

A CENTURY AND A THIRD OF AMATEUR DRAMATICS IN CONCORD

From 1793 to the organization of
of The Community Players

Together with something about the beginnings of the
professional theater and simple early entertainments

By Elwin L. Page

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NOTE

Too little attention has been paid, in city histories, to anything bearing on cultural history except schools, and even that has been of a statistical bent, for the most part. This manuscript, like the similar manuscript concerning White's Opera House, is designed to present material that will fill one of the gaps. Others need to be filled, in particular musical activities, which are covered only very incidentally by this and the Opera House work.

Clues to materials for musical trends, as well as many other things unrelated to cultural history, will be found in a card catalogue of notes I have gathered from newspapers from 1790 to 1927.

Someone else, I hope, will extend that catalogue and bring it down to date for ready reference, and in particular I hope that this manuscript will be extended from 1927 by The Community Players, whose task it ought to be to preserve the record of their activities, as none of their predecessors did.

E. L. F.

I.

"Tragedy and Comedy."

As far as can be found, the first dramatic performance in Concord was staged by amateurs in 1793. It aroused considerable public controversy, a newspaper war, and practically a political battle. Concord, as a white settlement, was sixty-six years old. Founded under Puritan influence, the town still remained, in 1793, a community with a large sense of repugnance to the theater. Among the good church people was George Hough, editor and printer of our first newspaper, The Concord Herald. In politics, Hough was a strict Federalist. But there were anti-Federalists in Concord, the leader of whom was Judge Timothy Walker, son of the first parson. He and others like him were soon to call themselves Republicans, then Democratic Republicans, and finally Democrats.

In the summer of 1792 a young printer from Boston named Elijah Russell joined the Hough office, and for several weeks his name appeared as joint publisher of The Herald. Hough and Russell meanwhile announced a proposal to print by subscription The Female Guide; or, Thoughts on the Education of that Sex, also another work with the title Sprinkling, a Scriptural Mode; and the Infants of Believers, Proper Subjects of Baptism. All that precedes may be sufficient to show something about the social state of Concord in those days.

In The Herald of August 25, 1792, Hough announced that there had never been any partnership, though one had been projected; that Russell had withdrawn his "assistance and attention" from the Herald office for over a week, and appeared to be in pursuit of business "in a separate department"; hence The Herald would continue under the original publisher. So Russell's name disappeared, and a week

M Nathan Cobby, Tohijah, Newell

D^r

To the Mirror from 17:29 to 106

0 11 0

To Abner Miles's account, and a writ, which I presented to
said Miles, but did not return

0 15 0

1 6 0

Errors excepted.

Concord, April 26th 1795.

Elijah Thapell.

later the name at the head of the paper was Hough's Concord Herald.

On September 9, 1792, the nature of Russell's "separate department" appeared with the first issue of a rival paper called The Mirrour, edited and published by Elijah Russell. To it flocked the budding Democrats and some others who saw in Russell a man with a little more nose for news than Hough. From the first, The Mirrour supported John Langdon, who was to become the New Hampshire leader of the Democrats. There is a story, not too well proved, that Langdon gave Russell financial backing. And now, with more background, we are ready for our first theatrical group.

The first we hear of it in print is a letter to Hough in his issue of January 31, 1793. "It is a pity," said the anonymous writer, "that some of the young GENTLEMEN who propose to be actors in the intended Tragedy in the Senate Room, should so soon degrade themselves by endeavouring to ridicule those Pupils who are preparing to join in the Exhibition intended by our worthy Master." Our generation does not know by experience the fancy of early days for the exhibition of school children by their teachers in recitation, dialogue, oratory, and other show pieces--a fancy that lasted well into the nineteenth century. Having this fancy, the letter-writer got quite worked up. Admitting that the "actors" asserted that they had no thought of injuring the school exhibition, he yet declared that "their conduct betrays them....their sneering & petty arts are discovered--and the good people of the town despise the method made use of to laugh the little worthy Lads out of countenance, and are determined to encourage and support them in their laudable undertaking, in preference to the Eighteen Penny institution for the benefit of a few who ought to be in better business."

Who were the persons thus excoriated? If there had been any

For Value Received I promise Philip Carigain or order
 seven shillings & 7^d. Money on demands with
 Interest — Comrod April 16th 1795
 Attest
 Phadiah Carigain

Jacob Thurtel

7.7 $\frac{1.25}{6}$
 1.32

Arth Progers

Judgment on this Note Decem^r. 24. 1798

for four Dollars and sixty three Cents

pr. Tim^r. Walker for. Rec^d

Lady
 Mrs. Humphreys

March 4th 17

Ind. for one old
of thirty two

29

22.1
5.1
1.15

1.1

Worship the sweet & his place
now John's Boston and
the receipt of him
at and I will pay
them Thompson's

ridicule of "the little worthy Lads" of the school exhibition, it must have come from the youngest of the cast, two boys who were given the female parts--Master John Roche and Master J. Chase. Puffed with their importance and with a sound feeling that their "lines" were more hifalutin and interesting than those of the school exhibition, they would not have been boys if they had not crowed insufferably. Some fond parent of a "worthy Lad" thus patronized probably wrote the letter, unless George Hough was slyly trying to take it out on Elijah Russell.

Those who took the male parts were Philip and Obadiah Carrigain, Elijah Russell, Dr. I. Sanborn, and A. Sanborn. The Carrigains were, or were about to be, the young blades of the town. Philip was then seventeen and was to graduate from Dartmouth in 1794. ~~They were gay~~ Obadiah was fifteen. They were favorites with the girls, who later were sometimes to distrust Obadiah's liking for liquor. Both were great readers and memorizers of poetry. Later they were to engage, with doubtful success, in a general store (then called, in English fashion, a shop). Six years later was to rise "Carrigain's Folly", still standing at the north end. Philip was to coach for college entrance more than one man of later distinction, was to write respectable verse, was to be Secretary of State and the creator of the first ambitious map of New Hampshire. The Sanborns I have been unable to place. Of the two boys, John Roche was the son of the widow of the famous, or infamous, Major Robert Rogers by her second husband. The Chase boy may have been Jacob Chase, 15, if his voice had not changed, son of ~~the~~ Town Clerk Caleb Chase, who was a graduate of New Jersey College. Arthur Rogers, about 23, older half brother of John Roche, and veritable son of Rogers the Ranger, was to speak the prologue. He was about to be called to the bar. This was the crew, probably largely anti-Federalist, upon whom fell the ~~conservative~~ conservatives.

The Herald's charge was given attention, a few days after it appeared, in The Mirrour of February 4, 1793. Under the heading "Tragedy turned Comedy", was a letter to Mr. Russell, referring to "that malicious Nonsense in Hough's last Paper" as "too despicable to merit Notice." Yet the writer proceeded to notice it. "What Ridiculousness! to suppose those Actors have any Envy against a parcel of little Children, and wish to prevent them from learning to read, or even....declaim, or proclaim, or exclaim, or make Speeches, or bawl, or vociferate, or act, or exhibit--or do any~~XXXXX~~ Thing else they please.! ^{What is this to those "young Gentlemen"?} They never even thought of the School! "

Before the next issue of The Mirrour, the intervening issue of The Herald ran a letter from "Parent and Old Inhabitant" which has not been found. This was answered in The Mirrour of February 11, 1792, under the title "More of the Tragedy" by "Another Inhabitant." For five weeks thereafter all was quiet in newspaper circles. The young gentlemen, rehearsing the while, knew how to advertise. In The Mirrour of March 18, 1793 one who signed himself "A Bewailer" wrote that after all the bluster, all the assurances, all the newspaper war, "the poor Tragedy is suffered to evaporate in smoke! O! infamous!" To which the editor appended a note that the tragedy would be enacted "next week." But it was not ready for two weeks. Meanwhile the school exhibition was observed on March 28 and noted in The Mirrour of April 1.

