house. Gross presented the "New Kit Carson," and carried comedians—"Black, Dutch and Irish," but played to a small house. "The money stringency makes it almost impossible for any kind of entertainment to draw a crowd," the newspaper commented. The opera-house management may have had to ask for protection from the city council. Tent show competition eventually was taxed, as this notice from the village clerk's report indicates. The town did not go empty handed as a result, even if the opera house suffered: "Licenses issued. 2 tent shows \$6.50, 2 peddlers \$2.00, 5 drays \$20.00, 1 saloon \$500.00."¹¹

When two men from Pawnee City rented the opera house to give a "scientific boxing exhibition" for a purse of \$50, the DuBois country correspondent for the *Argus* sarcastically commented: "If the same amount of muscle and means had been put to a wood saw or other means of honest livelihood, the effect on the youth of the town would not have lost anything for good." Athletic prowess must not have been popular in Table Rock, for when the Modern

Hercules, also known as the German Samson, came to town to "delight [with] his marvelous feats of strength," not many showed up. Receipts did not meet expenses.¹²

Activities increased during the fall of 1893 with every issue of the *Herald* carrying notices of coming events: e.g., an "exhibition" by school children, the proceeds to be used for singing books for the school, admission 10 cents and 20 cents; a speaker, Eli Perkins, who had "earned a national reputation for his humorous lectures. Everybody ought to go, you cannot afford to stay away"; an "entertainment" on November 8 with a ball afterwards; a musical concert; and "Child's Comedy Company and Baby Band."¹³

Since Table Rock was not on the main circuit of larger road shows, many entertainments featured "home talent." One concert reviewed by the local critic is typical of the programs mentioned in the *Herald*, although not all evenings had such variety:

The Humboldt band gave a good concert Thursday night. The Wilson sisters, always favorites with a Table Rock audience, appeared in two songs. Miss Jennie Fellers gave a very entertaining recitation, and the band played some very fine selections. The comedy given at the conclusion was very entertaining and was well acted. A dance was given at the conclusion of the programme.¹⁴

Besides Humboldt, other nearby towns sent entertainment ensembles to the opera house. One was the DuBois Columbia Band, "composed of ladies and gentlemen," who gave a Thanksgiving concert. The year concluded with a masquerade ball on December 22. Tickets were \$1.00, spectators 25 cents.¹⁵

In February the possibility of working up the operetta "The Mikado" was discussed. For the ladies a Martha Washington tea was held to benefit the Table Rock library, with "old fashioned games after tea." For the men, the GAR (Civil War Union Veterans) sponsored an address by a Dr. Johnson in honor of Washington's birthday. The only March event listed was a lecture by L. C. Smith on "Ethics of Equality."¹⁶

On April 17 the neighboring DuBois Columbia Band returned to present "The Turn of the Tide," a "nautical and temperance" drama before a good house despite threatening weather. Reserved seats were 35 cents, children 15 cents. "The play was well rendered, and the audience showed themselves well pleased with it, though the outbreak of a violent wind during the concluding scene caused many to leave their seats hastily and somewhat interfered with the effective rendering of the close of the play."

History had repeated itself. When "The Turn of the Tide" was given several years before in the school house, a violent thunderstorm had kept persons in the building till daylight.¹⁷

The "diamond anniversary" of the American Odd Fellows lodge was observed in the opera house in April, with an oration by the Reverend Dr. P. C. Johnson, who "answered some of the current objections to secret societies in general and the Odd Fellows in particular." All secret fraternal orders were then under criticism by some church and ethnic groups. During the observance Edgar Wood gave "an inspiring recital of an extract from Lowell's 'Present Crisis'."¹⁸

For the first of a long series of yearly high school commencements held in the opera house, the auditorium was "tastefully decorated and the class motto, 'Honors Wait at Labor's Gate' was worked in evergreen and hung over the stage." Each of the six graduates gave an oration, as was generally the custom, with special songs between the orations. Until larger facilities were built years later, commencement exercises were May-June fixtures in the opera house. A less dignified June event in the opera house ran into complications:

A couple gave an alleged mind reading and musical entertainment at the opera house. . . . The crowd was so small that they failed to make expenses. During the night, Mr. Ryan, the sewing machine man who occupied an adjoining room at the hotel, heard the man proposing to his wife that they jump their board bill. She objected, and quite a row ensued, the man threatening the woman with violence till finally Ryan interfered and by threats of arrest restored peace.

In the morning it was discovered the man had jumped his bill *and* abandoned his wife. She received charity contributions to pay her bill and to buy a train ticket for nearby Humboldt, where presumably she was able to resume her career.¹⁹

The only other summer events were a Fourth of July ball, as well as another dance sponsored by Superintendent William Combs, who frequently presented such entertainment.

September and October events included a dance played by an "Italian" orchestra; a "rag baby show" featuring a Punch and Judy episode, sponsored by the Republicans; a local drama, "Fruit of his Folly." Of those connected with the play, one was *Herald* Editor R. H. Wessel, manager. Wessel's paper for October 5 carried a full-column review, which is excerpted here:

The players were all home talent and surprised everybody by the realistic manner in which they rendered the play. They have been rehearsing for only two or three weeks, but the

performance would have been worthy of several months practice. Some of the cast show a remarkable degree of talent which if improved might make good actors of them. . . . After the drama, the players repaired to the restaurant of S. E. Roberts and over their oysters had a good chat among themselves respecting the merits of the play, and the different places which left room for improvement.²⁰

The *Herald* suspended publication shortly afterward, though it is not to be inferred as the result of Wessel's role in the play. Between October, 1894, and November, 1895, there is no record of opera house activity, after which *Table Rock Argus* files pick up its chronology. In November, 1895, the Table Rock Dramatic Company produced the "New York Book Agent" at the opera house in Humbolt, 7 miles to the east. In another exchange Professor Fulton, lawyer from Pawnee City, came to Table Rock to lead the Table Rock singers in "H.M.S. Pinafore" on two nights. The first-night house was the "largest paid audience" assembled to that time. In the cast were Grace Talcott, Charley Linn, Dr. [C. C.] Covert, D.D. (as Captain), Lotta Talcott, W. S. Turman, Louis Johnson, and Ruby Allen. "Prof. Fulton was loud in his praises of our singers and says that they sang the parts as well as any amateurs he ever heard."²¹

