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AMERICAN THEATRE PLAYBILL COLLECTION

1826-1873
(bulk dates 1860-1865)

23 volumes

September 2006

Descriptive Summary**Repository**

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Title

American Theatre Playbill Collection

Inclusive Dates

1826-1873 (bulk dates 1860-1865)

Quantity

23 volumes

Language of Materials

Materials are in English.

Abstract

The American Theatre Playbill Collection spans the period from 1826 to 1873 and covers performances held in Philadelphia theatres, both for repertory companies and vaudeville houses, as well as venues in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Baltimore, Maryland.

Administrative Information**Restrictions to Access**

The collection is open to researchers.

Acquisition Information

Gifts of John A. McAllister, Samuel Breck, and James Rush; forms part of the McAllister Collection.

Processing Information

The collection was described in 2006 by Sandra Markham under grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the William Penn Foundation. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this finding aid do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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Online Catalog Headings**Subject Names**

Chestnut Street Theatre (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 Arch Street Theatre (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 American Academy of Music (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 Academy of Music (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 Peale's Museum (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 Walnut Street Theatre
 Eleventh St. Opera House (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia
 Musical Fund Hall (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 Olympic Theatre (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 Sanford's Opera House (Philadelphia, Pa.)
 Sanford's Opera Troupe
 Wheatley, William, 1816-1876
 Drew, Louisa, 1820-1897
 Vestfali, Felicja, d. 1880
 Forrest, Edwin, 1806-1872
 Booth, Edwin, 1833-1893
 Love, William Edward, 1806-1867
 Carncross & Dixey's Minstrels
 Carncross, J. L. (John L.), b. 1834?
 Dixey, E. F. (E. Freeman), 1833-1904
 Lardner, Dionysius, 1793-1859
 Taylor, Tom, 1817-1880
 Boucicault, Dion, 1820-1890
 Bowers, D. P. (David P.), Mrs., 1830-1895
 Conway, Sarah Crocker, 1833-1875
 Conway, Frederick Bartlett, 1819-1874
 Drew, John, 1827-1862
 Grover, Leonard, d. 1926
 Adrian & Probasco--engraver—Illustrator

Subject Topics

Theaters--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources
 Music-halls--Pennsylvania—Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources
 Exhibitions--Pennsylvania—Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources
 Opera--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources
 Circus--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources
 Entertainment events--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources
 Women in the theater
 Women singers
 Minstrel shows--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources

African Americans--Caricatures and cartoons
 African-American entertainers
 Vaudeville--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources
 Benefit performances--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--History--19th century--Sources
 Afro-Americana
 African Americans--Satire
 Philanthropy
 Women

Document Types

Playbills
 Theatrical posters--American--19th century
 Advertisements--Entertainment events
 Broadsides

Biographical/Historical Notes

A survey of the history of theatre and popular entertainments in nineteenth-century Philadelphia is told in chapter 29, "Amusements of the Philadelphians," in *The History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, by J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott (1884), volume 2. Additionally, three other books provide greater details about specific places and time periods: Reese Davis James, *Old Drury of Philadelphia, a History of the Philadelphia Stage, 1800-1835* (1932) and *Cradle of Culture, 1800-1810, the Philadelphia Stage* (1957); and Arthur H. Wilson, *A History of the Philadelphia Theatre, 1835 to 1855* (1935). Both the Library Company and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania hold scrapbook sets of Charles Durang's exhaustive chronicle, "History of the Philadelphia Stage," which was published weekly in the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch* between 1854 and 1863; clipped from the papers, the columns were mounted on specially-ruled scrapbook pages. The articles describe the period 1750-1855 (in 4 volumes, LCP) and 1849-1855 (2 volumes, HSP). Volume four of the LCP set also has a miscellany of clipped newspaper articles about Philadelphia theatre dating from 1828 to 1859 (bulk 1842-1859), including two long articles by James Rees on the Philadelphia Stage (cut from the *Chronicle*) and the Arch Street Theatre; biographical sketches and obituaries of ten noted theatre people.

For the second half of the nineteenth century, the story can be told piecemeal through the primary source material held by the Library Company, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Each institution has theatre-related collections such as scrapbooks, programs, tickets and other ephemera, but each also strong in playbills.

The Library Company has approximately 5,300 playbills spanning the period from the early 1770s through the 1880s with the bulk of collection from 1850 to 1868. While Philadelphia material predominates, the library also has playbills from regional theatres in the Delaware

Valley, as well as for theatres in Baltimore and New York. Approximately 4,400 playbills, all from Philadelphia and arranged by theatre, are stored in twenty-one folio volumes in the McAllister Collection; they are briefly described in this finding aid. The remainder of the playbills is cataloged individually in the library's online catalog.

The Free Library of Philadelphia's Theatre Collection, a division of the library's Rare Book Department, holds the largest collection of playbills for Philadelphia theatres, dating from 1803 to the present. Its Philadelphia Theatre Index is a card file index of professional theatrical performances in Philadelphia covering the period 1855 through 2000, which was designed to take up where Wilson's volume ended. The index was created through a search of local newspapers to record each performance; only the top-billed plays were recorded, and only Philadelphia theatres were considered. Popular entertainments were not included, and actors, playwrights, or managers were not indexed. Two cards were made for each performance: one was filed under the theatre, and one filed under the title of the play. The cards also indicate the Free Library's playbill holdings.

The University of Pennsylvania's Walter J. and Leonore Annenberg Rare Book & Manuscript Library holds the Edwin Forrest Collection (Ms. Coll. 5), which contains ten boxes of playbills dating from 1826 to 1870.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania theatre holdings span 1754 to 1989, and include playbills from various theatres in Philadelphia and other cities. Access to the collection is through the reference staff.