And in that same issue the actors announced that on the next Wednesday evening, April 3, Dr. Young's tragedy, The Revenge, would be given by a number of young gentlemen, followed by a pantomime. "Scene" at 7 o'clock. Tickets, one shilling each, at Maj. Duncan's, at Manley & Partridge's, and at E. Russell's. The net profit (if any) would not go to the entrepreneurs, as stated by The Herald, but for such benefit as the selectmen should think proper. The selectmen would be admitted gratis, but that was the extent of the free list.

Here was a truly ambitious undertaking. Edward Young, D. D. (1683-1765) is now remembered only as a poet who in Night Thoughts coined numberless fine phrases that have become part of the common language. He also wrote plays in blank verse, and since he was no Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Jonson, they are long since forgotten. His second play, The Revenge, was produced at Drury Lane on April 18, 1721, and ran for only six nights. But it was later revived and had a long popularity. It was a variation of the theme of Othello. The principal character, Zanga, was the equivalent of Iago. Though the lines were bombastic, they gave an actor opportunity for effective rant which was popular at the time but has long since passed from any theater except the burlesque.

The scene is laid in Spain. Zanga, a captive Moor, is intent on revenge. Don Alonzo, the Spanish general, and his friend, Don Carlos, are both in love with Leonora, daughter of Don Alvarez, a courtier. Alvarez intends Leonora for Don Carlos, but she does not love him and weds Don Alonzo. Zanga forges a letter from Carlos to Leonora, puts it in the way of her husband, who believes her to be false. Zanga excites Alonzo's hatred until the latter gives him authority to have ~~Carlos~~ Carlos murdered, while Alonzo attempts Leonora's life. ^{Alonzo's} ~~his~~ courage fails and he leaves his dagger by her side as she sleeps. Zanga makes Leonora believe that the dagger means that Alonzo is jealous. There follows a scene in which Alonzo charges Leonora, and she stabs herself. The play ends with Zanga exposed, the real truth of all matters known, and Alonzo's suicide.

The performance of April 3 was repeated on the 11th, at the Court House, where the legislature met, on the site of the present Court House. Mr. Hough gave respectful attention to the school exhibition, but ignored the drama. The Mirrour of the 15th gave more

than a column to a review of the play. "This," said the paper, "was a virtuous, sentimental and rational Amusement to the respectable Inhabitants of this Town--and as it was performed was certainly an Honour to Concord." The cast was as follows:

Don Alonzo, the Spanish General,	Mr. O. Carrigain
Don Carlos, his friend,	Dr. I. Sanborn
Don Manuel, Don Carlos's attendant,	A. Sanborn
Don Alvarez, a courtier,	Mr. E. Russell
Zanga, a captive Moor,	Mr. P. Carrigain
Leonora, Don Alvarez's daughter,	Master John Roche
Isabella, wife to Zanga,	Master J. Chase

The young gentlemen did not have the courage to tell Concord that Isabella was cast by Dr. Young as the mistress, not the wife, of the Moor.

The Mirror's remarks on the performance are enthusiastic. Zanga was "acted completely and to the Life by Mr. P. Carrigain; his Gestures were judicious, and his Soliloquies were listened to with most pleasing, polite Attention, by the Audience, at the Conclusion of which he had the whole applausive gallery Roar." Obadiah Carrigain (Alonzo) "performed with graceful Spirit...received the frequent Clap of the elated Audience." Don Carlos (Dr. Sanborn) "supported his Character to Perfection." Leonora performed "her Part inimitably well." Mr. Russell was too modest to describe his own acting, but he gave great credit to Arthur Rogers's oratory in the prologue. Rogers was also stage manager and attended to the scenery, with the help of Mr. Chase, presumably the Town Clerk. There was music from the flute of Simeon Hall, the bass viol of Levi Hutchins, the fiddle (probably) of Moses Swett and other instruments. Nor must we forget the story of the costuming.

"The dresses of the principal Actors and Actress, were

truly elegant, exceeding rich, and shone to the greatest advantage; and it was remarked by many present, who have seen European Stages, that they never saw Clothes more brilliant." The costumes were made by the Harr~~s~~ sisters, daughters of Robert Harris, a merchant, and special praise was given to Miss Nancy. Harriet was not named by Russell. His particular care appears to have been for Nancy. When both ^{girls} were married out of town in 1795, Russell spoke of Nancy as "the amiable accomplished and agreeable Miss Nancy," but he had no enconiums for Harriet.

We know nothing about the pantomime that followed the tragedy, except ~~the~~ ^{that} Arthur Rogers had the principal part. In those days the serious play was usually followed, even on the professbnal stage, by a short farce, or something of the sort, so that all tastes might be served, and the practice was common until, a century later, the 10-20-30¹ shows of repertoire companies gave ~~contrast~~ ^{fa} to their programs by vaudeville skits between the acts.

But there was more comedy after the performances, though not in the Court House. The players had advertised ~~that~~ there would be no free admission except to ~~the~~ selectmen. The selectmen were there~~s~~ so were thirty others who did not pay for their tickets. Apparently the sour opponents of the young gentlemen remarked on the street that there was a breach of faith. Mr. Russell had to ~~defend~~ them by saying that the players did not give passes; he himself (perhaps to get a house) had paid for the thirty tickets out of his private purse, and given them away.

There were too many comic attending circumstances, but one must admire the courage of the players. In what ~~the~~ respect do the aims of the modern amateur theater exceed the spirit of 1793? Here was a professional tragedy, performed with locally made scenery, locally made costumes,

by local "hams", with local music. What higher aims can one ask?

II.

A Generation Without Theater.

The attempt of the "young gentlemen" to bring drama to Concord, though brave and ambitious, was decidedly premature. Concord was still too small and too near the pioneer Puritan stage of civilization to support the theater. Moreover there were no halls except very small ones--too small to permit effective production. For a full thirty-five years the town was not again to see a dramatic presentation. Meanwhile population was to increase--slowly at first, from a predominately agricultural community, to one predominately of a village character. In 1790, the census showed 1747 inhabitants. That increased 305 in the next ten years, 341 more in the decade 1800-1810, an additional 445 by 1820, making at that time 2838. In the decade 1820-1830 the growth was nearly 900, almost as much as the prior three decades together. Concord was then enjoying a really phenomenal growth of over 30 per cent in ten years. Meanwhile the town had become the permanent state capital and the seat of Merrimack County. That growth, as will be seen in the next chapter, brought the Eagle Coffee House and its Grecian Hall.

Those thirty-five years had a fair amount of small-town entertainment. On the more serious side, there were many lectures. Dr. Henry Bond, a local physician, began in September, 1817, a course of thirty chemical lectures, illustrated with experiments (Patriot, Aug. 12, Sept. 23, Nov. 18, 1817). He followed that with another course including subjects in physics, with the aid of an air pump and electric apparatus. Tickets were \$.5 for the course (Patriot, Apr. 7, June 16, 1818). A Mr. Gleason lectured on astronomy at the Masonic Hall (over the Lower Bank) on Nov. 17, 1818, at 6 P. M., tickets for lady and gentleman, 50 cents (Patriot, Nov. 17, 24, 1818).

Next came Dr. Alexander Ramsay from Edinburgh by way of Fryeburg, Maine, lecturer on anatomy and physiology, intended more specially for doctors, at a fee of \$30 each for the course. But Isaac Hill of the Patriot, hoping that the distinguished anatomist would have such success as to carry out his hope to make Concord the center of his teaching, urged the general purchase of tickets. Hill, bitterly opposed to Dartmouth College, wished Concord to outrival Hanover as the seat of a medical school. Ramsay gave his lectures to physicians in the morning, but every Saturday evening he gave popular lectures to ladies, gentlemen, and young people. They ran from early August to mid-October, 1819, and were apparently held in the building on the site of the present Patriot Building, which was later moved back on Park Street and in late years demolished to make way for the A. and P. Supermarket (Patriot, June 15, July 20, July 27, 1819). That building contained, on the second floor, over Wilcomb's store, a small hall in which the Episcopal Church first worshipped, and in this hall the lectures were given.