"Road show" entertainments visiting Table Rock early in 1896 included the Kittello Electric Comedy Company for a one-week engagement in February; admission was 10 cents and the entertainment "strictly moral and refined," according to the *Argus*, which was conversely uncomplimentary toward a "hypnotic" entertainment: "The hypnotist did not deem our town worthy of real work, or else he cannot perform any, so he provided several strangers and two or three prearranged local subjects to go through the performances, which were sometimes laughable."²²

Later in the spring a "newspaper outing" of area editors and publishers met in Table Rock and banqueted at the opera house, after which Ammi L. Bixby of Lincoln read poetry selections. A tramp orator rented the opera house and addressed a "big audience" in October. The tramp orator was a "young fellow who embarked in the rug business on borrowed capital in an Indiana town just before Cleveland's election in 1892. When the hard times came, he went broke and has since been tramping the country." Soon afterward the area Republicans met to hear Royal D. Stearns in a warm-up for the fall campaign of 1896.²³

A Methodist Church, founded in Table Rock in 1857 and well-established by the 1890's, began to sponsor a yearly lecture

series through its Epworth League, a youth organization. On November 6, Dr. H. D. Fisher of Topeka, Kansas, lectured on William C. Quantrill, the infamous Confederate bushwhacker who sacked Lawrence, Kansas, in 1863. The oration was described as a "noble lesson in American patriotism and liberty." On December 8, the Epworth League lecture was by a Bishop Bowman, who spoke on "Travels in India." "Many . . . had never before seen a bishop . . . and Bishop Bowman's appearance was in harmony with their ideas of what a bishop should be," an awed local reporter wrote.²⁴ More lectures in the Epworth series came early in 1897. Included was one by Chaplain Peter W. Howe of the Nebraska State Penitentiary on "Life and Experience in the Penitentiary"; a Dr. Dean presented a travelogue, "Travels in Europe"; and Dr. Charles M. Shepherd of Lincoln spoke on "Ghosts." Masquerade balls and dances were common during the winter months. Participants at one Washington's Birthday masquerade came in elaborate costumes. Those not wishing to participate were allowed in to watch from the sides of the arena for 50 cents each; gallery spectators were charged 15 cents.²⁵

The Pond-Berlin Theatrical Company, one of the small troupes playing the Midwest, featured Lilo Berlin, a young actress who had previously won an electionary contest in Table Rock. When the company played two nights during December of '96, it drew small crowds, despite the lure of a local-girl-made-good. The local critic, who was interested in the moral tone of the production as well as its quality, admonished the stay-at-homes. Pond-Berlin was, he said, "above average, both in excellence of merit and the absence of objectionable features. Several members of the troupe are performers of extensive experience and ability, and all appear to be ladies and gentlemen." The chiding must have paid off. In March the Pond-Berlin Company returned to present "Davy Crockett" one night and "Jerry the Tramp" the second, and "did a fair business." One band member with the show broke a large plate glass door at the H. C. Moore store, but whether in anger or by accident was not reported by the *Argus*.²⁶

The Table Rock Dramatic Company, cooperating with the Women's Suffrage Association, presented "White Mountain Boy" on March 12 and received this review a week later: "On Friday evening the Table Rock Dramatic Company presented the five-act drama, 'The White Mountain Boy,' to an audience which brought almost \$20 to the treasury of the W.S.A. The players all

TABLE ROCK BAND BOYS' BENEFIT

OPERA HOUSE,
TABLE ROCK, NEBR.,

—ON—

THURSDAY EVENING, FEB. 24,

The Great Moral and Instructive Drama
in Four Acts, Entitled

“THE

BLACK DETECTIVE, or OVER THE HILLS to the POOR HOUSE,”

Produced by the Best Local Talent in the
city, under the direction of F. E. Farrell.

Cast of Characters

GEORGE WASHINGTON CLEVELAND NIMMO, a member of the Linn Kila Club	- - - -	F E FARRELL
HUGH FLOYD, falsely accused	- - - -	C C NORRIS
FRANK JACKSON, a gentleman in appearance, a villain at heart.	- - - -	S E ROBERTS
CHAS. FLOYD, who forgets his duty	- - - -	JOHN PHILLIPS
TIM GARDENSAW, a representative from “Sing Sing”	- - - -	BEN JOHNSON
TOM PIPER, policeman	- - - -	COL COTTON
MR. FLOYD	- - - -	SQUIRE ROBERTS
MRS FLOYD a wronged mother sent to the poor house,	- - - -	MISS MAGGIE SUTTON
MARY WATSON, Hugh Floyd's sweetheart	- - - -	MISS NELLIE COTTON
JENRIE FLOYD, with a heart of stone	- - - -	MISS NELLIE FARRELL
MRS CHARITY, seeking charity for the poor beathen in the Sandwich Islands	- - - -	MISS PAULINE WRIGHT
LITTLE ELLA, the motherless child	- - - -	LELA JOHNSON

ADMISSION

Children under 12 years	- - - -	10 cents
General Admission	- - - -	20 cents
Reserved Seats	- - - -	30 cents

Playbill from the Table Rock Argus, February, 1898.

had their lines well committed, and acted their parts well." The review commended performers by name for dramatic talent or for "winning the audience." The Women's Suffrage Association frequently sponsored events in the opera house. In May it gave "one of the best of the numerous home talent entertainments," with an assist from S. Edward Roberts who delivered an address "replete with arguments for women's suffrage." Before the month was over the dramatic company cleared \$10 on a musical farce, "Fruits of the Wine Cup," in conjunction with a band concert.²⁷

Another kind of local entertainment, a variety show, was provided by performers from Tecumseh, county seat of Johnson County to the north:

The Tecumseh Ticklers have come and gone and a big audience would undoubtedly greet them at a second appearance here. The boys gave their entertainment at the Opera House last night to only a fair sized audience. . . . The program was made up of new and catchy songs, jokes, dancing, and other specialties, which for two hours held the attention of the audience. The music by the orchestra was very fine.²⁸

After an autumn of comparative inactivity, the winter of '98 brought a succession of plays: the Wade Opera Company rendered "For a Million" to "a fair-sized audience . . . , giving a fairly good performance"; The Cardo Medical Company performed for a week in February; "The Black Detective, or Over the Hills to the Poor House," a favorite of play-goers of the time, was presented under the management of F. E. Farrell to benefit the city band; "The Deestric School" played to a large audience, and the Women's Suffrage Association added a "snug sum" (\$16.10) to its treasury. Sammy [S. Edward] Roberts was the schoolmaster in the play, and Dramatics Society members were pupils. Costumes were the school dress of the mid-1800's.²⁹

The H.H. Auxiliary of the W.S.A. gave a banquet in February. The H.H., which stood for "hen-pecked husbands or happy husbands," indicated the disenfranchised women were far from humorless in their quest for ballots. Men of the auxiliary gave a "unique entertainment" which included a Negro character delineation by Capt. Jennings and his two daughters, Miss Fannie Jennings and Mrs. McBride.³⁰

A "really big show" came to Table Rock in March, 1898, when "Burk's Big Uncle Tom's Cabin . . . one of the finest organizations now traveling" appeared for a one-night stand. Rave reviews from Missouri preceded it:

This company comes well spoken of by the press of Southern Missouri and Kansas, where they have been for the past two months playing to crowded houses. Don't fail to see their

fine street parade at noon on day advertised, the company carrying their own special scenery, and the wonderful illuminated transformation scene entitled "The Gates Ajar," is in itself the finest spectacular production of any Uncle Tom's Cabin company. As a pledge of good faith, the manager will return money to those not satisfied with their performance, after the first act.³¹

The Midwest was full of "third Class Uncle Tom's" during the summer of '98 according to the *Wayne Herald*, which reported that Pickett's Uncle Tom's Cabin Company folded after a performance in Wayne could not even pay the city license. The company's tent was "attached by members of the cast, to whom the proprietors were indebted," and the sheriff sold the fixtures, including a bloodhound, for \$85, according to the *Argus*. Even so, the Table Rock Opera House management was bold enough to schedule another "cabin show" for June, Frank E. Griswold's elaborate Railroad Uncle Tom's Cabin Co., which in a 3 column-9 inch ad trumpeted its virtues. The *Argus* wrote:

This company in their own [railroad] car carry a car load of special scenery and mechanical effects. One of the finest bands on the road will give a band parade at noon. This company has been organized at an actual cost of \$40,000 and should not be confounded with other so-called companies playing this piece. Mr. Griswold was the first and only manager to produce the piece in the South, being actively connected with the play for over 20 years. He has played the piece in all the large cities in America including Cleveland, Indianapolis, Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit and San Francisco.³²

The Tennessee Jubilee Singers, well-known Fisk University Negro choir, made frequent appearances at Table Rock, beginning in 1896. A new piano was purchased in time for their return engagement in 1898. In commenting on the first booking, the newspaper said, "This aggregation of singers are popular with our people and they come with all the prestige of a national reputation as the best company of jubilee singers before the public. The company is better than ever and you may be sure of getting your money's worth and have the best laugh you have had for a long time." Two years later when they returned, their press notices were even more impressive:

Grand Vocal Concert by the far-famed Fisk Jubilee Singers, Chas. Mumford, Manager. Original Company, organized Oct. 6, 1871, at Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn. Lately returned from a most successful tour of Northern Europe. 9 public concerts in Leipzig, 11 in Amsterdam, 19 in Berlin, 24 in Hamburg, 50 in Stockholm. One more chance to hear the songs that have touched the heart of the world, sung as only the Fisk Jubilee Singers can sing them. Opera House, Table Rock, July 13. Admission, 25, 35, and 50 cents.³³

Patriotic fervor came to Table Rock in the spring of 1898 in the wake of the sinking of the *Maine* in Havana harbor. A mass

meeting of "Citizens for Cubans" heard Ex-governor John M. Thayer and H. C. Russell of Lincoln at the opera house. A "Remember the Maine" monument meeting was called during May and \$9.00 was sent to a national committee to help erect a monument in memory of servicemen who perished when the *Maine* sank in Havana harbor.³⁴

Two Spanish-American-War-oriented productions played Table Rock in the spring of 1898: Johnnie and Ida Pringle in a double comedy, "A Happy Pair" and "Love Flown Away"; and Sutton's Company:

The Pringles have appeared in all the larger cities of the U.S., Canada, and South America and have no equal in their profession. They are neat and artistic and never fail to please very one. [They do] the wonderful French Kaleidoscopic dance, for which they carry \$500.00 worth of calcium and electric light effects; in this dance, Miss Pringle will wear a dress containing over 100 yards of pure white silk and she will change the color, material, and design of the dress over 100 times in full view of the audience.³⁵

Sutton's Big Double Company of twenty people with a superb band and orchestra will be here for one night only, Saturday, August 20, presenting the latest and greatest war drama written, entitled, "Cuba Libre." This great play in four acts pertains to our difficulty with Spain shortly after the destruction of the *Maine*.³⁶

"The rendition of the war drama drew forth tumultuous and repeated applause," according to the *Argus* editor.³⁷

A year later traveling shows were still capitalizing on the emotionalism of the war. The Freeman Brothers brought their "Midway Attraction at the Exposition" to Table Rock, cautioning the public not to class this group "with inferior outfits who carry their apparatus in a hand satchel." Displays included:

Dewey's victory at Manila, Bombardment of Matanzas, Destruction of Cervera's fleet, Battle of Santiago, capture of Morro Castle and many more such as the Spanish Bull fight, Quarrel at cards, Barnum and Bailey's St[reet] parade, Rough riders, Mamma's pets, and many more, comprising 25 living pictures. Remember we have no Magic lantern views but are full of life and action. Don't miss this as it is an opportunity to view our naval engagement without endangering your self. We are the only people who have the exclusive right of the State of Nebraska and pay a large royalty to exhibit same. These water scenes are genuine Edison stock and are taken during the engagements with Telescopic lenses retouched, refinished, and brought out true to life. Our entertainment is sanctioned by the public and press and there is nothing that will displease the most select.³⁸