Collection Overview

The American Theatre Playbill Collection spans the period from 1826 to 1873 and covers Philadelphia theatres, both for repertory companies and vaudeville houses. The collection is housed in twenty-one folio albums that were created by the library in the late 1890s, after the death of the collection's principal donor, John A. McAllister (1822-1896). In preparing the McAllister playbills for storage in folio volumes, the library staff decided to add in the playbills given by two other donors, Samuel Breck (1771-1862) and Dr. James Rush (1786-1869). The combined material was sorted by theatre, arranged roughly chronologically thereunder, and mounted in the folio volumes. During the process, no effort was made to record provenance, but it is thought that the 1860s material probably came from McAllister, with the earlier playbills gifts from the other two gentlemen, both known to have been theatre patrons. In addition, Dr. Rush had professional relationships with several actors through his studies of the human voice.

Prior to the McAllister Collection processing project (2005-2006), the albums were a set of twenty-eight volumes. Seven of the albums were taken apart because they contained regional and non-Philadelphia material, or held random playbills for popular entertainments such as

circuses, balloon ascensions, and panoramic painting exhibitions. These playbills, numbering approximately 1000, were cataloged individually and can be found in the Library Company's online catalog, WolfPAC. The existing playbill albums have retained their original volume numbers and are referenced that way in this finding aid: they remain as volumes 1-5 and 8-23.

Playbills cataloged in the Library Company's online catalog – from the dismantled albums (6-7, 24-28) and items that had previously been removed from the existing albums – carry the suffix (5761 F McAllister) in their call number, which will connect them to their former album page. Readers should consult an LCP reference librarian if they wish to locate a specific item by using its call number.

The playbills were generally housed two per page; a ticket, season pass, or program was occasionally affixed as well. The span dates listed in the précis below represent the entire album or those for one theatre. Refined dates and arrangement anomalies are given in the next section of this finding aid, along with an overall survey of the volume's contents, but the descriptions are not at all inclusive of every actor, performance, presentation, or theatre manager.

Two unusual items are found in the albums: restaurant promotions that were printed to resemble playbills. Volume 11 has advertisements for Richard Harbord's Decatur Coffee House and volume 19 has one for Nathaniel Coombs' eating house.

Table of Contents for playbill albums:

Vol. 1-4	Arch Street Theatre (971 items)	1830-1870
Vol. 5	American Academy of Music (256 items)	1857-1867
Vol. 8	Concert Hall (80 items)	1863-1873
	Continental Theatre and Music Hall (113 items)	1861-1863
Vol. 9	Continental Theatre and Music Hall (309 items)	1863-1864
Vol. 10	Chestnut Street Opera House (23 items)	1864
Vol. 11	Chestnut Street Theatre (7 items; see also vols. 13 and 20)	1841-1853
	New Chestnut Street Theatre (183 items)	1863
Vol. 12	New Chestnut Street Theatre (264 items)	1863-1864
Vol. 13	New Chestnut Street Theatre (168 items)	1864-1866
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Vol. 16	Fox's Casino/Fox's American Variety (38 items)	undated
	Gardner & Hemming's Amphitheatre (101 items)	1863
	Gardner & Hemming's Great American Circus (8 items)	1863-1864
	Whittaker's Amphitheatre (8 items)	1863
Vol. 17	Metropolitan Concert Hall/Concert Saloon (63 items)	1864-1865
	Metropolitan Music Hall (2 items)	undated
	Musical Fund Hall (117 items)	1827-1873
Vol. 18	Great National Circus and Theatre (194 items)	1860-1865
Vol. 19	Olympic Theatre (63 items)	1863-1864
	Philadelphia Museum (58 items)	1838-1845
	Peale's Philadelphia Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts (27 items)	1846-1848
	Masonic Hall (1 item)	1864
Vol. 20	Chesnut Street Theatre (35 items; see also vols. 11 and 13)	1826-1855
	Walnut Street Theatre (112 items)	1853-1857
Vol. 21-23	Walnut Street Theatre (653 items)	1830-1865

Vol. 1 Arch Street Theatre, Arch and 6th streets

1842, 1853-1854

The volume opens with a single playbill for July 30, 1842, and then presents playbills in a straight chronology from February 1853 through August 1854. During the first months, the theatre was leased by Thomas Hemphill; he booked stars including Matilda Heron (1830-1877), John R. Scott (1808-1856), John Drew (1827-1862), Mrs. John (Louisa) Drew (1820-1897), William Wheatley (1816-1876), Kate Denin (1837-1907) and Mrs. E. Herbert, who were seen in popular works such as *Giralda* and in a variety of Shakespeare plays. In August 1853, John Drew and William Wheatley assumed the lease, renaming the house Wheatley & Drew's Arch St. Theatre; they published a playbill-format announcement for their opening which stated that they had altered and renovated the theatre, added new staircases in the east and west lobbies, enlarged the orchestra seats, and mentioned that "Boxes for Respectable Colored Persons have been set apart in the Gallery." The announcement listed the thirty members of the house's Star Company, which performed a repertoire of popular comedies and dramas including *John Bull*, *Speed the Plough*, *Venice Preserved*, *Lucretia Borgia*, *Paul Pry*, *Satan in Paris*, and a comedy called *The Serious Family*.

See volume 4 for other early playbills from this theatre.

Vol. 2 Arch Street Theatre

1854-1855

The volume continues the chronology begun in volume 1, with performances by the Star Company at Wheatley and Drew's theatre through July 1855. Productions included popular dramas and comedies, many with ethnic (particularly Irish) themes, as well as works by Shakespeare such as *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*; Boucicault's *London Assurance*, and *Old Heads and Young Hearts*; Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, *The Rivals*, and *The Critic*; Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*; and Bulwer-Lytton's *Night and Morning*, *Money*, and *Lady of Lyons*. The volume also holds a pass good for all performances during the 1855-1856 season, issued to comic actor and theatrical manager John Sefton (1805-1868) by J. Ingles Matthias, treasurer of the theatre.