Dr. Bond, with the encouragement of Dr. Ramsay, announced another course of chemical lectures to follow Ramsay's course (Patriot, July 27, 1819). Ramsay's popular lectures, at least, were soon moved to the Town Hall (on the site of the present Court House) and the evening changed to Wednesday, since Saturday night was so much devoted to spiritual preparation for the Sabbath. These popular lectures covered a wide scope--the evils of intemperance, the nursing and rearing of children, the control of passions and temper, and even natural theology (Patriot, Aug. 24, Sept. 14, Sept. 28, Oct. 19, 1819). Ramsay had to close in order to prepare a book on the outlines of anatomy and physiology, but promised to return (Patriot, Sept. 28, 1819).

He was back in April, 1820, under the auspices of the New-Hamp-

shire Medical Society, lecturing to doctors (Patriot, Mar. 20, 1820). In June and July he lectured to doctors and members of the legislature at \$10 a head (Patriot, Apr. 25, 1820), and proposed to the legislature that they give him aid to start a medical school here. They turned him down, and he went to Conway and opened a private school there, did not do well, as might be expected in that remote place, and was lost to the local scene (Patriot, July 4, 1820, Apr. 16, 1821, Aug. 13, 1821). He died in Parsonsfield, Maine, a tired disappointed old man, Nov. 24, 1824 (Patriot, Dec. 6, 1824).

Somebody demonstrated gas lights, phosphoric illumination, and the administration of nitrous oxide at 25 cents on Aug. 23, 1821 (Patriot, Aug. 20, 1821). And for a time, in the fall of 1824, Mr. Boardman, head of the local Young Ladies Literary Seminary, lectured three evenings at 25 cents each in the small hall over Wilcomb's store (Patriot, Oct. 18, 1824). There was a course on ~~wax~~ mathematics, physics, and astronomy in the spring of 1828 in the Court room over the Town Hall (Patriot, Mar. 31, 1828). Concord was not lacking in opportunities for the learning of science during those years.

But more to the point, for this study, Mr. Turner began, on Jan. 17, 1825, in the hall over Wilcomb's store, a course of lectures on elocution (Patriot, Jan, 17, 1825)

The lighter side of entertainment, during this generation, was so different from what we know that it should, as a matter of antiquarianism, be described, though it has almost no part in the story of theatricals.

On Aug. 21 and 22, 1805, one could see at Stickney's Tavern, north corner of Main and Court Streets, a show featuring an "Incomprehensible Crystal, and Reflecting Mirror", with six/^{small}wax figures

and a live crocodile, all for 25 cents, children half price (Courier of New-Hampshire, Aug. 21, 1805). This was at once the first wax works and the first animal show ever seen here. A better show of wax works came to Masonic Hall in 1814, with likenesses of Washington, Commodore Perry, and others. For good measure, patrons could have shocks from an electrical machine and listen to music from a concert organ, tambourine, and triangle--all for the usual 25 cents, children under ten at half price. For an extra quarter, one could have two profiles cut. That went on for several days (Gazette, June 14, 1814). "A New Museum" showed in the same place the next year, with wax figures of the heroes of the War of 1812, including a black boy who was in the Battle of Lake Erie, all to the music of a chime organ played by eight wax figures. The usual prices prevailed (Gazette, May 30, 1815).

Later that year Concord saw, for three days, its first elephant, exhibited in a barn at the south corner of Main and Church Streets. The elephant, claimed to be the only one in America, was only eight feet high, according to the advertising. Children under twelve could get in for half the admission of 25 cents, but the showman declined to make special contracts for whole families (Gazette, Sept. 12, 1815; Patriot, Sept. 12, 1815).

Another wax works showed in the room over West & Abbott's store next door to Barker's Tavern (site of the Rumford Arms) for two weeks. Besides 38 life-size figures, including effigies of many historical persons from Columbus to the War of 1812, Shakespearean characters, Bluebeard, etc., there was a mechanical panorama of thirty-six moving figures and "22 elegant views", besides "2 elegant organs" (Patriot, June 13, 1817).

Something new came to Town Hall for a week- three paintings of the Battles of Lake Champlain and Plattsburg (Patriot, June 11, 1821). A painting, "The Orphan's Christ Rejected", nine by fifteen feet, was

at Ebenhall over Wilcomb & Tarleton's store for a few days (Patriot, June 23, 30, 1823).

The "Grand Caravan" was deservedly popular in warm weather. In this period it was a menagerie, with no equestrian performers other than animals. It always carried a band. The earliest showed *Apr. 22-23, 1823, at the Phoenix Hotel (Patriot, Apr. 21, 1823)* and returned June 4-12, 1823, in a yard opposite the Phoenix Hotel (Patriot, June 2, 9, 1823). It showed again June 7-10, 1826 (Patriot, May 29, 1826), and on June 6-9, 1827, in a new building (probably the Eagle Coffee House) then being erected opposite the State House (Patriot, June 4, 1827). All the while this menagerie was growing. The caravan of animals "recently imported from the Tower of London", apparently the same as the "Grand Caravan", but with the addition of an elephant, a royal tiger, a pair of kangaroos, two camels, and other beasts of superior interest, showed *June 16-17, 1828,* at the rear of the Columbian Hotel (just south of the present New Hampshire Savings Bank Building), with a side-show of wax figures in (Isaac) Hill's Hall on the site of the Bank (Patriot, June 16, 1828).

That was followed, on the 14th to the 17th of the next month, on the same lot, by Concord's first circus. To be sure, there were only six horses and riders, but there was a riding-master, a clown, ground and lofty tumbling, and still vaulting. Box seats were 50 cents, pit seats 25 cents. No smoking was permitted. There was a side-show where one could see, for 12½ cents, two ostriches, and nothing more (Patriot, June 30, 1828).

Music played a large part in the life of Concord in those years. Singing schools were frequent, from the leadership of Asa McFarland (not yet a minister) in 1793 to the coming of Henry E. Moore in 1826. Moore was a musician of many parts, and was soon to publish The New* Hampshire Collection of Church Music, which went through edition after edition. He was also to have a vocal and instrumental school.

The Concord Musical Society, which had its start in 1793, flourished for twenty-five years. The Central Musical Society, gathering people from surrounding towns as well as from Concord, existed from 1811 for over twenty years. The New-Hampshire Musical Society, drawing members from all over the state, was active from 1818 to 1825. The last two met in various towns in their districts, but frequently in Concord.

The programs of all these societies called for business meetings and rehearsals, with an evening performance in the Old North Church or Representatives Hall. An address on music was always a feature of the performance. The programs given constantly matured, from Old Hundred and psalm tunes to the great choruses of The Messiah, The Creation, and other oratorios. Among the Concord people prominent in one or more of the societies were Philip and Obadiah Carrigain, John Odlin, the Rev. Dr. Asa McFarland, Isaac Hill, Stephen Ambrose, Dea. David Hall, Abel Hutchins, the Rev. Israel Evans, Dea. Joseph Hall, Richard Bradley, ^{Henry E. Moore,} and Samuel Fletcher. Dea. Joseph Hall gave the Concord Society a fund of \$500. The Society was a North Church affair, and when it became extinct, the fund was turned over to the Church, which still has it and uses the income for the partial support of its chorus choir. Among the out-of-Concord people prominent in the New-Hampshire Society were Chief Justice William M. Richardson, the Rev. Thomas Beede, the Rev. Jonathan Curtis, who did some composing, Dr. Josiah Kittredge, Dr. Moses Long, Dr. R. D. Mussey, and others well-known at the time in the state.

