

# Early Day Reminiscences of the Salt Lake Theatre

## Brigham Young As a Patron of the Drama

By David McKenzie

DAVID MCKENZIE,  
Matinee Idol of the Sixties



My first connection with any stage was the result of a mistake. Robert Y. Taylor and myself arrived in the city from Scotland, in Oct. 1854. We called at John Lyons's, to whom I had a letter of introduction, and at whose house a convivial party was being held. During the evening, Brother Taylor delivered two recitations, and so impressed Brother Lyons with his ability that he invited him to attend a meeting to be held in the Social hall, only two evenings later, for the organization of a theatrical company to play through the winter. Brother Lyons held the position of critic in the association, hence his influence. He introduced Brother Taylor to President Brigham Young at that meeting. He gave a recitation there, and was voted in as a member of the association, but Brother

ed to theatrical entertainments, especially those of an amusing character. He said to the audience on the opening night of the theater: "If I had my way I would never have a tragedy played on these boards. There is enough of tragedy in every day life, and we ought to have amusement when we come here." He was equally interested in the amusement of dancing, but he deprecated waiting. It was indispensable with him that all those entertainments should be conducted under the terms of the strictest morality. As early as 1854, he person-

Facsimile of Invitation to the Dedication of the Theater, Issued by President Brigham Young.

The original is owned by Mr. Fernand L. Clawson, who is negotiating with several collectors of relics for its sale. Thus far he has not received what he regards as a satisfactory price.

He wanted all such scenes forever banished from our stage. Still he felt that it was not his prerogative to forbid the repetition of the play, but he did advise the people through the various bishops, not to attend the next performance.

**MANAGERIAL CAREER.**  
My management was in joint association with John T. Caine and Hiram B. Clawson, and came about in this way. Prest. John Taylor as trustee in trust, in 1870, decided to organize the Salt Lake Dramatic association. He instructed me to call on United States Marshal Shaugnessy to receive from him the keys of the theater, which he held pending the litigation in the district court in which the theater was concerned. When I returned and gave the president the keys, he said he would need a president and vice president, also a secretary and a treasurer and asked me who I thought would be the proper parties. I supposed he would be president, and said so. He said emphatically "no." I then suggested John T. Caine as a fitting man of long experience in the business, and Hiram B. Clawson as vice president, both of whom he approved of. He said he wanted James Jack for treasurer and asked me if I would act as secretary, which I agreed to. When the election took place, Brother Caine, who was at that time city recorder, at first declined the office, but agreed to accept it, with the assurance that the secretary would do the most of the work, and he would only be required to advise, when necessary. The business was therefore run under the style of "Caine, Clawson & McKenzie," managers. The first performance under this management was given on Oct. 4, 1870, by James Herne, and his own company. They played five nights. This management continued without interruption until March 19, 1887. The entertainments given during this period were mostly by traveling companies. The

Mr. David McKenzie, leading man at the Salt Lake Theater during the palmy days of the old stock company which held the boards during the sixties and early seventies, contributes to the Christmas News the following interesting recollections. Those who meet Mr. McKenzie today, though he is still hale and hearty at the age of 75, can hardly picture him as a dashing leading man, the matinee idol of the girls of 43 years ago, yet such he undoubtedly was. He and Asenath Adams, mother of Maude Adams, played the leads together, or together they supported traveling stars in a fashion that put them on the top pinnacle of popularity in those days.

The accompanying picture of Mr. McKenzie, as he looked at the age of 32, (1865) was taken by C. R. Savage, who stopped him one day as he was passing the photograph gallery, and insisted on "taking" him just as he was, the artist informing the actor that he was besieged with inquiries for his photo from the young ladies of the city.

While Mr. McKenzie is engaged in the Church office, and is actively concerned in Church work, he retains his interest in theatricals and is a frequent attendant at the old house Saturday afternoons. His scrap book is a cyclopedia of information regarding early theatrical days and he has the cast of nearly every performance given during his active connection with the theater.