Vol. 3 Arch Street Theatre

1857-1864, 1867

The volume opens with seven playbills dating between 1857 and 1862, and then presents a straight run between January 1863 and September 1864. Of the earlier playbills, there is one from Wheatley's Arch St. Theatre (May 25, 1857), one from Wheatley and Clarke's Arch St. Theatre (April 21, 1859), and five from Mrs. John Drew's Arch St. Theatre (December 1861-February 1862, plus one from October 1867). Mrs. Drew assumed management of the theatre in 1861. Of particular note is a playbill-format announcement for the fall 1863 opening of "Mrs. John Drew's New Arch Street Theatre" after her ensemble had proved so successful that the owners remodeled the house for her. Published in early May 1863, it lists many of the firms involved, from the architects (Collins & Autenrieth) to the contractor, mason, marble and plaster work companies, and decorators. Also listed were the artists booked for the fall and winter seasons. A playbill for May 9, 1863, was for the "Last Night in the 'Old Arch'" and the next in the volume, for Saturday, September 12, was for the opening night of the new theatre (featuring a "New Act Drop Curtain by Mr. Hawthorn, the Scenic Artist of the Establishment.")

Performers featured in the volume are Caroline Richings (1827-1882), Peter Richings (1798-1871), Jane Coombs (1842-after 1873), Mary Provost (1835-1914), Edwin Adams (1834-1877), Mrs. D.P. (Elizabeth Crocker) Bowers (1830-1895), Edwin L. Davenport (1815-1877), James W. Wallack Jr. (1818-1873), Charlotte Thompson (1843-1898), Frank Drew (1831-1903), Cecile Rush (1833-1897), Barney Williams (1823-1876) and

Mrs. Barney (Maria) Williams (1828-1911), Mrs. John Drew, and Richings Opera Troupe, appearing in a mix of popular dramas, comedies, and musical presentations such as Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, and Buckstone's melodrama, *Victorine; or, I'll Sleep on It*. In June 1864, the theatre presented an "Apropos Operatic Bagatelle in One Act" titled *Jenny Lind: Or, The Swedish Nightingale* featuring Miss Lotta (Charlotte Crabtree, 1847-1923), "California's Favorite Protean Comedienne," as the main character, Miss Jenny Leatherlungs.

Vol. 4 Arch Street Theatre

1830-1870

The volume continues from 3 above. The bulk of the playbills date between September 1864 and February 1865, and are for entertainments at the theatre under Mrs. John Drew. Aside from herself, performers in her ensemble included John S. Clarke (1833-1899), Felicita Vestvali (1834-1880), Edwin Adams, Mr. & Mrs. Barney Williams, Caroline Richings, Peter Richings, and Lawrence P. Barrett (1830-1891) in productions such as Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Hamlet*, Sheridan's *The Rivals*, Bulwer-Lytton's *Lady of Lyons*, and Taylor's *Our American Cousin*.

The final items in the volume are three earlier playbills for the Philadelphia Theatre on Arch Street, two promoting appearances by Master (Joseph) Burke (1818-1902) in *The March of Intellect* (December 20, 1830) and as Dr. Ollapod in *Poor Gentleman* (April 27, 1831); also announced was the publication and sale, at the theatre, of a biography of Burke, described as "The Wonder of the World, & The Paragon of Actors." The third playbill is for the first Philadelphia appearance of the Tyrolese Minstrels, who were sandwiched between James E. Murdoch (1811-1893) and Edward N. Thayer (1798-1870) in *The Day After the Wedding*, and John R. Scott and Murdoch in *Adopted Child* (September 30, 1831). There is also a playbill for a performance of *Richelieu* with Wheatley, Shewell, and Mrs. Drew, on April 23, 1859.

The album contains four pieces of theatrical ephemera: two invitations from Mrs. E.N. (Agnes) Thayer (1800-1873) to attend her benefit at Mrs. Drew's theatre in March 1868 and February 1870; a single issue of *The Lorgnette*, a four-page program published by Wheatley and Clarke in April 1859; and an undated pass made out to John Sefton for performances at Wheatley and Clarke's Arch St. Theatre.

Vol. 5 American Academy of Music, Broad and Locust streets

1857-1867

The bulk of the playbills in the album are from 1863 and 1864. Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth (1833-1893) appeared at the Academy many times in a wide repertoire of plays including *Richard III*, *Othello*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Coriolanus*, and *King Lear*, as well as in the popular works *Jack Cade*, *Metamora*, and *Gladiator*. Most of the other entertainments at the Academy were musical, and featured companies such as the German Opera, the Havana and New York Italian Opera, Parepa-Rosa Grand English Opera, and Richings Grand English Opera, performing standards including *Fidelio*, *The Magic Flute*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Daughter of the Regiment*. The earliest material consists of six programs for operas in 1857 (*Ernani*, *La Traviata*, and *Mason & Locksmith*) and 1858 (*William Tell* and the *Barber of Seville*). Among the earlier playbills is one for the appearance of the Compagnie Francaise de New York (1860), and the latest in the album is for the Imperial Japanese Troupe (1867). A single playbill from January 1862 announced the arrival of pianist and composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869), and a few others describe appearances by the Martinetti and Marzetti ballet and pantomime artists in 1864.

The volume has a few playbills for events held to raise funds for wounded soldiers, local hospitals, and the United States Sanitary Commission during the Civil War. The first, from April 1861, was a patriotic music festival whose finale was a tableau vivant featuring George Washington standing on the Secession

flag; in September 1861 there was a “Grand Exhibition Drill” and concert with the Zouaves d’Afrique, held the night before the troop left to become bodyguards for General Nathaniel Banks; in February 1862 the local Hlasko Cadets performed “A Grand Military Sketch Entitled *A Soldier’s Life and It’s Vicissitudes*” with military drills and a *Union Battle Cantata* composed for the occasion; funds from performances held in April and May 1862 aided sick and wounded soldiers; in April 1863 a variety of actors, singers, and performers, including the magician and ventriloquist Signor Antonio Blitz (1810-1887), held a benefit for the army hospitals in and around Philadelphia; in September 1863, Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876) starred in *Macbeth* for the Sanitary Commission; in April 1864 there was a Grand Musical Festival featuring William Henry Fry’s new opera *Notre-Dame of Paris*, also for the Sanitary Commission; and in April 1864, Philadelphia native James E. Murdoch gave a reading to raise money for military families and the two volunteer refreshment saloons in the city.