The New-Hampshire Society had a part in entertaining Lafayette in Concord in 1825. Other performances of note in Concord included the appearance of the Handel Society of Dartmouth in conjunction with the Middlesex Musical Society of Massachusetts, at the Old North on Sept. 19, 1810. They "exhibited", said Isaac Hill, "one of the most splendid musical performances probably ever witnessed in New-England." They

ranged from Old Hundred to anthems and Handel's Grand Hallelujah. The address on music was by the famous Rev. Samuel Worcester of Salem, Mass. (Patriot, Sept. 25, 1810; Gazette, Sept. 25, 1810). But some people were impatient with oratoria, and got restless. Chiding them, Isaac Hill wrote: "Music, among civilized men, has been universally esteemed--it disengages the thoughts from vulgar pursuits, cherishes the higher feelings of the heart, and prepares man for those heavenly contemplations of which he is capable." (Patriot, June 13, 1820).

The first concert of a different nature was that in Masonic Hall Dec. 25 and 26, 1822, by Miss Plimpton, "the young Columbian Vocalist from Boston", assisted by her father and brother, who played the violin, French horn and six-keyed bugle. There was a "great variety of fashionable and popular Songs, Duets, &c." The time also was fashionable--6½ o'clock. Tickets were the standard 25 cents, and could be bought either at the Phoenix Hotel bar across the street, or at the Hall (Patriot, Dec. 23, 1822).

A sacred concert at the Brick (First Baptist) Meeting House--the only one of the auditoriums still in existence--brought to Concord a group of far more noted musicians. Col. D. R. Newhall directed. His company included Miss Ostinelli, piano; Mr. Ostinelli, violin; Mr. Graupner, double bass; Mr. Bartlett, trumpet and Kent bugle; also a company of singers from Boston who were assisted by some members of the Central Musical Society. For this concert the tickets went to 50 cents (Patriot, Aug. 6, 1827).

A lower order of art than the musician's, but nearer the theater, was that of the ventriloquist. The first who brought it to Concord was Mr. Charles, on June 7 and 8, 1821, at Masonic Hall. Isaac Hill gave him an editorial puff as known on both sides of the Atlantic, "the greatest ventriloquist perhaps now living." It was said that from the profits of a two-years tour in the United States he had purchased 7000

^{aches}
in Jefferson, New Hampshire. His charges were high for the time--
50 cents. (Patriot, June 4, 11, 1821).

But a greater ventriloquist than he, if local traditions are believable, was Richard Potter, a Cuban transplanted to Andover, New Hampshire, whence the name of Potter Place, where he built a fine house with hand-carved trim made by himself. He first appeared at Masonic Hall on Dec. 31, 1823, and Jan. 1, 1824. To feats of ventriloquism, he added sleight-of-hand and comic songs, and he charged only 25 cents. He was back again within a fortnight, and appeared every evening from Jan. 14 during court week, for Concord was now the county seat (Patriot, Jan. 5, 1824). His last performance during this engagement was on Jan. 19. Though his talents "as a comic actor are of high class" and his performances "are of good moral tendency", he yet suffers a "smattering of persecution." (Patriot, Jan. 19, 1824). Perhaps Concord was still too Puritan; possibly his dark color was at first a drawback.

At the end of the period, Potter played June 3 and 4, 1828, in the hall in Hill's Building (where the New Hampshire Bank now stands). He gave his standard program: Part 1. Magic. Part 2. Dissertation on Noses. Part 3. Ventriloquism, topping off with balancing. He still held to the country price of 25 cents (Patriot, June 2, 1828). He had become a favorite, and was to remain such. The tales that have come down to us of his feats of ventriloquism are so marvelous as to test imagination and credibility, but that he was a great artist of his sort is undeniable.

Twice during the period "theatrical" performances were given here (Potter never called his such), but they were merely recitations, interspersed with songs. Thus the Patriot of Aug. 24, 1819, related that on the 19th Mr. Bernard, "the favorite of the Boston Theater", Mr. Brennan, and Mrs. Wheatley performed in Stickney's Hall and were so successful

that they stayed over and repeated the next night. Bernard's program was all recitation. It included "Three Warnings", a "Dissertation on ~~X~~ Faults", "The New-Castle Apothecary", and "John Gilpin's Ride". The other two sang, Mr. Brennan playing the piano.

On April 11, 1820, McCleary and Morrison, "from the Theatre New-York, late of Montreal", were announced for that night at Masonic Hall. The promise was not drama, but a "well arranged feast" and "novelty" Patriot, April 11, 1820).

But the last year of the period, 1828, was to bring the theater in fact.

III.

Grecian Hall.

The attempt of the "young gentlemen" was premature, in part, as already noted, because Concord had no hall suitable for theatricals. Until such a hall was available, there could be no professional theater here, and professionals were need^{ed} to show our people what the drama was like. Such a hall came with the Eagle Coffee House, which was built in 1827. Though Captain William Richardson, the landlord, hoped to be able to serve dinner there on January 8, 1828, in celebration of Jackson's victory at New Orleans, he was unable to do so (Patriot, Dec. 24, 1827; Jan. 14, 1828). But on February 4, 1828, he announced that he was ready to receive and entertain company (Patriot, Feb. 4, 1828). Richardson was succeeded by John P. Gass, formerly manager of the Columbian Hotel (on the site recently purchased by the Merrimack County Savings Bank), but more recently of the Broadway House, New York. In taking over, he spoke of the Eagle as the "splendid New Hotel" (Patriot, 28, 1829).

There was much to support the claim. Within three years Gass had added somewhat to the house, which fronted on Main Street directly opposite the State House for ninety-six imposing feet, and rose three stories in height above the basement. At the rear were two wings, each seventy-five feet long, one or both two stories high. There were nine parlors, three dining rooms (one of them sixty feet long), one dressing room, sixty-four bed rooms, and one hundred and twenty-four "elegant" feather beds and hair mattresses. Gass declared that "the living is so good at the Eagle that I have already got the gout; and as for the bar that is well enough." Finally, the house included, as it had from the first, a hall 64 by 32 feet (Patriot, May 28, 1832) - Grecian Hall.

This hall at once interested those who had dramatic ambitions. It was hardly ready for the public before the members of the Concord Dramatic Society were notified by their secretary, D. M. Prescott, to meet at the Eagle Coffee House on April 3 at 7 P. M. (Patriot, Mar. 31, 1828). Nothing further is known about this organization. It may have been organized to get professionals to come here, rather than ^{as} an amateur group. According to Lyford's History (p. 377) there were two other groups at about this time--The Evergreen Fraternity and The Myrtle Wreath, both said to have been "home" dramatic societies, by which is understood that they flourished, if at all, in the homes of the members. But again we have no further knowledge of their activities. It is probable that the first local appearance of professional drama did something to encourage whatever the local groups did.

Gilbert and Trowbridge, first professionals to bring drama to Concord, came to Grecian Hall on July 21, 1828, and played nightly, ~~for two weeks~~, Saturdays of course excepted, for a fortnight. On the first night they presented Tobin's The Honeymoon, or How to Rule a Wife. With the alternative title dropped, that play was to remain a favorite for professionals and audiences until late in the century. The farce that ended the program, after a song, was Fortune's Frolic, or the Good Use of Riches (Patriot, July 14, 1828).

It appears that there were changes of bill during the first week, for the Patriot of July 28, praising this "first experiment" for Concord and remarking that it had been "respectably sustained by the public", specially mentioned the presentation of Timour the Tartar on Thursday evening as such as "would have done credit to the Theatrical Boards of Boston, New-York or Philadelphia. The plays....

41 Lexington Ave.

March 16th. 1880

My Dear Sir

I rec'd your letter -
I will call on you on Thursday
next if agreeable. between the
hours of eleven and twelve
o'clock - and thus I will be
able to more fully understand
the books.