Local entertainment—a spring festival, Maypole Dance, two other dances—were held during April-May. The Noble Dramatic Company, with "Mixed Pickles" in its repertory, unsuccessfully battled the weather during a brief May stand.³⁹ Commencement exercises on June 3, 1898, dispensed with student orations for the first time, and substituted a speaker, University of Nebraska Pro-

fessor Henry B. Ward, who addressed eight class members. Pranksters "who took the bunting from the opera house" were "notified to return the same and thereby save themselves trouble." Botany specimens by graduates were on exhibition.⁴⁰

Grace Talcott, a local soprano who had developed her "magnificent voice by a year's course of training under one of the best teachers in Chicago," gave a song recital which the newspaper called a "musical treat. . . . She reached high C with clearness and ease."⁴¹ She also appeared in other area recitals during the summer. The Lotus Male Quartette and Concert Company of the Lincoln Conservatory of Music, came to town with a "pleasing entertainment" featuring basso W. F. Lint, regarded "as the leading base [*sic*] singer of the west."⁴²

Major politicians appearing in Table Rock during the campaign of 1898 were Elmer J. Burkett, Republican candidate for Congress, on October 14, and George Hibner, a Fusionist, on October 12. Another Fusion candidate, James Manahan, spoke on November 3.⁴³

During October, 1898, "Lewis Carnival of Wonders, Nights of Enchantment," promised stage settings and paraphernalia both "costly and beautiful, excelling anything of the kind ever on the opera house stage." There "a refined combination of exciting acts"—"East Indian magnetism, Hindu sports, aerial tableaux, dramatic excentricities, laughable absurdities and illusions and a melange of literary and lyric patchwork." Something for everyone! The acts might have been almost as exciting as another "event" at a speaking a week later: "A rat at large in the opera house last night caused no little commotion in the audience."⁴⁴

The Epworth League continued its lecture series through fall and winter: The Reverend A. B. Whitmer, speaking on "Things That Make Me Tired," talked for nearly two hours apparently without tiring his audience, which "laughed and applauded." Dr. Fletcher L. Wharton, pastor of the St. Paul Methodist Episcopal Church filled one date; Dr. Charles M. Shepherd discussed "War and Weapons" and displayed his personal \$10,000 gun-and-sword collection; and C. S. Dudley's topic was "Luck and Pluck."⁴⁵

The year 1899 started with promise, but the entire year became a disappointment in that few outstanding attractions made it to the stage. One casualty was a four-act play, "What Became of Parker?" to benefit the fire company. One postponement notice

had followed another since October, but people were asked to be patient by the Table Rock Dramatic Company. It is doubtful that the public ever learned what became of Parker, since no further mention is made of the production. "Keabe's Great Attraction," scheduled for the opera house in March to portray "the dark side of city life," apparently became another casualty of artistic apathy. Still the management added a new piano to its fixtures.⁴⁶

Evangelism, temperance, and a musical recital, all locally generated, used the opera house in April and May of '99. Pastor St. John, who was conducting a revival at the Methodist Church, moved his "cause" to the opera house. In the "silver medal contest," sponsored by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the contestants were seven young girls who gave recitations or songs. A "grand musical entertainment" by Myrta Howe and her pupils consisted of twenty-seven organ, vocal, and piano numbers. The admission of 10 cents benefited the cemetery fund.⁴⁷

After the flurry of school-end activities, the summer of 1899 was especially slow. The opera house lay idle until August. Not even the usual Fourth of July celebration was held. The town languished under a smallpox quarantine from June 16 until August 11. "Forty-two persons were afflicted, some coming out of it badly marked," though a vaccination operation was carried on during the epidemic.⁴⁸

In August plans were made for the return of fighting men from the Spanish-American War in the Philippines. There was a reception for "our soldier boys" and an illustrated lecture by Professor George R. Roomer, a member of Co. C, 1st Nebraska Volunteers. Over 100 pictures taken by the speaker and other soldiers of Philippines scenes gave the hearer "a good idea of what the 1st Nebraska boys saw and went through."⁴⁹

The fall season brought the road show of C. H. Colson. "The best talent of Table Rock" and members of Colson's road company combined to present the four-act comedy drama "The Vagabond." No comment in the *Argus* followed the play, but a rare critical review did appear, however, in relation to the program presented by the music class of Emma M. Clema: "The musical entertainment given by the . . . class was not by far a success, owing to absence of her pupils. But Miss Clema bore her disappointment exceptionally well and gave a most interesting talk upon Music and Education."⁵⁰

Two Republican Meetings.

On Thursday, October 18, R. Rusicka, editor of the *Pokrok Zapadu*, will address the Bohemian citizens of this vicinity at the Table Rock opera house. Our Bohemian citizens are invited to come out and hear one of their own countrymen discuss the political issues.

Hon. Norris Brown, one of the most eloquent political speakers in Nebraska, will address the citizens at the opera house on Friday evening, of next week. It will pay you to hear him. Be sure to come out.

Flambeau and marching club demonstrations.

Political ad from the Table Rock Argus, October 18, 1900.

