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HEAD, Sadie Faye Edwards, 1929-

Louisiana State University, Ph.D., 1963
Speech-Theater

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A HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE TULANE AND
CRESCE GT THEATRES OF NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA: 1897-1937

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in
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by
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August, 1963
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ABSTRACT

The city of New Orleans, Louisiana, has been considered one of the cultural centers of the United States. The mixing of the French and American cultures and traditions created an unusual and unique background which was especially favorable for the stage. New Orleans theatres became known throughout America. The purpose of this dissertation is to make a historical study of the last of these theatres, the Tulane and the Crescent.

These theatres, which were built side by side in 1898 and demolished in 1937, span a transition period in theatrical history and are excellent examples of the changes which occurred on the American stage during that time. Their history is important not only as it pertains to New Orleans but as a part of the history of the stage in this country.

The study is divided into five periods: the Beginning Period, 1897-1899; the Prosperous Period, 1899-1911; the Erratic Period, 1911-1917; the Divergent Period, 1917-1926; and the Decadent Period, 1926-1937. The major sources of material were the daily newspapers of the period. Books of theatrical history, American history and American economics were consulted to provide an understanding of the existing conditions.

The Tulane and Crescent were built by Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger of the Theatrical Syndicate as a link in their nationwide chain of theatres. For six years the theatres were managed
by William Rowles; from 1904 until their closing, the manager was Thomas Christopher Campbell. Often designated as the Dean of New Orleans theatre managers, Colonel Campbell, as he was called, became a symbol of theatre for the city and its residents.

Each of the theatres was built for a specific kind of entertainment for a specific audience. The Crescent was the popular theatre. It presented melodramas, comedies, musicals and minstrels at a low price. Al Wilson, James O'Neill, Al G. Field, Rose Melville and other such stars appeared annually on its stage. The Tulane was the fashionable theatre and its schedule of classics, operas, new shows and big stars catered to the sophisticated element of the population. Stars such as Richard Mansfield, Julia Marlowe, E. H. Sothern, Otis Skinner, Ethel Barrymore and John Drew were frequent performers there. For thirteen prosperous years the theatres followed this plan.

By 1911, however, the legitimate theatre had undergone great changes. Few companies were touring and the power of the Syndicate was crumbling. Vaudeville was providing "family entertainment." Motion pictures were gaining popularity. For six more years the Tulane and Crescent continued as "high-class" and "popular" theatres, but productions became scarce, scheduling became erratic and attendance declined.

In 1917 the Crescent became a movie and vaudeville house under the auspices of the Marcus Loew circuit. The Tulane remained the sole recipient of the Klaw and Erlanger shows. The Loew interests
left the Crescent in 1926. The theatre housed tabloid shows, burlesque and motion pictures and then it closed in 1935.

The Tulane continued operation until 1936, but engagements were few. The heyday of the touring companies was over. World War I and the Great Depression caused its final collapse. The few productions which toured during the 1930's achieved little financial success in the city.

The buildings were demolished in 1937. They were the last legitimate theatres in the city. For forty years they had dominated the dramatic life of New Orleans, but they had been unable to survive the theatrical, cultural and economic changes which occurred during the city's great period of expansion and progress.
INTRODUCTION

The history of the stage in New Orleans, Louisiana, is a long and varied one. America's greatest actors appeared there in their most famous roles. Its theatres rivaled those of San Francisco, Philadelphia, and even New York City. For over a century this Crescent City at the mouth of the Mississippi River had what has been called a "golden age of theater."

The purpose of this study is to present, in as complete detail as is feasible, the history of the last of these famous New Orleans theatres—the Tulane and the Crescent. Their construction, by Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger of the so-called Theatrical Syndicate, may be said to mark the beginning of the modern theatrical era in New Orleans. Their demolition marked the close of the era. When these twin theatres were built in 1898, New Orleans was one of the most important dramatic centers in the United States. When they were demolished forty years later, the city was of little significance in the theatrical picture of America.

These two theatres, therefore, span a period which is important in theatrical history and are excellent examples of the changes which were being wrought on the American stage at that time. They were built during the heyday of the touring companies. They saw the rise and fall of vaudeville, the emergence of the moving picture as a major entertainment medium, the death of the "road," the rise of the Little Theatre movement, and the accompanying death of the professional
theatre outside of the major entertainment centers. For this reason a study of the Tulane and Crescent is, in lesser degree, a study of the early twentieth century stage in the United States.

Aside from their importance as symbols of a changing theatre, the Tulane and Crescent are notable for two other reasons. First, they are a specific part of New Orleans stage history. Since the city was an important cultural center, the history of its professional stage is important for a complete knowledge of the development of the American theatre. As the last important theatres in New Orleans, the Tulane and Crescent are the final chapters in the long and colorful story of the city as a theatrical metropolis.

The final reason for the study of the two theatres is their importance. On their stages appeared all of the important dramatic figures of the early twentieth century. In addition, they were the only two theatres in the United States which were built side-by-side, at the same time, by the same management. Known as the "twin" or "sister" theatres, they were, architecturally, unique in the annals of American theatres.

To discuss in detail every production, or star, which appeared at the Tulane and Crescent during their forty year history would make this study of such magnitude as to be prohibitive. Furthermore, there is no necessity for such a comprehensive work. The study will, therefore, chronicle the most important events of each year of their existence and relate these events to national and local matters as they affected the theatre.
The most comprehensive history of drama in New Orleans is John Kendall's *Golden Age of the New Orleans Theater*. Unfortunately, his coverage of the twentieth century theatres is sketchy and sometimes inaccurate. The major source of material for this history of the two theatres was, therefore, the New Orleans newspapers which were published during that period. The publication which is now known as the *Times-Picayune* was chosen as the basic source. This particular newspaper was selected because it is the oldest New Orleans daily which is still in publication and because it "epitomizes a century of journalistic development in Louisiana...."¹ Established in 1837 as the *Picayune*, the paper merged with the *Times-Democrat* in 1914 to become the *Times-Picayune*. Because of the connection between these two newspapers, and because the *Times-Democrat* had an excellent coverage of dramatic activities in the city, both papers were used as sources for the period of 1897 to 1914.

The two other major newspapers of New Orleans during the period covered by the study were the *New Orleans Item* and the *New Orleans States*. The *Item*, the oldest afternoon daily in the South, was founded in 1877; the *States* was founded in 1880.² Since the *States* is owned and published by the *Times Picayune* Publishing Company, it was so similar in content to the *Times-Picayune* that references to it were usually superfluous.

² Ibid., p. 92-93.
Some use has been made in this study of issues of the Item. During the early part of the century, however, the Item gave scant coverage to the Tulane and Crescent. There were no advertisements for either theatre, no mention of them in the Sunday editions which gave long articles on the coming attractions at the other theatres, and no reviews which did more than list the cast.

Although, because of the localized nature of this study, newspapers were the basic sources, certain books were used to obtain background information. Such publications as Davis' Louisiana: the Pelican State and the Federal Works Project book on Louisiana gave general information on New Orleans and its position as a Southern city. For general theatre history such books as Leavitt's Fifty Years of Theatrical Management, Green and Laurie's From Vaude to Video, and Morris's Curtain Time gave invaluable information about the plays, the stars, and the personalities of the period. A complete bibliography of these books, as well as the books on history and economics which were useful in studying the theatres in relation to the concurrent national and local events, is given at the end of the study.

Before it is possible to understand the history of the Tulane and Crescent and their position in the city of New Orleans, it is necessary to know some of the characteristics which make that city unusual and distinct. The first chapter of the study, therefore, contains a brief history of New Orleans and of the theatrical activity which preceded the construction of the Tulane and Crescent. In this chapter is included a discussion of the three men who molded, shaped,
and controlled the two theatres: Marc Klaw, Abraham Erlanger, and Thomas C. Campbell.

The major part of the study is the actual history of the theatres. This has been divided into five chronological periods: 1897-1899, the Beginning Period; 1899-1911, the Prosperous Period; 1911-1916, the Erratic Period; 1916-1926, the Divergent Period; 1926-1937, the Decadent Period. These irregular divisions were decided upon because each date marked a change in the policy of the theatres. For each division there will be a discussion of the changing policies of the management; the major performances and events at the theatres; and theatrical and economic trends as they pertained to and affected the two theatres.

The Beginning Period, 1897-1899, saw the construction and opening of the theatres. They began their first season in the fall of 1898. During that first year the policies which each was to follow were established. The Tulane was to be the "fashionable high-class" theatre of the city. The Crescent, though just as respectable, was to be the "popular" playhouse. Each had, therefore, its particular function, particular type of presentation, and its special audience.

The second period, 1899-1911, was the period of prosperity for the Tulane and Crescent. In each of these years they housed approximately thirty shows each; they maintained their reputations as the leading theatres of New Orleans; and they made money for their owners.

Then in the spring of 1911, began what this study will call the Erratic Period. Both the Tulane and the Crescent began to show
alterations and changes in their schedules. For the first time they showed an occasional photoplay. Sometimes one of them even presented a short "season" of moving pictures. Stock companies came for indefinite periods. Although they were still primarily houses for live touring drama, there were signs of the changes which were to come.

In 1916, came the first of these changes. The fourth, or Divergent, Period began with the opening of the Crescent as an exclusive photoplay and vaudeville house under the management of the Marcus Loew Circuit. For the next ten years, 1916 to 1926, the Tulane was the sole recipient of the touring companies. It received all types of shows. Although it remained the major theatre in New Orleans, it lost some of its lustre as the "fashionable" theatre as more and more people turned to the "movies" for entertainment.

The Decadent Period, which includes the last eleven years of the study, shows the decline and final demolition of both theatres. In 1926, the Crescent closed as a vaudeville and motion picture house. After some months as a "tab" show and burlesque theatre, it discontinued operation. The Tulane struggled to maintain its position during the remaining years; but the road was in a perilous state, and so was the Tulane. The depression of the 1930's had hurt the theatre in the United States and had forced the virtual abandonment of the road. In 1936, the Tulane closed for the last time. The following year the theatre buildings were demolished to provide space for a parking lot. This was the ignoble end of the two theatres which had once been called "temples of Thespis."
The final part of the study includes a brief summary of the history of the Tulane and Crescent theatres and an evaluation of their position in the theatrical history of New Orleans. A selected bibliography of the sources used in the study is the closing section.
CHAPTER I
"The Place and the People"

"Have you ever been in New Orleans? If not, you'd better go. It's a nation of a queer place; day and night a show."

Even today New Orleans is considered by many to be a "nation of a queer place." In 1960 it had a population of 627,525 and it is now one of the most commercial cities in the Nation. To the tourist, however, it is first of all a place in which to eat, drink, and be merry. Although it is now an American city, there remains a Latin quality that somehow sets New Orleans apart from any other city in the United States.

It is impossible, therefore, to consider the theatre of the city as a separate entity. Since its beginning, the drama of the city has been colored by and dependent on the unique character of the city and of its inhabitants.

"Surrounded by swamps and low lying delta lands, New Orleans proper . . . is an urban oasis lying in a dike-enclosed area between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, 107 miles from the mouth of the river." Settled by the French in 1718, the city and the surrounding land lay dormant during the first half of the eighteenth

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4 Ibid., p. 131.
century. The colony was never profitable to France; so in 1762, the land was ceded to Spain.\footnote{5}{Edwin Adams Davis, \textit{Louisiana, the Pelican State} (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1939), p. 61.}

As the Middle West began to develop, the city of New Orleans assumed some importance as a port. Spain was not a wealthy country; despite the rapid growth of the little city, the colony was costing the country more than it was worth. So on October 1, 1800, Louisiana was returned to France.\footnote{6}{Ibid., p. 131.} Napoleon, who was then Emperor of France, soon realized that he would not be able to protect Louisiana from the English with whom he was about to go to war. Therefore, in 1803, he sold Louisiana to America.

At this period in its history, New Orleans was only a small town with a population of a little over 10,000—4,000 whites, 2,500 free Negroes and the remainder slaves.\footnote{7}{\textit{New Orleans. City Guide}, op. cit., p. 16.} The city was contained within a small area called the Vieux Carre, or what is now known as the French Quarter. The language of the city was French and the dominating factor was the Latin Population with its strict caste rules, its love of music and art, and its abhorrence of the rowdy, boisterous Anglo-Saxon.

The first Americans who came there to live looked upon the city as a "Babylon where Creoles, English, Spanish, French, Germans,
Italians and Americans did little else than dance, drink, and gamble; New Orleans soon gained notoriety as a 'wide-open' town. Because of the antipathy of the Creoles (the descendants of the early French and Spanish settlers) who lived in the Vieux Carre, these early Americans settled away from the old town in what is now the business section of New Orleans. Thus one city became divided into a city within a city. As time passed, New Orleans continued to grow and common civic interests and the leveling effect of commerce tended to unite the inhabitants. The Latin influence, however, has never been erased. New Orleans is, even now, a strange mixture of gaiety, abandonment, piety, virtue, Yankee shrewdness and Creole culture.

Louisiana was admitted to the Union in 1812. New Orleans was by then the major city of the lower South and had a population of 24,552. In the following years it went through a remarkable period of prosperity and commercial expansion. By 1840, the population was 102,192 and it was the fourth largest city in the United States and the second largest port in the Country. During this period of growth, literature and the arts kept pace with the economic and social development and New Orleans became the "cultural center of the South."

"Because it, more than any other city of the South, depended upon slavery and the cotton crop for prosperity, New Orleans had little choice when it became necessary to make a decision of the question of

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8 Ibid., p. 18.
9 Ibid., p. 28.
secession—as the cotton States went the city had to follow. As the major port of the Mississippi River the city was an important and vital objective of the Union forces. It was captured by Federal troops and occupied during most of the War.

The war ended and New Orleans began the blackest years in the city's history. From 1865 to 1877 was a "period of violence, lawlessness, political agitation, and corruption." It was not until 1877 that Governor Francis T. Nicholls was given possession of the State House and "the carpetbag politicians were deprived of power..." Even with the restoration of Home Rule the disorder of occupation affected the city. In New Orleans "the change from Radical Government brought little improvement despite the efforts of citizens' groups to suppress crime, to compel the authorities to perform their duties, to watch the city government, and particularly to assist in securing the punishment of dishonest city officials."

Eventually order was reestablished and from that time forward the growth of the city was rapid. The birth of the twentieth century marked the start of an era of prosperity. The city had, at that time, a population of 287,101 inhabitants and considered itself the cultural and commercial mecca of the Southern United States.

Despite their religious severity and the strictness of their social codes, the early French and Spanish settlers were a fun-loving

10 Ibid., p. 30.
11 Ibid., p. 31.
12 Ibid., p. 34.
people. They enjoyed all forms of amusements and sports. Balls and
dances were frequent. Amateur theatrical performances were given as
early as the Spanish colonial period. It was not until the end of the
eighteenth century, however, that professional actors began to appear
in the city.

The first theatre was known as the St. Peter Street Theatre and
was the home of a troupe of Santo Domingan refugees who had settled in
New Orleans. The early performances were always presented in French,
the most common language; and it was not until 1818 that a "regularly
organized" American troupe appeared in the city. The manager of this
group was Noah Ludlow and he remained for an entire season. The per­
formances were given at the St. Philip Theater, which had been built
in 1808, and they appeared on nights when the theatre was not in use
for performances in French.

The great period of English-speaking drama began with James H.
Caldwell. Caldwell was an Englishman who had been in the United States
for less than four years; but he was to dominate the theatrical life of
New Orleans for more than thirty years. Caldwell's company arrived in
New Orleans in 1820 and began presenting plays at the St. Philip. Later
he moved to a new theatre called the Orleans. Then in 1823, he built
the American, or Camp Street Theatre which was the first building of
any consequence to be built outside the Vieux Carre.

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15 John S. Kendall. The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theater
(Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 6-7.
Caldwell's company remained at the American Theatre until 1835 when they moved to his new theatre, the St. Charles. The St. Charles, which cost approximately $324,000, became famous throughout the United States as "the most beautiful theatre in America." It was also one of the largest theatres in America. Unfortunately it burned in 1842. With Caldwell, however, "the English-language drama established itself in the city as a permanent intellectual and artistic institution. Thenceforth, for almost a hundred years, there was to be no interruption in the regular occurrence of the orthodox dramatic season."  

The following decades were a flourishing period for the theatre in New Orleans. Theatres were built. Theatres burned and were rebuilt; and drama remained a popular and profitable activity. Some of the more important theatres of this period were the Academy of Music; Placide's Varieties, later called the Gaiety; the National Theatre, for German productions; the French Opera House; the American, rebuilt as the New American; the Grand Opera House; and the St. Charles. It is sufficient to say that during the years prior to the Civil War, New Orleans became a prominent theatrical center. Under the supervision of such managers as Caldwell, Tom Placide, Ben DeBar, and Dion Boucicault many of America's greatest actors appeared in the city. Joseph Jefferson, Lola Montez, Edwin Booth, Jenny Lind and many other famous personalities gave frequent performances. Junius Brutus Booth gave his last performance there. Many new stars received their

training in the stock companies of the city. In fact, "the drama in New Orleans for a time achieved a standard of excellence rivaling, or perhaps surpassing that of any city in the country." 18

The Civil War "wrought havoc amongst the amusement enterprises of New Orleans." 19 With the disorder of the period of military occupation and the political upheaval which followed, drama in the city passed through some difficult years. "Riots occurred; state and city administrators rose, reigned and vanished away in the midst of incessant turmoil and excitement. It is not to be wondered at then, that the managers of the theaters in New Orleans suffered considerable losses in this stormy period..." 20

With the return of Home Rule in 1877, theatrical prosperity slowly returned to the city. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, New Orleans was once again a great theatrical center. It was during this period that David Bidwell and Henry Greenwall became the most prominent figures in the theatrical life of the city. New theatres such as the Greenwall were built; new companies were formed. With the appearance of new stars such as Edward Sothern, Mary Anderson, Stuart Robson, Lewis Morrison, and Lotta Crabtree, and the reappearance of the old favorites, the drama in the city regained its lustre.

19 Kendall, Golden Age..., op. cit., p. 495.
20 Ibid., p. 411.
Unfortunately, it was also during this time that the structure of the American theatre was changing. During the latter part of the nineteenth century the stock company, which had previously been the major form of theatre, steadily lost ground to the road company. As a result "a distressing uniformity eventually came to prevail throughout the United States, and the theatrical season in one locality became virtually a duplicate of the season everywhere else."\(^{21}\) The stock company persisted in New Orleans even during this period of its decline. Eventually, however, the power of such organizations as the Klaw and Erlanger Syndicate reached New Orleans. In 1897 they began to build the Tulane and Crescent theatres. These two theatres, which housed only touring shows, helped bring about the final death of the stock company. Ironically they too died, killed by an even bigger spectacle -- the motion picture.

There has been a great deal of controversy concerning the two men who built the Tulane and Crescent. Even now, sixty years later, theatre historians still debate the good and the evil of the Theatrical Syndicate and of the two who were most responsible for its operation, Marc Klaw and Abraham Lincoln Erlanger.

Klaw, born in Paducah, Kentucky in 1858, was a lawyer. It was not until 1881, that he became interested in theatre. He managed several shows but he was always a businessman never an artiste. Erlanger, born in Buffalo, New York, in 1860, received his first theatrical experience

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 552.
as a child. Although he liked to consider himself a director, his activities too were primarily related to the business side of production.

Known as the "fighting head" of the Syndicate, Erlanger became one of the most personally hated men in the theatrical world. He was often charged with thinking of "himself as little less than a re-incarnation of Napoleon, living in a house full of busts and momentoes of the Little Corporal, and of books about him." Yet, "even the worst of his enemies admitted that, at least in financial matters, he was honest."

As partners in a booking agency these two completely different personalities were an effective combination. "Klaw had the personal qualities which Erlanger lacked. Where Erlanger was blunt, Klaw was gracious; where Erlanger was arbitrary, Klaw was persuasive."

Until the latter part of the nineteenth century the booking of touring companies was a chaotic process. "Individual managers came to New York in the spring and dickered for individual attractions to keep their theatres operating the following season. Competition was free and no holds were barred." Eventually, in order to facilitate

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24 Idem.

scheduling, theatres along the same line of transportation combined to arrange their seasons together under a single agent. From that it was a logical step to consolidation. In a period when the nation's businessmen were gaining control of whole industries through trusts, it was "inevitable that something of the same sort would come about in the theatre."  

The Theatrical Syndicate was legally formed on August 31, 1896. There were six members: the producer, Charles Frohman and his associate, Al Hayman, who controlled a chain of Pacific Coast theatres; S. F. Nixon and J. Fred Zimmerman, who owned the principal theatres in Pennsylvania; and Klaw and Erlanger, who dominated bookings throughout the South.  

Through its monopoly of booking, by the method of booking shows only in Syndicate theatres and booking only those shows which agreed to play exclusively in Syndicate theatres, the group maintained control over the managers, the producers, and the actors. It was inevitable that they would soon come to be regarded as a menace. As one critic of the period said, "Not only did the Syndicate keep its hundreds of

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26 Lippman, op. cit., p. 28.
28 Lippman, op. cit., p. 92.
little theatre managers in line by tyrannical methods, denying them independence and exorting heavy tolls from them, not only did it kill off ambitious young managers or actors with a play, who would not come to terms;..." 29 but it also held complete sway over the theatre.

During the years of Syndicate control many actors and managers became its bitter foes. As early as 1898, some of the actors, led by Harrison Fiske and his wife, Minnie Maddrm Fiske, began to fight its power. By 1899, however, the revolt was over and all but Mr. and Mrs. Fiske had joined the Syndicate. There was a second revolt in 1900, but the Syndicate again triumphed. Then in 1905, the Shuberts began to contest the power of the monopoly. By consolidating all of the independents, Lee, Jacob and Sam Shubert fought the Syndicate, intermittently, until they effected the collapse of the theatrical monopoly which it exercised.