Very truly
Yours &c

John Gilbert

P. J. Wilton Esq.

are such as accord with the feelings of the refined delicacy...." Apparently some people got to the metropolis now and then and attended the theater.

Concord was indeed fortunate in having such a troupe as Gilbert and Trowbridge to introduce real theater in Concord. John Gilbert, of Boston, then only eighteen, was destined to become famous and to be remembered to this day. It was a long time ago, but within fifty years I saw his second wife and widow on the Boston stage, insisting on being known as Mrs. John Gilbert and not by her own name, play as a very old lady with consummate grace and charm. John himself, in his old age had specialized in old-man parts, it is said, with the same art.

Lyford's History (pp. 366-367, 862) tells us that the Trowbridge was probably Henry Trowbridge of New Haven. His wife, Mr. and Mr. Ashley, and two or three others completed the small company.

The opening bill for the second week was Shakespeare's Othello, the Moor of Venice, followed by a farce, Young Widow, or a Lesson for Lovers (Patriot, July 28, 1828).

On the night of November 17, 1828, Gilbert and Trowbridge were back in Grecian Hall for a stay of six weeks. These were the bills for the Monday performances (daily hand-bills advertising the changes):

Nov. 17. Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer
Farce, Family Jars. Tickets, 25 cents.

(Letters to the editor waxed enthusiastic. The "performances would do credit to almost any theatrical corps in America." "A Spectator" recommended the company in tragedy, but thought that in comedy they excelled anything he had seen.)

Nov. 24. The Heir at Law
Comic song by Mr. Gilbert
Farce, Spectre Bride, or a Ghost in Spite of Himself
Curtain at 7 o'clock

An undated bill of the day for an appearance
of Gilbert and Trowbridge in Concord is in
the collection of the New Hampshire Historical
Society:

Barbarossa; or the Downfall of Algiers.

(Cast)

Selim,	Mr. Ashley
Barbarossa,	Mr. Trowbridge
Aladin,	Mr. Bingham
Sadi,	Mr. Brown
Zaphira,	Mrs. Gilbert
Irene,	Mrs. Ashley
Othman,	Mr. Gilbert

Followed by

Comic Glee, "Dame Durden" and a farce

Ghost in Spite of Himself

- Dec. 1. Melodrama, Timour the Tartar
 Song by Mrs. Trowbridge
 Farce, Animal Magnetism
8. Othello
 Farce, Is He Jealous?
15. No advertisement found.
22. Colman's Heir at Law
 O'Keefe's comic opera, Poor Soldier

Most books state that John Gilbert made his debut at the Tremont Theater in Boston on November 28, 1828. He was here four days previously. If the date for the Boston debut was as stated, he must have left the company for the time being. His name does not appear in the advertising for the remainder of the Concord engagement, and, consistently, Mrs. Trowbridge had the between-the-plays song during the week of December 1 (Patriot, Nov. 17, 24, Dec. 1, 8, 22, 1828).

Gilbert and Trowbridge were back in 1829 for their final appearance here. They seem to have played in Grecian Hall the week of November 23, since the Patriot of the 30th announced that they would "remain" all that week except Saturday, beginning with Shiel's tragedy, The Apostate, or Spanish Tyranny, and concluding with a farce, Blue Devils, or the American in France. The doors opened at 5½; performance at 6½.

The next professional company to play at Grecian Hall arrived from Boston, headed by Charles Mestayer, on October 1, 1832, with "new scenery, dresses &c" for one week. That evening they gave Gretna Green, with this cast:

Lord Lovell,	Mr. Tatnall
Larder,	Mr. Wood
Jimmy Jenkins,	Mr. Mestayer
Lady Lovell,	Miss Smith
Betty Finniken,	Mrs. Mestayer

After the play, there were songs by Messrs. Mestayer, Tatnall and Rounds. Then followed The Young Widow, or a Lesson for Lovers, and a farce, Fortune's Frolic, or the Ploughman Turned Lord. The price

of tickets was 37½ cents; children half price (Patriot, Oct. 1, 1832).

The Mestayers, Charles and Emily, were connected with the Tremont Theater of Boston at the time. Later, in 1839, both were in the Chatham Theater in New York. Mrs. Mestayer was to be far better known than her husband. In 1872 she was a member of the justly famous Union Square Company of New York, playing with such later stars as Clara Morris, Stuart Robson, Kate Claxton, and McKee Rankin.

For two weeks beginning February 23, 1835, another company came to Grecian Hall. Their opening bill was the "Grand Romantic Drama", The Brigand, or the Banditti of Guadagnola. The company was a comparatively large one for barn-storming, including Mr. Rounds, who had been here with the Mestayers. Others included Messrs. Morton, John M. Weston (later a favorite in the South), George G. Spear of Boston, Frelthy, and J. E. Durivage of Boston (destined to a high place on the American stage); Mesdames Rounds, Herbert and Master Herbert. John Herbert, Jr. and his wife, Helen Kent, were both English. Their first-night farce was The Weathercock, or Love, Law and Physic.

They were highly praised as on the whole the best that had been seen here. Among the changes of bill for the first week were The Forty Thieves and Major Jack Downing. The Monday bill for the second week was Rent Day and Crossing the Line, or Crowded Houses (Patriot, Feb. 23, Mar. 2, 1835; Lyford's History, 862).

There is no slightest doubt that Concord's aspiring "hams" had an opportunity to see a good deal of capable acting in the sixty-five nights professionals appeared in Grecian Hall during the years from 1828 to 1835. They must have learned a great deal. But now came a time which was to cast a pall upon theatrical performances here. We were hard upon the panic of 1837 and the succeeding short years.

Addenda on Gilbert & Trowbridge

Since the foregoing was written, two ancient hand-bills have been located in the New Hampshire Historical Society.

One relates to Timour the Tartar, given July 24, 1828.

The cast ran thus:

Timour,	Mr. Gilbert
Kerim,	Mr. Ashley
Sanballet,	Mr. Bingham
Agib,	Mrs. Gilbert
Bermeddin,	Mr. Bingham
Orasmin,	Mr. Ashley
Octar,	Mr. Brown
Oglow,	Mr. Trowbridge
Zorilda,	Mrs. Ashley
Liska,	Mrs. Trowbridge

The music was arranged by Mr. Green
Mrs. Trowbridge sang a song after the play, and that was followed by a farce, Animal Magnetism, or No Magnet Like Love with this cast:

Marquis de Lancy,	Mr. Bingham
LaFleur, his valet,	Mr. Gilbert
Doctor,	Mr. Trowbridge
Piccard,	Mr. Brown
Jeffry, Dr's servant,	Mr. Ashley
Constance,	Mrs. Trowbridge
Lisette,	Mrs. Gilbert

Another hand-bill, date not known, is for The Brown Sword, or the Torrent of the Pyrenees. The cast:

Capt. Zavier,	Mr. Trowbridge
Claudio,	Mrs. Gilbert
Col. Rigolio,	Mr. Ashley
Pablo,	Mr. Bingham
Estaeen,	Mr. Gilbert
Myrtillo,	Mrs. Ashley
Rosara,	Mrs. Trowbridge
Stella,	Not named

Music arranged by Mr. Green, Comic song by Mr. Gilbert.
Farce, Weathercock, or Love, Law and Physics.

Old Fickle,	Mr. Trowbridge
Tristram Fickle,	Mr. Ashley
Briefwit,	Mr. Gilbert
Sneer,	Mr. Bingham
Gardner,	Mr. Brown
Variella,	Mrs. Gilbert

The Brown Sword was a comedy.

It is probable that we now know the names of all of the troupe.

IV.

The Concord Thespian Society.

