CHAPTER XXI.

PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS, CLUBS, ETC., IN BUFFALO.


WHAT was probably the first public performance given in the village of Buffalo, for the entertainment of the citizens and their families, was a ventriloquial exhibition by a Mr. Charles, which was given in the Court House about the first of September, 1820. This was followed by public entertainments peculiar to that period and of the most varied character. July 21, 1823, a caravan was advertised at Rathbun’s Eagle tavern, comprising a lion, an elephant, camel, etc.; while about the same time Stowell & Bishop opened an exhibition of wax figures “for a season, in the new brick building on Cheapside, a few doors north of Dyer’s tavern.” In the local papers was advertised for July 3, 4, and 5, 1826, an exhibition from the Tower of London, with two “full-grown Emuses, a zebra, monkeys, etc., at Mr. Dyer’s inn.” In July, 1827, a mummy was exhibited at the Franklin House. The proprietor of this unique show announced in the press that “an opportunity of witnessing a mummy may not soon occur again,” and it probably did not.

The first theatre in Buffalo was what was known as the Buffalo Theatre, which was built about 1821–22; it stood on Main street opposite the Eagle tavern. This theatre was advertised to rent from January, 1822, with four changes of scenery and good accommodations for companies, by S. H. Salisbury. It seems to have been purchased soon after by Walden & Mosely, who offered it for sale in November of that year. It was not much used for public entertainments, which were at that period few and far between, and in April, 1823, Rev. J. Bradley opened an English classical school in the hall. In July, 1826, we find that this theatre was occupied by a theatrical company, which produced Richard III., with a Mr. Maywood as Richard, and an afterpiece called “Tom and Jerry, or Life in London.” In August, 1828, a correspondent wrote the editor of a local paper that he had previously seen Mr. McCleary, “who sustained himself through a heavy bill of fare most admirably.”
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The correspondent also said he "would be gratified if the ladies should think proper to make a display on this occasion." The occasion referred to was the appearance of Mr. McCleary in a theatrical "bill of fare" for a few evenings in the old Buffalo Theatre. This actor established a museum, "accompanied by songs, recitations, etc.," in July, 1829, in the "Exchange" building, Main street. In August, 1830, A. H. Stowell bought out Mr. McCleary, and publicly expressed his determination to "render it a place deserving the patronage of a generous and intelligent community."

On the 10th, 11th and 12th of December, 1831, the Messrs. Waugh's announced to the ladies and gentlemen of Buffalo that they had effected an engagement with Mr. Mestayer, the performances to be given in "Philharmonic Hall, over the Museum." This hall was in the building where Dickinson's jewelry store now is, or the one adjoining. A theatre was also in operation for a short time about that period, on the third floor of a building on the south side of Seneca street, between Main and Washington streets; it was in the building now occupied by William N. Barnes as a grocery store.

The old Eagle Street Theatre, which for years was a noted place of amusement, was built for Dean & M'Kinney in 1835, by Albert Brisbane. For nearly twenty years the principal amusement companies that visited the city played in this theatre. The first gas used in the city was introduced in this theatre, being manufactured on the premises. The theatre was opened on the night of July 20, 1835, on which occasion "The Hunchback" and "Katherine and Petruchio" were the attractions offered.

Finally, after a long and varied career, the old Eagle Street Theatre was burned to the ground in June, 1852. The famous woman, Lola Montez, had appeared in the theatre on the evening before the fire, and had met with a cold reception, some of the audience showing their lack of appreciation in hisses, after which she declared she would never appear in the theatre again, and ordered her trunks removed from the house. Before morning the theatre was in ruins and all of the effects of the incensed woman were saved. This circumstance led to a current belief at the time that she was the means of the destruction of the theatre, but this was probably not the case, as the place had been on fire twice before and was only saved by the watchfulness of Thomas Duncan, who is now a trusted attaché of the Meech Brothers' Academy of Music. Little precaution seems to have been taken to protect the theatre from fire. The night following the burning of the theatre, the company opened in a place on Washington street directly in rear of the "Gothic" building on Main street, which was fitted up by William Carland. In 1835 Mr. Duffy, who came here from Albany, had a theatre on the corner of Washington and South Division streets. This was called the Buffalo Theatre.
The new Eagle Street Theatre was built immediately after the burning of the former place, and nearly upon the old site, by George and Albert Brisbane, who conducted it for a short time. The old theatre stood nearer the middle of the block than its successor, and had a yard on each side of the building. The second structure was erected on the corner of Washington and Eagle streets. The new theatre was opened under the management of Carr & Warren, on the evening of Sept. 1, 1852, with Miss Estella Potter and a stock company in "Much Ado About Nothing." A complimentary benefit was tendered the managers of the theatre, on account of their loss by the burning of the old theatre, and in appreciation of their successful efforts to please the public. The price of seats in the parquet on this occasion was one dollar. A prize address "written by a citizen of Buffalo and dedicated to the patrons of the Old Eagle Street Theatre," was read by Mrs. Muzzy. The occasion seems to have been an important one in Buffalo theatrical amusements.