Unfortunately this bitter warfare proved to be costly to both factions and detrimental to the stage. "It led to overproduction and a surplus of theatres. ... By 1914 the accumulated losses sustained by both factions convinced them that prolongation of the war would bring them to financial ruin." 30 By this time the road was almost dead. The Syndicate, despite claims to the contrary, was not entirely responsible for this; but, because of the battle with the Shuberts, they were responsible for the beginning of the decline.

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29 Eaton, op. cit., p. 839.
30 Morris, op. cit., p. 277.
"In order to keep their theatres filled and theatre managers satisfied, both factions had been forced to send out inferior companies. . . . public support had decreased alarmingly."  

In its later years, after the retirement of Hayman, the dissolution of the Nixon-Zimmerman partnership and the death of Frohman, the Syndicate was managed exclusively by Klaw and Erlanger. Then on August 31, 1916, the Syndicate came to an end.

Organized in 1896 by six astute business men, it was a dominant force in the history of the American theatre for twenty years. For nearly fourteen of these years it enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the theatre. Having successfully maintained its monopoly in the face of several revolts against it, it finally lost its complete control of the theatre in America in 1910, as a result of the Shubert's intensive campaign. From that time to the time of its dissolution, the Syndicate was held in check by a faction which had as much power as it had.

The end of the Syndicate was but another logical step in the development of the theatre. It had served its purpose. It had "stabilized the theatre as a business, bringing order and security for those who would accept its terms."  

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The end of the Syndicate was but another logical step in the development of the theatre. It had served its purpose. It had "stabilized the theatre as a business, bringing order and security for those who would accept its terms." It had robbed the theatre of much of its independence; but it had brought prosperity to local managers and to producers and more work and better salaries to actors. It had turned theatre into big business, in doing so it had taken from it much of its individual creativity. "... it was a purveyor

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31 Lippman, op. cit., p. 158.
32 Ibid., p. 165.
33 Hewitt, op. cit., p. 257.
of popular entertainment. Art was not excluded, but for admission it had to show a profit."

These were the men and the organization responsible for the construction of the Tulane and the Crescent. The New Orleans theatres were merely two links in a great chain stretching from New York to the West Coast. They were to be completely controlled by Klaw and Erlanger through their dominance over their local managers, William Rowles and Tom Campbell. Rowles was the first manager of the theatres. It was, nevertheless, Campbell whose name became most associated with them. He was the direct representation of Klaw and Erlanger in New Orleans. Throughout the entire history of the Tulane and Crescent theatres his name appears again and again.

"Nobody in New Orleans ever thought of either the Tulane or Crescent theaters without thinking of the name of Tom Campbell simultaneously. . . . When Tom Campbell spoke it was the oracle of the theater speaking." As a manager of the Klaw and Erlanger interests for forty-three years, he became the dominant personality in New Orleans drama. Each September his return from his annual summer trip to Massachusetts and New York was the signal that the theatrical season was ready to begin. Known by thousands of playgoers by the honorary title of Colonel, "Tom Campbell was the theater in New Orleans."

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34 Ibid., p. 278.
36 States, June 28, 1939, p. 1.
Campbell was the last of the great theatrical managers of the city. He was not a pioneer or a builder such as Ludlow, Caldwell, or Greenwall; but he possessed great endurance and even greater optimism. At a time when the American stage was undergoing great changes and was being consolidated in the Eastern cities, he still believed in its power as a nationwide attraction. For almost half a century, through prosperity, war and depression, he kept his own theatres alive. Even when he watched the buildings being destroyed, he refused to accept defeat. He refused to believe that the stage in New Orleans, or anywhere, could die. "Dead? Dead! The stage will never die. I've got plans right now to bring some shows to New Orleans next year." He was seventy-five years old when he spoke those words.

Thomas Christopher Campbell was not a native of New Orleans. He was born, in 1860, on a farm near the small town of West Alexander, Ohio. Despite his many years as a resident of Louisiana, and despite his popularity, little is known of his personal life. His father, James Campbell, was a cousin of Governor James Campbell of Ohio, and his family had been prominent in the state for many years. In fact, his great-grandfather was one of the first settlers in the western counties. Tom Campbell, however, spent most of his life in the South.

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In 1881, after a "common school education" he "succumbed to wanderlust" and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. He worked for a time there as a hotel clerk; but the following year, 1882, he went to Jacksonville, Florida. It was there that he first became associated with the entertainment world as a contractor and excursion agent with the Sells Brothers' Circus.

By 1885 he was an advance agent for theatrical organizations. This was the year in which he first came to the city of New Orleans in the capacity of agent for Louise Balfe. In the following years he travelled through the country representing such stars as Joseph Jefferson and Adelina Patti and such shows as *The County Fair* and the *Country Circus*. During this time he became associated with the Klaw and Erlanger organization, and for two years he worked as a press agent at their headquarters in Buffalo, New York.

Campbell had made a second visit to New Orleans in 1892, as the manager of a touring show called *The Soudan*. Then in 1894 he became a permanent resident of the city when Klaw and Erlanger sent him to work with their newly acquired theatres, the St. Charles and the Academy of Music. In 1898, when the Tulane and Crescent were built, he was named manager of the Crescent and assistant to William Rowles, the Tulane manager. In 1906 he assumed the managementship of both theatres.

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39 *Times-Picayune*, June 29, 1929, p. 2. Hereafter referred to as *Picayune*.

40 *States*, June 28, 1939, p. 1.

During the remaining thirty-one years of the theatres' existence he became known as the "dean of theatre managers" in New Orleans. He was a personal friend of many of the great figures in the theatrical world. More important, he was known to hundreds of New Orleans playgoers. "To what had been the relative quiet of Baronne street he brought for generations the glitter of the big stage and operatic stars and alackaday, the first of the big movies that were to spell ruin for the spoken drama as it once flourished here."\(^4^2\)

Often considered one of New Orleans' most interesting figures, Campbell was also one of the city's most active residents. He was an avid golfer. When horse racing was re-established in New Orleans in 1915, he was instrumental in its success. He was one of the first persons in the city to use an automobile; and, in 1907, he staged the first automobile show to be held in New Orleans. He "set the amusement world afire when he at one time managed three theaters, a race track, a benevolent association and several other enterprises."\(^4^3\)

The Tulane and Crescent, however, always received his greatest devotion and attention. Each opening night the New Orleans theatre-goer saw this "Beau Brummel of theaterdom,"\(^4^4\) standing, in full dress, just inside the lobby.

\(^4^2\) *Picayune*, January 25, 1937, sec. 4, p. 15.
\(^4^3\) *Idem*.
\(^4^4\) *States*., June 28, 1939, p. 1.
Colonel Campbell walked down the steps of the theatres for the last time on February 17, 1937. Two years later, in New Bedford, Massachusetts, he died. He was survived only by his widow, Anne Olstine Campbell. He was seventy-seven years old. With him passed an age and a way of life. He is remembered now only as a part of New Orleans theatre history, a legend, the past.
The entrance of Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger into the theatrical business of New Orleans was a result of the battle between David Bidwell and Henry Greenwall, two local theatrical managers, for control of the city's theatrical interests. For years, Bidwell, who was often referred to as the Napoleon of Managers, virtually dominated the theatre business of New Orleans. Then in 1888, Greenwall obtained a lease on the Grand Opera House and challenged the Bidwell dynasty. In the same year Bidwell is believed to have supplied Charles B. Jefferson, Klaw, and Erlanger with the money to purchase the H. S. Taylor Booking agency of New York. He is supposed to have started this combination in order that he might obtain better bookings for his theatres and thus drive Greenwall out of business.

Greenwall was a stronger opponent than Bidwell had anticipated. He managed to survive. He opened his own agency in New York. As a result of the war between the two men, the New Orleans play-goer enjoyed, for a time, the greatest list of shows of any metropolitan center in the United States outside of New York City. This cut-throat competition, which eventually resulted in the destruction

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2 Ibid., p. 585.
of both men, was the beginning of the Klaw and Erlanger combination which was to control theatrical booking across the nation for a quarter of a century.

By the beginning of the season of 1888-89, gout, complicated by other diseases, had forced Bidwell into partial retirement. At that time he rented the St. Charles Theatre to Jefferson, Klaw and Erlanger. After his death on December 17, 1889, his widow made an unsuccessful attempt to manage his theatres. Finally, in 1893, she arranged with the New York firm to take over the lease on the Academy of Music as well as the St. Charles. Thus began the forty year reign of Klaw and Erlanger over the New Orleans theatre.

After Mrs. Bidwell's death on May 16, 1897, Klaw and Erlanger continued to lease the theatres from Dr. George K. Pratt, a New Orleans physician, who had acquired the properties. This arrangement soon became unsatisfactory. Both the St. Charles and the Academy were old theatres. As early as 1897, it was announced that the two men were determined to have new theatres which were better equipped to handle the large productions which were touring. They had intended to demolish these two theatres and have new buildings erected on the same site. After the property came into the hands of Dr. Pratt this plan was still under consideration.

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1 Kendall, *Golden Age*, pp. 571, 573.
3 *Picayune*, January 28, 1898, p. 7.
For several months there were negotiations and discussions between the managers and the new owner. The first real sign of a break came when Klaw and Erlanger did not renew their lease for the 1898-99 season. In an interview with a New Orleans reporter, Klaw said, "We were promised a new theatre on the Academy site. We were also led to believe that the St. Charles was to be entirely reconstructed the year after. This promise was not lived up to, and from that moment we lost all interest in the old theatres, and they will pass out of existence as far as we are concerned, with the termination of our leases."  

W. H. Bowles, the man who had been sent South by Klaw and Erlanger to manage the St. Charles and the Academy, was then authorized to begin the search for another location on which theatres could be built. "After deciding to build—not one but two handsome theatres—the next thing was to secure a suitable location, in a respectable neighborhood, as far away from drinking-houses and evil influences as possible, accessible by all lines of street cars and good streets to the play-going men, women and children of New Orleans."  

The desired location was found in a plot of ground, 200 by 183 feet, which was owned by Tulane University. It was the site of the old medical and library buildings and was located in downtown New Orleans in the square bounded by Baronne, Common, Dryades, and

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7 *Times-Democrat*, January 30, 1898, p. 7. Hereafter referred to as *Democrat*.

Canal streets. The Tulane interests had held the property since the middle of the nineteenth century, and "in the 90's there was little value attached to it." The University had arranged to lease the land, for ninety-nine years, to Thomas Nicholson, who with Sam Henderson, C. P. Fenner and J. S. Rainey had formed the Tulane Improvement Company to develop the site.

On March 11, 1897, the lease of the property was signed by Mr. Nicholson, representative of the leasees, and a $10,000 check for the first year's rental was paid to the board of Administrators of Tulane. At the time of the transaction the company had no definite plans for the project. Then it was approached by the Klaw and Erlanger interests.

By January 29, 1898, all arrangements were completed; Marc Klaw came to New Orleans and signed a ninety-nine year lease on the ground. At the same time the architectural firm of Sully, Burton and Stone signed a contract to design two theatres for the site. They were to cost approximately $200,000. To help with the designing of the stages, Claude Hagan, the "northern builder answered a telegraphic summons to come to New Orleans" to confer

9 Democrat, January 30, 1898, p. 7.
10 Picayune, April 16, 1924 (Baronne Street Supplement).
11 Picayune, March 12, 1897, p. 10.
12 Picayune, January 30, 1898, sec. 3, p. 21.
13 Picayune, January 31, 1898, p. 7.
14 Picayune, April 16, 1924 (Baronne Street Supplement).
with the local architects to insure" . . . such commodious and perfect stages, with all modern appliances and improvements, as New Orleans has ever seen." 15

Klaw and Erlanger had promised that the theatres would open for the 1898-99 season; therefore the work began immediately. Fortunately, Rowles, who was in charge of the construction, had "acquired the habit of hustling and work in the busy west" 16 and was equal to the emergency of building two theatres "in New Orleans in six months of warm weather time . . . where no one seems to be in a hurry." 17 On February 3, it was announced that Mr. Maurice Feitel, "one of the most quick and careful men in his line of demolishing buildings that stand in the way of progress in the city" 18 had signed a contract to remove the old buildings. On March 15, the contract for laying the foundations was awarded to Mr. W. H. Wright, who guaranteed to have them ready for putting up the walls within thirty days. 19

Work progressed rapidly on the theatres; by March 26, 1898, they were ready for the laying of the cornerstone. The newspapers gave a colorful and complete account of the occasion:

15 Picayune, February 3, 1898, p. 8.
16 Picayune, March 16, 1898, p. 3.
17 Picayune, September 25, 1898, sec. 2, p. 7.
18 Picayune, February 3, 1898, p. 8.
19 Picayune, March 16, 1898, p. 3.
An important event of yesterday was an assemblage of interested spectators at the corner of Common and Dryades streets, at the old Tulane College grounds, to witness the laying of the cornerstone for the building of Klaw and Erlanger's two modern theatres, the Crescent and the Tulane. 

Taking advantage of the presence in New Orleans of America's foremost comedian, Klaw and Erlanger wired from New York to Manager W. H. Rowles, that Nat C. Goodwin should be invited to assist at the laying of the cornerstone for the new theatres, and in a way be made sponsor for the new playhouses. Mr. Goodwin accepted, and at 10 o'clock yesterday morning appeared on the scene and acted a little part that means very much for New Orleans. He was neatly dressed, was direct from his bath, his barber and his breakfast, and seemed as fresh as the flowers that bloomed at the lapel of his coat, his smile was as radiant as the sunshine of the glorious morning. Mr. Goodwin, lifted and put plumb on the corner a marble which is to serve as a cornerstone. On the marble is inscribed the words, "Laid by Nat C. Goodwin, New Orleans, March 26, 1898." Everybody's health and success concerned in the enterprise was drunk in amber wine at a cafe nearby, and the cornerstone laying was happily ended.

There is an interesting sidelight to this occasion which was omitted by the local reporters. On the same day, Henry Greenwall was conducting a meeting at the Grand Opera House with several important stars to consider ways of fighting the growing power of the Klaw and Erlanger combination. Attending that meeting was Nat Goodwin, who left to go lay the cornerstone of the two theatres which would further strengthen the Klaw and Erlanger firm by giving them a stronghold in the South.

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20 *Picayune*, March 27, 1898, sec. 3, p. 22.
The same newspaper which described the corner-stone laying in such glowing terms, perhaps best summarized the construction of the theatres and the public feeling toward them:

The busy work of preparation is going on at the Tulane lot... for the erection of the two new and beautiful modern theatres... This is the most important and progressive movement that has ever happened to New Orleans in a theatrical way. Klaw and Erlanger, who control as agents or owners, at least 80 per cent of the first-class attractions travelling, have felt compelled to abandon the old fashioned and uncomfortable theatres on St. Charles street, where many of the managers of great attractions have gone under protest, not being able there to stage their productions properly... The work has commenced. Every right-thinking citizen rejoices at this evidence of progress and advancement in the business of amusements... New Orleans is moving forward, and the moss-backs who cannot keep up with the procession must get left.22

By July it was apparent that Klaw and Erlanger would keep their promise to have the theatres ready for the opening of the season. In a newspaper article of July 3, it was announced that the workers had been almost quadrupled in number and that most of the contracts had been let. In the same article it was stated that the management had commissioned George W. Enright, a New York electrical expert, to install the elaborate, "modern and scientific" lighting system.23

It was to be the most efficient system then in use in New Orleans. One enthusiastic reporter went to far as to say that

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22 Picayune, February 27, 1898, p. 20.
the "... switchboard itself looks like a work of art and is certainly a marvel of modern mechanism." In describing the Crescent, another reporter states: "The lighting for the theatre has been lavishly done with 1,000 or more incandescent electric lights, and most remarkable of all will be the lighting of the stage..." Three separate currents furnished lights through white, red and blue globes which could be dimmed at will and which were capable of 336 combinations of lights. To the amazement of all, this could be handled by one man.

In The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theater, John Kendall said of the two theatres: "Architecturally, the exteriors were trivial, and within, though the auditorium was well arranged and comfortable, there was absence of decoration which was, on the whole, inexcusable." The observers of 1898 were much more enthusiastic in their descriptions of these two "temples of Thespis" and described them as the "finest New Orleans has known."

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24 Democrat, September 27, 1898, sec. 2, p. 8.
26 Democrat, Sept. 27, 1898, sec. 2, p. 8.
27 Kendall, Golden Age, p. 580.
28 Picayune, March 12, 1897, p. 10.
29 Picayune, September 27, 1898, p. 4.
Neither theatre was large; the Crescent seated 1800 and the Tulane held approximately 1500. The theatres were placed side by side within the square made by Baronne, Common and Dryades Streets and University Place. They sat parallel to Common Street with the stage entrances on Dryades Street and the front entrances toward Baronne. Between the theatres, and on either side, were twenty foot wide spaces, running the length of the theatres and connecting Dryades with the twenty-five foot carriage "street" which was built at the entrance of the theatres. These spaces at the sides had been provided for side exits from the galleries and the main floors. The front entrances to the theatres could be reached by these side walkways, by the front drive which opened on Common, or by the arcades which ran from the front drive to Baronne.

In front of the theatres, between the main entrances and Baronne Street, was a park which was 125 feet deep and which extended 310 feet across the fronts of both theatres. It was laid out with walks and carriage drives and made "a delightful little breathing space right in the heart of the big busy city." Over the entrance was a "brilliant and effective" electric sign whose large letters of white lights on a white background spelled out "The Klaw-Erlanger Co. Theatres."

Architecturally the exteriors of the theatres were the same. The two-story fronts, which extended back to a depth of twenty feet.

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31 Democrat, September 27, 1898, sec. 2, p. 8.
32 Idem.
to include the lobby, were brick and terra cotta painted a light creme color. The main entrances, which were sheltered by a wide portico, were twenty-two feet wide and were reached by seven marble steps. To the sides of these were the separate gallery entrances. The main building rose "in a plain-looking towering wall of white pressed brick." 33

The interiors of the two theatres, designed by a Chicagoan, T. Theodore Behr, were more elaborate than the exteriors. Since the Tulane was built to present the higher-class attractions, while the Crescent was the popular-price house, it was "designed to cater to the tastes of a more fastidious class of patrons. Where the Crescent is rich and handsome the Tulane is still richer, and adds an air of daintiness and delicacy." 35

The floor plans of the lobbies were the same. They were twenty by twenty-two feet; there was a smoking room on the right and the manager's office and ticket office were on the left. To the right of the foyer was the "ladies dressing room."

The decorations of the interiors were entirely different. The Tulane lobby was done in the style of the Empire period. There was a mosaic floor and a deep wainscoating of polished Italian marble. Above this, the walls were of a "peculiarly bright and rich shade of orange chrome." 36 The scroll-work on the wide cornice was shaded

33 Idem.
34 Picayune, July 3, 1898, sec. 2, p. 9.
35 Democrat, October 16, 1898, p. 23.
36 Idem.
from a deep ivory to a light sage green, which was the prevailing color of the ceiling. As one reporter commented, "By daylight... the colorings in the vestibule seem exceptionally high... to one unaccustomed to the effect upon high colors produced by either electric or gas lighting it would seem to border upon the extravagant."  

Past the lobby were the stairs leading to the dress circle. Between this passageway and the foyer was a row of massive square columns of polished white marble. The auditorium was done in the rococo Louis XV period. The walls were painted sage green and were heavily ornamented with painted vines and wreaths and fretted moldings of ivory and gold. The fronts of the boxes, the gallery and the balcony were fretted with gilded vines and flowers against a background of ivory.

The twenty-four foot deep proscenium arch formed the "fitting center piece" for the twelve boxes which were separated and enclosed by massive columns of ivory and gold. Above the deep proscenium arch, "enclosed in a vinelike wreath of golden scrollwork" was a twenty-two by sixteen foot oil painting entitled "The Fairies Chariot." It pictured "... chariots driven recklessly over cloud roads freighted with fair women in negligee costumes, and angels are seen in the distance, little fellows playing on heavenly instruments, 

\footnote{37 Idem.} 
\footnote{38 Idem.} 
\footnote{39 Idem.}
making the theatre seem like a fairy land." Another painting decorated the stage curtain. It was a reproduction of "Psyche at the Feet of Venus" and was considered a thing of beauty. "The figures are chastely draped, and the treatment is restful, taking the beholder far away from the workaday world. . . ."

The interior of the Crescent was somewhat the same, but on a much less elaborate scale. While the lighting fixtures of the Tulane were gold plated, those at the Crescent were of bronze. The Tulane had chairs of rattan enameled with ivory and gold; the Crescent had red leather.

The style of the decorations of the Crescent was Renaissance with Venetian red as the prevailing color. The lobby had the same mosaic floor and polished marble wainscoating as the Tulane. The auditorium was heavily ornamented with fretted moldings and gilded and painted designs. The Crescent had only two boxes and its proscenium was only twelve feet deep, but all were decorated in buff and gold. The drop curtain in this theatre also had a painting. It was entitled "Poet and Peasant" and depicted a maiden "watching her sheep" while a poet stood by and told her age-old stories.

The most unusual architectural feature of the interiors of the two theatres was the actual shape of the auditorium. The seating area was much wider and shallower than audiences were accustomed to.

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40 Picayune, October 18, 1898, p. 6.
41 *Idem.*
42 Picayune, March 20, 1898, p. 3.
43 Picayune, September 25, 1898, sec. 2, p. 7.
The curve of the seats was described as being like a saucer rather than the traditional horseshoe. This was an innovation for New Orleans and resulted in comment from all the reporters who described the theatres.

