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THE LYNCHBURG OPERA HOUSE (1879-1902) PROGRAMS

The programs are for shows and concerts at the Lynchburg Opera House, which was located at the corner of 11th & Main Sts. Also included are newspaper clippings which either pertain to the shows or provide a historical perspective of the theater.

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THE LYNCHBURG OPERA HOUSE

The Lynchburg Opera House was founded by a joint stock company and opened 6 February 1879 with the John T. FORD Company's production of "Julius Caesar", starring F.C. BANGS. March king John Philip SOUSA, actors Frederick WARDE, John DREW, and Joseph JEFFERSON, famous for his role as Rip Van Winkle, were among those who performed on the stage, which also hosted poetry recitations, music festivals by large-city symphony orchestras, religious and temperance meetings, funerals, Lynchburg High School graduations and stump speeches by backers of presidential candidates William McKINLEY and William Jennings BRYAN.

The Opera House was the first theater in the South to use electric lights. The 8,000-square foot theater, which could seat up to 1,000 theatergoers was built for \$55,000 with two balconies and a peanut gallery overlooking an orchestra pit surrounded by the horseshoe-shaped stage. Theatergoers paid 10 cents for seats in the peanut gallery and 30 cents for "choice seats" on the lower floor. The basement of the building held a restaurant and bar.

By the early 1900s interest in theater had diminished and in 1902 the building was sold to J.W. OULD, who operated a wholesale dry goods business. In 1912 Bruffy TRENT bought it and opened the Trenton Theater, which operated until 1950. The Warner Theater opened at the same location a year later.

[Lynchburg Opera House programs, MS1416, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia]

MS1416