Vol. 8	Concert Hall, Chestnut and 12th streets	1863-1873
	Continental Theatre and Continental Music Hall, Walnut and 8th streets	1861-1863

The first half of the volume carries playbills from the Concert Hall, which offered variety entertainments such as comedy, opera, and short plays. It featured repeat performances by star troupes the Hutchinson Family, the Peak Family of Swiss Bell Ringers, Morris’ Minstrels, and Christy’s Minstrels. Also appearing was the Chestnut Street Opera House Troupe which featured “Ethiopian comedians” John Mulligan (b. 1827) and John Moran in productions of *Frightened Darkey* and *Darkey in the Bag*, among others. Among the stars that performed at the theatre were Carlo Patti, L.M. Gottschalk (in a run of “farewell concerts” in 1865), and the Duranci Sisters. Another entertainment genre featured at the Concert Hall were panoramic paintings; the volume has several playbills for presentations of Samuel B. Waugh’s series of Italian scenes, and for the “Zographicon” of T.S. Arthur’s *Ten Nights in a Bar Room* playing with Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and one hundred panoramic paintings (Joseph Verey, proprietor).

There is one playbill each for Fanny Kemble (1809-1893), who did readings from Shakespeare; for a group appearance by Barnum’s touring foursome Tom Thumb, Lavinia Warren, Commodore Nutt, and Minnie Warren; and for Father Kemp’s Old Folks Concert Company, a troupe of thirty men and women who sang songs while dressed in mid-eighteenth-century costumes. Only a few playbills directly reference the Civil War, including one presentation of *Pearson’s Historic Mirror of the Rebellion*, one of the *Grand Historical Mirror of the War* (December 1862), and one for a benefit to aid sick and wounded soldiers at the military hospital in West Philadelphia.

The second half of the volume covers performances at the Continental Theatre and the Continental Music Hall, both on Walnut Street, between December 1861 and May 1863. The lessee for the former venue was Allinson & Hincken, and for the latter, Frederick Aims. Appearing there were the Aeolian Minstrels, the trio of John Mulligan, Andy Leavitt and Denny Gallagher (billed as the “Greatest Ethiopian Trio in the Country”), Tony Pastor (1837-1908), Kitty Blanchard (1847-1911), Eva Brent, and Fanny Forrest. Productions included *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Cudjo’s Cave, or the Star of Liberty*. At the end of the volume are the two earliest playbills, from December 1861 and January 1862, when the theatre’s lessees were Thomas McKeon and William Wheatley, respectively. The productions were two Civil War-themed equestrian dramas, *Southern Rebellion by Sea & Land* (with a supporting cast of twenty-five Arabian horses) and *War for the Union*.

Vol. 9 Continental Theatre and Continental Music Hall

1863-1864

This volume continues from number 8 above, and opens with Frederick Aims as proprietor of the theatre. The first playbill is from May 25, 1863. All of the playbills reflect the variety programs offered at the Continental, which featured a number of minstrel stars and troupes, such as Johnny Wild (1843-1898), Harry Enochs, and at the end of the year, the Ethiopian jig and character dancer Maggie Carr. Typical of the ethnic-humor-based sketches offered were *Essence of Old Virginny*, *The Chinese Twins* and *Lannigan's Ball*. A production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* began in June 1863, boasting of 6 acts, 32 scenes, and 9 tableaux. The summer brought the premiere of the "grand military spectacle" *Victory on Victory*, which covered in three scenes the recent triumphs of generals McClellan, Grant and Meade. Also featured that season were Hernandez Foster and the contortionist Don Santiago Gibbonoise (1836-1923). In the fall of 1863, Allinson & Hincken became the lessees and brought in long-running headliners including the Zanfretta Troupe of acrobats and pantomimists, the singer Eva Brent, the Grecian Sisters (in classical tableaux vivant), and, to great acclaim, the French trapeze artist Verrecke. Allinson & Hincken printed a playbill-format promotion filled with Verrecke's past reviews, adding that he had been booked for a dozen performances for the salary of \$1,200. Some of the playbills include a wood engraving of the artist at work, and the theatre printed an additional color woodcut poster for him. January 1864 saw the arrival of the equestrienne actress Kate Raymond (b. 1844) starring in *Mazeppa* and several other productions during her contract. Fayette Lodawick "Yankee" Robinson (1818-1884) appeared in two Civil War-themed productions: the drama *Unionist's Daughter, or Life in the Border States*, in February 1864, and the equestrian drama *Battle of Gettysburg*; he also received a broadside with his reviews and color woodcut poster. Other performers playing at the house included Edwin Blanchard and his trained dogs, and the Aeolian Minstrels. A playbill for the latter lists all seventeen of the troupe's members.

Vol. 10 Chestnut Street Opera House, 1221 Chestnut Street

1864

The volume contains twenty-three playbills, primarily featuring appearances by Moran's Minstrels, described as "superior Ethiopian entertainment," who opened at the opera house on September 5, 1864. The first playbill lists their specialties as a general advertisement for the troupe; the rest are filled with daily performances. John Mulligan, Ethiopian comedian, is featured on some of the playbills, as is the "New Troupe" who appeared on December 19. The playbills are clustered on ten pages at the end of the volume; the rest of the album pages are blank.