The stages and backstage areas of the Tulane and Crescent were almost identical. Each stage was sixty-five feet wide and forty-two feet deep with a height of sixty-one feet. Both proscenium openings were thirty-seven feet wide and thirty-three feet high. Each theatre had fourteen dressing rooms planned to accommodate two people each and equipped with "everything necessary for the comfort and convenience of the occupants." There were also large "dressing rooms for supernumeraries and chorus people." The only major difference between the backstage areas of the two theatres was the more elaborate lighting system of the Tulane.

Fires destroyed an appalling number of theatres in the nineteenth century and were responsible for the loss of many lives. "Theatres were particularly vulnerable to fire during the period of gas illumination from 1825-1890. . ." This was partially due to carelessness in the construction and handling of scenery and light effects and partially due to the lack of fire extinguishing apparatus. Even after the introduction of electricity, fires were possible and much too numerous.

\[1\] Democrat, September 27, 1898, sec. 2, p. 8.
\[45\] Idem.
\[46\] Democrat, October 16, 1898, p. 23.
The Tulane and Crescent theatres were, for their day, amply protected against the hazards of a fire. Each building was provided with six side exits with strongly constructed iron stairways leading to them, large front entrances, separate front entrances to the galleries, and large doors and windows in the rear of the buildings. Mr. Sully, the architect, said, "Each theatre should be emptied inside of two minutes in case of fire. There is no other theatre in the country with the facilities for exit equal to these that I have ever visited." As a further precaution against fire, there were numerous fire hose appointments, asbestos curtains and fireproof walls surrounding the boiler which heated the theatres.

In 1898, when the epoch of magnificence in American theatre buildings was just beginning, these buildings were considered great contributions to the architecture of New Orleans. New Orleans was properly impressed, "Looking at the beautifully fashioned, formed, lighted and tinted Tulane Theatre last night, perfect in every detail, luxurious and comfortable, a New Orleans man, accustomed to the dingy playhouses of the past, said 'This is too fine for New Orleans.'"

Despite the skepticism of local pessimists, Klaw and Erlanger kept their promise to the New Orleans play-goers. "It was one of those rare occasions in the history of theatres when a new theatre has been opened exactly on time, and yet complete down to the smallest detail." The Crescent was opened on Monday night, September 26,

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48 Picayune, March 20, 1898, p. 3.
49 Picayune. October 18, 1898, p. 6.
50 Democrat, September 27, 1898, sec. 2, p. 8.
1898. This event set a precedent which was followed throughout the history of the theatres. Each season the Crescent opened first.

The occasion was one of the highlights of the fall social season. As the Times-Democrat reporter observed, "... it must have been something of a surprise to note the presence of such an extremely fashionable audience at the time of the year when comparatively few have returned from their summer outings." 18 The Picayune reviewer expressed the same surprise and added, "Warm as the night was, the handsome new theatre was full in every part with an audience made up of the best people in the city." 19

After the overture was played, Manager Rowles appeared before the curtain to be greeted with "a storm of congratulatory applause that was fairly deafening." 20 He welcomed the large audience and then introduced the Mayor of New Orleans, the Honorable Walter C. Flowers, who made the dedicatory address.

The Mayor concluded his speech with these remarks:

The completion of these theatres furnished an object lesson to the people of New Orleans. Theatre property is notoriously a risky investment, and when Messrs. Klaw, Erlanger and Co., announced the contemplated building of these two theatres some months ago, many incredulous people shook their heads in doubt. But their projectors had faith in the future of New Orleans, and they have demonstrated that confidence by embarking a large capital in this enterprise, which deserves substantial recognition from our citizens.

51 Idem.
52 Picayune, September 27, 1898, p. 4.
53 Democrat, September 27, 1898, sec. 2, p. 8.
Mr. Klaw, on behalf of this audience and the people of New Orleans, I wish you and the Crescent Theatre the fullest measure of success.

After the Mayor's speech the curtain rose on the first production to be shown in the Crescent Theatre. The play chosen for the event was The Ragged Earl, an Irish comedy, which introduced to New Orleans the singing comedian Andrew Mack; "upon the whole the performance was a thoroughly pleasing one. . . ."

The opening of the Tulane, one month later, was a no less auspicious occasion. One reviewer summarized the event with these words: "Last night, Monday, October 17, the new Tulane Theater was opened to the public. It was packed to the doors, with as fine an audience as ever assembled within the walls of a playhouse." The advent of cool weather, no doubt, had a favorable effect on the attendance. Climatic conditions were one reason for the delayed opening of the Tulane season. The theatre had been built to cater to the more fashionable element of New Orleans society; and New Orleans society always left town in the summer. The other reason for the late opening was the difficulty Southern managers had in booking good attractions early in the season.

The opening production was Nathan Hale, starring Nat C. Goodwin and Maxine Elliott. Both the Picayune and the Times-Democrat reviewers were impressed with the attraction as it was produced at the

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54 Idem.
55 Idem.
56 Picayune, October 18, 1898, p. 6.
Tulane. "To be fully appreciated, this play must be seen as it is staged and acted at the Tulane Theater, with its special scenery and all the modern appliances of lighting effects..."

Marc Klaw was present for the opening of the theatre. In the closing words of his short speech he expressed the policy of the theatre management and their hopes for success:

We now leave the management of these two theatres largely in the hands of you, the playgoing public of New Orleans. The practice of hissing does not obtain on this side of the Atlantic, but you have a much more dignified way of expressing your displeasure with an attraction. You can turn your backs upon it, and trust me, we shall not be long in profiting by any such hint that you may give us. It is clearly to our interests to give you what you want, and we lay claim to no merit for directing our efforts that way. This is why we must place the management of our theatres largely in your hands, whether we would wish to do so or not. We have had five years in which to study your tastes, and we would be dense indeed if by this time we had not learned that there was a large clientele of cultivated people in New Orleans who would appreciate and liberally support what they know to be a strictly high class entertainment...

Thus the two theatres were opened; and so began their forty year period of activity as the leading, and sometimes the only, legitimate theatres of New Orleans. Many of America's greatest stars would play in these theatres; but most of them would be the stars of a new generation. While the Tulane and the Crescent were still fresh from the drawing board, the so-called "Golden Age of the Road" was passing and a new order was beginning. With this new

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57 Picayune, October 18, 1898, p. 7.
58 Democrat, October 18, 1898, sec. 2, p. 8.
order came new stars; new stars who no longer specialized in Shakespeare and the classic drama, but who played the more realistic drama of the new playwrights such as Augustus Thomas, George Broadhurst, Clyde Fitch and David Belasco.

As this new order established itself, the productions became more and more spectacular and more and more expensive. Companies of from fifty to one hundred became almost common-place. Elaborate scenery required two or even three railroad cars to transport it. This too passed away and in its place came the new noisy gadget: the "talking picture." In their forty years of existence the Tulane and Crescent saw and were a part of these changes. They too passed away.

In 1898, however, the future was bright. In that first season these two theatres gave New Orleans fifty-seven different theatrical groups. Some few of these were touring companies that went knocking about the country year after year with inadequate actors in poorly written shows, but many of the companies were excellent.

This study will not attempt to describe in detail the numerous attractions which visited the two theatres each year; but a detailed review of the opening season will serve to give a better comprehension of the quality, kind and number of companies which played the Tulane and the Crescent during their early affluent years.

The Tulane normally presented nine performances a week and the Crescent presented ten. There were matinees on Wednesday and Saturday at the former, while the latter had matinee performances on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons. Opening nights, except in special instances (when a star refused to perform on the Sabbath),
occurred at both theatres on Sunday night. Admissions at the Tulane were normally .25¢, .50¢, .75¢, $1.00, and $1.50. The popular priced Crescent ranged from .15¢ to .75¢. The staff of the theatres included W. H. Rowles, Manager; Thomas Christopher Campbell, business manager; Claude Robinson, treasurer; Abe Seligman, assistant treasurer; and Robert Struve, scenic artist.

Because the Crescent opened first and had the longest season, it will be discussed first. During the 1898-99 season, this theatre presented twenty-seven dramatic companies in twenty-six different productions. In addition, there were three minstrel companies, one magic show, and the sensational Black Patti and her Troubadors. The season ended with the Wilbur-Kirwin Opera Company which performed in nine different light operas during a three week engagement.

After the opening of Andrew Mack in The Ragged Earl, the star and his company were asked to remain for another week, during which time they presented An Irish Gentleman. This happened because of the annual autumn plague of New Orleans: the fever. The company which was scheduled to appear the second week feared "being bottled up here by the unhealthy quarantine enemies of New Orleans." Mack was persuaded to stay over. Unfortunately, after a week of "good"

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59 There were times when both theatres increased the admission price for special productions.
60 Picayune, September 4, 1899, p. 3.
61 Picayune, September 29, 1898, sec. 2, p. 5.
business he played the second week to "poor" receipts.

Following the Andrew Mack engagement, a musical farce entitled At Gay Coney Island filled the house to "overflowing by a highly amused audience" during the week of October 9. "There were over two thousand people" at the opening night and the show played a weeks engagement to "big" business.

Throughout the history of the Crescent there was one type of show which usually enjoyed successful runs. These were farces; especially popular were the musical farces. The first year of operation there were thirteen farce comedies at the Crescent; only four played to "bad" business.

The next week, the week of the opening of the Tulane, one of the most popular shows of all times played the Crescent, the Al G. Fields Minstrels. Fields had been coming to New Orleans for many years and had "played every theatre" there. Minstrel shows did not fare too well at the Tulane, but the manager could always dust off the Standing Room Only signs in preparation for the burnt cork performers at the popular-priced Crescent. A guarantee of financial success for minstrels

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62 Picayune, April 30, 1899, sec. 2, p. 5. Both the Democrat and the Picayune gave an annual summary of the season. According to information from the management, receipts were listed as "good", "big", etc.

63 Picayune, October 19, 1898, p. 6.

64 Picayune, April 30, 1899, sec. 2, p. 5.

65 Picayune, October 17, 1898, p. 7.
was that Negroes were allowed to attend these performances. This was assurance that the upper part of the house, at least, would be full and enthusiastic.

Following the minstrels there were four weeks of comedy. Joe Kelly and Charles A. Mason appeared first in *Who is Who*. They were succeeded by an old, but popular, farce, *A Parlor Match*. The comedians Happy Ward and Harry Vokes, who were old favorites in New Orleans, opened November 6, in a rollicking jumble of nonsense entitled *The Governors*. This was a lucky week for the comedians. They had a "remarkably successful" run; and during their stay in New Orleans, Happy Ward became the father of a son. This news definitely increased the gaiety around the theatre.

The last of the four consecutive comedies was a farce by Charles E. Elaney, *A Hired Girl*. Despite the fact that the show opened to a "regular packed Sunday night house," it fared badly. The critics complained that the show has a "few presumably funny dialogues that dragged wearily, for the play is not remarkable for coherence of natural humor. . . ." It did the least business of the four shows.

Another minstrel company appeared on November 20. The Wm. H. West Minstrels received good reviews, but the financial results were only "fair." Minstrels were traditional; they were always the same and

66 Democrat, November 10, 1898, p. 3.
67 Picayune, November 14, 1898, p. 2.
68 Democrat, November 14, 1898, p. 3.
the audiences applauded the sameness. West had a new format for his show. There were end men, but no monologues and no stale jokes and lots of songs. Perhaps this was not what the audiences wanted. At any rate, large numbers of them stayed at home.

The show which opened on November 27, was *A Milk White Flag*. It was an old farce with a good script and a good company, but it lacked a big name comedian. Despite two very pretty girls in tights the weeks receipts were only "fair."

The next week was worse. The show was called *Natural Gas* and featured two comedians named Edward Garvie and Eddie Girard. The reviewer from the *Picayune*, who was inclined to be less critical than the *Democrat* reporter, merely complained that H. Grattan Donnelley had written a show with no plot. The review in the *Democrat* was less kind. It stated, "The trouble was that the company was weak, woefully weak. . . . The men were mediocre and the women were plain." 71

Business picked up on December 12, when *My Friend from India* opened. It was a good production and was the first time the comedy had played in New Orleans at popular prices. It was a successful week. Another financially successful week followed with the Georgia Minstrels. This was an unusual company which was composed of an all-Negro cast led by Billy Kersands. Kersands was the "piece de resistance of the

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69 *Democrat*, November 28, 1898, p. 3.
70 *Picayune*, December 5, 1898, p. 8.
71 *Democrat*, December 5, 1898, p. 8.
performance." \[72\] He weighed about 200 pounds and had a real big mouth. \[73\] He did a buck and wing with two billiard balls in his mouth. He would say, "If they ever made my mouth bigger they would have to move my ears." \[74\]

When the Georgia Minstrels closed on December 24, 1898, the Crescent had completed three months of comedy. There was not much variety in the scheduling at the Crescent; but there was not meant to be. A popular-priced house was not designed to appeal to the culture seekers or the fashionable intelligensia. It was designed for the "people". At the end of the nineteenth century, the "people" wanted lots of laughter, a few tears and romance, and a touch of adventure. The Crescent provided all three--in the proper dosage.

On Christmas day, 1898, the Crescent presented its first drama. It was David Belasco's romantic play, *The Heart of Maryland*, with B. J. Murphy, Lyon L. Adams, and Miss Alma Kruger. *Secret Service*, another romantic war drama, by William Gillette, appeared the following week. Byron Douglass was playing the role created by Gillette and the reviews of his performance were good, \[74\] but the weather was bad and business was only fair.

The week of January 8, 1899, was one of the most successful of the season, both financially and nostalgically. The play was *Shall We Forgive Her*. The star was Marie Wainwright. Miss Wainwright had

\[72\] *Democrat*, December 19, 1898, p. 3.


\[74\] *Picayune*, January 1, 1899, p. 12.
first appeared in New Orleans in 1879-80, at the Varieties with the Collier's Union Square Company. In 1885, she had been the leading member of the Bidwell Stock Company at the Grand Opera House, and New Orleans had not forgotten her. As one reviewer said, "... last night the people came out to see her, as in the old days, and completely filled the Crescent Theatre, and gave her a fine reception when she appeared."  

She varied the program during the week by presenting the melodrama, *East Lynne* at the matinees and on Friday night. The Thursday afternoon performance of *East Lynne* broke the Crescent record for attendance. This was one of the most popular plays of the nineteenth century despite the fact that "it is one of the worst plays ever written from a purely technical point of view. But it presents at length the heartbreaking suffering of a good but erring woman. ... it appealed to those who love to weep over the anguish of others." Miss Wainwright and melodrama were a profitable combination and the entire week was summarized as "Business big."  

75 Kendall, *Golden Age*, p. 556.  
76 Ibid., p. 401.  
77 Picayune, January 9, 1899, p. 12.  
78 Hewitt, op. cit., p. 188.  
79 Picayune, April 30, 1899, sec. 2, p. 5.
The following week "an audience that packed the Crescent to the very doors..." welcomed back an old show, *The Prisoner of Zenda*. The stars were Howard Gould and Margaret Fuller. This was one of those romantic dramas that everyone knew and loved and went to see.

"The annual visit of Mr. James O'Neill, with his polished and beautiful art, his hero face and his voice of gold, is one of the treats that appreciative theatre-goers look forward to from time to time. . . ." The Standing Room Only sign welcomed him to the Crescent on January 22, 1899, when he appeared in a new play, *When Greek Meets Greek*. Mr. O'Neill was one of the most popular actors in America, but unfortunately he had been doomed to "one-role stardom." Though he occasionally tried new shows, the public really preferred seeing him in *The Count of Monte Cristo*. During his week at the Crescent he appeared in *When Greek Meets Greek* and *Virginius*; but he also presented *Monte Cristo* on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings and at the Thursday matinee. These were the performances that were most profitable.

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80 Picayune, January 16, 1899, p. 2.
81 Picayune, January 23, 1899, p. 3.
Leon Herrmann, the Magician, played next at the Crescent. This show had appeared before in New Orleans but this time it was not successful. Financially the week was "poor".

Another romantic play, Under the Red Robe, followed on February 5. Starring William Morris and Frances Gaunt, the new play had a successful week.

A very unusual event occurred on Sunday night, February 12. Because of severe winter weather which prevented the opening of the other touring shows, the Crescent was the only New Orleans theatre in operation that night. "But the Crescent would have been crowded in any event..." because the show was The Devil's Auction. This old musical comedy was always popular and the 1898-99 company was better than usual, so all ten performances were given to crowded houses.

"Finnegan's Ball was not intended as a social feature of the season, but people who were willing to be delighted crowded the Crescent Theater last night, until there was not a seat to be had before the curtain went up..." There were many people who were willing to be delighted by the antics of Charles Murray and Ollie Mack; the two Irish comedians had a big week.

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83 Adelaide, the widow of Alexander Herrmann, who was more famous than his nephew, Leon, appeared with him.
84 Democrat, February 13, 1899, p. 3.
85 First produced in 1867 this was long considered one of the first musical comedies in America.
86 Picayune, February 20, 1899, p. 9.
The White Slave was written in 1882 and had been on the road for sixteen years when it appeared at the Crescent on February 26, 1899. But "it never grows old, never proves wearisome and always holds people." With a cast of unknowns who were "honest actors who interpret the lines with feeling..." the melodrama played a week to "good" business.

The biggest musical attraction of the season was a production of John Phillip Sousa's El Capitan with William C. Mandeville and Lillian Harper. The reviewer stated that the opera was a "rousing success," but it was not, financially, in the same category as Gay Coney Island or The Governors. Looking For Trouble, the farce which followed it, was of much lower quality, artistically, but much more successful, financially. The next engagement was a farce ineptly called The Dazzler which spent a bad week in New Orleans.

On March 26, an unusual show appeared at the Crescent, Black Patti and her Troubadours. Black Patti, or Mme. Sissieretta Jones, was a "woman of magnificent physique" and a tremendous voice. Her all-black company gave a performance of Negro songs and dances and took both the White and the Colored population of New Orleans by storm. The entire engagement was successful.

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87 Picayune, February 27, 1899, p. 7.
88 Picayune, March 6, 1899, p. 8.
89 Picayune, March 20, 1899, p. 10.
Unfortunately the season did not end there, but continued for a week of "bad business" with a bad show, Hogan's Alley. It was supposedly a musical farce; the reviewer merely commented that "there were many who laughed heartily. . . ."  

The season at the Crescent concluded with a three engagement by the Wilbur-Kirwin Opera Company. In 1882, when A. L. Wilbur began producing comic opera at 10, 15, and 25 cents, his competitors thought he was crazy; but the company played twenty-five years of continuous shows and "brought more comic opera stars to fame than any other single organization has ever been able to produce." When they appeared at the Crescent in 1899, Susie Kirwin was the chief prima-donna. They had a repertoire of at least twenty operas and a company that numbered between forty and fifty people. This was their first appearance in New Orleans and it was a completely successful one. Matinee attendance was so large that special matinees were offered on Sunday and all performances played to big houses.

The Crescent season closed on April 29, 1899. "All things considered, especially the drawbacks of quarantine oppression last fall,

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92 Leggitt, Picayune, April 3, 1899, p. 9.
92 Leavitt, op. cit., p. 522.
93 Picayune, April 9, 1899, p. 12.
94 The operas presented were The Queen's Lace Handkerchief; The Merry War; The Said Pasha; The Black Hussar; Carmen; The Royal Middy; Giroflé-Giroflé; The Mascotte; The Two Vagabonds; The Mikado; and Fra Diavolo.
The season has been a remarkably successful one. That was the opinion of the theatre management. Financially, the most successful engagements had been those of Gay Coney Island, Marie Wainwright, The Devil's Auction, Plack Patti, and the Wilbur-Kirwin Opera Company.

In an article in the Democrat which reviewed the season, the reporter expressed the opinion that several presentations should be mentioned as "high class." They were The Prisoner of Zenda, Wainwright, O'Neill, Secret Service, Under the Red Robe, My Friend from India, the Devil's Auction, W. H. West and Al C. Fields with their minstrels, the Herrmann's and Ward and Vokes in The Governors. Only three shows had played to really bad receipts: Hogan's Alley, Natural Gas and A Hired Girl.

While the popular-priced Crescent was appealing to the masses, the Tulane was making New Orleans theatrical history. There were twenty-five companies at the Tulane that first season. A list of the stars appearing that year would contain many of the best and most popular actors and actresses of the time.

Following their opening performances in Nathan Hale, Mr. Goodwin and Miss Elliott remained for a second week to appear in An American Citizen, David Garrick, and a short curtain raiser called The Silent System. Regretably the attendance for this second week, and for the two companies which appeared next, was low. The weather was unseasonably warm and the quarantines which had been placed on commerce

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Picayune, April 30, 1899, sec. 2, p. 5. Seasonal Summary.
had affected the economy of the city. Very few people were attending the theatre.

Charles Coghlan and his company, were the second group to appear. They presented *The Royal Box*. Coghlan, the brother of the popular comedienne Rose Coghlan, was a British actor who had won prominence in America. Described as "a miracle of elegance, dress and distinction," he was one of the popular leading men of his era. Under more favorable conditions he would have had a good week, but the quarantine severely curtailed his audience.

William (Willie) Collier, who had run away from home at the age of ten to join a company of *Pinafore*, was, by 1899, one of the foremost young comedians of the country. His production of *The Man from Mexico*, which opened November 6, 1898, marked his first appearance in New Orleans as a star. His play was a farce in which there were "no tears, no vulgarity and no horse play. . . ." His appearance was an artistic success "due to the merits of the young star and to his good company," but financially it left much to be desired due to the warm weather and the quarantine.

The weather became cooler, quarantines began to be lifted, and theatre attendance began to increase. The first really successful week of the season started November 13, 1898, when Stuart Robson

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96 Morris, op. cit., p. 212.
97 Leavitt, op. cit., p. 448.
98 *Picayune*, November 7, 1898, p. 6.
opened in _The Meddler_. Robson had been in New Orleans many times. He first appeared in the city in 1871, when he was a member of a stock company which performed at the Varieties Theatre. He later appeared several times co-starring with another popular comedian, William H. Crane. _The Meddler_ was written for him by Augustus Thomas, and was called by the playwright, "A comic play of modern manners."  