In the meantime the new Metropolitan Theatre had been built by Mr. Meech, as hereafter detailed, and it soon became apparent that the city would not support two theatres. An arrangement was therefore entered into by which the proprietors of the Eagle Street Theatre agreed to close their house for theatrical purposes; they did so, but afterwards reopened it as St. James' Hall, giving up the lower floor for business purposes. In 1859, C. G. Flint took the management of St. James' Hall, which he has continued to the present time with the exception of about a year. In January, 1861, the hall was burned, and was immediately rebuilt in its present shape.

In the same year that the new Eagle Street Theatre was built, (1852) H. T. Meech completed the Metropolitan Theatre, which is now the Academy of Music. This house was opened on the evening of the 15th of October, 1852, under lease to C. T. Smith, on which occasion Mrs. Anna Cora Mowatt appeared in "The Honeymoon." An opening address was written by Anson G. Chester and read by Mrs. Mowatt, and there was dancing by the Kendall Sisters, etc.

The following season the theatre was managed by Carr, Warren & Smith. Mr. Smith subsequently went to Rochester, where the firm had a theatre in operation, and Carr & Warren managed the Metropolitan three or four seasons; Carr then bought out his partner's interest. In 1857, Carr having 'failed to make his theatre a success, Mr. Meech took it into his own hands again, but soon after rented it to Olney & Whitman. Their bad management compelled Mr. Meech to again assume control of the theatre and finish the season. About this time John H. Meech took an interest in the management of the place with his father, which continued until the death of the latter in 1870; since which time it has been in the hands of the Meech Brothers, John H., and Henry L. Meech. In 1875-'76 the theatre was leased to Abbey & Schoeffel, of
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New York, who inaugurated its management on a scale much grander evidently than its patronage would warrant. The opening night under their management was given to Lester Wallack, who then made his first appearance in Buffalo in "Rosedale." Abbey & Schoeffel failed to make the theatre pay, and again it came back into the Meech Brothers hands. The house was remodeled and refurnished in the summer of 1882; a new front was also erected and the Academy of Music is now a fair example of the best theatres in the country. The Meech Brothers leased the new Music Hall, of German Young Men's Association, for 1883, and fitted it up for theatrical, operatic and concert purposes. What was at first called the Buffalo Opera House, (now the Adelphi) was built, also by the Messrs. Brisbane and completed in 1861–62. It was opened by Grau's Italian Opera Company, with Kellogg as the prima donna. Mrs. English then took the house, placed a museum in the lower portion of it and gave dramatic performances on the stage above. This enterprise was not successful and was soon followed by a season as a theatre under the management of the actor, Mr. Charles Thorne. After that season the opera house was idle, except for transient entertainments, until September 6, 1874, when it was leased to Messrs. John Level and T. G. Riggs, who changed its name to "The Adelphi" and opened it as a variety theatre. At that time Dan Shelby was managing a similar place of amusement on the Terrace. The opposition between the two variety halls promised to be disastrous to both, and Shelby finally bought out the lessees of the Adelphi, January 3, 1875. Under his management it was successfully conducted until the season of 1881, when the management passed into the hands of Joe Lang, who still conducts it.

Wahle's Opera House is the latest addition to the places of amusement in the city. It is located on Court street, between Pearl and Franklin, and is 165 by 58 feet in dimensions. The construction of this house was begun on the 20th of April, 1882, and it was opened on the 12th of October of the same year, by the Strakosch Opera Company. The house has two galleries and parquet, and during the summer of 1883 was remodeled on the interior, more descent given to the floors and other changes for the better being made. It is now a convenient and comfortable place of amusement.

There have at various times been other unimportant places of amusement in Buffalo, but as a rule they were short-lived and not of a character entitling them to particular mention in this work.

THE CLUBS OF BUFFALO.

Social intercourse, as it relates to the gentlemen of Buffalo, has always been kept up to a healthful and elevating standard, and has developed into the formation of numerous organizations having for their object the promotion of sociability and freedom of friendly intercourse
among their members. The first and most prominent among these organizations is:

The Buffalo Club.—This Club was organized in January, 1867, and incorporated under the laws of the State. The incorporators and first directors of the Club were as follows:—Millard Fillmore, William G. Fargo, Isaac A. Verplanck, William Dorsheimer, Delavan F. Clark, Josiah Jewett, Bronson C. Rumsey, Sherman S. Jewett, Henry L. Lansing, Asher P. Nichols, John M. Hutchinson, Harmon S. Cutting, Jewett M. Richmond, H. C. Winslow, John T. Hudson, E. Carlton Sprague, Dexter P. Rumsey, John B. Williams, S. K. Worthington, Myron P. Bush, Albert H. Tracy, G. Stedman Williams.