Vol. 11 Chesnut Street Theatre, Chesnut and 6th streets

1841-1853

New Chestnut Street Theatre, Chestnut and 12th streets

1863

The volume holds seven playbills for the Chesnut Street Theatre: two playbills for Anne Seguin (1814-1888) as Norma, performing on June 8 and 16, 1841; one program for a June 1843 performance of Scottish songs; and four playbills for mixed drama, comedy, and dance performances held between December 1852 and January 1853. There are additional playbills (dated 1826-1855) for the theatre in volumes 13 and 20. The Chesnut Street Theatre burned in 1856.

The remainder of the album is a consecutive run of playbills for the New Chestnut Street Theatre, as it was rebuilt six blocks west and opened in January 1863 by William Wheatley. The playbills date from January through August 1863 and describe performances by Wheatley, Edwin Forrest (1806-1872), James H. Hackett (1800-1871), Lucille Western (1843-1877), Daniel E. Bandmann (1840-1905), Kate Bateman (1842-

1917), Mrs. John Wood (1833-1915), and Mrs. D.P. Bowers in repertory. Productions included Shakespeare and contemporary popular plays, comedies, and burlesques. The album ends with playbills for the summer season (August 1863), which featured the Martinetti & Marzetti family performing ballets, tight rope walking, balloon ascensions, and "fairy pantomimes." In May 1863 the theatre's playbills emphasized that they were "the coolest theatre in America" because of their steam fan, which moved 60,000 cubic feet of air per minute through the place, renewing the entire building's air in five minutes.

One interesting document that appears near the front of the volume is a playbill-styled announcement for Richard Harbord's Decatur Coffee House at 6 Decatur Street. Harbord's clever ad prominently features the Chestnut Street Theatre's name in display type along with those of famous actors. Running within are small-point texts describing the close proximity of the coffee house to the theatre, its décor featuring portraits of the stars (listed in a larger font), some of the foods and beverages served, etc. The piece is undated, but according to city directories, the restaurant was in business from 1839 to 1843.

Vol. 12 New Chestnut Street Theatre

1863-1864

The album continues from 11 above. The first half concerns the New Chestnut Theatre as managed by Wheatley from September 1863 through mid-January 1864. His productions were of Shakespeare plays and the usual popular dramas, comedies, and musicals including *East Lynne* and *Cynthia*, starring himself, Edwin Booth, John R. Collins (1811-1874), Lucille Western, Felicita Vestvali, Avonia Jones (1839-1867), Edwin Forrest, Johanna Claussen (1842-after 1870), and Jean Hosmer (1842-1890). The final two playbills were for week-long performances by Paul Juignet's New York French Company.

The second half of the album holds playbills from the time of Leonard Grover's management beginning in late January 1864; Grover (1831-1926) was also manager of Grover's Theatre in Washington, D.C. His first announcement advertised that several important alterations had been made to the theatre, specifically the addition of new chandeliers by Cornelius & Baker, and listed the members of the company who would be appearing during the season. Productions included a military drama, *The Veteran*, which took place in Algiers; Boucicault's *The Octoroon*; Tom Taylor's *Ticket-of-Leave Man*; Buckstone's *Leap Year*; and the "great Irish scenic drama," *Colleen Bawn*. Only one production in the season made specific reference to the Civil War: the "grand fairy spectacle" titled *The Seven Sisters* that began its run in June 1864. The first scene opened in Hades. The plot line had the fairy sisters determined to spend the summer on earth where they encountered (among other things) the Secession, joined the Union Army and performed a "Grand Zouave March & Drill," after which they returned to Hades and created an interpretive dance, the "Birth of Cupid in a Bower of Ferns."

Grover's playbills did not advertise his actors, giving him the space to run, in addition to the titles of the plays, wood engravings (by Adrian & Probasco) portraying some of the dramatic action. As did Wheatley, Grover touted the air conditioning of his theatre.

Vol. 13 New Chestnut Street Theatre
Chestnut Street Theatre1864-1866
1830-1855

The album continues from volume 12, and begins in July 1864 with an eight-week run of *Aladdin* (described as a "romantic, musical, pantomimic, spectacular drama") that was enhanced in late August by the introduction of "The Living Fountain of Colored Waters" from Barnum's Museum in New York; Grover promoted the fountain equally with the drama, even putting a wood engraving of it on the playbill, which he printed in red ink. The next production was *Sea of Ice*. In October Grover introduced a "comedy

combination" troupe headlined by William Warren (1812-1888), which was to present standard comedies by Sheridan, Bulwer-Lytton, Taylor, and Boucicault. For a period in November, Mrs. D.P. Bowers starred in two plays, *East Lynne* and *Lady Audley's Secret*, after which Grover returned to company productions, including two Boucicault works, *Pauvrette*, or *Under the Snow*, and *Jessie Brown, or the Relief of Lucknow*. Junius Brutus Booth (1796-1852) appeared in two plays in January 1865. Contemporary political events were virtually ignored during this season, though there is a playbill from one benefit performance held May 24, 1865, when E.L. Davenport, Edwin Adams, and J.W. Wallack starred in the comedy *Wild Oats* in aid of the Lincoln Monument Fund. The end of the album has a single playbill from 1866, a benefit held in March for the firemen of Philadelphia

The final four pages hold six single playbills from the first Chesnut Street Theatre. They date from 1830 to 1855. Among the performances was the Ravel family of acrobats in a variety show, the "Venitian [sic] Carnival" as produced by Gabriel Ravel (1810-1882) on October 22, 1830, and a ca. 1855 performance featuring "dissolving views" and an oxyhydrogen microscope. The last page holds an undated announcement of a week of appearances by James E. Murdoch. Further material from the Chesnut Street Theatre appears in volumes 11 and 20.

