

THEATRE BIRTH & FLAMES

Henry Van Liew: founder of The People's Theater

Azlene: Van Liew's foster 'daughter'

James: Henry's stage builder/assistant

Sallie St. Claire: the best variety entertainer

Lowe: Republican leader of the 1858 convention

Newspaper 1 & 2

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

HERALD

Welcome again to Hidden Herald - cooing around about the People's Theatre - remember, the first real theatre in St. Paul? Imagine now it's their second season, and yes, Minnesota just became a state! But it's not as good a story as you'd think. Headlines aren't talking about that OR theatre...

NEWSPAPER!

National incompetence has made a perfect storm of economic disaster,.

NEWSPAPER 2

St. Paul is printing it's own money and hundreds are leaving the city behind.

HERALD

And Henry Van Liew - the owner -in our last episode? If you remember...he is hosting political sessions with prime candidates - both for his beliefs, and well, and to keep the theatre alive.

VAN LIEW

We as republicans will find ways to eliminate the exploitation of black citizens and further a free and equitable United States. And support crucial storytelling..

SFX: Cheers

HERALD

But what plays will they produce? For a dying audience? And will they survive?

SFX: cleaning up/moving furniture

VAN LIEW

Azlene - James - stop the cleaning. We need to adjust the season, yet keep our mission. I'm thinking *Macbeth* could match well with the nation. And YES, *The Poor of New York*. Perfect. Resonates. We are the Poor of St. Paul. All of us.

JAMES

Those aren't cheap shows, Boss. Maybe a little lighter?

AZLENE

Let's do "*The Loan of the Lover*": I could play Gertrude. That would make me happy.

SFX: click of shoes, swish of a skirt.

SALLIE ST. CLAIR

I believe that you will be hiring me for your starring roles. Make me happy.

VAN LIEW

Who are you?! Not that one...

AZLENE

I forgot to tell you - I invited her...

SALLIE

Yes, Sallie St Clair - sweetie of the St. Louis Varieties: your chief rival in the entertainment world.

VAN LIEW

Azlene, I am not hiring her. (to Sallie) You can leave - now!

SALLIE

Wait! The rest of my Varieties Group have left. But my solo talents could up your ticket sales.

VAN LIEW

We will not lower the bar. "Me think'st thou are a general offence" All's Well/

SALLIE

/That Ends Well. I know Shakespeare.

(direct)

Four theatres closed, no one has "dollars", and everyone is eating fear for breakfast. So I was thinking that this crap ship of a theater barely floating could use a little lift. And guaranteed coins drifting in...

(SFX: sound of coins spilling)

My musicians are available - the Old Gent's Band. Could warm up the room. (yelling to them) Boys, play a riff!

SFX: A little music

JAMES

Um - Maybe we could break our rules a bit boss - to get the butts in seats?

AZLENE

Selling our souls isn't the worst...

SALLIE

Darling - That's our profession. *(to Van Liew)* What do you say Van Liew?

VAN LIEW

Well, you did come here with honesty. And "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." Maybe we can web it together.

SALLIE

Which one of us is the good and which one the ill? Hmm?

VAN LIEW

I'm sure it goes both ways. We will work this out - but one thing - NO minstrelsy or black-face abomination in this house. We have Abolitionists meeting here with their party members to protect Minnesota from the South.

SALLIE

I guess I won't sing "Dixie'..

VAN LIEW

Never say that word again.

SFX: Transition sound

HERALD

And they went on with fire and heart! Their most successful play? *Mazeppa and the Horse!*

ROBERT MILES

With me Colonel R. E. J. Miles - now wildly famous - strapped every night to a wild stallion running across the stage -- and sometimes into the audience.

SFX: Horse--screaming and applause.

VAN LIEW

In dire times, we must make art the people love.

AZLENE

With the people we love.

VAN LIEW

And with our St. Paul Representative! Charles F. Lowe. Expanding theatre further!

CHARLES LOWE

I know some of you came tonight for the horse. (laughs) The horse is important. But so is this. Slavery must not extend. Dred Scott must be repealed. (beat) This theater is called The People's Theater. Tell me who "the people" are, if not all of them.

SFX: Applause. Some boos. Cheers and people leaving...

VAN LIEW

The Theatre supported all these points, as I saw them necessary. Some of the patrons weren't on board, but at certain points you have to take risks. You have to. Before the world burns down.

HERALD

In a little box, downtown, words were heard...of the people, by the people, and for the people. Shakespeare, Horses, Variety and Human Rights. Stay tuned for the last section of Theater Birth and Flames.