Lyons in his motion misnamed him "David McKenzie." The correction elicited further inquiry, with the result that I was invited to attend the next meeting. I did so and was installed in the new company, not, however, as an actor like Brother Taylor, for I could not then recite, but to render any assistance needed as a supernumerary. It was some time before I got parts of any importance, playing mostly second old men in the Social hall. Afterwards the theater was erected and the Irwins appeared there Nov. 4, 1863. They had witnessed one performance "The Charcoal Burner," in which all the company took part; I had played Myron, and in casting the "Lady of Lyons" for their opening piece they chose me for Col. Demas, afterwards for Polydore in "Ingomar" and Colonna (a juvenile part) in "Evadne." After this I had many good parts, comprising a wide range. For example I played Polonius in "Hamlet" with John McCullough, after playing Pythias to his Damon a few nights previous. This was in 1868. On Dec. 28, of that year, I left the home company, who on that date gave me a farewell benefit. It had fallen to my lot, to do leading business from January, 1865, until I left the stage nearly four years later. John T. Caine, who formerly did the leading business had retired to devote himself exclusively to the role of "stage management."

When I left the stage President Brigham Young at once took me into his service as corresponding secretary. At that time Caine & Clawson were lessees of the theater, and continued in that capacity until May 1, 1875. With the approval of President Young I occasionally took part again when some star appeared who needed support in some character which I was known to be familiar with. So, on Sept. 13, 1869, I played Richmond to Nell Warner's Richard III, Macduff to his Macbeth, and Polonius to his Hamlet. I also supported Madame Scheller, Amy Stone, Leo Hudson, C. W. Coudlock, Mrs. Lander, Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Bates and others until Oct. 19, 1872.

I thought I was now through with the stage, but eight years later, when instructed by President John Taylor (the successor of President Young) to look after the interests of the theater, I was coaching the Home Dramatic club; they insisted on remunerating me for my services, so I put on "The Octo-roon," playing Jacob McCloskey, Oct. 6, 1880, the club volunteering their services and I had over a \$1,000 house. Again on March 4, 1881, Mr. Bandmann was under contract here to appear as Macbeth. The orchestra and witches had been under full rehearsal for all the choruses, when Mr. Bandmann telegraphed cancelling his engagement. Rather than any less should accrue, I played "Macbeth" in his stead and had an \$890 house. I find from my journal that from that time on to April 3, 1884, the date of my very last appearance, I appeared in 16 performances, at long intervals, as a member of the Salt Lake Dramatic combination.

**PRESIDENT YOUNG AND THE DRAMA.**  
President Young was ardently devoted

ally attended our rehearsals. He had his private carriage convey the lady actresses to and from the Social hall, on every occasion, so as to avoid the society that might embarrass them after performances. Those rehearsals and dances were invariably opened with prayer. He sternly opposed the habits of smoking and drinking, and he insisted that the playhouse ought to be as sacred as the temple, and might be made so by the proper conduct of those who were engaged in them. He used every laudable means to inculcate those views, but President Young was no autocrat and his good counsels were not always enforced, although, not altogether unheeded. Yet I know of several instances where improper conduct on the part of performers caused their instant dismissal.

One example shows the interest he took in our theatricals. It fell to my lot to be the first Uncle Tom on our stage. Our preceptor, George Pauncefort, played the part of George Harris. He assured me that it was not right to speak Uncle Tom's part in the negro dialect. The morning after the first performance, President Young took me strongly to task for not using the dialect. He instructed me to hunt up some one who could speak it properly, and so learn it. Then he said I was to use some padding, so that the suit of clothes he was wearing at that time would fit me. (We were of the exact same height.) The suit to be worn when Uncle Tom was talking with St. Clair. I did as he told me, and wore his clothes, and the next performance, thanks to President Young, was a great improvement on the first one.

Never was theatrical manager more careful in his precautions against fire than President Young. We used only coal oil for light in those days. On one occasion, George Francis Train was delivering a lecture in the theater, when two or three of the coal oil foot-lights commenced to flare up and smoke. The president quietly stepped out of the stage box, strode over to the smoking lamps, and with his broad brimmed hat, coolly wafted the lights out, and returned to his box without any remark.

Another incident came to my mind showing the precautionary measures he adopted. We were playing "The Rappanee." Sally Hinkley, George W. Thompson and myself were to have formed a tableau. The scene was the destruction of a castle by fire. It was intended to be a gorgeous spectacle. Every possible measure had been taken to avert accident from fire, but unfortunately, before the climax was reached, the cue was prematurely given, and the drenching we got from a score of water buckets emptied from the flies right down upon our heads was something never to be forgotten. When the lady recovered herself and looked upon her dripping satin, she used language, that, to say the least, was most forcible.