Vol. 14 Eleventh Street Opera House, 11th Street above Chestnut

1863-1864

This is a full volume of playbills for Carncross and Dixey's Minstrels (John L. Carncross, ca. 1834-1911, and Edwin F. Dixey, 1833-1904) appearing in a variety of acts at the Eleventh St. Opera House (late Sanford's Opera House) between January 1863 and February 1864. Some of the playbills advertise the house as "The Family Resort." A production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was offered in June; it was followed by Dumas's *The Conscript*, and the playbill suggested that the work should be seen by every citizen of Philadelphia, as well as every soldier, every child, every parent having children serving their country, and every patriot. The house returned to variety acts afterward.

Vol. 15 Eleventh Street Opera House

1864-1865

The volume continues from 14 above, and has playbills for Carncross and Dixey's Minstrels from February 1864 through February 1865. The theatre featured appearances by comedians Lew Simmons (d. 1911), Harry Lehr (1830-1881), and Charles Villiers. Among the presentations were the grand fairy pantomime *Magic Pearl, or the Fortune Teller's Prophecy*; other long-running productions were *Davenport Boy*, *The Big-Bug*, *Babes in the Wood*, *Life on a Mississippi Cotton Boat*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and *Old Folks at Home*. At the end of the volume there is one undated playbill for the "New Eleventh Street Opera House."

Vol. 16 Fox's Casino/Fox's American Variety, Chestnut and 6th streets

undated

Gardner & Hemming's Amphitheatre, Market and 12th streets

1863

Gardner & Hemming's Great American Circus, traveling

1863-1864

Whittaker's Amphitheatre, Market and 12th streets

1863

The album opens with undated playbills advertising Fox's Casino and Fox's American Variety Theatre, which featured popular "Ethiopian comedians" such as Fattie Stewart, J.C. Stewart, and Hughey Dougherty (1844-1918), as well as Fannie Wilson, who appeared as Greek and Roman statues.

It continues with playbills for Gardner & Hemming's Amphitheatre, the partnership of clown, and juggler Dan Gardner (1816-1880) and British-born gymnast Richard Hemmings (1834-1919). The playbills (which have an apostrophe within Hemmings' name) date from January 5 to mid-March 1863, and feature variety acts starring a company of clowns, acrobats, and equestrian acts. The circus employed many wood-engraved vignettes of performers (humans and horses) and tents on its playbills. Two of the stars at the venue were the Trick Horse McClellan, and Louise Tourniaire (1825-1901), prominent member of the first family of French equestrian acts. Also featured was the artist William R. Smith in his Zampillaerostation, a trapeze act.

In mid-March 1863, Frank Whittaker (1818-1887) assumed management of the venue and, keeping the same graphic program, advertised "Whittaker's Amphitheatre (late Gardner & Hemming's)." He engaged the noted clown Sam Long (1822-1891), kept Gardner & Hemming's team of performing horses, and offered similar variety acts as his predecessors. The only direct mention of the Civil War appears in April 1863 when Whittaker mentioned that a matinee would be attended by patients from several of the local army hospitals. Whittaker's season ended on April 11, 1863, and the final playbill advertises a large lot of lumber for sale after closing. Volume 18 holds a single playbill for Whittaker's.

The album concludes with eight playbills for the traveling show of Gardner, Hemming's & Co.'s Great American Circus. The playbills date from after their 1863 Philadelphia season though several use the same layout and graphics as the Gardner & Hemming's Amphitheatre bills, only with blank lines to fill in with place and time.

Vol. 17 Metropolitan Concert Hall/Concert Saloon, 611 Chestnut Street	1864-1865
Metropolitan Music Hall, 11th Street and Pennsylvania	undated
Musical Fund Hall, Locust and 8th streets	1827-1873

The first half of the volume holds mixed playbills for the Metropolitan Concert Hall, Metropolitan Music Hall, and the Metropolitan Concert Saloon, all of which featured minstrels, dancers, "Ethiopian comics," and comic singers. Among the headliners were the Metropolitan Minstrels, Edward Preble, Lizzie Davenport (Mrs. Charles Mathews Jr., d. 1899), and Fred Shaw; performances included *Pompey's Blunders*, and *Life among the Cotton Heads*.

The remainder of the album holds playbills, programs, and one ticket from events held by the Musical Fund Society and at the Musical Fund Hall. The society sponsored classical music concerts of works by Beethoven, Brahms, and Rossini, among others. The earliest material dates from 1827 (2 items), 1828 (1), and 1830 (4), then continues into the 1850s. Events held at the Musical Fund Hall included various Musical Fund Society concerts as well as recitals by individual performers, appearances by groups such as the Germania Musical Society and the Italian Opera Company, and a concert by students of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind in April 1836. Also held there were lectures and recitations, and an appearance by "Professor Pepper, F.R.S." of the Polytechnic Institute of London, who demonstrated his "Ghost" and other scientific phenomena. The run of playbills ends in 1864, after which there are two small programs for performances in 1870 and 1873

Vol. 18 Great National Circus, Market and 12th streets, Walnut and 8th streets	1860-1865
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The album opens with a single playbill for Dan Rice's Great Show dated March 1860, which offered equestrian and ballet acts, but with no location mentioned. The remainder of the album has playbills for the Great National Circus, managed by "Mrs. Charles Warner (formerly Mrs. Dan Rice)." On the earliest

playbills, Mrs. Rice is in larger point type than Mrs. Warner, a decision made in order to capitalize on the fame of Margaret Warner's ex-husband, the showman and performer Dan Rice (1823-1900) who married Warner (d. 1865, the treasurer of Rice's show) in 1861 and the couple went out on their own. The playbills have three portraits of Mrs. Warner printed along their top edge. The Great National Circus presented standard circus fare: equestrian act such as the Whitby Family, clowns Nat Austin (1834-1892) and Sam Long, the great American leaper and rider Tom King (1832-1877), contortionist George Wambold (1842-1908), the acrobatic Nicolo Troupe, and George de Louis (1822-1875) performing with his celebrated trick dog Jenny Lind. The playbills run through January 1865.