The Epworth League's annual lecture course that winter brought these lecturers to the opera house: Dr. Hugh O. Rowlands, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lincoln, "one of Lincoln's most popular divines, and an orator of acknowledged superiority throughout the country . . . with his famous lecture, 'Tantalus'"; Dr. C. N. Dawson, pastor of the Omaha Walnut Hill Methodist Church, who kept his "audience laughing for nearly two hours and even then the people were not tired"; Edith Cogswell of Crete in an elocutionary program that "greatly pleased her hearers, her enunciation and acting being fine"; Dr. Shepherd of Nebraska City, an "orator of great ability and one of the most wonderful word painters in Nebraska"; Dr. Henry B. Wharton of Lincoln, speaking on "That Preacher's Boy."⁵¹

A major improvement in the lighting began in November, 1899, when the opera house was "fitted out with Conklin acetylene gas." At that time the building complex included Martin's butcher shop, the State Bank, the post office, and Brown's barber shop. During installation an explosion occurred in the Knights of Pythias Hall in the bank building when a leak caused gas to be

trapped under the lecture platform. Fortunately only minor injuries were incurred: A. C. Boyd and John Sutton, who were looking for the leak, both sustained leg injuries.⁵²

December, 1899, activity at the opera house almost made up for the slow months preceding. An entertainment on December 13, sponsored by the Women's Suffrage Association consisted of "comic quartettes, solos, recitations, duets, tableaux, a tennis drill, and dialogue." The newspaper singled out the "recitation by little Rudolph Kovanda" for special acclaim. The popularity of the program necessitated an encore a few nights later.⁵³

In December the LaRenos held forth at the opera house for a week. The LaRenos were part of a traveling medicine show called the Mexicana Herb Company. The *Argus* said this was "one of the best 10 cent entertainments ever given in our city . . . the entertainment clean, yet fun provoking." One night the company presented "Ten Nights in a Bar Room"; on others there were comic voting contests—for the homeliest man in the house, J. P. Ewing the winner; for the lady who proved the best nail driver; and for the handsomest baby.⁵⁴

Cheaper yet was the Quaker Medicine Company which played at the opera house the following year. The entertainment was "free to adults, but children . . . charged for every night." What the philosophy of this gambit was is not clear. The *Argus* said "the company gave the best and most refined entertainment of any organization traveling."⁵⁵ Several of these "Quaker" medicine shows were on the road, and author Harlowe Hoyt, who grew up with various traveling companies, reports that the "Quaker doctors" with the troupe were models of decorum:

Something about their subdued drab clothing instilled confidence in their listeners and their "thee," "thou," and "brother" were paramount when they started their pitch. Even if this affectation was dropped, once the sales talk got under way and the lecture became quite as commonplace as any other ballyhoo, the audience listened entranced and remained to buy at the blowoff.⁵⁶

When the genuinely famous Blind Boone Concert Company was billed for Table Rock in January, the *Argus* commented, "Our music lovers are anticipating a royal treat." John William (Blind) Boone, a sightless Negro pianist, featured talented women vocalists, one of whom was a Miss Rivers, who had "a sweet voice" and proved "a great hit." Boone, an accomplished pianist, "successfully reproduced a piece played by Miss Bessie Sutton [a local musician] and his other work was up to its usual high order."

He was greeted by a large audience and the concert "gave universal pleasure."⁵⁷

Blind Boone, an institution for almost fifty years in the Midwest, was well known in Nebraska. Willa Cather in *My Antonia* combined Blind Boone and another black pianist, Blind Tom, into a character called "Blind D'Arnault."⁵⁸ Besides classical works by Liszt, Chopin, and Gottschalk, Boone played his own compositions, humorous ditties and camp meeting melodies, which he might sing as he played. "He usually ended with the thundering 'Marshfield Tornado'—his idea of the din made by that lethal storm of 1880. Afterward he played selections requested by his listeners, one of whom might first play a piece unfamiliar to Boone and ask that it be repeated. His memory was good enough to play back the number with reasonable fidelity."⁵⁹

"A Social Glass" by the Table Rock Dramatic Company was presented in March, with proceeds going to the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Admission was 10 cents, "so that everybody can attend." In reviewing the performance, the *Argus* was kind:

A home talent company rendered T. Trask Woodward's temperance drama, "A Social Glass," at the opera house . . . Under the direction of S. Edward Roberts . . . Those who heard it say it was as well played as professionals would have done. The Table Rock orchestra rendered some excellent music and Alwyn Scism sang delightfully "The Cake-Walk in the Sky." As the old maid who "loved to make people happy," Millard DeBord, was a hit; S. E. Roberts was at his best in the role of Robt. Britte, Esq.; Misses Gertie Norris and Nellie Cotton, each played their parts well, and Ben Johnston looked and acted like the typical booze dispenser; while Bob Wood, Will Ellis, John Phillips and Paul Pangburn played and acted their parts well. The proceeds about \$15.00 net was turned over to the W.C.T.U.⁶⁰

The spring of 1900 found the Royal Neighbors entertaining the Woodmen (these were complementary female and male fraternal orders) at a banquet; Myrta Howe's music class performing at a benefit for the cemetery fund; dancers winding the Maypole; and a "Guess and Eat" social. At the latter, "crokinole and other amusements" were indulged in and supper was served from 6 o'clock till 12. Proceeds of \$14.00 went to the suffragettes of the W.S.A.⁶¹ Lecturing on May 4 was prohibitionist Mrs. E. Norine Law, "a woman of magnetic presence, a clear, forcible speaker," with a "voice eminently adapted to her mission and withal heart and soul devoted to the grand work of temperance in which she is engaged."⁶²

In the fall of 1900, a presidential election year, politics took up much of the space in the press and a parade of political speakers

*John William (Blind) Boone.
Courtesy State Historical Society
of Missouri.*



held forth at the opera house. "Male and female" Republicans were invited by advertisement to the meeting of the McKinley and Roosevelt Club to hear "that eloquent and logical speaker, Judge Tucker," who was expected to "give the Republican campaign a good start."⁶³ At this time the suffragettes had not yet gained the vote, and the women attended only for the sake of sociability. Elaborate campaign festivities were planned for a local candidate. His advertisement in the *Argus* read:

Hon. Frank Martin, Republican candidate for State Senator, will address the citizens of Table Rock and vicinity at opera house on Saturday evening. The Flambeau and ladies' marching club will parade before speech. Special quartette singing. You are cordially invited to come out and hear the next senator.⁶⁴