I recollect another item illustrative of President Young. James A. Herne and Lucille Western were playing "Oliver Twist." The brutality of the treatment of Nancy Sykes by Bill was so disgusting to him, that he avowed

## Julia Dean Hayne As a Speech Maker.

ONE of the most luminous and unforgettable pages in the history of the Salt Lake theater, is the engagement of the famous actress Julia Dean Hayne. She played here several times in the years 1865-66 and it has always been considered remarkable that an actress who throughout America was regarded as a second Adelaide Nielson, should have tarried so long in the wilds of the west. Mrs. Hayne, however, found friends, fellow-players, and an audience here, to all of whom she became deeply attached, in fact she married her second husband, Mr. Cooper, from this city. One of the notable nights of her engagement was a farewell tendered her at the Salt Lake Theater, when the play of "The Popo of Rome," was the bill. During the performance she was called before the curtain and the following clipping is from the Deseret News' files of those days.



"At the fall of the curtain, Julia Dean was called for. She appeared, and with much feeling spoke as follows: "Ladies and Gentlemen: "It is but seldom I lose the artist in the woman, or permit a personal feeling to mingle with my public duties; yet, perhaps, in now taking leave I may be pardoned if I essay to speak of obligations which are lasting. If, during my lengthened stay within your midst, some trials have beset my path, many kindnesses have cheered the way, the shafts of malice have fallen powerless, and the evil words of false hearts have wasted as the air. And perhaps in teaching me how sweet the gratitude I owe these friends, I should almost thank the malignancy which called their kindness forth. For such, believe me, memory holds a sacred chamber where no meaner emotion can intrude. "To President Young for very many courtesies to a stranger, lone and unprotected, I return those thanks which are hallowed by their earnestness; and I trust he will permit me, in the name of my art, to speak my high appreciation of the order and beauty that reign throughout this house. "I would the same purity prevailed in every temple for

the drama's teachings. Then indeed the grand object would be achieved and it would become a school. "To wake the soul by tender strokes of art. To raise the genius and to mend the heart." "But I speak too long and pause—perhaps, before the last farewell. "A word that has been and must be, A sound which makes us linger, Yet, farewell." It was at that time the gifted Utah poetess, Sarah Carmichael, inscribed the following beautiful lines to Mrs. Hayne: JULIA DEAN HAYNE. A form of sculptured beauty; A deep magnetic face, That draws the gazer's worship To its intense embrace; Her beauty presses on the heart, Yet shines above it far With a strange polar luster, Exquisite woman star! Her beauty hath a splendid stress That words cannot explain, Expression swoons in its caress— Julia Dean Hayne.

A still repose of motion, An animate repose; Expressive power of silence, No language can disclose; Her lip, with languid motion, turns Each leaf in feeling's book; Her voice can picture all things, but, Her eloquence of look. A warm pulse in the world's great heart; She thrills its every vein; And bids its tear-drops stay or start— Julia Dean Hayne. S. E. CARMICHAEL. G. S. L. City, Nov. 12, 1865.

