

Dramatic Group Plays to Packed Houses

Stage Talent Marked in O'Neill from Beginning

As a people sing so are they. As they play so they would like to be.

Music and dramatic talent, with a liberal sprinkling of stage nonsense, have been more or less marked in O'Neill, to put it modestly. Maybe it should be said these three elements of the "fine arts" have had some outstanding exponents from earliest days, when Will Markey fascinated bystanders with his Shakespearean recitals of "Pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, that I am meek and gentle with these butchers," until the present. Hattie Potter thrilled her hearers with her sweet soprano voice. Rose Fallon rose to the very height of the peaks of song, and Kitty Dwyer sang the thrilling melodies of old Ireland.

Church groups have had musical talent, song and instrumental, and those so talented responded on any and all occasions with choruses, soloists and quartets. Among these were Mrs. O. F. Biglin, Mrs. M. M. Sullivan, Nicholas Martin, Grant Smith, Oscar Snyder, John Smoot, Ed Campbell, Miss Wilcox and her brother, Oscar, Mattie Mann, Jess O'Sullivan, Ross and Nellie Fallon, Catherine and Ilene Donlin, Elizabeth Donohoe, Mary Fitzsimmons and Mae Campbell, Mrs. W. T. Evans, Mrs. Hazelett, Anna Lowrie, Jennie and Tenie Norvell and many others to mention only those of some years ago.

In the realm of entertainment scarcely a week passed without musicians giving a concert or the local Richard Keens and Sarah Bernhardt's putting on a show. John Smoot and Sliver Triggs did the blackface stuff. Denny Cronin took on the role of Robert Emmet. Miss O'Donnell, the heroine and Bob Marsh the funny man.

In the year 1897 a Black Face Minstrel was originated with O. M. Collins as the leader and it was called Kollins Komical Koons. Taking part was about everyone in town who thought he could sing or was willing to try. Wes Evans and Maylon Price were the end men and Mr. Collins the interlocutor. Miss Maud Gillespie played the score for every song or dance. C. E. Stout and Ralph Evans each sang a song, followed with a duet. Harry Dowling, Maylon Price, Wes Evans and many more sang. Miss Leone Skirving went through the motions of playing a cornet solo with Oscar Wilcox doing the playing back of the wings.

Stout's song was "Pansy, Does You Love Your Baby." The duet was "The New Bully." Ralph Evans sang "Bill Bailey."

The Academy Dramatic company shown elsewhere in this issue in picture, gave a series of dramatic performances beginning with "Robert Emmet" and always played to a packed house.

With the introduction of the moving picture theater much local musical and dramatic talent has gone to seed. Of those who performed with the grace and natural bearing of the professional dramatist now living, only two are remaining in O'Neill: Mrs. C. E. Stout and M. R. Horisky.

When Mail Came Once a Week

J. C. Santee, postmaster at Niobrara, received a telegram from Hon. E. K. Valentine instructing him to have Charles Witte, the present contractor on the route from Niobrara to Yankton, S. D., put on special service from Niobrara to O'Neill once a week, leaving the latter place on Friday and returning on Saturday. — Holt Record, June 16, 1879.



SKATING RINK THEIR THEATRE . . . The Academy Dramatic company periodically played to a crowded house in the old skating rink, which was transformed into a theatre on occasions. In this old photograph (left-to-right) are: Top row—O. F. Biglin, M. R. Sullivan, Den-

nis H. Cronin, M. F. Cronin, Romaine Saunders, Clarence Campbell; seated—Alice Cronin, Tess O'Sullivan (Mrs. P. J. Flynn), Kittie Dwyer (Mrs. C. E. Stout), Robert Marsh, J. A. Donohoe and Doctor Flynn.

Montana Jack Left Town with Elastic Gaiter Shoes, Rail Ticket, and a Left Hook

By MONTANA JACK SULLIVAN of Butte, Mont.

BUTTE, MONT.—Editor Frontier Diamond Jubilee Special Edition: My earliest recollection of our prairie home near O'Neill was a wilderness of wild flowers and the habitation of song birds. Those early impressions through contact with bird life and floral bloom gave me a love of nature. The song of the birds brought daily inspiration and if I felt any preference for the notes of one above another it was the sweet song of the bobolink.

When we were growing up O'Neill had no industries, so from that standpoint it was virtually standing still. The national field trials for top ranking upland bird dogs were held there annually. This event had all the earmarks of a present day world series in baseball. The fact that prairie chickens were abundant and the lay of the country was ideal for this event were the principal reasons for holding the trials in the O'Neill territory. The country being

about as level as a billiard table and the bunch grass ideal cover for the birds were deciding factors in bringing men and dogs to O'Neill.

When I decided to embark on the uncertain tide of industry commercial activities were at a low ebb at home, so the golden West caught my fancy and subsequently my person.

When I shoved off from O'Neill my worldly possessions consisted of a pair of elastic gaiter shoes, a suit of clothes which would never make the ads in Esquire, a railroad ticket to Butte, Mont., and a fairly snappy left hook. This latter I found of inestimable value on the journey through life, where the going is rough and steep. Since those days, the people of O'Neill have achieved a place for their community which makes it the outstanding center of educational advantages and trade opportunities of a large section of North Nebraska.

But the past Winter's storms demonstrated that nature still holds dominion over man.



OPENING ROSEBUD . . . From all sections of the country men came to O'Neill to register for land drawings during the opening of the Rosebud. Many special trains brought hopefuls to O'Neill. This photograph was taken in 1908.—Photo courtesy Felix Sullivan.