As the year 1900 drew to a close the community fell back on its own resources for entertainment. Ten cents gained admittance to a school entertainment November 9. The program advertised "humor, pathos, and patriotism, liberally interspersed with good music. All the parts will be short and spicy." The "treat of the season" was promised at the "Grand Concert" on November 30 when the Pawnee Concert Company, composed of the "best talent" in the West, starred Frank Gregory, a whistling soloist. The Aeolian Quartette—Dr. C. C. Covert, Table Rock dentist, the Reverend W. H. Parker, Laura Holmes, soprano (who had "few equals in the west"), and Miss Kate Moore, alto ("very pleasing to an audience")—appeared at the opera house on December 15. On the same bill it was said "The Foaming Sea" by a boys' quartette would be "worth the price of admission."⁶⁵

The end of December had its disappointments. "Waves of fun, oceans of laughter, music and wit" promised by Cooper's Musical

Comedy Company on Christmas Day did not materialize. Neither did the Arthur Dayton Show during the holidays. The century closed out in silence at the opera house.⁶⁶

In the years since 1900, other productions, dances, and banquets have been held in the Table Rock Opera House. though movies, the automobile, good roads, radio, television—all have eroded the functions for which it was built. For a short while it was a movie theatre, with M. V. Johnson the manager. About 1917 or 1918 a new movie house was erected in Table Rock and shortly after that the opera house became the meeting hall for the local Bohemian C.Z.B.J. Lodge. A swan song of sorts issued from the historic old structure in 1955 when the last play was presented on the opera house stage.⁶⁷

Gordon Bethel, president of the Table Rock Historical Society and former owner of the opera house, has fond memories of the old building. As a boy in 1910, Bethel worked there. His jobs included starting fires in the big stoves in the early evening, sweeping, and setting up the chairs. He received no pay but was allowed to see the performances free. He remembers the high school graduation plays, the traveling shows, the acrobats who performed on rings hung from the auditorium ceiling. One popular troupe, a man-wife-partner team, performed for a whole week. The male partner had a beautiful high voice, and as the front curtain was raised to about his waist, the man, in female garb, was thought to be a woman singing. The man and wife played drinking glasses by rubbing their hands on partially filled glasses. And the woman was also a quick-change artist. Her last costume consisted of stars and stripes, and little Gordon was impressed.⁶⁸

Those small road companies are gone now, as are the suffrage speakers, medicine shows, masquerade balls, and temperance dramas. But these and other events provided both culture and entertainment for the local citizenry. From the variety of activity that took place there, it is obvious that the opera house was the "civic center," a community meeting place where friends took time to get together. Pre-1900 events listed here obviously do not include all the entertainments which were staged in the opera house or occupied its auditorium. Some have been arbitrarily omitted. Others may have been inadvertently missed by the newspaper, and still other casual meetings may have been deemed unnewsworthy. Still this section presents a cross section of what

interested the townsfolk of Nebraska villages in the 1890's. The Table Rock Historical Society has wisely retained its opera house as a museum where visitors may get a glimpse of the past.

APPENDIX

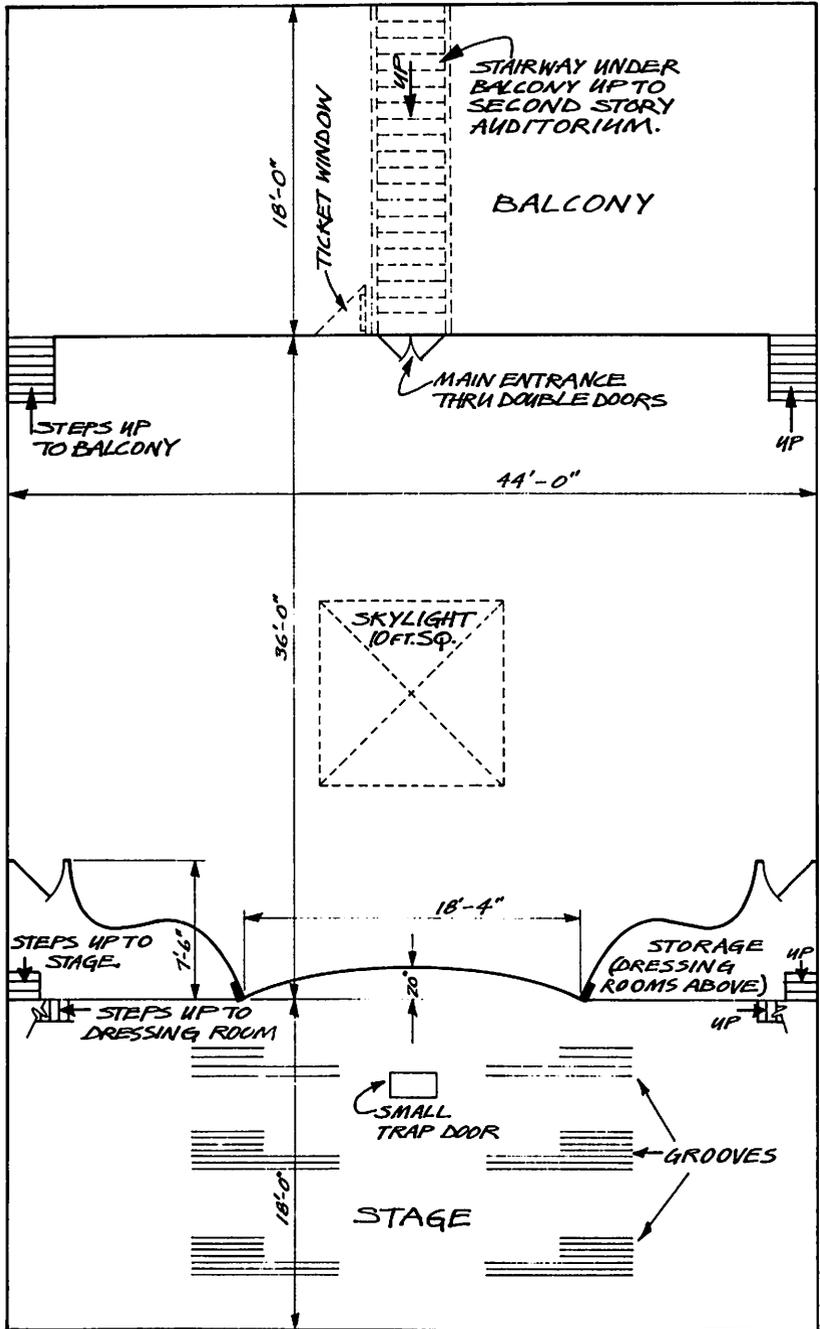
Description of the Opera House

The Auditorium takes up most of the second floor; a balcony, high auditorium ceiling, and stage loft make up the third story. The offices on the north under the balcony are separated from the kitchen on the south by the main entrance stairway in the center. Today the office space is a museum picture gallery. The kitchen, with two serving windows open onto the auditorium, is now a reconstructed family kitchen of the 1890's. Spectators once used the landing at the top of the stairway for standing room while buying tickets. The ticket booth, part of the rental office area, was large enough for only one ticket seller.