This chapter centers about the Rentons, so we may as well tell about them before telling about the Thespians. The Patriot of September 30, 1822, announced the arrival in Concord of Dr. Peter Renton to practice medicine. He was a native of Berwick in North Britain, had studied at the University of Edinburgh, had, it was said, practised extensively, would dispense medicines at a low price, and give advice to the poor gratis. He lived at the house later known as John Abbott's, at what is known in 1951 as 236 North Main Street.

Either Dr. Renton's practice here was unremunerative or he was overanxious for wealth, for he was before long engaged on the side in milling at West Concord and added a large ell on the north side of the residence at 236 North Main Street for use as a warehouse. That ell is in part now existent, but as the doctor built it, ~~was~~ extended practically to the sidewalk. It was roomy.

In a matter of years his son John grew to young manhood and studied to follow his father's profession. John was a gay and lively fellow. The Patriot of July 7, 1842 tells of fires in the State House Yard on July 4 (with no damage except to a maple tree) and the arrest and conviction of nameless respectable adults. It turned out that one of the respectables who set the bonfires was John Renton.

John was tried in police court and found guilty. But the zealous prosecutors overstepped the mark and put in evidence of the ^{attempted} firing of a stage coach, old and abandoned, on the fourth of July the year previous, in which young Renton had a part. Renton's conviction for riot went on appeal to the high court, with the result that in July, 1844, the verdict was set aside for error in

Francis W. Kirk
1843 To Peter Renton Dr
March To Medical attendance \$75

Recd Payment
John Renton

Received of Mr Wm Kirk \$100 in full
of all accounts.

Concord July 28. 1845.

John Renton

Mr Kirk To John Renton Dr
for visit & extracting teeth
for July 25. 1844 April 10. April 15. 1845 \$150

Received payment

J Renton

Chancie W. Kirk
1843 To Peter Renton D^r
March To Medical attendance "75[¢]

Rec^d Payment
John Renton

Receipt. C. 50
Pro. Renton
July 1843

Concord August 27. 1845
Mr Kirk To John Renton D^r
for visit & extracting teeth
for July 25. 1844. April 10. April 15. 1845 \$1.50
Received payments
J Renton

proof of a former escapade. State v. Renton, 15 N. H. 161.

But meanwhile Dr. Peter Renton had left Concord, and Dr. John was carrying on the business. Patriot, Jan. 19, 1843. Tradition has it that Dr. Peter shook the dust of Concord because of what he felt was the shame and injustice of the conviction of his son.

Young John, staying on in the house with his sister Christie, soon turned his thoughts to dramatics. The only contemporary newspaper reference to his activities appears in the Patriot of Jan. 4, 1844: "The 'Thespian Society' gave an exhibition on new year's eve, at the society's Hall, north end of Main street. We understand that the performances were highly creditable to the members of the society. The hall was filled to overflowing." The former warehouse was the hall.

Fortunately, along article by Isaac Andrew Hill in the Patriot of July 31, 1900, gives us considerable information about the Thespians. Mr. Hill depended not merely on his memory of fifty-odd years but even more upon a copy of the by-laws of the Concord Thespian Society dated April 23, 1844. John Renton was President and Stage Manager; Charles W. Walker, a bookbinder who lived on Washington Street, was Vice President. John C. Stowell, a printer, was Secretary and Treasurer. George Renton, John's brother, was Librarian. Harriman Couch, another printer (printing and bookbinding was then Concord's principal industry) was Doorkeeper. The Executive Committee was composed of Couch, Stowell, Walker, George Renton, and Josiah H. Nelson. The Leader of the Choir was William A. Hodgdon, who in 1900 was supervisor of music in the schools of St. Louis.

Besides these, there was a long list of members. They included Frank S. West, a printer, Abiel Carter, ~~xxxLxxRxxSimpson~~, a guard at the State Prison, Charles H. West, Samuel G. Nelson, Alfred L. Tubbs, Charles A. Robinson, S. F. L. Simpson, a near neighbor of the Rentons's, George Kimball, son of Samuel,

living where the Kimball-Jenkins house now stands, Josiah Stevens 3d, Lewis R. Davis, the assistant postmaster, A. R. Davis, A. H. Bailey, whose father kept the Merrimack Hotel a few houses below the Renton house, George S. Towle, a printer, who was to become a lawyer and later hold a position in the Custom House at Boston, Ezra T. Pike, Harrison G. Eastman, George H. Moore, later the distinguished librarian of the New York Historical Society, George W. Pillsbury, George C. Pratt, Isaac Andrew Hill, then a lad, and John Merrill, a clerk later at Gass's American House.

The women members were: Sarah C. Ayer, then 27 years old, young Hill's cousin, daughter of Sarah Connell Ayer the over-pious writer of the diary that is a treasury of information about old Concord; E. Bixby, C. R. Baxter, A. Ingalls, A. Allison, Sarah A. West (daughter of William and later Mrs. White), E. West, N. Hodgdon, E. Merrill, and the leading lady, Christie W. Renton.

"We remember sweet Christie Renton
That the eyes of young men were all bent on,
With her red cherry cheeks,
And her small pretty feet,
We no more shall see Christie Renton."

Others were soon to leave Concord behind. Stowell and Pike went with Pierce to the Mexican War. The former was shot through the heart; the latter lost a leg and died after amputation. Dr. John Renton left Concord in ~~1844~~ 1845, and the Thespians came to an end. In 1900, when Isaac A. Hill reminisced, only four of the members were still alive: Hill, Hodgdon, Couch, and Mrs. Sarah West White.

The organization was an enthusiastic one. They met thrice a week in their hall. Over half a century later, Hill recalled the parts taken by only a few. Dr. John Renton was Don Caesar de Bazan in the play of that name, and Roderick Dhu in The Lady of the Lake.

"Sweet Christie" played the Lady of the Lake and Pauline in The Lady of Lyons. Harriman Couch, six feet in his stockings was Goliath of Gath, and when he fell, the victim of David's sling, the whole house trem-

bled. Young Hill took the part of Alonzo the Peruvian. What little we learn of the repertory of the Thespians shows that they were ambitious. Don Caesar de Bazan and The Lady of Lyons were stuff for professionals. It was short life for the Thespians, but an active one. They were the real progenitors of the later and longer-lived local amateur organizations.

In 1845 Dr. William Prescott took over the Renton house, and later devoted the former theater ~~into~~ a museum of natural history.

The Concord Histrionic Society and the Slader Family.

After the Thespians disbanded, more than a decade passed before organized dramatics again held the Concord stage. How it happened that the activity was resumed does not appear. There was practically no influence from the outside; there was, at least, no professional encouragement. Between 1835 and 1855 there does not appear to have been a single appearance here by a professional actor. Late in 1855, Yankee Locke, for many years to come to be popular as a comedian, especially in farce, did appear here as an entertainer. He was arrested for playing without a permit and carried before the local judge. He got the case dismissed for some insufficiency of the complaint, and before a new complaint and warrant could be drawn he ran down the stairs, jumped into a wagon and drove to Manchester. (Patriot, Oct. 31, 1855). Though he often came here in later years with organized companies and was a great local favorite, it is hardly likely that this appearance in 1855 furnished the suggestion for local amateur dramatic activities a few months later.

The Patriot reported on February 13, 1856: "The Concord Histrionic Society, recently formed in this city for the purpose of advancement in the study of Elocution, propose giving an Exhibition at Depot Hall, on Wednesday the 20th inst. It will be seen by an advertisement in another column that they offer a very pleasing and attractive entertainment. We learn that the Society has gone to considerable expense in the procurement of Scenery, Wardrobe, Music, &c, and trust that our citizens will give them a 'bumper' on Wednesday Evening, by way of encouraging them in their praiseworthy object."

Depot Hall was on the second floor of the second (1847) passenger station. In it appeared many great musical artists, including Ole Bull and Adelina Patti, but the Society was the first to give it theatrical use, unless, as seems unlikely, Yankee Locke had performed there.