At the end of the album is a single undated playbill for Whittaker's Amphitheatre (see also the others in volume 16) and a single playbill for Dan Rice's Great Show, undated, for an appearance in Washington, DC.

Vol. 19 Olympic Theatre, Race and 2nd streets (61 items)	1863-1864
Philadelphia Museum, George and 9th street (58 items)	1838-1845
Peale's Philadelphia Museum, Chesnut Street (27 items)	1846-1848
Masonic Hall	1864

The first third of the album holds playbills from the Olympic Theatre. Most of the playbills are undated, but document four changes in management of the property: 1 playbill for the Race Street Theatre; 10 for Hernandez's Olympic Theatre (A.M. Hernandez, lessee); 33 for Davis' Theatre (sometimes Davis' Theatre and Music Hall, J.L. Davis); 11 for Aims' Olympic Theatre (Frederick Aims); and 6 for the Olympic Theatre (John Weaver). Though the proprietors and theatre name changed, the house remained largely a variety venue, producing programs of vaudevilles, farces, burlesques, songs, ballets, and dances, augmented by the occasional ghost spectacle, pantomime, and acrobat, equestrian, and minstrel act. One of Aims' playbills stated directly: "Variety - - Our Motto." The Ravel Family appeared under Hernandez, and Miss Lizzie Louise Davis starred in a number of the production under J.L. Davis, who also produced a burlesque version of *Othello* and the "romantic equestrian drama" *Mazeppa*. Two of the theatres put on productions of *A Glance at Philadelphia*, described as a "local drama." On May 18, 1864, John Weaver, a comedian who had headlined under Davis, opened the "thoroughly renovated, re-painted & decorated" theatre, where he intended to present the "Most Popular Moral Domestic Dramas, Vaudevilles, Farces &c." for the "wives and families of the citizens of the Northern Section of the City." His first production was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, followed by the popular works *Jack Sheppard* and *Nick of the Woods*. A single handbill amid the playbills in this section has the poem "Landlord's Song" which, though it resembles a playbill, is an advertisement for Nathaniel Coombs' eating house at 432 North Second Street.

The second third of the album holds playbills from the Philadelphia Museum, organized by Franklin Peale (1795-1870), Robert M. Patterson (1787-1854), and John Kintzing Kane (1795-1858). The earliest item is a card of admission to the opening on Tuesday, July 2, 1838. It was inscribed to James Rush (1786-1869), who wrote on the verso: *The Philadelphia Museum in 9th Street was "got up" by speculation in the year 1838 - it was likely to become a losing concern, and it was desirable therefore to "beat up" for its success - by inviting the whole world to opening on the evening here specified; and from my standing in the city of Philadelphia, I was invited as one of the Tom Dick and Harrys.* The house began as a venue for vocal and instrumental concerts but from August 1839 through January 1840, the main act was the polyphonist William Edward Love (1806-1867), whose talent lay in mimicking the sounds of animals, birds, and musical instruments. Some of his sketches were titled *Dinner at 5 Precisely*, *Zoological Concert*, and *Love's Labor Lost*. Featured afterward were a Belgian giant and strongman, Monsieur Bihin, the Albiness Miss S.G. Shore, a program of "dissolving tableaux," and a twenty-one-part brilliant spectacle, *Pyrotrope!, or Moving Fires*. There are five playbills for

the December 1843 appearance of Dionysius Lardner (see volume 20 below for his earlier appearance in Philadelphia), billed as “Lardner’s Lyceum” and featuring dioramas and mechanical scientific exhibitions. A few benefit concerts were held at the museum in 1840 for different fire companies, and one for the “Franklin Library Company.”

The final third holds playbills and programs from Peale’s Philadelphia Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts (late Masonic Hall) on Chesnut Street; the first of the twenty-three playbills is for April 3, 1846 and the last is April 28, 1848. The house offered popular dramas, farces, vaudevilles, and concerts of popular songs. Performers included Kate Ludlow, John Sefton, Frances A. Emery, Emma Ince, Mr. & Mrs. Burke, W.F. Johnston, and the Vallee Sisters (Emma, Eliza, Julie, and Amelia) of Philadelphia. In the fall of 1847, the minstrel group Sable Harmonists played for three weeks. There are three programs (one sheet, folded): two for Dr. Collyer’s lecture and tableau (personifications of painting and sculpture) and one for Mr. Lynne’s musical illustrations of Shakespeare. The final piece in the volume is a handbill for a promenade concert held at Masonic Hall by the ladies of the May Flower Association to benefit the Soldier’s Union Fair; the date was May 12, 1864.

Vol. 20 Chesnut Street Theatre, Chestnut and 6th streets	1826-1855
Walnut Street Theatre, Walnut and 9th streets	1853-1857

The first half of the album has some of the earliest playbills in the collection, from the Chesnut Theatre, Francis C. Wemyss (1797-1859) manager. There is one from July 6, 1826, two from October 1827, and one from May 1828; the 1826 and 1828 bills feature Edwin Forrest in starring roles. Among the other notable performers were the French Opera, and on January 2, 1833, James Booth Roberts’s farewell performance. A playbill from later that month titles the theatre “Italian Opera House, late Chesnut Street Theatre,” but in September the house is again called Chesnut Street and features the French Opera. There are two 1841 playbills that promote performances by the Austrian dancer Fanny Essler (1813-1884), followed by ten playbills covering three weeks of appearances in 1842 by Dionysius Lardner (1793-1859). A professor of astronomy and natural philosophy, and popular science writer in London, Lardner became involved in a personal scandal in 1840, was forced to leave England and, along with his new wife, embarked upon a lecture tour in the United States. These playbills document his presentation topics which included Halley’s Comet, The Moon, The Planets, Steam Engines, Benjamin Franklin, and Waterspouts, many of which were illustrated by transparencies and all of which were aimed at a non-scholarly audience. The section ends with a playbill for a performance of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, listing Samuel E. Harris (1825-1858) as the star and lessee of the theatre.