Inside, the opera house is 44 feet wide and 72 feet long. Both the balcony and the stage are 18 feet deep, with the auditorium taking up the remaining 36 feet. Natural lighting, efficient heating, and simple seating were provided for the audience. Over the main seating area is a skylight 10 feet square—a tiny roof-top cupola 8 feet tall with windows on all four sides. The auditorium was heated by two coal-burning stoves along the south and north walls. Seating was provided by wooden, round-backed "kitchen" chairs, perhaps eight rows of ten chairs each. To facilitate placing chairs, they were bolted together by fours on boards. Additional chairs were used along the walls, and another sixty or seventy could be placed in the balcony.

The balcony can be reached by two stairways against the walls. Stairs are only 3 feet wide, very steep and, since they extend out onto the main floor, have a double board railing opposite the wall side. The balcony, 8 feet, 4 inches above the main floor, has a low, solid-wood railing across the front. It is 9 feet from floor to ceiling at the front of the balcony and only 7 feet, 6 inches to the ceiling at the rear wall; this variation shows that the rake in the balcony is about 1-1/2 feet within its 18-foot depth. Four unevenly spaced windows are at the rear of the balcony.

The stage opening is on the west wall, opposite the balcony. To the right and left of the stage opening, the walls angle into the



Floor plan of the Table Rock Opera House.

audience area, then curve back to the outside walls. This jutting-out creates two small rooms or passageways on each side of the stage. Two auditorium doors near the outside walls allow entry to the stage by way of these small rooms and five-step stairways. Each triangular room is 12 feet wide, but only 4 feet deep near the stage and 1-1/2 feet deep along the outside wall. Each little room has an upper level used for dressing and is accessible by a crude stairway from the stage floor. Men probably dressed on one side, women on the other. Passageways below the dressing rooms were used for storage.

The scenery on the stage consists of a "wing and groove" system. Large flats, i.e. frames made with 1 x 4's and covered with canvas, are held in place at the top by being inserted into a groove. Several panels, called wing flats, stand upright on each side of the stage, facing the audience and parallel to the stage opening. Space between the panels allowed for exits by the actors. Each panel now exposed on the stage has trees and shrubbery painted on it.

Scene changing was a simple task at the opera house. For an outdoor setting, "tree" flats were shoved into place. Stages also had "interior" wings, or plain painted flats with wainscoating or other suggestions of interior walls. If the play called for an indoor scene the "interior" wings were slid into place, hiding the "exterior" wings. Of course, if "trees" were needed again, out would go the "walls." The more grooves on each side of the stage, the more variety of changes possible, with the addition of various colored wing flats or various "views" painted on the flats.

The opera house has only 8 feet of off-stage area on each side when the wing flats are in place. Wing flats are 14 feet tall and 4 feet wide and held in place by the "groove system" which is suspended 4 feet from the stage ceiling. A pair of two grooves, one 4 feet long and one 8 feet, are 2 feet from the proscenium on each side of the stage ceiling. Wings this close to the front are used for masking, or hiding the off-stage arena. Four feet behind the first pair is a wider pair, again one on each side, with four grooves 4 feet long and two grooves 8 feet long. A pair of the last longer grooves is capable of holding the main backdrop across the rear of the whole stage. The many grooves allow not only for scene changes but also provide stage depth.

Besides the groove system suspended from the ceiling, two parallel 1 x 8 boards 10 feet apart support the lighting system—eight (four on each board) incandescent bulbs with

reflectors behind them. This system, about 1920's vintage, is controlled stage right by a box containing sixteen fuses and eight pull handles, each carefully labeled. The switches control four chandeliers in the audience and one in the balcony, as well as bulbs in the proscenium arch and the footlights. Footlights are in tin troughs hung on the apron, and consist of ten porcelain sockets for incandescent bulbs. (At the very first there were kerosene lamps in the opera house.)

The stage floor is of unfinished tongue-and-groove and has a 30-inch square trap door cut in it. Under the stage is an area that is 48 inches high at the back wall and 43 inches toward the front of the stage. The actual front stage apron, which is curved and extends in the center 20 inches past the proscenium frame, is 41 inches high. According to under-stage measurements, it is apparent the stage is raked 6 or 7 inches.

The front of the stage opening, or proscenium arch, resembles a giant gold-tone picture frame. The opening is 20 feet, 4 inches wide and 13 feet, 6 inches high. The gold-painted border measures 20 inches wide and is decorated on the sides and top with recessed panels, each 6 feet long and 9 inches wide. On the upper side panels and across the top are sixteen porcelain light sockets for incandescent bulbs. Four narrow gold panels fill in the area between the ceiling and the border at the top of the arch. Partially rolled up behind the arch is the front stage curtain, a canvas drop with painted "draperies" framing a pastoral scene.

NOTES

1. *Nebraska Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1894-95.*
2. Frank H. Taylor, "History of Table Rock" (c. 1925), 2, typescript at Nebraska State Historical Society. Taylor bought the *Table Rock Argus* in 1887. The paper continued in the Taylor family until the 1940's; Lewis C. Edwards, *History of Richardson County, Nebraska*, (Indianapolis, Bowen and Co., 1917), 621-622.
3. Files of Register of Deeds, Pawnee City (Pawnee County), Nebraska.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Table Rock Herald*, May 4, 11, 1893.
6. *Ibid.*, May 18, 25, 1893.
7. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1893.
8. J. F. Kemper was an early pastor of the Table Rock Methodist Church. Ellen L. Fellers, *Table Rock, Nebraska, 1858-1958* (1958), 3, typescript at Nebraska State Historical Society. *Table Rock Herald*, June 22, 1893.
9. *Table Rock Herald*, July 6-13, 1893.
10. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1893.