The advertisement gave the officers of the Society: President, Byron Slader; Secretary, John W. Pettengill; Treasurer, Thomas B. Hill; Scenic Artist, J. H. Nelson.* Slader, a native of St. John, N. B., was a printer at the Patriot office, and was probably both the writer and compositor of the "boost" already quoted. Of Pettengill nothing is found except that he boarded with John C. Ordway. Hill was engaged in the selling of shoes with his father, Chase Hill. Nelson was a bookbinder at Merriam & Merrill's. Those connected with Concord's thriving printing and bookmaking industry were likely to be leaders in any local enterprise.

The program for the first performance included The Iron Chest and an afterpiece, then customary in the professional theater, called The Omnibus. The former was by George Colman, the younger, and was based on William Godwin's Adventures of Caleb Williams, first performed in 1796 at London's Haymarket Theater. Patterning on the metropolitan theater, there was a local orchestra composed of men most of whose names are well known in Concord's musical history. George W. Ingalls, the band leader of the day, played the cornet; John Jackman, whose descendant is still prominent musically, was pianist. Both were professional. The other players were amateurs. Ezra Morgan, who kept a restaurant, was first violin; John J. Morgan, second violin, worked at Charles Austin's, where melodeons and reed organs were made; George H. Sturtevant, a printer, was cellist; D. Arthur Brown of Fisherville (now Penacook) played the double bass and was later to gain great fame as a leader of military bands; while Samuel F. Brown, also of Fisherville, was the trombonist. One would say that a ticket at fifteen cents was

a bargain not to be missed. In any event, the performance was so successful that it was repeated the next night (Daily Patriot, February 21, 1856).

With this encouragement, the Society at once began preparation of a more ambitious work. On April 8, 1856, at Depot Hall, they put on Don Caesar de Bazan. This was a three-act play adapted from the French by Gilbert a'Beckett and Mark Lemon, first played in London by James W. Wallack, Sr. and in New York (1844) by Charles Walcott, and later by the younger Wallacks, James W., Jr. and Lester. It was much played for many years by both professionals and amateurs. The afterpiece was The Widow's Victim. Ingalls's Quadrille Band furnished the music, and again the tickets were only fifteen cents. For this performance the Treasurer and Scenic Artist were the same as before, but the President was J. S. Doe, who remains unidentified. H. W. Fuller, also unidentified, was Vice President, and George W. Patterson, a clerk at George Hutchins's grocery store, was Secretary (Patriot, April 2, 1856).

When the Patriot announced the next performance of which we have record, it remarked that all previous ones had drawn full houses. That next performance was at the City Hall. This was located in the building erected jointly by the City and the County. The present County Building is the result of extensive alterations of that old building. The City Hall was in the middle of the first floor. The small stage was against the east wall, and without anterooms of any sort. The curtain, when this writer knew the hall some over twenty years later, was of green cambric hung by rings on a wire. It was a crude place for theatricals, but the hall itself was large, $50\frac{1}{2}$ by $69\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and 23 feet in height. The audience sat upon old-fashioned wooden settees with backs. The hall had been first used in January, 1857 (Patriot, January 14, 1857).

There the Histrionic Society opened a series of performances on December 15, 1857. The bill was The Lady of Lyons, a comparatively new

play by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, first Baron Lytton, the great novelist, who produced it in 1838 at Covent Garden with great success, the great William Charles Macready being the star. The play became for many years a favorite vehicle for professionals. It was indeed an ambitious venture for those Concord amateurs. They followed it with an afterpiece called Our Gal, all for the usual fifteen cents.

For this performance the Society again had new officers. George S. Nelson, bookbinder at Merriam & Merrill's was the President. (He lived at 17 Union Street with J. W. Nelson, the Scenic Artist, and Nathaniel C. Nelson, later jeweler, and to be one of our greatest amateur actors, probably getting his first experience in this very company). John T. Hale, a printer, was Vice President; Charles C. Wyatt, unidentified, was Secretary; but Thomas B. Hill remained as Treasurer. The music on this occasion was furnished by George W. Ingalls, Henry W. Ranlet, Ezra Morgan, L. M. Currier, William D. McPherson, and George H. Sturtevant (Patriot, December 9, 1857).

Early in 1858 the Society was threatened with eviction from the City Hall. Perhaps there was puritanical opposition to the use of city property for theatricals. All we know about it is a squib in the Patriot of February 10, 1858: "Mayor ["Honest John"] Abbott, we understand, has backed down from his expressed determination to suppress the exhibitions of the Concord Histrionic Society, and therefore the Society survives. We think if the Mayor would suppress the City Police he would do an act much more acceptable to our citizens."

The Patriot continued to boost the Society. Announcing a benefit for George S. Nelson, it said: "The 'bill' is a good one, and we have no doubt it will be well performed. Mr. Nelson is a 'clever fellow' and has labored hard to amuse the public through these exhibitions, and we hope his many friends will turn out in force and give him a benefit indeed" (Patriot, February 24, 1858).

Concord March 5, 1853

Recd of P A Fish thirty Dollars in
full for my services in Stur from July 1, 1852
to March 5, 1853 - and find fully paid

\$30.00 Geo S Nelson

The advertisement in the same paper shows that Mr. Nelson was to be a very busy man at the City Hall on February 26. The three-act play was to be Nick of the Woods, another borrowing from the professionals, but this time an American product, first put on at the Bowery Theater in New York before 1840 by Joseph Proctor. Nelson was to appear in multiple roles--as The Jibbenainosay, Bloody Nathan, Nick of the Woods, Avenger, Reginald Ashburn and the Spirit of the Waters; the other parts falling to other members of the troupe. For some years it was a favorite "stunt" of actors to show their versatility by playing anywhere from three to half a dozen parts. The play was followed by a farce, The Two Buzzards. Cyrus J. ¹¹Carrier, a tuner at Liscom, Dearborn & Company's pianoforte factory, was advertised to sing a song. And that was another common part of professional performances of the day. There was no increase in the price of tickets, fifteen cents (Patriot, 2/24/58).

That appears to have been the last performance by the Histrionic Society as such, though it is possible that there were others not noted in the press, but improbable in view of Byron Slader's employment by the Patriot. But some of the members were not done with amateur acting.

Three ~~years~~ ^{later} the Sladers moved into Phenix Hall, which had been opened about January 1, 1855. That hall deserves a little attention here, because in it professional dramatics were to have a place of resort for some years. There Sanford & Fiske's company played from June 18 to June 27, 1857, the Concord Brass Band, George W. Ingalls, leader, furnishing the music. Their plays were not recorded (Patriot, Daily, June 17; Patriot, June 27, 1857). The amateurs must have got some "points". As far as Slader and his wife and daughter were concerned, it must have been an event when J. C. Myers came to Phenix Hall and put on Othello as his first bill. D. Nourse was Iago; C. E. Bidwell was Cassio; J. Flood, Roderigo; Mrs. Nourse, Amelia; and Mrs. F. O.

Savage, Desdemona . Prices were up to the hitherto locally unknown fifty cents. Since the company was a good one, it must have been worth the money (~~March 6,~~ ^{March 6,} ~~Patriot,~~ ~~1861~~). This was a real revival of the drama, and it must have done something to the Sladers.

In Phenix Hall, on April 25, 26, and 27, 1861, the Sladers put on a "histrionic and musical exhibition", with new scenery and decorations. The first night program (there was a change each night) is the only one given in the papers. Byron Slader gave Cato's Soliloquy by Addison. The company presented a musical burletta, The Swiss Cottage; or, Why Don't She Marry? The Sladers' daughter, Ada Blanche, recited The Frost . (As Blanche Slader, professional, she was later to be one of the best as Topsy in Uncle Tom's Cabin). Mrs. A. Slader sang Ever of Thee I'm Fondly Dreaming, and the whole company played A Conjugal Lesson. There was an eight-piece orchestra including George W. Ingalls and Carl Krebs, all for fifteen cents (Patriot, April 17, 1861). Carl Krebs was a clarinetist who went to war with the Third New Hampshire Regiment band, whence he was called to the leadership of the band of the 48th New York (Patriot, Oct. 23, 1861). The same paper that carried the announcement of this Slader engagement also carried the news of the fall of Fort Sumter.