"The beautiful Tulane Theater, which was dedicated to the drama and comedy by Nat Goodwin, followed by Chas. Coghlan, in legitimate comedy, and by Willie Collier, in farce comedy, and by Stuart Robson, in refined acting, was made classic last night by the appearance here of Louis James, Kathryn Kidder and Frederick Warde. . . ."  

Thus Shakespeare came to the Tulane. Stars under the Wagenhals and Kemper firm, these three had formed a combination to tour in repertoire. They were presenting _Julius Caesar, The School for Scandal, Othello, Hamlet_ and _Macbeth_. They were "players of acknowledged power and reputation." Living up to its claim of being a theatrically cultured city, New Orleans' fashionable society presented itself en masse and gave the company a week of "big" business.  

After its week of the classics, the Tulane turned again to comedy. George C. Boniface was the leading comedian in George H.  

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100 Kendall, _Golden Age_, p. 425.  
101 _Picayune_, November 14, 1898, p. 2.  
102 _Picayune_, November 21, 1898, p. 2.  
103 _Democrat_, November 21, 1898, p. 6.
Broadhurst's *What Happened to Jones*. He had appeared in New Orleans before, and "well filled though by no means crowded," houses welcomed him back.

Sunday night playgoing was not "altogether fashionable" in New Orleans. The Crescent was usually crowded at a Sunday night opening but this was not true at the Tulane. The "exceptionally large Sunday night audience" which greeted the arrival of *The Telephone Girl* was an event worthy of notice. The musical spectacular starred the popular husband and wife comedy team, Louis Mann and Clara Lipman. In the 1890's, Louis Mann was one of the major comedians of the American stage; he justly deserved his reputation. One of the highlights of *The Telephone Girl* was a scene in which Mr. Mann, alone on stage, without words kept the audience laughing "heartily" for almost ten minutes.

When Julia Marlowe was only twenty-two years old, Daniel Frohman had offered her the juvenile lead in his stock company. She refused because she wanted to play Shakespeare. Frohman, a successful and cautious manager, did not want to undertake the management of a Shakespearean company with a young star who had caused little sensation in New York. So in 1887, Miss Marlowe formed her own

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104 Democrat, November 28, 1898, p. 3.
105 Democrat, January 1, 1899, p. 18.
106 Democrat, December 5, 1898, p. 8.
107 Democrat, December 5, 1898, p. 8.
company. She toured for ten years and it was the prestige and fame that she gained on the road that eventually brought her metropolitan stardom.

At first, her leading man was her husband Robert Tabor, but by the time she came to the Tulane on December 11, 1898, he was no longer with the company. Hobart Bosworth and John Blair divided the leading male honors in a group that was "satisfactory." Despite the weakness of the company, the popularity of Miss Marlowe gave them a financially and artistically successful week presenting *As You Like It*, *Ingomar*, and a new play called *The Countess Vaneska*.

The *Old Dominion* opened December 18, 1898. Clay Clements was the author and the star of the "romantic comedy." Although he and his company won "golden opinions from intellectual and discriminating audiences," they played to the worst business of the season. This was, however, not the fault of the author and star or of the company. As the drama editor for the *Democrat* explained on the Sunday following the engagement:

> The week preceding Christmas is generally reckoned next thing to a dead one by experienced theatrical managers in cities which constitute 'week stands' and upwards. In small towns, one or two performances during this unpromising week may be especially

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110 *Democrat*, December 13, 1898, p. 8.
111 *Democrat*, December 25, 1898, p. 16.
featured as social events, but when theatres are wide open seven nights a week, from the opening of the season until its close, it is not easy to drum up any play-going enthusiasm during the week before Christmas. In view of all this New Orleans may be said to have done very fairly in the way of patronizing this week that has just closed.112

Despite the approaching holiday season and some very bad weather, Clements did have one "large and fashionable" audience. On Monday night he invited the Daughters of the Confederacy to be his guests at the performance of his other play, Southern Gentleman. In appreciation they presented him with a large bouquet of roses and a silver headed cane.113

Sol Smith Russell, a long-time star of the road, opened Christmas day in his new play, Hon. John Grigsby. "Sol Smith Russell, the quaint and genial comedian, who brings sunshine to New Orleans when he comes. . . ."114 had always been popular in New Orleans; but his appearance at the Tulane proved to be one of the biggest weeks he had ever played in the city.115 He closed the engagement after the Saturday matinee; so for the first time since its opening in October, the Tulane Theatre was dark for a night.

112Idem.
113Democrat, December 20, 1898, p. 12.
114Picayune, December 31, 1898, p. 4.
115Picayune, December 28, 1898, p. 7.
The new year opened with a unique attraction. The show was called *The Golden Horseshoe* and the stars were the Lilliputians. This was a company of midgets, headed by Franz Ebert and Adolf Zink, who performed in musical farce with ballet interpolations. Although the midgets were Europeans, the performances were given in English. This was the fourth appearance of the group in New Orleans and each time they had been quite popular. Their earnings this trip, however, were only "fair." The reviewer for the *Democrat* gave his explanation for the unsatisfactory attendance:

The *Golden Horseshoe*... scarcely achieved the success that had been expected of it. In fact, it is a dull play viewed dramatically, and such humor as it has been equipped with is not of the sort usually served to the patrons of so handsome and luxurious a playhouse as the Tulane. New Orleans play-goers will tolerate a dash of the risque in a really bright play, but the better class of them have no tolerance for coarse vulgarity. They look upon it as coarse and disgusting, and they generally express their disapproval in the most seemly and decorous manner, and that is by remaining away from the theatre as long as the performance is in any way tainted with vulgarity.

Clyde Fitch's *The Moth and the Flame* was presented for the first time in the city on January 8, 1899. Effie Shannon and Herbert Keldey, the stars, were "given an ovation by a big and enthusiastic audience." The society drama played to big audiences all week.

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117 *Democrat*, January 8, 1899, p. 16.

118 *Picayune*, January 9, 1899, p. 12.
All of fashionable New Orleans turned out for the first presentation there of John Phillip Sousa's new comic opera, *The Bride Elect*; and it played all week to the large houses which could be expected for a production of such magnitude.\(^{119}\) This was followed by William H. Crane, the former partner of Stuart Robson, who appeared at the Tulane the week of January 22, 1899. He presented two shows, *A Virginia Courtship* and *The Head of the Family*.

The Klaw and Erlanger extravaganza, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, appeared next. One reviewer called the show "a veritable gold mine.\(^ {120}\) Its scenery, music and color appealed to all.

Roland Reed was another comedian who had first appeared at the Bidwell stock companies in New Orleans. He had been a favorite in the city for over fifteen years, so it was expected that his appearance in *His Father's Son* would attract large audiences. It proved to be a very successful week.

February is often an unpleasant month in New Orleans; February, 1899, was more unseasonable than usual. The weather was so bad that on February 12, the scheduled production was cancelled. "An audience that entirely filled the Tulane Theater was dismissed last night at about 9 o'clock for the reason that it was found impossible to transfer the scenery and baggage of the Bostonians from the depot to the theatre. . . the transfer men, with smooth-shod mules to do their hauling on ice and snow-covered streets, threw up their hands

\(^{119}\) Picayune, January 16, 1899, p. 2.

\(^{120}\) Democrat, February 5, 1899, p. 18.
at the job.¹²¹ More than 1,000 dollars in admissions was returned. The difficulty was overcome and the engagement opened the next night with The Serenade. The Bostonians presented The Serenade and Robin Hood, alternately, for the rest of the week to Standing Room Only and achieved the honor of playing the banner week of the season.¹²²

Otis Skinner, now best remembered as the father of Cornelia Otis Skinner, first became a star in 1894,¹²³ and he toured for many years, becoming more popular each season. "He had a range far more extensive than any other actor of the time, and he also had the ability to invest comparatively trivial material with significance."¹²⁴ That is why he could take a play such as Rosemary and, with a comparatively unknown company, turn it into a financial success. He opened at the Tulane on February 19, 1899. His wife, Maud Durbin, also appeared in the show; and, to the delight of New Orleans, "Miss Bessie Bernade, a local actress of talent and experience, helped the company out in an emergency, and at a short notice took the little part of Mrs. Minifie, and it first-rate (Sic)."¹²⁵

Mr. Skinner was followed by another great star, Henry Miller. Miller, an Englishman, first appeared in the United States in 1880.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Picayune, February 13, 1899, p. 10.
¹²² Picayune, April 16, 1899, sec. 2, p. 9.
¹²³ Leavitt, op. cit., p. 446.
¹²⁴ Morris, op. cit., p. 289.
¹²⁵ Picayune, February 20, 1899, p. 9.
¹²⁶ Leavitt, op. cit., p. 573.
Later he played leads with the Lyceum and Empire Theatre companies. In 1899, he toured in *Heartsease*, a romantic comedy, which started a successful week at the Tulane on February 26, 1899.

Otis Harlan, who appeared next, starred in the farce *A Day and A Night*. He was neither as well-known nor as competent as the actors who preceded, yet he was fairly successful.

The *Little Minister*, by James Barrie, had its tryout engagement in September, 1897. Since that time it had become a household word. When the engagement originally scheduled for the week of March 12, was cancelled, the management managed to secure a company which was presenting the popular play. Adelaide Thurston played Lady Babbie and a very weak actor, Horace Mitchell, was the minister. This was the first presentation of the play in New Orleans; so in spite of the fact that this was a number 2 company and was "not in line with the other attractions appearing in the Tulane Theatre," many thousands enjoyed the production.

The Tulane broke its precedent of presenting only dramatic companies when the Primrose and Dockstader Minstrels were there in March. The *Picayune* reviewer commented, "It was the spectacle of the swellest theatre in the south presenting the swellest minstrel organization of America to society. . . ." New Orleans society was not particularly interested. Those people who wanted to see

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128 *Democrat*, April 16, 1899, p. 16.
129 *Picayune*, March 20, 1899, p. 10.
minstrels went to the Crescent; business for the week was fair, but not on the same level as for the other shows which appeared at the theatre.

The performance of Miss Eugenie Blair in *A Lady of Quality*, beginning March 26, was a double treat. The play was new to the city but Miss Blair had been there before. Although the production was not very good and was a replacement for the regularly scheduled company, it played to good business.¹³⁰

The Tulane season was nearing its close. For the week of April 2, the George Broadhurst farce comedy, *Why Smith Left Home*, was presented with Maclyn Arbuckle and Blanche Chapman. The following, and last, engagement of the season was the Blanche Walsh and Melbourne MacDowell company in the two classic dramas *La Tosca* and *Fedora*. They were a fitting climax to a brilliant opening season. "From every point of view" the season had "been a prosperous and successful one. To begin with, the financial results have been extremely satisfactory to the management."¹³¹

This was even more gratifying in view of the fact that the Tulane and Crescent were not the only theatres in the city. In 1898, the New Orleans playgoer had a variety of theatres from which to choose. At the Grand Opera House, Greenwall presented a stock company which had been well-attended through the season. The St. Charles, too, had a permanent stock company which enlivened its

¹³⁰ *Picayune*, March 27, 1899, p. 7.
¹³¹ *Democrat*, April 16, 1899, p. 16.
productions with touring vaudeville. The Academy of Music also presented touring shows. In spite of such competition, the Tulane and Crescent had been able to establish themselves as strong contenders for the theatre attendance of New Orleans.

Klaw and Erlanger and all the power of the Syndicate had insured a good beginning for the two theatres. As the reviewer for the Daily States wrote:

It is not idle newspaper talk to say that the magnificent record made by these two brand new, thoroughly equipped, beautifully appointed and splendidly managed theatres, for their baptismal season, has never been equalled by any playhouse in the South, and a few indeed in the country....

...year had been more than ordinarily trying; but quarantines, opposition and blizzards have not been sufficient to make more than a slight indentation upon the season's business, and to-day the Tulane theatre stands pre-eminently the highest class playhouse of New Orleans and the South, drawing its patronage from the ultra-fashionable, the multi-wealthy, the keenly critical and the superlatively cultured people of the city; the Mecca of all who must see the best that is going and the best that can be obtained.132

The productions had been some of the best ones available. A reporter summarized the first season of the new theatres: "The tide of prosperity and good fortune seem to have set very strongly in favor of the Tulane and Crescent theatres. ... The Klaw-Erlanger Company having secured good plays and companies and handsome, desirably located theatres, has become precisely 'the correct' thing with people of wealth and fashion this season."133

132 Daily States, April 16, 1899, p. 11.
133 Democrat, January 29, 1899, p. 15.
CHAPTER III
"The Prosperous Period: 1899-1911"

"In 1899 the American theatre was approaching the turn of the Century gaily and with confidence."¹ Scores of touring companies covered America each year. The repertory company was a thing of the past. "By 1900 the single play and type casting were firmly established as the basis for actor employment."² The length of the run had become the criterion for success. It was the star rather than the play which dominated the playhouses. It was the "star-makers", like the New York managers David Belasco and Charles Frohman, who were taking over the ruling positions in the theatre.

At the end of the nineteenth century the theatre was a big, prosperous and commercialized business. It was the country's chief medium of entertainment.³ Outside of the few larger cities, the theatre was organized into the "road" which was fed, almost entirely, by the "combination companies which originated in New York" and carried their own scenery, equipment and company.⁴ In 1900, there

³ Idem.
⁴ Idem.
there were over five hundred combination companies on the road and most of these were under the control of the Theatrical Syndicate. The theatre of America was organized into one large network of which the Tulane and Crescent were a part.

When Klaw and Erlanger built the Tulane and Crescent they were explicit in their statements as to the purpose of their two New Orleans theatres. The Tulane was to be the "high class" playhouse. This meant that it was to present the better stars and the newer shows; it was to cater to the fashionable theatre-goer. The Crescent was to be the "popular" theatre. It was to present the shows the "public" wanted at a price it could afford to pay. During the first twelve years of the existence of the theatres, this differentiation between the fare and the clientele of the two playhouses became increasingly evident. While the Tulane was presenting Shakespearean repertory, light opera, spectacular musical comedies, and such stars as Richard Mansfield, Sarah Bernhardt, Otis Skinner and Ethel Barrymore, the Crescent filled its seats with productions of farce comedies, melodramas, magic shows, minstrels, and occasional visits from first run companies.

Following the precedent set in the inaugural year, the Crescent continued to be the first of the two theatres to open its regular schedule each season. This was explained, earlier in the study, by the fact that the fashionable audience was slower in getting back into the city following the summer vacation. The actual opening dates varied from year to year, but they occurred some time in September or early October.
A large opening night audience usually greeted the first show at the Crescent, but the weekly receipts were low. September temperatures in New Orleans were too high for heavy theatre attendance. Air conditioning was still a thing of the future, so for the first two or three weeks of the season the Crescent performers usually played to meagre audiences.

Then the Tulane would open. This meant "that the world of fashion had come back from its summer outings, glad to be home and anxious to be amused." The dramatic "season" lasted for six or seven months during which time the theatres were open continuously. The only time either theatre was dark was when bad weather or an "act of God" prevented a company from arriving on time.

Since the Tulane was considered the more important theatre, it will be discussed first. In order to arrive at an understanding and knowledge of the shows which appeared there, it will be necessary for this study to consider each year of the period. Some stars appeared annually at the Tulane, but each season saw a host of new players.

The American theatre was changing. The old actor-manager was dying and each year saw more and more new actors and actresses appearing in more and more of the new plays written in the popular "realistic" style. The Tulane reflected these changes. While the Crescent presented the same old shows and old stars, the Tulane

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5 Picayune, September 25, 1899, p. 3.
THE NEW TULANE THEATRE.
received new plays which had either just closed runs in New York or Chicago or which were on their way to New York. Sometimes these productions would return for a second or third season, unfortunately often with a second or third company, but they were soon replaced by a newer play or a newer star. It was an exciting period in the American theatre; it was a financially prosperous period.

The Tulane 1899-1900

"The annual opening of the Tulane Theater is an event in social as well as dramatic circles in New Orleans." The first night of Eugenia Blair in A Lady of Quality, September 2k, 1899, was a gala event. The theatre had been redecorated and "restored where dampness had defaced" the ornamentation. Although the "unprecedented demand for iron and steel" had delayed the completion of the arcades, the theatres were ready for the public.

Despite the festivity of the opening night, the company played to poor houses for the remainder of the week. This was due partly

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6 Picayune, September 25, 1899, p. 3.
7 Idem.
8 Picayune, August 13, 1899, sec. 2, p. 4.
9 Arcades from the theatre entrances to the street were common with several New Orleans theatres.
to the warm weather and partly to the fact that it was "seldom that any company has been seen in New Orleans playing at standard prices which has been as absolutely destitute of merit as is Miss Blair's company this season."

As the season progressed, however, the picture became more cheerful. The Purple Lady, with C. H. Robertson, came as the second show and did well. Then Frederick Warde, who had been there the previous year as a part of the Kidder-James-Warde company, appeared alone for a successful week of repertory. During the week he performed in The Lion's Mouth, Romeo and Juliet, Virginius, The Merchant of Venice, and Richard III. The fourth attraction starred a New Orleans favorite, Otis Skinner, who returned for the second time in The Liars and played to good business.

Two financial failures, a farce comedy, Dear Old Charles, with George C. Boniface, Jr., and the "historical, spectacular comedy", Frederick the Great, starring Lewis Morrison, appeared next. The first show in November was Rupert of Hentzau, the sequel to The Prisoner of Zenda, which featured the new star James K. Hackett. His Father's Son with Roland Reed, followed. Both played to good business.

November 18, was the opening date of the first really spectacular engagement of the season. The English actress, Olga Nethersole, made her first appearance in New Orleans. The play was Arthur Wing.

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10 Democrat, October 1, 1899, sec. 2, p. 7.
11 Picayune, October 30, 1899, p. 5.
Pinero's shocking and controversial drama, The Second Mrs. Tangueray. Mrs. Nethersole drew the largest Monday night audience the theatre had recorded. 12

During the two week engagement she also presented Camille, The Profligate, and Sapho. The latter was especially popular and attracted large and curious audiences who wished to see the play which "had set Chicago and St. Louis wild." 13 New Orleans theatre-goers came in large numbers to see the piece and to form their opinion of the star. As one reviewer stated, "A very large, fashionable and representative audience rendered a verdict of absolutely unqualified approval upon Olga Nethersole's presentation. . . . It was just that kind of an audience that will take nothing on trust; coldly self-satisfied and bent on forming its own judgments quite regardless of what other audiences had said or thought." 14

New Orleans approved completely of the new star. "The furore Miss Nethersole has caused is genuine, and New Orleans has not been so moved in favor of an actress since the days of Bernhardt, to whom she has been favorably compared by some of the best judges of intense, passionate acting. . . ." 15 As another critic remarked, "The success of her engagement must be regarded as simply astounding." 16

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12 Miss Nethersole did not perform on Sunday so the show opened on Monday.

13 Picayune, November 21, 1899, p. 10.
14 Democrat, November 21, 1899, sec. 2, p. 6.
15 Picayune, November 24, 1899, p. 6.
16 Democrat, December 3, 1899, p. 15.
The two following weeks were also successful. The acting team of Kelcey and Shannon appeared for their second season in The Moth and the Flame. The week of December 10, "Good wholesome old William Shakespeare was set out for an intellectual feast... and was thoroughly appreciated by an intelligent audience...." when the James-Kidder-Hanford Alliance appeared in repertoire.

The number two company of The Little Minister, which came just before Christmas, did badly; but the next week saw the arrival of Melbourne MacDowell and Blanche Walsh in a series of Sardou dramas which were played to big business. A farce comedy, Mistakes Will Happen, did badly the first week of the New Year; but the first New Orleans production of David Belasco's play, Zaza, followed with a good week. The one real old-fashioned melodrama of the season was Denham Thompson's The Old Homestead, which played the week of January 14.

Sol Smith Russell was to have followed Mr. Thompson; but he became seriously ill and a last moment replacement was found for him. Motion pictures came to the Tulane for the first time. "Klaw and Erlanger... were able to secure from the American Mutascope and Biograph Company the complete and accurate pictures which so marvelously portray the recent Jeffries-Sharkey fight..."
The remainder of the season varied as to financial success. The two really big attractions of the spring were Viola Allen in *The Christian* and Richard Mansfield in repertoire. *The Christian*, a dramatization of Hall Caine's best selling novel, was making its first appearance in New Orleans. Miss Allen, a former Frohman star, had deserted that manager to star in the show, and it became "one of the most profitable plays of the day, and established Miss Allen among the top ranking stars."\(^1^9\) It played to record breaking business at the Tulane during the week of February 25, 1900.\(^2^0\)

The biggest week of the season, however, belonged to Richard Mansfield when he introduced New Orleans to his production of *Cyrano de Bergerac* on March 5, 1900. This was Mansfield's first appearance in New Orleans in five years. Although he played only a week he performed in four plays: *Cyrano*, *The First Violin*, *Beau Brummel* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.\(^2^1\) Mansfield was one of the greatest actor-managers of the period and his productions were beautifully and elaborately done. The Mansfield company travelled by "a special train of nine cars" and for the four plays he carried a cast of one hundred players, which was supplemented by local talent. "He also brings intact all the scenery, furniture, costumes, armor, properties and the horses seen in the original run in New York."\(^2^2\)

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\(^{20}\) *Picayune*, April 22, 1900, sec. 2, p. 12. The annual financial summary.

\(^{21}\) *Picayune*, March 6, 1900, sec. 2, p. 1.

\(^{22}\) Idem.
The other shows of the season varied from "good" to "big" to "fair." A production of *Rip Van Winkle*, starring Thomas Jefferson in the role his father, Joseph Jefferson, created, was not too successful. Two shows, *Oliver Goldsmith*, with Stuart Robson, and *Mr. Smooth*, with Willie Collier, did well since both stars were popular in New Orleans. A musical comedy, *A Runaway Girl*; the Bostonians in a return engagement; and *The Sign of the Cross*, presented for the first time in New Orleans, were all well attended and financially successful.