LONE SURVIVOR ON 4th's WEST SIDE

Stannard Firm Once a Monument Works — Other Street History

A woman's scream cut the Summer night air and froze in their tracks a few stragglers on Fourth street, then galvanized them into action.

At the alley on the East side of the street stood a frame building with rooms on the second floor. A lone occupant of the upstairs, gained by an outside entrance, was a lady who made her home there. The scream came from her apartment. The three or four men still about rushed up those steps with long and gallant strides to rescue the fair one from any foul intruder upon night slumbers. It was discovered that a harmless town character, deep in his cups, had managed to climb the stairs and, not knowing where he was or what he was doing, was fumbling at the door of the frightened lady's room.

He was led away by the gallant gentry, given in custody of the town's night watch and stowed away where he could not molest lone women.

This building, built in the early 1880s, was the place of business which still survives and now occupies a modern building erected on the same ground. Joining it on the South is The Frontier building, also a late structure, taking the place of an old frame building. The two had been built about the same time in the year '83, and expired together a quarter of a century ago.

The building next to the alley originally was the John McCann furniture store where coffins also were sold. Mr. McCann was succeeded in the business by his brother-in-law, O. F. Biglin, a good natured Irishman from Scranton, Pa., who enlarged the business to include wagons, farm machinery and buggies. Biglin's two sons, Frank and William, continue the furniture and undertaking business.

This institution together with The Frontier have been functioning amicably side-by-side a longer period of time than all other business concerns in O'Neill.

The woman's scream, gun fights of the liquor inflamed cowboys, the great fire that destroyed the buildings but not the business of the two oldest institutions in the city, the stopping place of covered wagons and the cow ponies, the business place and home of the man who introduced the first automobile to the street, and hectic life at times wrote a history all its own along two blocks on lower Fourth street.

And out of the '80s and '90s came other business concerns still a part of the commercial life of Fourth street, the Spelts-Ray Lumber company, formerly the Galena, the Gallagher store antedating all other grocery dealers in O'Neill, the McManus store, the O'Neill National and First National banks, the Noble lumber yard, originally established by Barnett & Frees.

Church and Cobbler Ads in Early Issues

The first issue of The Frontier became the medium of publicity for business, lodges and the one church, St. Patrick's, that has continued through the years. It was at first called St. Joseph's with Rev. J. T. Smith as pastor.

The Ancient Order of Hibernian Division No. 1 carried a card in the paper. Frank Toohill was president; B. McGreevy, secretary; John Dwyer, treasurer; M. Sullivan, county delegate, and M. D. Long the financial secretary.

Elkhorn Valley lodge IOOF, still in existence, was functioning as early as 1880. Sanford Parker's name appears as the noble grand and M. H. Daggett, the secretary.

The professional cards of Cleveland & Uttley and O'Neill and Williams advertised the four early day lawyers.

Sam Wolfe and John McBride advertised their business as carpenters. Wm. Dahling was equipped to supply harness and saddles for the ponies. N. A. Hagenstein was a boot and shoe maker. C. C. Millard had a livery stable, B. S. Gillespie was surveying and locating claims. James O. Kattoffer, holding down a claim a mile West of the postoffice, advertised himself to be a "Practical tailor and all kinds of cleaning and repairing."

Patrick Hagerty spread it on with a two-column ad and D. L. Darr and Barrett Scott, as Darr & Scott, were doing a big business out at Red Bird. There was about two columns of ads of Niobrara concerns.

Organize Village Later

In 1880 O'Neill was still a community of colonists, not until two years later was the organization of a village effected. In 1880 the community was officially looked after by the county officers. These were: Sanford Parker, clerk; John J.

Kelley, treasurer; M. D. Long, deputy; Bernard Kearns, sheriff; Wm. Malley, judge; D. P. O'Sullivan, superintendent of schools; John Nightengale, surveyor; I. R. Smith, coroner. Patrick Hagerty was postmaster, and besides two column advertisements in The Frontier calling attention to his stock of "Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots and Shoes."

Tobacco, Strychnine, Tarantula Juice Staples on Niobrara Expedition

Over the simple signature of May, under the title of Red Bird Ripples, this information was promulgated in September 1880, through the medium of The Frontier:


Last week the time-honored veteran trapping party left this place for the upper Niobrara, fully equipped to be absent eight months. The party consisted of Col. Frank Jones, O. F. and C. A. Biko and W. Biddle, accompanied by Barrett Scott, who look along a load of supplies.

Besides this they have one team and wagon and one saddle horse. Among the numerous articles and immense piles of supplies we observed the following: 70 pounds tobacco; 120 pounds coffee, one barrel of beans, 100 steel traps, 50 bottles of strychnine and four gallons diluted tarantula juice.

6 Loads of Beer

An even thousand head of fat cattle passed down the valley to Neligh on Tuesday for shipment over the Sioux City and Pacific East, reported The Frontier of September 30, 1880. They were from Carpenter's ranch near Ft. Niobrara. In the same issue, D. L. Pond, under his Fort Flashes, tells of an exciting horse race, distance 500 yards and money involved \$3,000. Six loads of beer passed through O'Neill one week en route to the fort.

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REUNITE HERE . . . These three Sullivan brothers (left-to-right)—Daniel, Jack and Philip reunited in O'Neill in October, 1947, with Dr. J. Milton Murphy. The Sullivans are located

in Butte, Mont.; Doctor Murphy in Portland, Ore. (Montana Jack's first-son contribution appears above).—The Frontier Photo by John H. McCarville.