11. *Table Rock Herald*, September 28, 1893; *Table Rock Argus*, September 4, 1897. The *Argus* was purchased by Frank W. Taylor in 1887 and the paper remained in the family until 1940. He was the author of many of the reviews of opera house entertainments.
12. *Argus*, September 21, October 5, 1897, January 4, 11, 1900.
13. *Table Rock Herald*, October 19, 26, November 2, 9, 1893.
14. *Ibid.*, November 16, 1893.
15. *Ibid.*, December 22, 1893.
16. *Ibid.*, February 9, 23, March 2, 1894.
17. *Ibid.*, April 6, 20, 1894.
18. *Ibid.*, April 27, 1894.
19. *Ibid.*, June 8, 22, 1894.
20. S. Edward Roberts, owner of a Table Rock restaurant and confectionary business, popular with "outing parties and others wanting ice cream, cool drinks and oysters in their season." Hassler, *Souvenir Book*, 66; *Table Rock Herald*, July 27, September 7, 21, 28, 1894.
21. *Table Rock Argus*, November 22, 1895.
22. *Ibid.*, February 14, 28, 1896.
23. Probably Ammi L. Bixby, associate editor of the *Lincoln State Journal*, who in 1899 listed his occupation as "poet-philosopher." Royal D. Stearns was a Lincoln attorney. *Hoyle's City Directory of Lincoln for 1899* (Lincoln: Hoyle Directory Company, 1899), 76; Albert Watkins, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1913), IIIA, 539; Watkins, *History of Nebraska*, IIIC, 618; *Table Rock Argus*, April 24, October 23, 30, 1896.
24. Taylor, "History of Table Rock." 1; *Argus*, November 27, December 11, 1896.
25. Probably Dr. Charles M. Shepherd of Lincoln's Grace Methodist Church; *Argus*, December 11, 1896, January 29, February 19, March 5, 12, 1897.
26. *Ibid.*, December 11, 1896, March 5, 1897.
27. *Ibid.*, March 19, May 14, 21, 1897; The Women's Suffrage Association was organized in Hebron, Nebraska, in April, 1879, and was especially strong in the Beatrice-Tecumseh areas near Table Rock. Erasmus M. Correll Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.
28. *Argus*, April 9, 1897.
29. *Ibid.*, February 18, 25, March 4, 1898.
30. *Ibid.*, February 11, 1898.
31. *Ibid.*, March 11, 1898.
32. *Ibid.*, June 23, September 8, 1898; *Wayne (Nebraska) Herald*, July 7, 14, 1898.
33. *Argus*, March 25, 1898; July 5, 1900.
34. Henry Clay Russell, elected to the Legislature in 1886 from Colfax County, was an unsuccessful contender for the 1902 Republican gubernatorial nomination. J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: Jacob North and Company, 1907), II, 766; *Argus*, May 6, 13, 1898.
35. *Argus*, August 4, 1898.
36. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1898.
37. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1898.
38. *Ibid.*, April 27, 1899.
39. Harlow R. Hoyt, *Town Hall Tonight* (New York: Bramhall House, 1955), 76; *Argus*, April 8, 15, 22, May 13, 20, 1898.
40. *Argus*, May 27, 1898.
41. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1898.
42. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1898.
43. *Ibid.*, October 13, 27, 1898.
44. *Ibid.*, October 27, November 5, 1898.
45. *Ibid.*, December 8, 29, January 19, February 2, 1899.
46. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1898, March 2, 9, 30, 1899.
47. *Ibid.*, April 27, 1899.

48. *Ibid.*, August 17, 1899.
49. The 1st Nebraska Regiment participated in the American attack on Manila in August of 1898, and took part in numerous other Philippines engagements. It had a total enrollment of 1,376 and was mustered out at San Francisco, August 23, 1899. Theron E. Sedgwick, *York County, Nebraska, and It's People* (Chicago: the S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921), 176; *Argus*, September 28, 1899.
50. *Ibid.*, October 5, November 16, 1899.
51. Actually Dr. Hugh D. Rowlands. *Argus*, December 28, 1899, January 17, February 1, 8, March 8, 1900.
52. *Ibid.*, November 30, January 11, 1900.
53. *Ibid.*, December 7, 14, 1899.
54. *Ibid.*, December 14, 1899.
55. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1900; Because of the almost universal faith the public had in the conscientious Quakers, their name was often assumed by firms which had no connection with that sect. The suspect products of the medicine show company, it was hoped, would thereby become more respectable when associated with the Quakers.
56. Hoyt, *Town Hall Tonight*, 247.
57. *Ibid.*, January 17, 25, 1900.
58. "Out of Old Nebraska," newspaper release of *Nebraska State Historical Society*, August 25, 1976.
59. *Ibid.* Boone (1864-1927) was born of a slave mother in an Army camp of a Missouri regiment during the Civil War. He became blind as a youngster. In part self taught, he also had some formal music education in college. He played for audiences in the Midwest until late in life.
60. *Argus*, March 15, 29, 1900.
61. *Ibid.*, March 15, 31, April 26, 1900.
62. *Ibid.*, April 26, 1900.
63. *Ibid.*, August 16, 1900.
64. *Ibid.*, October 4, 1900; Flambeau (flaming torch) marching clubs were a part of most political campaigns in the 19th century. A number of Nebraska towns had McKinley Flambeau Clubs which paraded in evenings in the interest of the Republican candidate. *Wayne Heald*, September 8, 1900.
65. *Argus*, November 1, 22, December 6, 1900.
66. *Ibid.*, December 20, 27, 1900.
67. Interview of Gordon Bethel, Table Rock, by author.
68. *Ibid.*