Three productions at the end of the season played to "fair" business. They were *The Adventures of Lady Ursula; As You Like It*, with Ada Rehan; and the much talked of *Children of the Ghetto*, with Wilton Lackaye. All were well presented and well acted, but they were unable to rise above the end of the season slump which generally affected the New Orleans theatres.

The last show of the season did well. It was *The Charlatan*, a comic opera with DeWolf Hopper who had just returned from London "where he actually succeeded in making the British laugh."

The "remarkably successful" thirty week season closed on April 22, 1900. It had been a good season artistically as well as financially.

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23 *Picayune*, February 5, 1900, p. 10.
24 *Picayune*, April 22, 1900, sec. 2, p. 12.
25 *Picayune*, April 9, 1900, p. 9.
26 *Picayune*, April 16, 1900, p. 10.
There were six companies playing repertory, three farce comedies, four comedies, one musical comedy, one comic opera, and the Bostonians in a week of comic opera repertoire. The rest of the plays were romances or dramas; it was, according to Manager Rowles, the best season that Klaw and Erlanger had ever had in the city. The business of the two theatres had "doubled that of the first year..." 27

1900-1901

There was a slight drop in quality during the 1900-1901 season; yet a number of attractions which could be considered "strictly first class" did appear, and the average was brought "to a very respectable standard." 28 As one newspaper printed at the close of the season, "a large margin of profit is shown to the credit of art for New Orleans and finance for the managers." 29 The season opened on September 23, 1900, and closed on April 20, 1901. Thirty different companies appeared during the year for $7,000 more than the preceding year. 30

Summer temperatures "prevailed" late into September, and this affected the attendance during the early weeks. The first show was The White Horse Tavern, starring Federick Bond as a comic German

27Daily States, April 21, 1901, p. 9.
28Democrat, April 21, 1901, sec. 2, p. 5. The financial summary for the season. Also in the Picayune.
29Daily States, April 21, 1901, p. 9.
30Idem.
character; and "In spite of it all... the opening week... has been a reasonably satisfactory one from every point of view."\(^{31}\)

Several stars of the previous season reappeared during 1900-1901. Frederick Warde returned in The Duke Jester, a comedy-drama written by Espy Williams, a resident of New Orleans.\(^{32}\) Despite a very bad company and "without a foot of new scenery," the personal popularity of the star gave the theatre a week of good business.\(^{33}\) Louis James and Kathryn Kidder brought A Midsummer Night's Dream, which was described as "the artistic treasure of the season. Excellent company, admirable stage effects, good ballet and music... well attended."\(^{34}\)

Otis Skinner starred in Prince Otto the week of December 30. The following week Blanche Walsh presented the historical play, More Than Queen. Both drew big crowds. Three shows, Oliver Goldsmith, The Old Homestead, and The Sign of the Cross, reappeared with the same cast as the previous season. The Christian returned with a new company which included Lionel Adams, a native New Orleanian.\(^{35}\) Zaza came back with a "fourth rate company" and it

\(^{31}\) Democrat, September 30, 1900, p. 14.

\(^{32}\) Picayune, October 1, 1900, p. 8.

\(^{33}\) Picayune, October 7, 1900, sec. 2, p. 8.

\(^{34}\) Picayune, April 28, 1901, sec. 4, p. 14.

\(^{35}\) Picayune, November 19, 1900, p. 6.
was "ghastly." The remainder of the season's productions were new to the theatre.

There were more musicals than there had been the previous year. The Belle of New York, a Casino production, arrived at the same time as cool weather and played to crowded houses all week. Other musicals were The Rogers Brothers in Central Park; Papa's Wife, with Anna Held; and The Burgomaster. All were well presented and well attended. The Rogers Brothers, Gus and Max, played Carnival week for a total of $12,000.

In addition to the musical comedies, there were five comic operas. Thomas Q. Seabrooke appeared in The Rounders, another Casino success. Victor Herbert's The Singing Girl, with Alice Nielsen, a former member of the Bostonians, achieved the second largest receipts of the season for a week's engagement, $11,000. The Bostonians, on the other hand, did the poorest business of any of the musical companies. They presented The Viceroy, Robin Hood and The Serenade; but the lack of Miss Nielsen and two other cast members who were ill sadly crippled the company. They had only "fair" audiences.

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36 Picayune, April 28, 1901, sec. 4, p. 1h.
37 Picayune, October 8, 1900, p. 7.
38 A week of celebration in New Orleans climaxxed by Mardi Gras, or Shrove Tuesday, when there are parades. Also called Carnival Week.
39 Daily States, April 21, 1901, p. 9.
40 Idem.
41 Picayune, April 28, 1901, sec. 4, p. 1h.
The Ameer, featuring the comedian Frank Daniels, did well, but The Princess Chic, with Marguerita Sylva in her first New Orleans appearance was "so late in the Lenten season" that attendance was falling off.

In summary, there were ten repeats from the season before and there were nine musicals. Of the other eleven shows some were interesting and some were only average. Sherlock Holmes, with a second company, was one of the latter group. The cast was average; the attendance was average. The Greatest Thing in the World was not a great play, but it was well done and it was "a play a girl can take her mother to see, and every dissipated young man should be made to see it."

Two melodramas appeared in December. The first, Way Down East, was an old show, but it played well. Barbara Frietchie, by Clyde Fitch, was the second. It starred Effie Ellsler and Frank Wester; and it played a good week, despite its subject: "the inevitable love of a disloyal Southern woman for a Yankee soldier of unflinching loyalty."

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1^2 Picayune, March 25, 1901, p. 7.
1^4 Picayune, December 10, 1900, p. 2.
1^5 Democrat, December 24, 1900, p. 7.
A new play which was classified as a "melodramatic romance" and was entitled The Pride of Jennico, did well; the season closed with Heart and Sword. The last production was not outstanding, but the star, Walker Whiteside, had a "vim and dash which would guarantee the success of almost any play." Although it was the final show of the year, it drew well because of the personality and fame of the actor.

There were five other shows presented during the season which need to be discussed individually. The first was Quo Vadis. This was one of the biggest productions which had appeared at the Tulane. It was said to have approximately two hundred cast members and the scenery was "gorgeous." As the summary of the season stated, it drew "crowds which are fond of strong emotions."

On November 4, a play entitled Self and Lady opened at the Tulane. This was a Charles Frohman production of a farce comedy which was decidedly French in tone. Contrary to Frohman's usual custom, it was touring with the original New York company. Because of the excellence of the company, and the star E. M. Holland, it had one of the better weeks of the season. The slightly risque

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46 Picayune, April 8, 1901, p. 9.
47 Picayune, April 15, 1901, p. 7.
48 Picayune, October 29, 1900, p. 2.
49 Picayune, April 28, 1901, sec. 4, p. 14.
subject matter and its treatment were also responsible for large attendance. As the reviewer commented, "discussions about it... increased the size of the audience. New Orleans was not shocked."  

A show appeared on March 31, which had the distinction of being the worst production of the season. Professor Sylvian A. Lee, the hypnotist, and his company played their first, and last, engagement at the Tulane. The audiences considered it all quite uninteresting.  

February was a remarkable month for the Tulane. Two of the world's greatest actresses appeared for the first time at the theatre. Mme. Helene Modjeska, the Polish tragedienne, opened an engagement on February 4. "Time had not dealt gently with the great Polish actress..." but the audiences came in large crowds to see her perform in King John, Macbeth and Mary Stuart.  

On February 27, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and M. Constant Coquelin began a ten day engagement at the theatre. Both of these French stars had appeared in New Orleans before, but never had the two appeared together. In spite of advanced prices, the first day's sale of seats netted $7,000. During "the 11 days in which they played there was taken in at the box office of the Tulane over $31,000."  

50 Idem.  
51 Idem.  
52 Idem.  
53 Picayune, February 21, 1901, p. 7. They played L'Aiglon, La Tosca, Cyrano de Bergerac, Phedre, and Camille.  
54 States, April 21, 1901, p. 9.
The "Divine Sarah" had long been a favorite with the fashionable French-speaking population of New Orleans. Since her initial appearance in 1881, she had often returned and her coming was one of the social events of the season. This time, despite her success, Mme. Bernhardt was not pleased with the reception given her by the New Orleans theatre-goers. She later mentioned this in an interview for a Northern newspaper. In April, New Orleans replied to the criticism of the great actress through one of its drama columns.

Why Bernhardt does not like New Orleans

Sarah Bernhardt's utterances in a recent interview have been of such a nature as to cause pain and mortification to her admirers. She anathematized the audience of Philadelphia and New Orleans as being dull, apathetic and unresponsive. These remarks were most uncalled for, as her reception in this city was in every way flattering. True she did not crowd the theatre, as she did on her first visit. But she was then in the heyday of her talent and success, where now there is no denying the fact that she is an old woman. Her marvelous voice is gone, she has weakened perceptibly, and tried to remedy these defects by abominable ranting. Her admirers could not help noticing the change and having seen her once did not return again.

Dramatic art has undergone a change, and the methods in vogue thirty years ago have been superseded by others more recent and more true to nature. The theatre-going public of New Orleans, made up for the most part of people thoroughly conversant with the French language, had already seen Mme. Bernhardt on other visits, and when they flocked to the theatre, this time, it was more to see Coquelin, whose marvelous talent and admirable elocution is not marred by any tricks to catch the superficial public. The fair Sarah felt this intuitively and perhaps more strongly here than elsewhere. Hence the piqued remarks.


56 Picayune, April 21, 1901, sec. 2, p. 9.
Before the opening of the 1901-1902 season, the exteriors of the theatres were finally completed. The arcades which led from Baronne street to the front of the theatres, and from Common street across the front, were finished. The Baronne street arcades were twenty feet across and 125 feet long and the main arcade was twenty-five feet wide and 200 feet long. The arcades were lighted by incandescent lights; and in the construction 600 panes of glass, two feet wide and eight feet long, were used. The height of the arcades varied from eighteen to twenty-five feet. The walls were cemented and colored, and later, mosaic tile was used as a flooring.

These arcades made an impressive entrance to the theatres and became one of their most outstanding architectural features.

In September, 1901, a reviewer for one of the New Orleans newspapers made the statement that "It would not be at all surprising if the season just opening should furnish undoubted evidence that the farce-comedy period is passing away. . . ." This prediction was to be true for the Tulane, at least for one year. The 1901-02 season saw an increased number of dramas, almost no farces, and fewer musicals than the previous seasons.

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57 Picayune, November 5, 1899, sec. 2, p. 7.
58 Democrat, September 15, 1901, sec. 2, p. 10.
Only one real farce, *Are You A Mason?*, with the comedy team of Charles Edwards and John C. Rice, came to the theatre. It played to "fair" business. There were five comedies, but they were of the newer, more sophisticated variety. Of these, four played to "good" business and one to "fair" returns.

The first of the four popular comedies was Lady Huntworth's *Experiment*, which was a "wholesome little English comedy" produced by Daniel Frohman. The comedian William Collier was the star of the second, *On the Quiet*, "a sparkling comedy from the pen of Augustus Thomas." When We Were Twenty One, with the popular Nat Goodwin and his wife Maxine Elliott, and Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines, a Clyde Fitch comedy with Ethel Barrymore in her first starring role, were the remaining two. George C. Boniface, who had flopped so badly in 1899, accounted for the fifth, and least successful, comedy, *The Gay Mr. Goldstein*.

Musical productions were in a minority during the 1901-02 season. Only three new comic operas appeared. Miss Marguerita Sylva returned in a new production, *Miss Bob White*, and played "fair" business. The Augustin Daly production, *San-Toy*, a Chinese-English musical comedy, played big business; but Jefferson De Angelis' company presented *A Royal Rogue* to "poor" business.

Three musical comedies, however, were presented to large and enthusiastic audiences. The Rogers Brothers, with a "retinue of fun-
makers and fifty or sixty pretty girls. "62 came in The Rogers Brothers in Washington, and entertained full houses. The Klaw and Erlanger musical extravaganza, Foxy Quiller, also played big business. The most successful weeks of the season, however, were the two engagements of the musical Florodora. The show first appeared the week of November 10, and played "tremendous" business, and then returned for Carnival Week and repeated its success. 63 Although the farce might have been in a decline, the musical show, be it called farce or comedy, was still a powerful drawing card.

Despite the financial success of the comedies and musicals, the other shows were the more interesting artistically. New Orleans paid to see them too.

Three popular stars returned from the previous season. Frederick Warde had a new show, The Montebank. Otis Skinner was appearing in Francesca de Rimini, and Helen Modjeska teamed up with the great actor, Louis James, to present a week of repertoire. Of the latter engagement, the Democrat reviewer said, "The engagement of Modjeska and James in classic repertoire, although little more than average financial success, has been a notable event in the theatrical history of the season. "64

Other stars from earlier seasons returned in new shows. James K. Hackett, the matinee idol, appeared in Don Caesar's Return. Eugenie Blair, with a weak supporting company, 65 did Peg Woffington. Stuart

63 Picayune, April 6, 1902, sec. 2, p. 4. Seasonal Summary.
64 Democrat, November 24, 1901, sec. 2, p. 10.
65 Picayune, September 23, 1901, p. 7.
Robson brought his old play, The Henrietta, which he was playing for the fourteenth season; and Kelcey and Shannon appeared in a new play, Her Lord and Master. This Kelcey-Shannon play was quite popular with audiences, but rather upsetting to the reviewer. After praising the company and the lavish staging of the production, the reviewer denounced the drama as being against the "American tradition" because "The play shows the domination of the British male over the American female." 66

One of the best weeks of the season began February 2, when "Richard Mansfield's special train steamed into New Orleans... with becoming pomp and majesty." 67 Mansfield presented Beaucarie, the five-act comedy by Booth Tarkington. It was a typical polished, brilliant, unforgettable Mansfield production. 68 New Orleans had not seen the play before and it was accepted with enthusiasm.

Another popular male star, James O'Neill, played the Tulane for the first time in December. He brought his famous Count of Monte Cristo, but played only fair business. Other names appeared for the first time on the Tulane list. New stars were constantly being introduced during the early part of the century and the Tulane was fortunate in receiving some of them during the 1901-02 season. Gertrude Coghlan, the daughter of the late Charles Coghlan, made

66 Picayune, October 21, 1901, p. 4.
67 Picayune, February 3, 1902, p. 8.
68 Picayune, February 4, 1902, p. 8.
her New Orleans debut, at the age of twenty-one, in *Vanity Fair.* Viola Allen and W. E. Bonney appeared in *The Palace of the King.* Julia Marlowe, "prime favorite in New Orleans," appeared at the Tulane for the first time in *When Knighthood was in Flower.* E. H. Sothern, who had last been seen in the city as a comedian, made his debut as a serious actor in *If I Were King.* One reviewer called this engagement "unquestionably one of the prominent events in the theatrical history of New Orleans. It has proved a really great play, a great star and company, and a particularly noteworthy scenic production."

One interesting, and somewhat amusing, event of the season serves as an excellent example of the star system at the turn of the century and its domination of bookings. As one of the New Orleans reporters explained, Blanche Walsh had been touring that season with the play *Janice Meredith.* However, the city of New Orleans was "in Mary Mannering's territory as far as *Janice Meredith* is concerned." Rather than trying to compete with Mannering in the interpretation of the role at the Tulane, Miss Walsh arranged to try out her new play, *La Madeleine,* for that engagement. Thus New Orleans was given the rare opportunity of attending a real opening night. In order to complete the story it must be noted

69 Picayune, March 18, 1902, p. 8.
70 Picayune, January 7, 1902, p. 7.
71 Democrat, January 12, 1902, sec. 2, p. 10.
72 Democrat, December 30, 1901, p. 9.
that Mary Mannering appeared at the theatre the week of February 17, in her production, Janice Meredith.

The regular season had opened on September 29, following three "preliminary" shows. It ended on April 6. It was a good year. Financially there had been some engagements which had played only "fair" business, but only one, the Jefferson De Angelis Opera Company, had "poor" returns. Only two shows, Way Down East and The Burgomaster, had been retained from the previous season. Great stars such as Mansfield, Julia Marlowe, Sothern, O'Neill, Skinner, Mary Mannering, Warde and Goodwin had appeared and been well received. The "Standing Room Only" sign had been used often during the year.

There were, during the 1901-02 season, seven theatres running in the city. It was "an emphatic demonstration that New Orleans is one of the best theatre towns in the country, as all of the play-houses now here are playing to big business and good profits." It must be noted, however, that the Tulane and the Crescent were the only theatres which housed legitimate touring shows. Two of the theatres, the Grand and the Audubon, had stock companies; the others housed opera or variety and vaudeville shows. Yet Klaw and Erlanger were keeping their promise to New Orleans. They were giving it some of the best theatre-fare in the country; and, during

73 Often before the start of the "regular season" two or three obviously second-rate, second or third company, shows would appear to fill the time before the better shows had time to get South.

74 Democrat, January 21, 1902, p. 3.
this period, New Orleans was giving Klaw and Erlanger its financial support.

1902-1903

The season of 1902-1903 was interesting in several respects. It was, financially, almost as good as the previous season, which had broken all former records for the Tulane. It was, however, surprisingly unpredictable. Some shows which should have done well managed only to eke a narrow margin of profit, and others which seem to have had little to offer made a hit with the theatre-going public.

It was a big year for laughter and music. Of the twenty-nine shows which appeared during the season, ten were of the musical variety type. Nine were comedies of one kind or another. As a drama reporter commented in a local newspaper, "Public taste is nowhere better illustrated than in the theatre. Public prosperity is nowhere made more apparent than it is by the crowds or lack of them attending the theatre. The theatre is, therefore, something of a public barometer, and just now it shows that the play of amusing tendencies is in greater ascendancy than ever before."75

Of the ten musicals, only two, The Liberty Belles, a Klaw and Erlanger spectacular, and The Strollers, with George Boniface and Marguerita Sylva, played to "fair" business. Five played "good" weeks. There were repeat performances of San-Toy and Floradora, and

the annual week of the Bostonians. Two shows, Miss Simplicity, with Frank Daniels, and Dolly Varden, with Lula Glaser, came for the first time. Max and Gus Rogers made their annual appearance in The Rogers Brothers in Harvard. Raymond Hitchcock starred in King Dodo, which came "very nearly being the king and queen of all the royal family among the new musical comedies. . . ." 76

The last two shows played two of the "big" weeks of the season.

However, the biggest and most popular of the musicals was described by an enthusiastic reviewer as "A flash of color, . . . bright tuneful music, a pageant of beautiful women, situations that verge enough toward the risque to make you sit up, and back away from it. . . and in the midst of it all, Anna Held— petite chic, bewitching— such is The Little Duchess." 77

Of the nine comedies, only two had appeared before at the Tulane. They were Are You a Mason? and Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines. Elizabeth Kennedy had replaced Ethel Barrymore in Clyde Fitch's Captain Jinks, and the reviewers called her "a young and prepossessing actress"; but she arrived in the midst of a streetcar strike, and was unable to rise above that handicap. 78

Two other Fitch comedies also fared badly. The Way of the World starred Elsie DeWolfe and The Climbers featured John E. Kellard and Maude Turner Gordon. Whether the plays were badly

76 Picayune, December 22, 1902, p. 12.
77 Picayune, January 5, 1902, p. 5.
78 Picayune, September 29, 1902, p. 9.
done, or whether New Orleans audiences were just not ready for the society comedies of Fitch is not known. Neither play was successful.

The three comedies which met with the most approval were A Royal Family, with Miss Percy Haswell; David Harum, with the long time favorite of New Orleans, William H. Crane; and The Auctioneer, with David Warfield. Warfield was a former burlesque actor with Weber and Fields, and it was David Belasco who was responsible for his appearance as Simon Levi in The Auctioneer. His success as the East Side Jew had been instantaneous. The show played for one hundred and five consecutive performances in New York before it took to the road. 79 When the production arrived in New Orleans it "scored a success which is seldom achieved." 80

Ten other plays were presented that season. Only one, Audrey, with Eleanor Robson, which was the next to the last attraction of the year, did really bad business. However, neither James O'Neill, in his new play The Manxman, nor Gertrude Goghlan, with a number two company in Alice of Old Vincennes did better than "fair". 81

Some of New Orleans' favorites returned in new shoes. Stuart Robson in The Comedy of Errors, Herbert Kelcey and Effie Shannon in a revival of Sherlock Holmes, and Frederick Warde and Louis James


80 Picayune, November 10, 1902, p. 8.

81 Picayune, April 19, 1903, sec. 3, p. 12. Seasonal summary.
in an outstanding production of *The Tempest* all played good weeks. In spite of the streetcar strike, Amelia Bingham also did well in *A Modern Magdalen*.

The remaining four shows must be considered individually because each was an event of especial importance. On January 26, John Drew made his first appearance in New Orleans as a star. The show was *The Mummy and the Humming Bird*. The supporting cast included a young actor who was later to become quite famous in motion pictures, Mr. Drew's nephew, Lionel Barrymore. In deference to Mr. Drew's position as "The First Gentleman of the Stage" this was considered the social event of the year in the theatrical picture.

Probably the most outstanding production, artistically, was only moderately successful, financially. Richard Mansfield brought to the Tulane one of the biggest and most magnificent performances of *Julius Caesar* "that this generation of theatre-goers has seen. Including the extras who were hired in the city, the cast totaled three hundred persons, and extra dressing rooms had to be built to handle the large company. The stage underwent extensive cleaning and redoing for the production since Mansfield insisted that everything be off the stage except for the drop curtains and

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82 *Picayune*, November 24, 1902, p. 5.
83 *Pageant of America*, *op. cit.*, p. 289.
84 *Picayune*, January 27, 1903, p. 12.
85 *Picayune*, March 17, 1903, p. 3.
the eighty-five sets of lines needed to manipulate the scenery. 86
Returns were only "fair."

