

## ***THEATRE BIRTH & FLAMES***

**Henry Van Liew:** founder of The People's Theater

**Azlene:** Van Liew's foster 'daughter'

**James:** Henry's stage builder/assistant

**Malcombe:** Republican leader of the 1858 convention

On the street between Park Square and The Palace  
Theatre in St. Paul

HERALD

Welcome again to Hidden Herald! Today we're searching for the first REAL theatre in St. Paul. And it's not Park Square Theatre - right over there - which 50 years ago used to be the ACTOR's Theatre and before that the huge CAPITAL theatre. Not that. And it wasn't the Palace Theater over there - nope. Way before that, 1857. The People's Theater - With a determined founder..

SFX: Hammering sounds

HENRY VAN LIEW

I will lift local stage artistry beyond variety and touring revelry. My theatre, the People's Theatre will present resident local actors and classic plays to elevate public consciousness in the burgeoning city of Pig's Eye. I mean St. Paul.

HERALD

Yes, traveling showman, director, and producer Henry Van Liew put together a theater out of slab boards with a canvas roof. For \$750- just two blocks away at 4th and St. Peter. It's remains are buried under the county courthouse, but in the beginning...

SFX: curtains sound??

HENRY VAN LIEW

Azlene! James! Updates! The theatre opens in 47 minutes. And the stage is not level.

JAMES

Got your lift right here, boss. (*grunts and hammering*)

AZLENE

Costumes are ready, father. And I can open with "Beautiful Dreamer" - *Beautiful Dreamer, wake unto me- Starlight and dewdrops are waiting..*

VAN LIEW

Azlene, my girl, not this time. We need to bring forth the ideals of the nation, of our souls.

JAMES

Boss, people needs a little lift sometimes. Distraction?

AZLENE

Remember when we just danced and sang? Quite a few places are doing that...

VAN LIEW

This city is on the cusp of being the best - past St. Louis, past Chicago - so the people need ideas, art. We must support - "Free soil, Free Labor, Free men"!

JAMES

Okay, okay. I get it. As long as this stage can last through the summer.

VAN LIEW

The purpose of our work "was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature"

AZLENE

Father, enough Shakespeare. I know the theatre in Iowa wasn't exactly your type, but/

VAN LIEW

No one mentions Iowa! Get the cast on stage now!

SFX: Music/cast lines/ Applause:

HERALD

And his insistence did work! The newspapers!

NEWSPAPER!

The People's Theater presents "Hamlet" with an exceptional cast and a full audience, rivaling Sallie St. Claire and the St. Louis Varieties at the Mazurka Hall. Patronage is encouraged.

VAN LIEW

(to self)

I have - we have - become what is necessary.

HERALD

Audiences and shows continued! Classics, some melodrama of the era - But by August of 1857, things changed.

*(Horse cart clopping/stopping or crashing)*

Can you imagine economic instability, markets crashing, and dire political schisms?

Faint clapping. A trumpet fades.

AZLENE

There were only seven people in the house... how will we pay people?

VAN LIEW

The show must go on until the season ends. I'll figure it out..

AZLENE

Perhaps we could get Sallie St. Clair and her band for openings - The Mazurka Theatre is closing and her backups are leaving for St. Louis.

VAN LIEW

No, no, no...or maybe.

JAMES

Boss - there's a man want to talk to you....

VAN LIEW

Not now! We must find ways..

JAMES

He's a politician. A republican. Says he likes the theater. The actual theatre. Andre Balcombe/

BALCOMBE

Excuse me, Mr. Van Liew. Sorry to interrupt, but -- your theatre is ideally located. I led the Republicans in the Convention this year - And, we, uh, may need some space for gatherings next year....

VAN LIEW

Really? That is a spectacular idea!

HERALD

And so it goes.. In 1858, The People's Theater became a spot for speeches and rallies - and still spectacular dramas. Just so you know, Republican and Democrat were flipped back then - especially if we're talking about individual rights. So, actually it was all drama, if you think about it. Stay tuned for the second episode of Theatre of The People!