After that the Sladers prepared a program of "Fireside Rehearsals of Gems from the Poets, Home and War Songs, Soliloquies, and Yankee Stories", suitable for war-times. A feature was a sketch by Mrs. Slader, Mrs. Smart on the War. From November 13 to 20, 1861, they carried their new venture up the Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad, playing at Sanbornton Bridge (Tilton), Laconia, Lake Village (Lakeport), Holderness, Plymouth, Haverhill, and Littleton (Patriot, November 13, 1861). This ended, for some years, amateur efforts in Concord. In 1863 Slader moved to the Boston Journal. He died in 1890 (Monitor, July 15, 1890).

VI.

The Civil War and Stagnation.

The Civil War brought to an end organized amateur dramatics of the sort accomplished by the Sladers and their associates. Even for nearly a decade after the end of the war, no such organization was heard of locally. Yet in the interim there were sporadic amateur performances in some variety.

Soldiers' Aid.

The Concord Soldiers' Aid Society was given some benefits in the closing months of the war. The performances were all given in Eagle Hall. That hall was located in the third and fourth stories of the Stickney Block still standing on the east side of Main Street opposite the Patriot Building at the north corner of Main and Park Streets. The block was erected in 1863. The hall itself was a large one, with a gallery. Although Joseph Stickney built and owned the block, it was Nathaniel White who undertook the construction and fitting of the hall, which was the largest at the time in town (since Phenix Hall had not then been enlarged), and comparatively well arranged for entertainments (Monitor, Oct. 21, 1863).

It was announced that on the three evenings of February 20, 23, and 25, 1865, the hall would be given over to comedy and farce. The bills were: First night, Married Life and Slasher and Crasher; Second night, Married Life and Poor Pillicoddy; Third night, the same as on the second. Admission to the floor was 25 cents, and gallery seats were reserved at 50 cents. In those days the customers believed that the higher the seat the better it was.

Mr. White gave free use of the hall, and the Concord Brigade Band, Jonathan C. Lane, director, played gratis. The net profits for the Aid Society were \$532.95 (Monitor, Feb. 18, 20, 24, Mar. 7, 1865).

The same people gave two more performances, with complete changes in bills, and for the benefit of the same society, at Eagle Hall on April 24 and 26. For the first time, we find the casts of characters in the performance on April 24:

Barnett's The Serious Family

Charles Torrens,	Mr. Bell
Capt. Murphy Maguire,	Mr. Hutchins
Frank Vincent,	Mr. White
Aminadab Sleek,	Mr. Crosby
Lady Sowerby Creamly,	Mrs. Jennison
Mrs. Charles Torrens,	Mrs. Dumas
Emma Torrens,	Miss Pierce
Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine,	Miss Tilton

Farce, The Dead Shot

Capt. Cannon,	Mr. Rolfe
Mr. Hector Timid,	Mr. Crosby
Mr. Wiseman,	Mr. Lund
Louisa Cannon,	Miss Perkins
Chatter, her maid,	Miss Pierce
Frederick Thornton,	Mr. Bell

The bill on April 26 was Sweethearts and Wives, followed by Perfection, but the casts are not found (Monitor, Apr. 21, 22, 26, 1865).

With hardly breathing time, the company appeared again, Apr. 28, this time for the benefit of the Freedman's Relief Association, though the hand-bill in the New Hampshire Historical Society states, apparently by repetitious error, that it was again for the Soldiers' Aid Society. Dr. Crosby, who was the moving spirit of the players, had hoped to give an entirely new bill, but the illness of one of the ladies of the company prevented its preparation. So The Serious Family was repeated, with Poor Pillicoddy for afterpiece (Monitor, Apr. 27, 28, 1865).

The handbill mentioned shows that the casts of the play was the same as on April 24, except that Miss Odlin took Mrs. Jennison's place as Lady Creamly and Mrs. Jennison took Miss Perkins's place as Mrs.

Delmaine, which seems to indicate that the ill lady on whom so much depended for a new bill was Miss Perkins.

The cast of Poor Pillicoddy was:

Mr. Pillicoddy,	Mr. Crosby
Capt. O'Scuttle,	Mr. Bell
Mrs. Pillicoddy,	Mrs. Jennison
Mrs. O'Scuttle,	Mrs. Dumas
Sarah Blunt,	Miss Pierce

The Concord Brigade once more played.

An attempt to identify the players was difficult, since first names (in the fashion of those days) were not given. The only sure identification is that of Mr. Crosby, who is called by Dr. Crosby by the Monitor, as already noted, so he could be no other than Dr. Albert H. Crosby. (The date of his coming to Concord, as given in Lyford, p. 1380, must be at least a year late). As to the rest, much guessing may be done. There were ^{too} many men in Concord named Bell and Hutchins to risk even a guess. There were also several Mr. Whites, the most likely of which was John A., son of Nathaniel. Would Mr. Lund be Joseph B. or Charles C? Of the many Rolfes perhaps Henry P., the lawyer, is the one. Miss Perkins I am inclined to think, upon character, was the well-known Susan G., but Perkins was a rather common name here. There was only one Pierce then whose daughter might have been acting. That was Augustine C. Pierce, and his daughter was Julia, older sister of the late Mary H. Pierce. Julia married, in 1867, Alexander Tyler of St. Louis, later of Minneapolis. ^{tions} ~~Tilsons~~ were too many to make a safe choice. Miss Odlin probably was Lizzie, later Mrs. Wallace Rice of Lawrence. She was the sister of John W. Odlin, and with the family cleverness and flair for comedy, she was sure to be good.

The Grand Army of the Republic.

E. E. Sturtevant Post No. 2, G. A. R. had a charity fund that needed refreshment. On the evenings of February 16, 17 and 18, 1871, they put on, with a cast of fifty local people, at Phenix Hall,

The Old Flag, or the Spy of Newbern. Admission was 35 cents (post-war inflation), but reserved seats in the gallery were 50 cents.

"The scenery is entirely new, 20 by 40 feet, the largest ever presented on a stage in this city--and over 30 changes are required in the performance." So, it was added, "The curtain rises a quarter before eight o'clock" (Monitor, Feb. 16, 1871).

We find little about the play itself. G. H. Walker was both author and star. Possibly he was one of those men who went from town to town, as many have since, putting on shows. Members of the Post were prominent in the cast, including Col. James E. Larkin, Mr. (probably Frank D.) Woodbury, Mr. (probably Adjutant General John M.) Haines and Dan Newhall, who was comical as a Yankee. Henry P. Moore, the photographer, took the part of Pat Murphy. He "did not make his first appearance, as his funny brogue and funnier action have been seen and heard often behind the footlights". Which proves that some of our amateur history is lost. Mrs. J. C. Main was a mother, whose daughters were played by the Misses Johnson and Underhill. The houses were large to full (Monitor, Feb. 11. 16, 17, 18, 20, 1871).

The show was so successful that it was repeated on February 24 and 25, with special trains from Fisherville (Penacook) on the 24th and from West Concord on the 25th, and a good house on the former night and a large audience on the latter. At the last performance, an extra tableau was added at the end--"The Old Flag". The curtain rose and exposed, solus, "the venerable Dr. Daniel Flagg." Encore. (Monitor, Feb. 24, 27, 1871).

Once again the Post put on The Old Flag at Phoenix Hall October 25-29, 1871. Two new acts and some tableaux had been added by E. A. Lewis and Charles Adams, the new managers, who took prominent parts. The cast, as far as given, was