The second half of the album begins coverage of the Walnut Street Theatre, E.A. Marshall as lessee, and John Sefton (formerly of the Arch Street Theatre) as stage manager. Performers appearing between 1853 and 1856 include the Ravel Family, Madame Marietta Alboni (1823-1894), Mr. & Mrs. Barney Williams, John Drew, and Alexina Fisher Baker (1822-1887), Mr. & Mrs. William R. (1805-1863) and Caroline (1798-1881) Blake, Mrs. John Sefton, Jean Davenport (1830-1903), and Edwin Forrest. The Laura Keane & Company appeared in October 1856. The Keller Troupe played for nearly a month in November 1856; they performed in *Az-ael, or the Child of Israel*, which was billed as an allegorical, historical and scriptural drama. The troupe also presented “Great Mythological Re-Productions of Grand Living Pictures” including a tableau of “The Election” featuring portraits of Buchanan, Fremont and Fillmore by Phillips of New York, and another tableau of Emanuel Leutze’s 1851 painting “George Washington Crossing the Delaware.” At the end of 1856 the Ravel Family returned with the Martinetti Family and the French acrobat and rope walker Blondin (1822-1897); a playbill from that time features a woodcut portrait of Blondin in action. Henry Placide (1799-1870) appeared the next year in a series of Shakespeare and contemporary plays.

Beginning in December 1857, the theatre was leased by Mrs. D.P. Bowers. On her first night, she addressed her patrons directly, and then presented, with her company, *London Assurance*.

Vol. 21 Walnut Street Theatre

1842, 1858-1863

The album continues from volume 22 and from Mrs. Bowers' management, which ended in June 1858; most productions featured her star company, which included her sister Sarah Crocker Conway (1834-1875), brother-in-law Frederick B. Conway (1819-1874), and Caroline Richings, later joined by Louisa and John Drew. Productions included *Camille*, the *Marble Heart*, and various Shakespeare plays. In May 1858 Laura Keene & Company arrived. The house reopened May 1859 as the New Walnut Street Theatre with Edward F. Keach (1824-1863) as manager; two playbills document his productions. Beginning in 1862, again as the Walnut Street Theatre, the house was leased by Mrs. M.A. Garrettson. She produced popular dramas and comedies featuring Laura Keene & Company (in *No Rest for the Wicked*), Mr. & Mrs. Barney Williams, Kate Denin (in *Aurora Floyd*), Edwin Eddy, and the Spanish dancer Isabella Cubas (1831-1864), among others.

In March 7, 1862, a benefit was held at the theatre for the showman Dan Rice, who had become involved in the politics of secession by his public anti-abolitionist statements prior to the start of the Civil War. A handbill printed for the benefit has an unsigned poem, "Tribute from an Admiring Friend," which celebrates Rice's loyalty to the Union cause. In June 1863 the theatre turned to variety programs, presenting Campbell's Minstrels (described as the oldest established band in existence), clog dancers, and a sketch by the "Exempt Shaking Quakers from Lebanontown," New Hampshire, with a character named Mrs. Mehitable Pokebonnetbroadbrim. By the fall season straight plays had returned, with Edwin Adams, Matilda Heron (1830-1877), Mary Provost (1835-1914), and Edwin Eddy appearing in Shakespeare and Bulwer-Lytton programs. At the end of the album are several playbills featuring a troupe of a dozen "genuine" Arabs, performing as leapers, bounders, pyramidists and strongmen, supposedly the first to appear in the country.

Toward the front of the album is a single playbill dated December 13, 1842, for "American Theatre Walnut Street."

Vol. 22 Walnut Street Theatre

1863-1864

The album continues from volume 21 and begins at the end of December 1863. Featured stars were John S. Clarke, Lucille Western (in *East Lynne*), Ettie Henderson (d. 1909), Edwin Adams, and Laura Keene's Company. In April 1864 the "alliance" of James W. Wallack Jr., Edward L. Davenport and Mrs. Farren began a run of performances. They were followed by appearances by Mr. & Mrs. Malvina (1831-1906) and William J. (1831-1891) Florence, Lucille Western (in *Leah the Forsaken*), and Harry Pearson (1824-1884), then James Booth Roberts and Alexina Fisher Baker in *Faust and Marguerite*. At the end of the season, in August 1864, Sanford and Troupe performed songs, dances, and comedy sketches. S.S. Sanford had assumed the role of "Bone Squash" made famous by Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1808-1860) and the playbills state that, following Rice's death, he was declared the "Daddy of Ethiopia" by the public and press. The album ends in August 1864 with the romantic spectacle *Naiad Queen*, "complete with poetry, painting, and music."

Vol. 23 Walnut Street Theatre

1830s, 1864-1865

The album continues from volume 22 and opens in September 1864, with Mrs. Garrettson, lessee. Edwin Booth appeared in his regular Shakespeare roles, as well as in *Richelieu*. In October, Charlotte Thompson starred in *Victorine*, followed by the father-daughter team of McKean Buchanan (1823-1872) and Virginia Buchanan in *Robbers*, translated from Schiller. This production is among four for which the house printed broadsides illustrated by vignettes suggesting the drama. Lucille Western played at the theatre from mid-November 1864 through January 1865 in a variety of roles, after which the "Wallack & Davenport Alliance" reappeared, though this time with Rose Eytinge (1835-1911) in addition to Mrs. Farren. The trio performed in Shakespeare plays and Taylor's *Still Waters Run Deep*. Also presented this season was a dramatic version of Tennyson's poem *Enoch Arden*.

At the end of the album are a group of earlier (undated, but from the 1830s) playbills for the theatre, including one from January 30, with Miss Louisa Lane (afterward Mrs. John Drew) in the *The Barber of Seville* and a farce titled *Twelve Precisely*, in which she played five of the eight characters. Also there are undated playbills from the Sanford Opera Troupe, announcing their return after two years away.