## Facsimile of the House Program at the First Regular Dramatic Performances Given in the Salt Lake Theater.

local entertainments consisted of balls, lectures, etc., the plays by the Dramatic combination and the Home Dramatic club. Among the traveling companies were Sothorn, Emille Melville, T. W. Keene, Robson & Crane, Hazel Kirke company, Alice Oates, Gelstinger, Nat Goodwin, Comley Barton, Vokes, Lawrence Barrett, Callender's Minstrels, Union Square company, Boucletta Patti, Rhea, Langtry, Biju company, Wallack company, Carleton's Opera company, Joseph, Emma Abbott, Emma Nevada, Madison Square company, Mary Anderson, Duff's Opera company, etc. During this period Dr. Banks McKenzie had built the Walker Opera House, of which he was sole manager. Theatrical managers in correspondence with our house, being best acquainted with me, frequently addressed their letters and telegrams to "Manger McKenzie," and sometimes these were delivered to the rival house and never reached their proper destination, so I dropped my name entirely from the management, and it was again "Caine & Clawson, managers," although I did the work as before, covering a period of seven and a half years. THE EARLY YEARS. On Jan. 14, 1863, the first "star" appeared at the Salt Lake Theater, viz., Thomas A. Lyne, in the play of "Virginius," supported by the local company. He came to Utah originally as a preceptor for the stock company. The next stars were Mr. and Mrs. Irwin who first appeared Nov. 4, 1863, in the "Lady of Lyons." They remained in Salt Lake City playing twice a week until April 9, 1864. The local company continued to play alone until George Pauncefort and Florence Bell appeared July 20, 1864, in the "Romance of a Poor Young Man." They continued there until Jan. 7, 1865, also playing twice a week. The local company fled up the interval until Julia Dean Hayne and the Potter Troupe arrived here Aug. 11, 1865. They played until Sept. 5, 1865, when the troupe disbanded, leaving a few members here who appeared in connection with the home company some time, particularly the leading man, George B. Waldron who supported Julia Dean Hayne until April 17, 1866, when the season closed. With the new season commencing June 2, 1866, Julia Dean Hayne reappeared, supported by David McKenzie and the local company, until June 30, 1866, when she closed her engagement here. The home company continued to play twice a week and occasionally thrice, and at intervals supported single or double stars who might be crossing the plains by stage coach. Among those were John McCullough, E. L. Davenport and wife, Coudlock and daughter, Amy Stone, James Stark, A. R. Phelps, Madam Scheller, Annette Ince, Nell Warner and others. In May, 1875, the local company disbanded and from that time on, only traveling companies appeared, except on rare occasions, when home talent got up a bill. The Home Dramatic club, Culmer and Whitney, managers, was organized and made its first appearance in April, 1880, in "The Romance of a Poor Young Man," playing at intervals for some years. The Dramatic combination, headed by John T. Caine, as business manager, and David McKenzie, Phil Margrett, John C. Graham and such accessories as they could procure also occupied the stage at long intervals.

Wrong soon found that the building would be insufficient for the whole, and hence many invitations were extended over to a second night's entertainment. There were thus two opening nights, the first Thursday, March 6, 1862; the second Saturday, March 8, 1862. The program on the opening night was a mixed one, and right here may be set, at last, once and for all, the conflict in the memory of many old timers, some of whom insist that the comic drama, "The Pride of the Market," was not presented until the Saturday night performance. While the account of the program on the opening night as printed in the Deseret News of March 13, 1862, is not entirely correct (because the paper was only a weekly in those days, and the dates of theatrical events were not always printed), still it may be set down as certain that "The Pride of the Market" wound up Thursday evening's entertainment. This is borne out by the memory of several survivors, including Mrs. M. G. Clawson, who took part in the play, and who remembers sitting in costume in the wings waiting for the dedication services to be over. Mr. David McKenzie, James Jack, and the late B. H. Schettler were equally positive on this point, and the matter is clinched by an extract from the diary of George Goddard, which the writer has lately perused, and in which it is stated, under date of March 6, 1862: "At 6 p. m. the new theater was dedicated, after which a new play was performed, Eliza and Mary (his daughters) took part as French market girls. A very snowy day."

The main interest of the first evening's program centered in the address of President Brigham Young, who, with his counselors, Heber C. Kimball and Daniel H. Wells, presided. The dedicatory prayer, a most eloquent and feeling effort, was offered by President Daniel H. Wells. The house was packed with members of the high council, bishops of the city, county and territorial officers, the men who had been working on the building and the employees of the temple block. President Young took as the theme for his address "The Capacity of the Human Body and Mind for Improvement and Development." He said that generation after generation of men had lived upon the earth, and from neglect of their duties they had passed away and had failed to enjoy the privileges and blessings which the All Wise Creator had placed within the reach of His creatures. They had lived and died without learning the object of their existence on the earth. He alluded to the notions entertained by some "unco-godly" Christians against amusements, because of the evils sometimes attendant at places of public resort; but it was for the saints to neither follow the traditions of the one, nor to fall into the errors of the other. He had himself been so "piously" raised, that he could never have thought of visiting a theater and like other youngsters, under such an influence, had his doubts that if even listening to the vibrations of "the fiddle" was not a step in the direction of Davy Jones. The Lord looked upon the children of men as they were, saw their deeds, and understood them, and so should the saints understand what was in the world, and learn

to choose the good and eschew the evil. It was not to learn evil; but to know the duplicity and falsehood of false men, guard against the frodoes of vice, and to pursue that undeviating course of rectitude and virtue that invariably led to happiness and honor. There was nothing lovely in the world, nothing delightful but the Lord had created it for the good of His children and it was the abuse, and not the proper use of anything, that constituted evil. Men could make evil of going to the theater; they could make evil of anything, but they did not expect to do

ALTHOUGH nearly 47 years have passed since the event, I well recall the all-absorbing interest with which the opening of the Salt Lake theater was awaited. It was first intended to have all church officials, city, county, and territorial officers, the workmen on the theater, and workmen on the temple block, attend with their families and to open the house to none others, but President

The date is rapidly approaching when the Salt Lake Theater will celebrate its jubilee. Its fiftieth anniversary will occur March 6, 1912, and if the precedents in other cities are followed, notably in the case of McVicker's Theater, Chicago, the management will see to it that the event is celebrated in memorable fashion.