The constitution of the Club makes the number of the Board of Directors after the first year, twenty-one. Following is a list of the successive presidents of the Club since its organization:—Millard Fillmore, 1867–68; William G. Fargo, 1869 to 1873, inclusive; Sherman S. Jewett, 1874; Myron P. Bush, 1875; Rufus L. Howard, 1876 to 1878, inclusive; T. F. Rochester, M. D., 1879; Abraham Altman, 1880; James P. White, M. D., 1881; Josiah Jewett, 1882; Franklin Sidway, 1883.

The number of resident members in this Club is limited to two hundred. Among the present membership are very many of the leading men of the city, and the Buffalo Club is famous for its general high character, its hospitality to distinguished visitors and guests, and the elegance and tone of its style of entertainments. Following are the directors in office at the close of 1882:—


The City Club of Buffalo.—This Club was organized March 10, 1877, and incorporated in the following month. Its first officers were:—George S. Wardwell, president; J. L. Fairchild, vice-president; Robert P. Hayes, secretary and treasurer. These gentlemen and Townsend Davis, D. F. Clark, H. T. Smith, J. H. Vought, Grover Cleveland and John S. Noyes were the first board of directors.

In October, 1877, the Club occupied its present club house, at No. 351 Washington street. The present membership consists of 350 resident members and 150 non-resident members. Two commodious additions to the club house have been made, providing public and private rooms, billiard room, reception rooms, etc.
The present officers of the Club are—George Gorham, president; John L. Williams, vice-president; George R. Teller, treasurer; S. M. Welch, Jr., secretary. The directors are George Gorham, George R. Teller, Henry Altman, Charles H. Daniels, John L. Williams, S. M. Welch, Jr., C. G. Warren, Howard H. Baker and Lawrence Budd.

The Lotus Club.—This social institution was organized March 15, 1878, and incorporated May 6, 1879. The object of the Club is given as “social and mutual benefit, dramatic and literary purposes,” and for the establishment of a library.

The first officers of this Club were:—William Hertkorn, president; M. I. Smith, vice-president; A. I. Siebold, recording secretary; C. J. Becker, financial secretary; George A. Weber, treasurer.

The present officers are:—Samuel J. Omphalhain, president; Anthony Weber, vice-president; A. Mospau, recording secretary; James Hill, financial secretary; A. F. Miller, treasurer. Trustees—William Hertkorn, Ed. Williams. Regular meetings of the Club are held Monday evenings, in room D, 83 Franklin street.

The Buffalo Polo Club.—This Club was the outgrowth of a meeting of Buffalo gentlemen interested in horsemanship and kindred out-door sports, which was held at the Buffalo Club House on the 9th of April, 1877. On the 14th of the same month a constitution was adopted. The officers elected for that year were:—L. D. Rumsey, president; W. Hodge, first vice-president; E. H. Mevius, second vice-president; C. H. Williams, treasurer; J. H. Cowing, secretary; Charles Cary, H. A. Lindeman, H. R. Hopkins, C. A. Blake, executive committee.

There were seventeen active and thirty-three honorary members. The object of the Club was to encourage horsemanship, the game of polo and other similar sports. In August, 1877, a match game was played at Newport, R. I., with the only other Polo Club in America, resulting in a victory for the latter. In September, 1878, a return match game was played in Buffalo, resulting in a victory for the Buffalo Club.


The Falconwood Company.—This company was incorporated in 1879. At that time the Falconwood, on Grand Island, was the property of D. R. Morse, D. P. Rumsey, C. F. S. Thomas and Dennis Bowen, who purchased it of Hon. Lewis F. Allen. The two gentlemen first named became sole owners of the property and laid the foundation of the Falconwood Club, and about the year 1879, a handsome house was erected at a cost of $12,000. The grounds were beautifully improved and the Club has been a successful and popular organization. In 1882 the club house was burned to the ground, but was rebuilt on a more extensive plan, the fol-
ollowing summer. The Club has now a large membership made up of the heads of many of the leading families of Buffalo, who spend portions of the warm season there. The directors are Messrs. George Howard, (who is president); S. S. Jewett, J. M. Richmond, D. R. Morse, and E. B. Smith, the latter being secretary.