On April 16, the perennial Rip Van Winkle arrived. The show starred the original Rip, Joseph Jefferson, and the Tulane Theatre was packed to the doors. The seventy-four year old Mr. Jefferson had first appeared in New Orleans sixty-two years before, and as a critic said, "Of Mr. Jefferson's acting of Rip nothing can be said that has not already been said." 87 The opening night was nostalgically described by the Democrat reporter:

New Orleans has a great affection and admiration for the veteran actor, and this affection and this admiration were manifested last night at the Tulane Theatre when he rendered once more his favorite play, after a long absence. The theatre was crowded, and the people were enthusiastic in their welcome of the man and enthusiastic in their appreciation of the artist. At first it was apparent that age had set its ravages upon the actor... but as the play progressed... this impression ceased to exist, and art, which knows not age, or climate, or any other qualifying conditions... made them see only the character... For the first time in the history of the theatre the orchestra was moved behind the curtain and the space filled with seats... many stood in the rear. Many children were there... and when he is driven from his home the entire house, as of old was dissolved in tears and weighted with the affliction of a poor, imaginary drunkard. 88

During the engagement Mr. Jefferson also performed in The Rivals, Cricket on the Hearth and Lend Me Five Shillings. It was a "tremendous" week.

86 Picayune, March 15, 1903, sec. 1, p. 4.
87 Picayune, April 17, 1903, p. 15.
88 Democrat, April 17, 1903, p. 8.
The most spectacular show of the year was the record-breaking
Ben Hur. It came directly from St. Louis, and New Orleans was its
first production in the South. It was one of the biggest shows
ever to appear in that city. The play required 350 people for
presentation; the company had three special trains, including seven
baggage cars and additional cattle cars. In order to present the
show, a new stage floor was built, providing a treadmill for the
famous chariot race, and the entire backstage area was overhauled. 89

The production starred William Farnum, who had "made a reputa­
tion" in New Orleans as the leading man in a stock company, 90 and
his Ben Hur was "ideal." 91 Primarily, however, it was the spectacle
which the audiences came to see and it "kept the gallery shouting
and clapping." 92

The engagement lasted for two weeks. Prices were advanced to
$2.00, $1.50, $1.00 and $0.50; and, playing Carnival Week, the show
broke all records for the Tulane. The receipts for the first week
were $17,000. The second week an extra matinee was added and the
show received "the biggest business ever recorded in N. O. $21,000." 93

It was a big year for the Klaw and Erlanger interests in New
Orleans.

89 Picayune, February 5, 1903, p. 9.
90 Democrat, February 17, 1903, p. 7.
91 Picayune, February 17, 1903, p. 15.
92 Democrat, February 17, 1903, p. 7.
93 Picayune, April 19, 1903, sec. 3, p. 12.
As the twentieth century progressed, three trends became more and more apparent in theatres throughout the country. Realism became the magic word among the new American playwrights such as Clyde Fitch and George Ade and the two English imports, Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero. Managers such as Frohman and Belasco created realistic settings with realistic lighting effects. As the taste of New York became more sophisticated, so the taste of the fashionable play-goers in Chicago, St. Louis and New Orleans changed.

A new trend was evident in the style of acting. Most of the great stars of the nineteenth century were either retired or dead. Some few, such as Modjeska, Skinner and Mansfield, had managed to survive the change of style, but the number was very small. Through the efforts of men like the Frohman brothers, new stars were being created; stars who could perform in the realistic manner required in the new drama. Each season at the Tulane saw more and more of these players of a new generation.

Ironically, in direct contrast to the new realism, the third most important trend evident in the early part of the century was the increasing number and popularity of the "spectaculars." Musicals became bigger, bigger, and bigger. Such extravaganzas as
Ben Hur were rare, but any comic opera or musical comedy which expected to be successful at a theatre such as the Tulane had to be lavishly staged, employ many mechanical effects and have a large company.

During the 1903-1904 season at the Tulane, nine of these lavish musical productions appeared. All of the reviews contained such words and phrases as "elaborate mechanical effects" or "sumptuous lavish musical." Of the nine shows only two had less than "good" business. Dewolf Hopper's Mr. Pickwick, which came early in the season, and King Dodo, which had appeared the year before were only fairly successful. One of the biggest weeks of the season was credited to the comic opera, The Prince of Pilsen, which was chosen as the Christmas engagement.

The season of 1903-1904 was also a good year for the new style of comedy. Charles Frohman sent four of his companies in Cousin Kate, Imprudence, The Second in Command, and Whitewashing Julia. These four productions starred such actors as Ethel Barrymore, John Drew, William Faversham, and Fay Davis. Only one, Whitewashing Julia, did badly.

The public reaction to this last show was somewhat indicative of the national reaction to this type of play. The "social comedy"
usually proceeded by means of satire and its prime essential lay "in its employment of social inhibitions to accelerate or to pre-
vent the actions of the characters." Audiences were either
shocked, bored or wildly enthusiastic. Whitewashing Julia, by
Henry Arthur Jones, shocked New Orleans a bit. One critic just
did not like the play. He considered it "tame and chatty." Another expressed the more common reaction, indignation. He said,
"The play has not a wholesome moral atmosphere. It is nondescript
in this respect, seemingly not having the courage to be out and
out bad, but continually sneaking around and hinting at badness."

Four other new comedies appeared. Mary Mannering presented
Clyde Fitch's The Stubbornness of Geraldine and Maxine Elliott
starred in another Fitch play, Her Own Way. Both were social
comedies. David Warfield returned in The Auctioneer; and the
famous "Jersey Lily, no longer the pale ethereal anemone of early
spring, but a tropical full-blown tiger lily of mid-summer
gorgeousness and splendor. . . ." played a very big week in a
society comedy entitled Mrs. Derring's Divorce. This was the fabu-
loous Lily Langtry's first visit to New Orleans in many years, and
large audiences greeted her appearance.

97 Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama, From
the Civil War to the Present Day (New York: F. S.: Crofts & Co.,
1943) II, 83.

98 Picayune, April 4, 1904, p. 2.

99 Democrat, April 4, 1904, p. 2.

100 Picayune, December 29, 1903, p. 10.
Other shows came. Otis Skinner presented *The Taming of the Shrew*; Nat Goodwin revived his old play, *The Gilded Fool*, for very big audiences. The "Gay and gentle Tim Murphy introduced *The Man From Missouri*," and James and Ward presented *Alexander the Great* and *Julius Caesar*. Virginia Harned did moderately well in the Arthur Wing Pinero play, *Iris*, which the reviewer complimented even though he was not too sure about the morality of the play. Joe Jefferson and Denham Thompson returned in their famous plays, *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Old Homestead*; yet the old favorites could not compete numerically with the new voices, new faces, and new plays.

It was a "good" year for the theatre. There were no "capacity" houses and only two shows, *Prince of Pilsen* and *The Gilded Fool*, were rated as "Very big" by the management. There were, however, sixteen "good" ratings and several "Fair" and "Fine." An article was printed in one of the newspapers which may or may not be an unbiased opinion. It is unsubstantiated; but it does give one explanation for what seems to have been a decrease in attendance throughout the year.

"Bad Manners in Box Office"
Patrons of the Tulane Theater have suffered much annoyance this winter at the hands of the ill-mannered churl who presided at the box office. He does everything in his power to discourage people from attending the plays. No matter when one goes for seats, he never has anything for sale but the last rows, and offers them as though he were bestowing a special favor upon the one who pays his

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101 *Picayune*, September 21, 1903, p. 3.
103 *Democrat*, April 24, 1904, sec. 3, p. 8.
money for the goods. Now that is preposterous. Very few attractions have packed houses all week, and the owner of poor seats walks in to find plenty of empty places, but he must sit far back to gratify the taste of the ticket seller, who thinks it preferable to have the audience scattered than to see them all in front. This personage is an importation of the Syndicate, who could not find a suitable man in all New Orleans. His rudeness is such that many people stay away from the theater rather than have dealings with him. Many well-known club-men and liberal patrons of the best shows that come to this city have been depriving themselves and their friends on account of this box office wonder, and it is to be hoped that when the Tulane closes in a few weeks he will go back where he belongs and never trouble New Orleans again.

Even in New Orleans there are rumors of discontent over the Syndicate.

1904-1905

Unfortunately the manager of the theatre did not publish a summary of the financial record for the 1904-1905 season. From reading the daily reports it would appear to have been a financially successful one. If the previous season was an indication of public taste in New Orleans, the fourteen musicals of the season would have been enough to guarantee success.

In its list of attractions the 1904-1905 season differed little from the preceding or the following seasons. The most obvious

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10 Picayune, March 6, 1904, sec. 3, p. 8.
features were the increasing numbers of big musical productions and the growing popularity of the society comedies.

The Prince of Pilson, Red Feathers and Silver Slippers were brought for a second season; the Rogers Brothers returned after a year's absence. Richard Carle starred in his own play, Tenderfoot. The New York success, Peggy from Paris, and George Ade's musical satire, The Sultan of Sulu, were presented. Klaw and Erlanger had two dazzling extravaganzas touring that season. One, Mother Goose, ran for two weeks in New Orleans with a bad cast. However, as one reviewer said, "Mother Goose is only intended as a wonderful scenic production, and in that particular it is the biggest thing that has ever been seen in New Orleans." The show was from the London Drury Lane Theatre and had four hundred persons in the cast and staff. It came to New Orleans directly from Atlanta and went next to San Francisco since no other southern stage was large enough to handle it.

Some of the regular stars made their annual appearance at the Tulane. Tim Murphy inaugurated the season with Two Men and a Girl; and Amelia Bingham presented a week of her most popular plays, beginning with Fitch's The Climbers in which she had performed successfully in New York. Frederick Warde and Kathryn Kidder presented the "dark and bloody tragedy," Salammbô. Robert Edeson,

105 Picayune, January 9, 1905, p. 12.
106 Idem.
107 Picayune, November 21, 1904, p. 10.
a New Orleanian who was becoming a bright young star, appeared in *Ransom's Folly*. John Drew, Richard Mansfield, and Otis Skinner made their annual visits to the city. *Ben Hur* returned; and *The Virginian* with Dustin Farnum and the original cast, made its first of many appearances in New Orleans.

Three other shows of the season should be noted. Maude Adams, the "most potent box office attraction of the American theatre," came October 24, in *The Little Minister* and "captured all hearts." *The Two Orphans*, first produced in 1874, was revived with an all-star cast which included James O'Neill, Grace George, Kyrle Bellew, Margaret Illington, Clara Morris, Louis James and Thomas Meighan. As one reviewer commented, "What can be said! It was a treat such as seldom happens."

The final week of the season was one of the most successful, financially as well as artistically. The new team of Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothern came to the Tulane and "were given an extremely cordial welcome by a thoroughly fashionable and representative audience." Charles Frohman had brought the two stars together and "guaranteeing each of them $100,000 for a season of forty weeks,

108 Morris, op. cit., p. 283.
110 Mantle, op. cit., p. 457.
112 *Democrat*, April 11, 1905, p. 4.
the largest fees until then paid to stars,"\textsuperscript{113} sent them on a tour in a repertory of Shakespearean plays. During the week in New Orleans the stars successfully presented \textit{Much Ado About Nothing}, \textit{Hamlet} and \textit{Romeo and Juliet}.

1905-1906

One of the most important things about the 1905-1906 season was that it was the shortest of the twelve year period. During the last of July, 1905, the city of New Orleans was gripped by one of the worst yellow fever plagues in its recent history. The city was placed under quarantine until the end of October. Even if companies had been able to come to New Orleans they would have been unable to leave the city. The opening of all theatres was postponed until after October 22. The first play at the Tulane was \textit{The College Widow}. This George Ade comedy opened on October 29, 1905 with the theatre packed "to the very doors"\textsuperscript{114} and played a successful week.

Of the twenty-two shows which appeared during the season, thirteen were comedies. John Drew, who was becoming a great favorite in New Orleans, appeared in \textit{De Lancy}; William Crane, after an unsuccessful appearance the previous year, succeeded in a Frohman production of a new George H. Broadhurst comedy, \textit{The American Lord}.

\textsuperscript{113} Morris, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 287.

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{New Orleans Item}, October 30, 1905, p. 3.
On the farcical side, "Joe Weber and his 'all star' company of fun makers appeared" in *Higgledy-Piggledy*, which made a star of a new-comer, Marie Dressler.

The settings for all of the musical comedies were magnificent, but the biggest of all was a Klaw and Erlanger Drury Lane special, *Humpty Dumpty*. It opened January 28, and played for two weeks.

Another Klaw and Erlanger production was *The Ham Tree*, with the old time minstrel stars, James McIntyre and T. K. Heath. The play was "nothing but a chance for them to perform," but it was a popular Carnival Week selection. A new comic who was appearing in the show received special praise from the New Orleans reporter. His name was W. C. Fields.

Marlowe and Sothern were the "big event of the year" in repertoire. A new show, *Raffles*, which was described as a "polite melodrama" made its first appearance in New Orleans with the romantic English actor, Kyrle Bellew. Eleanor Robson starred in a new play, *Merely Mary Ann*, which was "sweet, clean and truly human and a relief after the problem plays and lurid melodramas usually seen on the stage."  

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115 Picayune, December 4, 1905, p. 3.
116 Picayune, January 29, 1906, p. 11.
117 Picayune, February 26, 1906, p. 5.
118 Picayune, March 13, 1906, p. 2.
119 Picayune, January 8, 1906, p. 12.
120 Picayune, November 14, 1905, p. 2.
There were two other scenic spectaculars on the road that season. The Shepherd King, starring Wright Lorrimer was "one of the finest spectacular productions seen . . . since Ben Hur." The cast of the drama was satisfactory, but the reviewer recommended seeing it "for its purity alone, if nothing else." The other big show was The Pit. This was a drama made from Frank Norris' novel and featuring Wilton Lackaye. At the end of the season both of these shows were considered to have been "noteworthy."

The one other show of the season which created a great deal of interest in New Orleans was The Clansman, the "much talked of problem play" by Thomas Dixon, Jr. The play was well produced "and the efforts of the actors were well appreciated. But the question constantly in mind. . . is that of advisability of presentation." There is no record of the financial success of the show, but according to newspapers of the time, the New Orleans theatre-goer did not become particularly aroused or irate over this play, which was later to cause much disturbance as a motion picture entitled The Birth of A Nation.

Once again there was no financial summary of the entire season. On April 8, 1906, there was a statement in a newspaper that "The

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121 Picayune, December 12, 1905, p. 2.
122 Idem.
123 Democrat, April 8, 1906, sec. 3, p. 10. Seasonal Summary.
124 Picayune, December 18, 1905, p. 2.
season was a success financially as well as artistically. As a rule the attractions were of a high class, while the engagements of Miss Marlowe and Mr. Sothern, Mr. Mansfield, Eleanor Robson, Grace George, and Wm. Crane, Wilton Lackaye, Wright Lorrimer, John Drew were especially noteworthy.\textsuperscript{125}

There were seven theatres in operation that year in New Orleans. There were stock companies and opera. High class vaudeville and burlesque were playing the new Orpheum theatre. For the first time the Tulane and Crescent were meeting with competition from other touring companies. The Independents, a group of actors and producers who had banded together to fight the monopoly of the Syndicate, had permission to play the Greenwall and sent several shows to New Orleans during the season. The major position, however, was still held by the Klaw and Erlanger theatres.

1906-1907

Two important facts stand out concerning the 1906-1907 season for Klaw and Erlanger. First, that was the year in which the Tulane achieved its greatest financial success; second, the Tulane acquired a new manager.

Little is known about William Rowles. He had managed the two theatres since their opening; then in 1906 he began to neglect his

\textsuperscript{125}Democrat, April 8, 1906, sec. 3, p. 10.
duties at the theaters, and was dismissed from his post."

There is no record as to exactly when this occurred; when the theatre opened on September 2, 1906, Thomas C. Campbell, the former manager of the Crescent, was listed as the manager of both theatres.

Rowles left New Orleans and moved to Chicago. He managed a string of cigar stores there, but the enterprise failed. Some time later his body was "found embedded in the ice in Lake Michigan in front of the city. Whether he met with foul play, was the victim of an accident, or had put an end to himself was never determined."

In several respects the 1906-1907 season was an outstanding one. There were the regular number of musicals and there were some productions which were not exceptional; but considering the season as a whole, it offered to the New Orleans playgoer a large variety of shows, many of the nation's leading players and a few of the world's greatest plays.

The Tulane opened early with a preliminary season of three average productions. A comedy, A Message from Mars; the female impersonator, Neil Burgess in The County Fair; and Tim Murphy's Old Innocence appeared in September. They did fairly well, considering the quality of the offerings and the hot weather.

There were thirty productions given during the regular season and eleven of these played to "capacity" houses, seven played "big"

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126 Kendall, Golden Age, p. 580.
127 Ibid., p. 580-81.
128 Picayune, April 21, 1907, sec. 3, p. 3, Seasonal Summary.
business, and five had "good" houses. Not a single attraction had a "poor" week. 129

The least popular plays were Heir to the Hoorah, a repeating show with the comedian Guy Bates Post; a revival of She Stoops to Conquer, with William Crane; and three shows which came at the end of the season when a really outstanding bill was required to get an audience. These three were Amelia Bingham's comedy, Lilac Room; a "stale" production of the musical, The Gingerbread Man; and Jefferson De Angelis in The Girl and the Governor. It is interesting to note that De Angelis never had a large audience at the Tulane. His productions were always praised by the reviewers, but the attendance was always low.

The Clansman returned to a "big" week, and everyone seemed to like it except the reviewer who still maintained that it voiced "feelings and passions that were better left sleeping in the grave of the past." 130 Four other shows had "big" financial returns. A Midsummer Night's Dream, which starred the comedienne Annie Russell as Puck, was popular. The Prince of Pilsen paid a successful third visit. Nat Goodwin appeared for a week playing some of his famous roles; and the New Orleanian Robert Edeson starred as the Indian hero in the romantic drama, Strongheart. All drew big audiences.

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129 idem.
130 Picayune, October 1, 1906, p. 10.
In considering the eleven most popular plays of the season, the eleven which had "capacity" houses, it is interesting to note the variety in the types of shows and to determine some of the various reasons for the filled houses.

There were only three musicals in this group. Although the musical show comprised over one-third of the season's attractions, it only accounted for slightly more than one-fourth of the most successful shows. The three which made the list were The Rogers Brothers in Ireland; the new George M. Cohan show, Forty-Five Minutes From Broadway; and Mlle. Modiste, with Fritzi Scheff a former star of the Metropolitan Opera and later the "queen of comic opera."  

Otis Skinner was always popular in New Orleans and it was not surprising that his production of The Duel did well. Another week of capacity business was earned by Olga Nethersole when she returned, for the first time since 1899, and performed in repertoire. Another famous actress of whom New Orleans had heard, but had not seen was Mrs. Leslie-Carter. Although her production of Du Barry was the closing engagement of the season, her reputation was so great as to guarantee large audiences.

Oddly enough, the reviewers were mixed in their opinions of the star. One critic felt that she was "tremendous;" another felt that she had been highly over-rated. He said, "Her way of doing things reminds one of the Delsarte school, as if she believed

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131 Morris, op. cit., p. 312.

132 Picayune, April 15, 1907, p. 13.
certain gestures and tricks of enunciation and intonation could un-
failingly be depended upon to produce like results. Her acting as
a whole fails to carry with it the suggestion of originality and
spontaneity." The same critic did not like the drama nor the
company. He called it "an unwholesome play which is bound to leave
a very unpleasant after flavor... presented with a cast which
left little to wish for as far as numerical strength was concerned,
and much to wish for in the matter of class and quality." Only one of the new "sophisticated comedies" made the "capacity"
list. It was Clyde Fitch's Her Great Match with Maxine Elliott.
Yet three of the most popular plays were melodramas. They were the
"great American drama," The Lion and the Mouse; The Woman in the
Case with Blanche Walsh; and a new play starring the matinee idol,
William Faversham. This play, The Squaw Man, was to become one of
most popular shows on the road.
Man and Superman, the last of the "capacity" shows, was import-
ant for two reasons. It featured a star new to the South, the
British actor, Robert Loraine; and it was the first production of
a George Bernard Shaw play in New Orleans. At the turn of the
century, America was still very skeptical about the Irish playwright,
and it took some time for his work to become acceptable to American
audiences. However, when one of his plays finally came to New Orleans,
both the critics and the public expressed their approval.

133Democrat, April 15, 1907, p. 4.
134Idem.
135Picayune, December 17, 1906, p. 2.
136Picayune, March 11, 1907, p. 12.
The 1906-1907 season was perhaps the most outstanding year the Tulane ever had. The following years were profitable and many good, and even great, shows were still to come; but the theatre never again reached such a continued peak of prosperity as it had maintained during that season. Theatre as a whole had reached a commercial peak. The financial panic of 1907 was to hurt it; rising transportation rates began to make travelling costs prohibitive. The continued strife between the Syndicate and the independent managers, producers, and actors was to create more and more trouble. Most important, just around the corner was the greatest villain of all—the motion picture. The big theatrical boom was not over; but it had reached a peak and was beginning to weaken.

1907-1908

New Orleans theatres probably suffered less the past season than those of any other city of its size, and it was not until the end of the season that the small attendance, which has been a feature in other parts of the country became apparent here. Most of the houses did excellent business through the early and middle parts of the season, but with the coming of Lent there was a big fall off in attendance which caused the early closing of several of the smaller houses. 137 So said Thomas Campbell of the 1907-1908 season.