The Salt Lake Theater is now almost the sole survivor of the American houses which were running in the sixties. Its old contemporaries were the Ford in Washington, (where President Lincoln was assassinated), the Bowery, in New York, the Ben De Bar, in St. Louis, the California and Maguire's, in San Francisco, the Academy of Music in Denver, Farnham's in Omaha, and Hooley's in Chicago, but all have passed away from one cause or another.

Many old timers have grown somewhat mixed in their memories as to the actual date of the opening of the Salt Lake Theater. The fact is that there were two openings, one on Thursday, March 6, 1862, when the building was dedicated, though it was still uncompleted, and the other two nights later, Saturday, March 8, when the first regular performance took place. Another dedication took place Dec. 24, 1862, when the house was finished. It is for the purpose of "getting the record straight," on these two important events that this article is prepared for the Christmas News.

He was glad to see his brethren and sisters, to witness the joy of their countenances, and to know that they were happy and that their eyes were resplendent with joy and contentment. It was joy for many to meet his friend and to rejoice with him. The happiness of men and women was—much of it—of their own creation. The Lord had created the elements and sustained the work of the Creator, but he had not planted the seed, nor the grain, build their grist mills, nor yet bake their bread for the support of their bodies. He did not raise factories and construct machinery for the use of man; but He expected of man the development of that intelligence that was planted within them to provide everything for themselves; the Lord was not going to build houses and habitations for them to occupy, but He inspired them with the wisdom necessary to provide for the wants incident to existence. Every pure enjoyment was from heaven and was for the sake of the soul when they came together with pure spirits and with faith that they could pray for the actors and actresses, they would be benefited and refreshed in their entertainments; and those on the stage should ever be as humble and just as if they were on missions preaching the gospel. No impure thoughts should be inspired there, and no impure words expressed. Truth and virtue must abound and characterize every person engaged on the stage, or they should be immediately ejected from the building. No person—he actor, musician, employe or any other person—should be admitted to bring liquor into that edifice, and the police would protect them from the inebriate and the contamination of the filthy breath of the poor loafer.

Other addresses were given by President Heber C. Kimball and Elder John Taylor, and in conclusion President Young spoke in commendation of the work of the architect of the building, William H. Polson; also of the members of the Deseret Dramatic association, who were to appear upon the boards. The music of the occasion was rendered by a choir and orchestra, presided over by Prof. Thomas, the selections being "The Star Spangled Banner," with solo by William C. Dunbar, "The Marsellaise," by the orchestra, an anthem written by Eliza H. Snow, the music by Prof. Thomas, and the hymn, "Lo, On the Mountain Top Appearing," another song composed for the occasion by Elder John Taylor was rendered by the choir and Mr. Dunbar. THE SECOND NIGHT. The first regular night of the season, Saturday evening, March 8, brought the reproduction of "The Pride of the Market," a comic drama in three acts, with the popular farce entitled "State Secrets;" a facsimile of one of the house programs, with the notable cast engaged, appears on this page. Of all those who took part only Mr. Caine (who with H. B. Clawson, was manager), Mr. McKenzie, Mr. Clawson, Mrs. Clawson, Phil Margrett and C. J. Thomas survive. The second night's audience was made up of invited guests who were unable to attend the first performance, with an overflow turnout from the public at large. The company made a tremendous impression, was made up promising that not long after President Young encouraged the tragedian, T. A. Lyne, to take up his abode here and act as instructor to the members. They made great advancement under his tutelage, and later made still further strides in the more modern school of acting, under the direction of the accomplished English actor, George Pauncefort, who arrived here a considerable time about 1865-6.

### The Two Opening Nights of the Historic Playhouse

By One Who Was There

Salt Lake Theatre, Whose Jubilee will Occur March 6, 1912