The Acacia Club.—What was known as the Knights Templar Club, was organized in Buffalo in April, 1875. The Fraternity Club was organized in June, 1875. These two Clubs were consolidated May 1st, 1880, forming the present Acacia Club, which was incorporated May 17, 1883. The rooms of the Club were burned on December 21, 1882, and re-opened in their present quarters in the Miller & Greiner Building on Washington street, on the 26th of May, 1883. The Club derives its membership solely from the Masonic fraternity of the city and county; its object is purely social intercourse. The rooms comprise an elegant suite of parlors, card, chess, reading, cloak and toilet rooms, and a large billiard parlor. The membership on May 1st, 1880, was fifty-seven; at present it is one hundred and eighty, and increasing steadily; membership is limited to two hundred. The officers for 1883 are as follows:—William H. Baker, president; William C. Barrett, M. D., 1st vice-president; Cassius C. Candee, 2d vice-president; Charles R. FitzGerald, secretary; William H. Smith, treasurer; William J. Runcie, Daniel E. Bailey, directors.

The Beaver Island Association.—This Association was incorporated in 1880, and has a club house on Beaver Island. Its chief objects are social intercourse, piscatorial amusement and the enforcement of the laws for the protection of fish. It has a membership of about twenty-five, from the leading men of Buffalo. The officers for 1883 are:—James P. White, president; Robert P. Hayes, 1st vice-president; S. T. Viele, 2d vice-president; C. D. Marshall, secretary and treasurer; E. C. Sprague, S. T. Viele, Robert P. Hayes, C. H. Utley, J. B. White, Jr., Charles D. Marshall, J. H. Cowing, J. G. Milburn and C. B. Germain, directors.

The Unknown Social Club was organized April 5, 1878, and was incorporated October 2, 1882. It meets at Scheu’s Building, No. 241 Genesee street. The officers are:—E. C. Burgard, president; P. Scheeler, vice-president; Val. Specht, Jr., recording secretary; E. W. Kuhn, financial secretary; Theo. Baetzhold, treasurer.

In addition to the organizations above described, there are in Buffalo ten or twelve other bodies bearing the title of clubs; most of them are organizations formed for the purpose of developing an interest in shooting, rowing, yachting, etc. Prominent among these are the Bay View Rifle Association, with headquarters at 474 Main street; the Audubon Club, with rooms at No. 30 Arcade Building; the Queen City Shooting Club, the East Buffalo Gun Club and the Cold Spring
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Gun Club. There are also the Buffalo Yacht Club, with the following officers: John S. Provoost, commodore; T. P. Frank, vice-commodore; E. P. Field, secretary; C. L. Abel, treasurer; A. H. Allen, measurer. The Queen City Rowing Club, the Buffalo Mutual Rowing Club, the Buffalo Athletic Club and the Fritz Reuter Club.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOSPITALS, ASYLUMS, CHARITIES, ETC.

The Buffalo General Hospital — The First Hospital Meeting — Successive Presidents of the Institution — The Training School for Nurses — Hospital of the Sisters of Charity — The Good Samaritan Eye and Ear Infirmary — The Homeopathic Hospital — Buffalo Eye and Ear Infirmary — Buffalo Surgical Infirmary — The City’s Dispensaries — The Charitable Institutions and Asylums of the City.

THE BUFFALO GENERAL HOSPITAL.

On the 21st of November, 1855, a meeting was held with the view of establishing a general hospital in Buffalo. There were present Charles E. Clarke, George S. Hazard, Andrew J. Rich, Bronson C. Rumsey, William T. Wardwell, Roswell L. Burrows, Drs. Phineas H. Strong, Charles H. Wilcox, Thomas F. Rochester, Sanford B. Hunt, William Gould, James M. Newman, John Root, Charles C. F. Gay, James B. Samo, Charles H. Baker and Sanford Eastman. On the 19th of June, 1858, the first medical staff was elected as follows:—Drs. Thomas F. Rochester, James M. Newman, Cornelius C. Wyckoff. Consulting physicians—James P. White, George N. Burwell, P. H. Strong. The surgeons were Charles H. Wilcox, Austin Flint, Jr., and Sanford B. Eastman; consulting surgeons—Frank H. Hamilton, John Root and Charles C. F. Gay.

The hospital was located on High street, near Main, where it now is. On the 6th of July, 1858, A. W. Dewey and wife were engaged as warden and matron, at a salary of $300 a year for both. The presidents of the hospital have been as follows:—Charles E. Clarke, nine years; George Howard, two years; James Bradley, James D. Sawyer, R. D. Sherman, Hon. John B. Skinner and Jason Sexton, one year each; R. J. Sherman, seven years; James N. S. Scatcherd, from 1879 to the present time. The secretaries have been Roswell L. Burrows, two years; William T. Wardwell, seven years; George S. Wardwell, six years; William F. Miller, 1880, succeeded by the present incumbent, Robert P. Wilson. The present warden is William S. Wheeler, who assumed the position in September, 1880, his wife is matron.