Tim Murphy again opened the preliminary season; and he was followed by three shows which had been to the Tulane before. They were The Clansman, which again played "capacity" houses; The Umpire; and The Land of Nod. The first big event of the season was Wilton Lackaye's presentation of The Bondsman. Otis Skinner

137 Democrat, April 12, 1908, sec. 3, p. 8. Seasonal Summary.
appeared in one of the dramatic treats of the year, "The Honor of the Family," the Chorus Lady, a comedy but not a musical, and a Klaw and Erlanger spectacle, "The Grand Mogul," followed.

The weeks of November 11, and November 18, were two of the biggest of the season. During the first week, Maude Adams appeared in "Peter Pan." The second week, the comedienne Grace George played in Sardou's comedy, "Divorçons." Both of the young actresses had large and delighted audiences. Another young actress, Ethel Barrymore, brought her play, "The Sisters," for a successful week at the Tulane just before its opening in New York.

As further evidence of the changing theatrical picture, the only classical drama of the season was provided by Robert Mantell. Richard Mansfield had died in September, 1907; so Mantell "carried into the twentieth century the acting style of the robustious school of Forrest and McCullough, of which he was the last representative." During the week of December 8, he played "Macbeth," "Richard III," "Othello," "Merchant of Venice," "King Lear," "Hamlet" and "Richelieu." It was a "splendid repertoire" and the entire company was "quite good..."

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138 Picayune, October 21, 1907, p. 2.
139 Democrat, April 21, 1908, sec. 3, p. 8.
140 Picayune, December 17, 1907, p. 12.
141 Morris, op. cit., p. 287.
142 Picayune, December 9, 1907, p. 11.
Music reigned at the Tulane from Christmas through most of January. The Prince of Pilsen, Forty-Five Minutes From Broadway, A Yankee Tourist (a "capacity" week with Raymond Hitchcock), Madame Butterfly, and The Spring Chicken appeared, one after another.

The perennial Ben Hur played another "capacity" week beginning February 3. Nat Goodwin came in The Easterner; and Eleanor Robson brought a "western idyl," Salomy Jane and played "capacity" audiences. Lillian Russell had a new comedy about horse racing called Wildfire which, with a "splendid cast," played a big week.

The attendance dropped off with the beginning of Lent and of the last four shows of the season, only John Drew's My Wife, with the young English actress, Billie Burke, was successful.

Excepting for the previous year, the season which began September 8, and ended April 11, was the most successful in the theatre's history. During the season, however, another death knell was being sounded for the touring companies. As early as September, 1907, an article in the New Orleans Daily Picayune announced that

The abandonment of the 'party rate' as applied to theatrical companies on railroads in various parts of the South and the exaction of full rates for all passengers promises to work hardship in the cases of many companies whose plans were formed and contracts entered into on the theory that rate concessions long in practice would still be enjoyed by theatrical managers. Under existing conditions of law, as embodied in the ruling of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the railroads can offer nothing but the regular tariff. . . . and the local rate in many instances runs from 3 to 4 cents a mile.145

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113 Picayune, February 25, 1908, p. 11.
114 Picayune, March 9, 1908, p. 8.
1145 Picayune, September 15, 1907, sec. 3, p. 3.
With the enforcement of these laws it became apparent during the season that:

... railroading for the theatrical companies through the South has become an expensive luxury. ... The result has been that managers were compelled to cut down the size of their companies to meet the changed conditions. This, of course, has hurt business.  

The effects of this situation became more and more evident in the following seasons.

1908-1909

Although Manager Tom Campbell said he had been very well pleased with the 1908-1909 season, he added in an interview at the end of the season: "It has been a peculiar year. ... On account of the fact that the previous season had resulted in but few successes being produced, the South had to be content with several shows which had been previously seen. ..." 147

Although the financial panic of 1907 had not periously affected the economy of New Orleans nor appreciably decreased theatre attendance, it did have a delayed effect upon the Tulane. Because of severity of economic pressure upon the New York stage, fewer shows were produced, more shows closed as financial failures, thus fewer shows were available for touring during 1908-1909.

Yet, in spite of the large number of repetitions, the season was profitable and had some few engagements which well deserved the

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146 Picayune, March 1, 1908, sec. 3, p. 11.
147 Democrat, April 18, 1909, sec. 3, p. 8. Seasonal summary.
attendance they received. A few new shows were introduced and some new stars appeared. The Tulane ran for thirty-two weeks; there were twelve musical productions, two of which had "capacity" audiences.

Some of the new stars were Florence Davis, in Under the Greenwood Tree, and Amelia Stone in The Gay Musician. Several of the older stars appeared. The Man Who Stood Still, "By many declared to be the best attraction of the season," featured Louis Mann. Francis Wilson came in the satiric farce, When Knights Were Bold. Herbert Kelcey and Effie Shannon appeared in a "melodramatic but effective" play, The Thief, which played to "capacity" audiences.

The Clansman returned for the fourth time, but played only "fair" business, while Dixon's new play, The Traitor, "proved to be a piece of dramatic emotionalism that at times bordered on the realms of melodrama... produced a picture that seemed more exaggerated than real." New Orleans was the first metropolitan production of the play and it never reached New York.

The greatest success of the year was Franz Lehar's The Merry Widow. It had taken the nation by storm and during its two week run in New Orleans it played to over 20,000 enthusiastic playgoers.

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149 Picayune, November 16, 1908, p. 12.
150 Picayune, October 26, 1908, p. 3.
151 Morris, op. cit., p. 312.
152 Democrat, April 18, 1909, sec. 3, p. 8.
The other "capacity" engagements were Richard Carle in his best vehicle, Mary's Lamb, and E. H. Sothern in a week of repertoire. Sothern ended the week with Hamlet which "created a furore, and the capacity of the theatre was taxed to the utmost. Not a seat in the house could be had hours before the curtain went up, and Mr. Sothern was given a wonderful ovation during the presentation of the drama."153

The most talked-of drama of the year was The Right of Way with Gus Standing and Theodore Roberts. It played just before Christmas and drew exceptionally large houses and was considered "strong, forceful, and convincing."154 John Drew had his usual success in Jack Straw, a Somerset Maugham comedy.

Nat Goodwin had a good week, financially, in spite of rather severe criticism from the reviewers. He presented two plays, The Master Hand and A Native Son. Of the first, the reporter said it could "be styled a melodramatic comedy, whatever that might be, and but for the humor that Goodwin brings to the piece, it would rank as melodrama pure and simple."155 The reviewer was even more critical of A Native Son. It was a new play and was presented March 28, 1909, for the first time on any stage. It was called a bad play, "not funny, crude and amateurish."156

153 Idem.
Max Rogers played in Panama with Joe Kane, his new partner since the death of his brother, and did well. Only two plays, Coming Thru' the Rye and Hook of Holland, both musical comedies, did really bad business. On the whole it was a successful year, but not an outstanding year.

1909-1910

Despite the claims of Campbell that "Never in the history of my connection with theatre has any season been so prolific of high class offerings as the year which has just ended," the 1909-1910 season was not unusual. It was a typical Tulane season. The usual number of musical comedies appeared and did the usual good business. Many of the Tulane regulars returned; however, a few names were missing. Louis Mann, who had appeared in New Orleans for twenty consecutive seasons, died March 5, 1910. Something other than death, however, was taking many of the other stars. Vaudeville was assuming prestige by "the invasion into it which is being made by bright lights from the legitimate stage." Such stars as Virginia Harned, Sothern's ex-wife and former leading lady, and Amelia Bingham were succumbing to the high salaries of the "two-a-day."

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157 Picayune, February 15, 1909, p. 11.
158 Picayune, April 17, 1910, sec. 3, p. 6. Seasonal Summary.
159 Picayune, March 6, 1910, p. 9.
Robert Mantell, "the romantic actor par excellence, and the present great exponent of Shakespeare. . . ." made a triumphant return to New Orleans in November, 1909. Other stars appeared that season for the first or second time. Kyrle Bellew brought a new drama, A Builder of Bridges; Victor Moore was in a Cohan musical, The Talk of New York. The actress Grace George returned in A Woman's Way and Victor Morley brought a big musical, The Three Twins. Morley's play, in fact, came twice during the season. It first appeared on March 27, and then returned for the week of April 10, as the attraction for a National Shriners Convention which was meeting in New Orleans, and closed the season.

The "biggest" show of the year was another Klaw and Educational extravaganza; but the attendance was a disappointment and the show did not do as well as did a return engagement of The Merry Widow. The most spectacular week of the season occurred when David Warfield came to the theatre in The Music Master. The advance sale surpassed any in the history of the theatre, with the exception of Ben Hur. Ticket sales for a performance always began on the Thursday preceding the opening. By 2 A.M. on Thursday, October 21, "a line of buyers was forming at the box office window." The first person "in line took his place shortly after 11 o'clock Wednesday night."

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161 Picayune, November 22, 1909, p. 9.
162 Picayune, April 11, 1910, p. 9.
163 Picayune, April 17, 1910, sec. 3, p. 6. Seasonal Summary.
164 Picayune, October 21, 1909, p. 5.
165 Picayune, October 22, 1909, p. 4.
and on the first day of sales the largest number of seats ever sold for an engagement of this kind in New Orleans was disposed of. At the end of the season, Mr. Campbell said that "Mr. Warfield appeared in *The Music Master,* and played to a greater business than any star who had ever been seen in New Orleans. At each performance . . . he was greeted by capacity houses, and he set a record surpassing local history."  

Another record was broken when John E. Dodson, appearing in *The House Next Door,* played to the greatest amount of business which had ever been recorded during Holy Week in New Orleans. The local theatre-goers also gave a good reception to its native daughter, Mrs. Minnie Maddern Fiske, when she appeared in the Edward Sheldon drama, *Salvation Nell.* The audiences were very impressed by the realism in the play and by the excellent cast.

It is interesting to note at this time the increasing criticism of the morality of the plays which were being presented in New Orleans. More and more often the reviewers commented upon the nudity, the coarseness and the vulgarity of the typical musical comedy. For example, *The Soul Kiss* was described as "Plenty of fun, some vulgarity, a big bunch of girls. . . ."  

The new "problem play" which was becoming a staple of the play-going public was often criticized by New Orleans reviewers. The

166 *Democrat,* April 17, 1910, sec. 3, p. 8.
167 *Picayune,* April 17, 1910, sec. 3, p. 6.
169 *Picayune,* September 20, 1909, p. 12.
"moral standpoint" of such plays as Nethersole's *Sapho*, and others of the same style, became a more and more disturbing issue. In writing of *The Test*, one reporter lamented as he described it as:

a problem play dealing with a woman's past life and the part played by several men in that past and the present. At one time the problem play was almost under ban, but so familiar has the American public become with the lady with the malordorous past that it can sit throughout the rattling of the various skeletons with complacency without being a bit shocked, and now and then only get a little bit horrified with the lady with the unsavory present.

Although New Orleans was never to be as staid as some of the more puritanical cities, segments of the population were becoming aware of the "less wholesome" elements of many of the modern productions. Voices of discontent were beginning to be heard.

1910-1911

The last year of the Prosperous Period was rather successful. As Mr. Campbell said, "Notwithstanding every one's cry of hard times and the fact that little business has been done in other cities in the show business, New Orleans theater-goers... have patronized the Tulane and Crescent liberally." Only three productions were recorded as having done "capacity" business; yet Campbell stated that it had been a better year than the previous one.

The three shows which attracted the largest audiences were *Ben Hur*, "A theatrical spectacle which has become an American

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170 *Democrat*, October 4, 1909, p. 4.

What Every Woman Knows was a play which James Barrie wrote for Maude Adams. It was to become one of the classics of modern theatre. When Miss Adams first brought the play to the Tulane it set a new record by having the largest advance sale of tickets in the history of the house. New Orleans took Maude Adams to its heart and the production was successful in every respect.

Other big shows of the season were the musical, Folly of the Circus, which opened the season; Ethel Barrymore's Midchannel, which was praised despite the critic's regret at seeing Miss Barrymore "smoking cigarettes in the first part and indulging in slang. . . ." The melodramatic A Fool There Was, with the new star Robert Hilliard, and Frances Starr's The Easiest Way, which the reviewer described as an immoral "feast of horror," were both popular with audiences. The comedy, The Man Who Owns Broadway,
written by George M. Cohan and starring Raymond Hitchcock, was very successful, as was the musical The Fortune Hunter.

The worst, and most unexpected, failure of the year was The Dollar Princess. It played a two week engagement to "poor" business because of a very "inadequate cast." The star of the show, Daphne Glenne, was ill the first week, but even her return for the second week did not raise the attendance.

Bernhardt returned to the Tulane for a week of "good" business in repertoire; Mrs. Fiske was successful in Becky Sharp. Otis Skinner had his usual success in a Booth Tarkington comedy, Your Humble Servant, and the comedy Seven Days was well-attended. The rest of the season was ordinary.

As Mr. Campbell said, it was a good year. "With more opposition than ever, the Tulane and Crescent have kept the even tenor of their ways and evidently pleased their patrons." And the opposition was increasing. The Independents, under the leadership of the Shuberts, were becoming more and more powerful. Campbell might say,

The trouble is really causing more amusement than alarm in the East, and Messrs. Klaw and Erlanger and their allies are entertained at the vain attempts of these one-night stand managers to demonstrate that the tail can wag the dog.

Messrs. Klaw and Erlanger have an impregnable position; they have kept enough one-night stand points to make the journey east to New Orleans and beyond, and

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177 Picayune, February 20, 1911, p. 9.
178 Picayune, April 9, 1911, sec. 3, p. 8.
with their Richmond circuit and their new theatres in Atlanta and Memphis, the jumps are all comfortable. 179

Yet the number of Independent theatres and the number of stars who were playing them was increasing.

During the 1910-1911 season the Dauphine Theatre became the theatre of the Independents in New Orleans. During the season the theatre presented such stars as Frederick Warde, Wilton Lackaye and Tim Murphy, all of whom were former Tulane regulars. The monopoly was being broken.

Other competition for the Tulane and Crescent was becoming more strongly established. The Shubert, claiming to be the largest motion picture theatre in the world, and the Lyric were showing films. The Orpheum and the American Music Hall presented vaudeville. Smaller neighborhood motion picture houses were opening, and this cheaper entertainment was making the Tulane and Crescent a luxury form of amusement.

The period from 1899 to 1911 had been big years for the Tulane. It had made theatrical history in the city of New Orleans. The theatre had been riding on a big wave of prosperity. There were still good years ahead, but the future would be more uncertain and more erratic.

While the Tulane had been presenting twelve years of "high-class" legitimate theatre, what of the Crescent fare? The financial picture for the two theatres was much the same during the first period of their history. The shows and the audiences were, however, very different.

Three types of productions occupied most of the seasons at the Crescent Theatre. These were the minstrel shows, the popular long-run melodramas and comedies, and the musical variety shows built around such comic stars as Al Wilson, George Sidney, or the team of Murray and Mack. It would be hard to determine which was the most popular of the three types.

The audience of the Crescent had its distinguishing characteristics which made it different from that of the Tulane. It was a devoted audience. It came, year after year, to see Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch or Buster Brown, never tiring of the sameness. Yet, it was, at its own level, a discriminating audience. Despite its admiration for a star or a play, it became critical when the company was below the standards it demanded, when the chorus was too ugly, or when the humor became too coarse. At those times it stayed home.

In surveying the twelve year period of the Prosperous Period this study will consider first the three kinds of presentations which appeared at the Crescent.
The first of this group are the minstrel companies. "The minstrel show is the only indigenous American contribution to the drama, and the melodies the Negro minstrel inspired are America's only approach to national music."\(^{180}\) The source of the Negro minstrelsy is in the slaves of the South.\(^{181}\) "Basing their ideas on eccentric Negroes, the white impersonators played up the dissimilarities... between the Negroes and white."\(^{182}\) They created charicatures, built up shows around the songs and music of the Negro, and minstrelsy became a "fixed institution, an immovable fact."\(^{183}\)

From 1761, when the first individual minstrel performers appeared, until 1840, the development of the formal minstrel show was slow.\(^{184}\) This form of entertainment, however, reached its highest levels in the decades following; and in the 1880's there were at least thirty minstrel companies touring the country.\(^{185}\)

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\(^{182}\) Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

\(^{183}\) Wittke, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

\(^{184}\) Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 4k.

\(^{185}\) Wittke, *op. cit.*, p. 6k.
By this time there was a set pattern for the show. The program began with a musical overture with songs and dances. The second part, the olio, consisted of straight and character monologues, songs, dances and farces; and the third part, or afterpiece, was a burlesque of a popular serious drama. This was followed by a grand finale in which the "burnt cork" performers "imitated what they liked to call the 'true spirit of the southern plantation Negro'."  

The minstrel was novel, cheap and amusing. It was popular with all ages and all classes and "the public flocked to it in large numbers."  

The character of the minstrel show changed with the years. It slowly became bigger, more elaborate, and more cluttered; soon it resembled the typical burlesque or variety show. Still it retained its popularity until the twentieth century. By 1915, however, the professional minstrel show was practically a thing of the past. There have been many attempts to explain the death of this most successful of all institutions in American theatre. There is an economic explanation; the shows became unprofitable. The rising cost of theatrical production, the managers who tried to outdo one another in elaborateness of presentation, the increased cost of travel, and competition from other forms of amusements, such as the motion pictures, were reasons for the decline. Too, the public taste changed; the actors

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186 Davidson, op. cit., p. 4.
187 Ibid., p. 86.
died or went into other forms of entertainment. Most of the critics, nevertheless, give another, perhaps more important, reason for the death of the minstrel show. They say that the "minstrels did not remain in their special field as delineators of Negro character."\footnote{Wittke, op. cit., p. 120-21.} They changed the shows to musical extravaganzas filled with tired jokes, sentimental ballads and coarse comedy.

New Orleans, at the turn of the century, still had a good audience for minstrels; but it was a special audience. As the Tulane manager discovered in the opening season, minstrels were not popular with the audiences who frequented that theatre. At the Crescent, on the other hand, the receipts for minstrel performances were usually high. The top balcony was always opened to Negroes for these performances and great numbers of colored people attended. There were also a lot of white people who enjoyed the spontaneity and humor of the burnt-cork performers.

So each year the minstrels came to the Crescent. Some seasons there were only two companies, other seasons as many as five appeared. One company came every year during this early period, the Al G. Field Minstrels.

Al G. Field, called the "Dean of American Minstrelsy,"\footnote{Wittke, op. cit., p. 252.} organized his show in 1886. The first performance was given on October 6, at Marion, Ohio, with a company of twenty-seven. The
organization remained in existence for forty-one years, thus having the longest record established by any travelling minstrel organization. It was also the most elaborate and expensive minstrel show on the road. Field, who wrote, directed and performed in the shows, was the first of his group to carry complete settings and the first to operate special railway cars to transport the personnel and equipment of the show.

Field always appeared at the Crescent in October and large audiences greeted his arrival. In 1899, the reviewer stated, "Not a seat could be bought long before the curtain went up. It was take what you could of standing-room, and be glad to get that."190 The next year, October 21, 1900, "thousands braved the rain to attend his opening night."191 In 1905, New Orleans suffered from a fever plague and was under quarantine for three months. For this reason, Field was the first engagement of the season and a large audience attested "to the popularity of the group and to the happiness of the city in its defeat of quarantine."192

Reviewers often commented on the costumes and scenery used by Field. Each year the shows became more elaborate and expensive than the year before. They "often spend ten thousand dollars for the show's wardrobe for one season with scenery costing several

190Picayune, October 23, 1899, p. 7.
191Picayune, October 22, 1900, p. 3.
192Picayune, October 23, 1905, p. 5.
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Thus it was not surprising that a reviewer, in 1909, commented that the show had a "world of scenery." Even more remarkable than the longevity of the company was its popularity. In the financial summaries given to the newspapers each spring, the Field Minstrels were always noted as having played "big" or "capacity" houses.

The closest rival to the Field organization was the Dockstader Minstrels. Lew Dockstader was born in 1856; by the time he was twenty years old he was appearing as a Negro minstrel. During his long career he was associated with various organizations, and, intermittently, had companies of his own. At the time the Crescent opened he was in partnership with George H. Primrose, who was famous as one of the greatest soft shoe dancers of all time.

Their Primrose-Dockstader Company appeared at the Tulane during its first season, but the following year they moved to the Crescent. On January 11th, 1900, they opened to "fine" business at the popular theatre. They returned the following year; but they did not appear at all in the 1901-1902 season.

On February 1, 1903, the organization opened its last week at the Crescent. The reviewer said they were "splendid;" but it appeared that personal relations between the partners were not running smoothly. The Daily Picayune of February 13, 1903, announced

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193 Wittke, op. cit., p. 118.
195 Wittke, op. cit., pp. 245, 246.
that the minstrel organization was in a "Unique Controversy." The previous fall, Primrose had told Dockstader that at the close of the season he intended to retire. Dockstader, who meant to continue, made an agreement with their manager, J. H. Decker, to continue managernship. While the show was in New Orleans, Primrose fired Decker and made a speech to the company informing them of that fact. Dockstader told Decker that he was still the manager; he made a speech to the company to that effect. Both men got lawyers, had conferences, and reached no agreement. In Baton Rouge, Primrose got a writ of injunction restraining Decker from being manager; in Jackson, Mississippi, Decker secured an injunction restraining Primrose from interfering with him in the discharge of his duties as manager. The partnership ended.

The Lew Dockstader Minstrels first appeared at the Crescent on January 22, 1905, and the reviewer called it the "minstrel treat of the season." After that the company appeared annually for the next four years. Each time the settings were "splendid," "lovely" and "more and more elaborate." At their final appearance in March, 1909, they presented "minstrelsy with a plot" which was the new trend. The whole show was done in the form of a musical comedy and one of the featured players was a young singer of "coon songs", Al Jolson.

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196 Picayune, February 13, 1903, p. 4.
Although Dockstader presented good shows and was popular, he never drew as large an audience as did Field. Neither did Primrose when he made his single appearance at the Crescent with his own company. The critic and the public were unimpressed. Business was only "ordinary."

There were other minstrel groups who appeared occasionally at the Crescent, but none of them attained the popularity of the Field and Dockstader groups. In December, 1899, the Richards and Pringle and Rusco and Howard troup, known as the Georgia Minstrels, came. This was an organization of colored performers with the popular Billy Kersand in the group; so business was "good." In 1900, there was some sort of split in this organization. The "Georgia Minstrels" appeared again in December, 1900, while "The black artists of Rusco and Holland, who are going under the name of 'The Nashville Students' . . . ." appeared in April, 1901. The latter was a third-rate company and did poorly. The same company appeared again the next December and the reviewer said, "This season little is offered and most of that is bad, to say the least."

Three other Minstrel aggregations appeared during the twelve years. The West Minstrels, under the leadership of W. H. West, came three different times. West had been, for thirty years, a partner

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199 Picayune, March 14, 1910, p. 10.
200 Picayune, April 8, 1901, p. 9.
201 Picayune, April 28, 1901, sec. 4, p. 14.
202 Picayune, December 13, 1901, p. 8.
of Primrose, but they eventually separated. \(^{203}\) By 1900, despite fairly good reviews, West's company was giving its performances to bad business.

"Colonel Jack Haverly should be remembered as the founder of the modern large scale minstrel show." \(^{204}\) Haverly was not a performer, but a manager. In 1878, he sent out his first company; after that he made and lost several fortunes and sent companies all over the world. The company that he sent to New Orleans in 1901 starred Billy Van and Eddie Leonard; but, except for the two stars, the show had little to offer. \(^{205}\) Van returned to the Crescent in 1905 with an organization called Nankerville's Consolidated Minstrels, but following that he always appeared in other types of shows.

The final company to be considered in this era was an organization headed by George "Honey Boy" Evans, who had begun with the Haverly Minstrels in 1902. \(^{206}\) His company had an added attraction in James J. Corbett, the heavyweight boxer, as interlocutor. \(^{207}\) The shows were good and they played to good audiences.

Another organization which was not one of the usual minstrel groups, but which could be discussed in the same category was the

\(^{203}\) Wittke, op. cit., p. 245.

\(^{204}\) Ibid., p. 237.

\(^{205}\) Picayune, January 18, 1904, p. 10.

\(^{206}\) Wittke, op. cit., p. 244.

Black Patti Troubadors. The Black Patti had appeared during the season of the theatre's opening, and she returned for four more years. The reviewers, however, were not very enthusiastic about the continued appearances. After the engagement of 1900, the reviewer praised the earlier Black Patti troupes, but added that their former reputation had been "blasted by the present tour. . . . and the audience left the theatre heartily glad the agony was at an end." Nevertheless, the engagements were comparatively successful. There was always a large colored audience, and many white people welcomed the reappearances with enthusiasm.

During the twelve year period which comprises the era of prosperity, there were thirty weeks of minstrelsy, in addition to the four weeks during which the Black Patti Troubadors performed, at the Crescent Theatre. The minstrel show accounted for approximately one-twelfth of the performances at that "popular" theatre.

It was quite usual for a production to appear twice or even three times at the Crescent. Any presentation worth seeing was worth seeing twice. There were some shows, however, which far exceeded this limit. One type which appeared over and over was the "domestic" play. These might be classified as melodramas, domestic comedies, domestic tragedies and rural plays. There might be differences in the plots, the settings and the characters; but the major characteristics were the same. There were exciting situations; there were tears and humors; and there was intense suspense. All sentiments

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208 Democrat, April 9, 1900. p. 7.
were heightened and all passions were exaggerated; but the ending was always "satisfactory."

The oldest of these shows were vivid melodramas. Some of them had been in existence for twenty or more years. One of the oldest which appeared at the Crescent was The White Slave, first performed in 1882. This play appeared three times at the Crescent during the twelve year Prosperous Period. It was written by Bartley Campbell, one of the more prolific early dramatists. It is a vivid and exciting melodrama which is set in Kentucky and is based on The Octoroon, by Dion Boucicault. It was a stirring experience for the playgoers of the time.

Following its opening at the Crescent, in 1900, the reviewer said, "The White Slave always has heart interest, and, even now when it is old, the play appeals strongly to everyone. . . . Every year, for many years, the beautiful play has been presented here, and each year it has won more sympathy from the play-goers." The play was to have been shelved after the 1900 season; however, it was revised and played again in 1902 with Helena Collier, the sister of the comedian William Collier, in the role of Lisa, the White Slave.

In Old Kentucky is one of the best examples of the melodrama which "held its stage by reason of the sincerity of its portraiture

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209 Quinn, op. cit., p. 123.
210 Picayune, January 8, 1900, p. 8.
211 Picayune, December 22, 1902, p. 12. Also appeared in 1899-1900.
of character as well as by the vividness of its situations. ..."\(^{212}\) It was written by Charles T. Dazey to show contrast between the mountaineer and the "blue grass" people. It is the story of a mountain girl, Madge, and her deep love for the patrician, Frank Layton. The secret of the success of the play lies not only in its exciting plot, but also in the "picture of the intense loves and hates which the primitive life of the mountaineers made plausible."\(^{213}\)

The play was first produced in 1893 and was performed for twenty-seven consecutive seasons in New York and on the road. In Old Kentucky appeared six times during the first thirteen years of the Crescent's existence.\(^{214}\) Each time the leading players were different, but each time the cast seems to have been competent; and each time this "stirring"\(^{215}\) melodrama brought in good audiences.

During the "era of prosperity" the record for melodramas at the Crescent was held by a play entitled Human Hearts. This was a thrilling story of the Arkansas hills. It first appeared at the Crescent on September 2, 1901, and starred George W. Murdock and Mary Downs. At that time it was already an old and loved play. It was not a good play; but, as the reviewer said at the time, "There is something intensely pathetic in Human Hearts... and, for all its lack of literary quality, it is sure to cause a tear."\(^{216}\)

\(^{212}\) Quinn, op. cit., II, 101.
\(^{213}\) Ibid., II, 102.
\(^{214}\) Play appeared at Crescent in 1900, 1903, 1904, 1906, 1908, and 1910.
\(^{215}\) Picayune, October 17, 1904, p. 11.
\(^{216}\) Picayune, September 23, 1901, p. 7.
The show played the Crescent for the next eight seasons; it omitted the 1909-1910 season, and then appeared again on January 22, 1911. The cast was constantly changing; seven different actors played the leading role of Tom Logan. As the reviewer for 1907 explained, "Fortunately, there is no absolute need for brilliant players to go along with the lines. . . ." The companies ranged from "adequate" to "poor;" the audience, however, was usually "fair" or "big." Only once, in 1908, did the show have "poor" attendance.

The Old Homestead was a better play than most of the early melodramas. The plot was negligible; but the character of the simple lovable old farmer created by Denham Thompson was a step toward a realistic rural drama. The play was called a comedy and was created originally, in 1875, as a sketch entitled "Joshua Whitcomb." Thompson enlarged it to a four act play in 1878. Later it was again revised and it opened in 1886 under the title The Old Homestead. Thompson starred in the play, in the role of Joshua, and thus created one of the most famous of all "yankee" characters. He continued in this play, at intervals, until his death in 1911.

The play was revived by Franklin Thompson, the son of Denham, in 1904. It came first to the Tulane with Denham Thompson in the role he created. It played there for two other seasons and then, with a different star, it moved to the Crescent for three more years.

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217 *Picayune*, December 2, 1907, p. 2.


219 Played the Crescent in 1906, 1907, and 1910.
When the play first appeared at the Tulane the critic rhapsoidized, "Here is a pure play for the people!" With an excellent supporting cast, this play which "tells of the son who left home and went to New York, the anxious search of the old father for him, his reformation and the jollification upon his return to the old homestead," played three engagements to pleased audiences. Even when William Lawrence, and later Edward L. Snader, played the Thompson role at the Crescent, with a weaker supporting cast, the play was well attended.

_Sis Hopkins_, starring Rose Melville, went a step further toward comedy. The play originated from a character which Miss Melville played in the third act of a play called _Zeb_. It was so popular that she created a vaudeville sketch called _Sis Hopkins_. So successful was that effort that Carroll Flemming wrote a play with Sis as the central character. Before her death, in 1916, Rose Melville had played _Sis Hopkins_ to 5,000,000 people in 5,000 performances.

The play was described as a rural comedy with music and it had "humor and pathos... blended in every act." Miss Melville

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220 _Picayune_, January 15, 1900, p. 9.
221 _Democrat_, April 1, 1907, p. 5.
224 _Picayune_, December 10, 1900, p. 2.
always had a competent supporting cast. Each of the six times the play appeared at the Crescent it received good reviews and the support of the audience.

Two of the newer plays which remained popular during repeated appearances at the Crescent were Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch and The Virginian.

Mrs. Wiggs had many of the elements of the older melodramas blended with the domestic realism of the turn of the century plays. It was called a comedy, but there was much pathos, suspense, and emotion in this adaptation of the Alice Hegan Rice stories. The play was first produced in 1904, and when it came to the Crescent in February, 1906, it was still a comparatively new play. It starred Madge Carr Cook in her original role of Mrs. Wiggs. Although she was replaced for the last two tours, it played for four years to "capacity" business. One reviewer described the play as "whimsical, sentimental and slightly comic" and he added "the audience liked it too."226

The Virginian, like The Old Homestead, started out at the Tulane. The play opened in New York in September, 1903, and in the fall of 1904, after one hundred and thirty-eight New York performances, it went on the road. It appeared for the first time in New Orleans on December 4, 1904, with Dustin Farnum in his original role as the Virginian. It returned in 1906, and the following year it was removed

225 Played the Crescent in 1900, 1902, 1904, 1906, 1909, and 1911.
226 Picayune, February 19, 1906, p. 16.
to the Crescent. Wm. S. Hart, who later gained fame as one of the early cowboy movie stars, took over Farnum's role and the reviewers liked him. The show played to "big" business and returned again in 1908. When it came back in 1911, the cast had again changed, but the company was "well drilled and evenly balanced." 228

Although The Virginian and Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch were never to earn the reputation for stamina and longevity held by such shows as The Old Homestead and The White Slave, they were important additions to the list of popular favorites which could be depended upon, year after year, to entertain, to excite, or to wring a few tears from the hardest of souls. These shows were a phenomenon peculiar to the period. They were not good plays, but they had a pathos, humor, and a suspense that caused the audience to come and to come again.

Even more popular than the annual melodramas, were the musical farces which came each year to the Crescent. Just as the audiences cheered and hissed the same heroes and villains each year, they laughed at the same gags and applauded the same music.

The oldest of these musical shows was the Charles Yale spectacular, The Devil's Auction. After appearing during the first season of the Crescent, the production came six more times during the next twelve years. 229 This was in spite of the fact that the attendance was often poor for the week's engagement. The show, however, usually came in September so the hot weather was partly responsible. The

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228 Picayune, January 2, 1911, p. 10.
229 It played the Crescent in 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1907, and 1908.
cast was never outstanding, but it was usually competent. The show was occasionally brought up to date by the addition of a few new jokes, a change of cast or some new costumes and scenery. There were never any radical changes. As one reviewer said, "There is little to tell of The Devil's Auction, for the dialogue and action have not changed in twenty-one years." 230

The second of these "long-run" musicals was a better and more popular production. It was called McFadden's Row of Flats. It first appeared at the Crescent on September 16, 1900, and it returned every year, except for the 1905-1906 season, during the Prosperous Period. This "rollicking, slap-stick farce"231 always came early in the season; but, despite the time of year, a "splendid crowd"232 always greeted it. As the 1902 review of the show stated, "McFadden's Flats... has always been popular here... and the business shown by the musical farce comedy last night is far greater than any production has been credited with; in fact, the audience was the biggest ever held in the theatre."233 The show had no stars, but it had lots of "gags, knock-about work and specialties as well as good music..."234 Add a chorus line and "capacity" houses and you have the story of McFadden's Row of Flats during ten years at the Crescent Theatre.

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230 Picayune, September 31, 1903, p. 3.
231 Picayune, September 16, 1901, p. 4.
232 Picayune, September 16, 1901, p. 4.
233 Picayune, September 15, 1902, p. 2.
234 Picayune, September 17, 1900, p. 8.
Another show which was enjoyed by the Crescent audiences year after year was the musical comedy **Buster Brown**. This show opened in New York in January, 1905, and ran for ninety-five performances before it took to the road. Based on the comic strip, Buster Brown, the play was "simply the reproduction of a series of delightfully amusing cartoons." The greatest appeal was in the songs and dances and the amusing antics of Buster Brown and his dog Tige. When the show first appeared in New Orleans the company was headed by the original stars, Master Gabriel as Buster and George Ali as Tige. The cast was changed for the next year, but it was still a "refreshing play... enjoyed by the audience." The show appeared in 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910 and 1911, and always played to "big" business.

The third group of shows which appeared annually at the Crescent were the musical comedies and farces which were built around a comic star or a comic team. Although the name of each season's attraction might be different, there was seldom any great change from the show of the previous year or the show of the following year. Often the star was a dialect comedian. He was usually a comic who had created and perfected one character and he played it for the rest of his life. The shows were built around and for him and his special talents; the rest of the company was background scenery before which he displayed himself. The stars were often called "knockabout comedians", or non-subtle comedians. The shows were described as "a great deal of nonsense."

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236 *Democrat*, April 2, 1906, p. 4.
237 *Picayune*, January 28, 1907, p. 2.
238 *Picayune*, March 12, 1900, p. 7.
"broad farce," or "tomfoolery and gayety."  

Despite the lack of subtlety in their playing and despite what the critics may have said about their performances or their scripts, these stars and their shows were well attended and were popular. The stars, or teams, who appeared annually at the Crescent Theatre were Johnny and Emma Ray; "Hap" Ward and Harry Vokes; Charles Murray and Ollie Mack; Gus York and Nick Adams; George Sidney; Dan and Charles Mason; and the popular tenor, Al H. Wilson.

The most popular of these, in fact the most popular player who visited the Crescent during its early years, was Al H. Wilson. He was a German dialect comedian with a "sweet voice." His plays were musical comedy romances. Wilson first appeared at the Crescent in February, 1900, as a member of the cast of the old musical extravaganza, The Evil Eye. The following year he returned; this time he had his own show, The Watch on The Rhine. At that time the reviewer of the show prophesied that he would "someday win his way to the hearts of all song-lovers." This prophesy proved to be correct, in New Orleans if nowhere else. He came back to the Crescent each year during the 1899-1911 period and each year his following increased.

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239 Picayune, September 28, 1903, p. 3.
240 Picayune, February 1, 1909, p. 3.
241 Democrat, April 17, 1910, sec. 3, p. 8.
242 Picayune, February 8, 1904, p. 11.
243 Picayune, February 12, 1900, p. 8.
244 Picayune, March 4, 1901, p. 9.
Wilson played The Watch on the Rhine for two seasons. He next brought a musical romance entitled A Prince of Tatters, which was described as "A sweet play interspersed with songs." After two seasons with this play, he revived The Watch on the Rhine for 1904-1905. He played A German Gypsy for one season and then he began his series of shows built around the character of Metz. He starred in Metz in the Alps for two years, When Old New York was Dutch and Metz in Ireland for two seasons each. Each time the singing star appeared at the Crescent he had "big" or "capacity" houses.

The team of "Hap" Ward and Harry Vokes was actually a quartet since Lucy Daly and Margaret Daly Vokes always appeared with them. These popular comedians appeared nine times at the Crescent during the twelve year period. Their productions were The Floorwalkers, The Head Waiters, A Pair of Pinks, Not Yet But Soon, The Promoters, and The Troublemakers, a comedy on woman suffrage. The reviewers always used the same words in describing their productions: "musical farce," "uproariously funny" and "clever comedians." Their shows were well staged and elaborately costumed, had lots of pretty chorus girls, and played to "big" or "good" audiences in 1900, 1901, 1903, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, and 1911.

Another comedy star of the Crescent was George Sidney. He first appeared with Ward and Vokes in The Floorwalkers, in 1900, and in The Head Waiters, in 1901. By the fall of 1902, he was starring in his own show. The character which he created and played in all of his productions throughout the period was called Izzy Mark. The

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245 Picayune, February 16, 1903, p. 3.
critic said of his performance in the 1902-1903 production of Busy Izzy.

The Hebraic character, in truth, is rather tragi-comic, and if not ill used, lends to the players' world a profound element of tragedy, of the richest humor, of a most gentle love, or a delightful fund of pathos. But George Sidney, a comparatively new funny-maker, has artfully drawn a stage type that is new, and even if a little gross, is free from vulgarity.

Sidney returned in the musical farce for two years. In 1905, his show was called Busy Izzy's Vacation, and in 1908, he appeared in Busy Izzy's Boodle. The 1909 and 1910 edition was called The Joy Rider, but the character was the same. Although the plays were vehicles for Sidney, there was a "careless regard for expense throughout the show..." and they always had a "good chorus and lots of pretty scenery." He came for eight years, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1908, 1909, 1910, and always "played to big business and was enthusiastically received."

A popular husband and wife team were Emma and Johnny Ray. Following their appearance in their farce comedy, A Hot Old Time, the survey of the season's business said of them, "The Rays--Rough Show. Record business of the season." They returned the next year and again, "The Rays--played what was without a doubt the most successful

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246 Picayune, November 10, 1902, p. 8.
247 Picayune, November 9, 1903, p. 9.
249 Democrat, April 17, 1910, sec. 3, p. 8.
engagement at Crescent." The Rays did not come again until February 24, 1907, and the review stated, "The play is not very good," but business was "big." Their 1908 attraction, King Casey, again played to big business, but the public deserted them the next season. The reviewer said, "The biggest absurdity of the day is King Casey. . . ." The financial summary for the year listed them as "poor."

Three other comedy teams appeared several times during the twelve year period. The "knockabout comedians," Charles A. Murray and Gillie Mack filled nine different engagements during this time. Although they performed in six different shows, Finnegan's Ball, Shooting the Chutes, A Night on Broadway, An English Daisy, Around the Town, and The Sunny Side of Broadway, none of them were particularly good. The 1906 reviewer dismissed Around the Town with these words, "The two funmakers were applauded, but the musical farce itself could be put back into the literary workshop." A Night on Broadway and Shooting the Chutes were considered their best vehicles, but even in these productions the "clever singers and dancers and a chorus of twenty of the prettiest girls seen here in many a day" 256


252 Picayune, February 25, 1907, p. 3.

253 Picayune, February 15, 1909, p. 11.

254 Played the Crescent in 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, and 1909.

255 Picayune, October 20, 1906, p. 10.

256 Picayune, September 29, 1902, p. 9.
were merely surroundings for the antics of the two comedians. De­
spite the literary inadequacy of their plays, the audience liked
them; attendance was always good.

Neither of the two other teams appeared as often at the Crescent
as did Murray and Mack. Yorke and Adams came during the seasons of
shows were Bankers and Brokers, Playing the Ponies, and In Africa.
The companies for their musical farces were large; Bankers and
Brokers had a cast of sixty-five people. They, like Sidney, were
Jewish comedians, and their appearances were well-received.

Charles A. and Harry Lester Mason were German dialect comedians.
For their first three appearances, 1901-1902, 1902-1903, and 1903-1904,
they played a farce comedy, Rudolph and Adolph. Their last appearance
was in Fritz and Snitz, in September, 1904. Financially their shows
were not as successful as the productions of the other comedy teams.

There was one other group of performers who often appeared at
the Crescent. These were the magicians. The two who came to the
theatre during the early period were Leon Herrmann and Thurston.
Herrmann had appeared the opening season of the Crescent, and he con­
tinued to return each September. In addition to the magic tricks
performed by the star, there were singers, musicians and comedy rou­
tines. The Five Nosses, "three beautiful ladies and two polished
gentlemen,\textsuperscript{257} accompanied him for some seasons. Later there were
other acts which provided variety to the program. The engagements

\textsuperscript{257} \textit{Picayune}, September 19, 1900, p. 3.
were never particularly successful, but since they came early in the season, they were not expected to do much business.

The show appeared in 1899 and 1900; then for the next three years it inaugurated the seasons. In 1906, Adelaide Herrmann, wife of the late Alexander Herrmann, appeared alone. Although she was one of the few women magicians who made good,258 her engagement at the Crescent was not successful.

One other magician made two appearances at the Crescent. This was Howard Thurston who had for many years "the leading magic show in America."259 He carried a company of twenty-six and was liked by the viewers when he appeared in 1908, and 1909, but he only played to "fair" houses.

These were the shows that returned again and again during the Prosperous Period of the Crescent Theatre. In the productions built around comic stars the shows would have different titles, but the characterizations and the situations would be the same. There was even more monotony in the melodramas and musical comedies. In these shows the productions were identical and the only variety was in the casting. Even this did not create any appreciable change. There was a great tradition surrounding these popular plays and the audiences would not have tolerated any differences in interpretation or manner of playing. The popular play-goer knew the play and he knew the reactions and emotions which he wanted in the production; any change which disturbed the tradition was unpopular.

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259 Ibid., p. 107.
Thus this study seeks to discover the trends which were evident in the first thirteen years of the Crescent's history. During the twelve years following the inaugural season there were 385 engagements at the theatre. Thirty-seven of these engagements were productions of the seven melodramas which came year after year. There were a total of twenty-three presentations of The Devil's Auction, McFadden's Row of Flats and Buster Brown. In addition, there were fifty shows starring either Sidney, Wilson, or one of the five comedy teams. When these are added to the thirty-four minstrel productions and the eight magic shows, they total one hundred and fifty-two. This means that over one-fourth of the presentations of the twelve year period were shows which come under the heading of annual visitors. This fact alone is astonishing. What is even more astonishing is that the audiences returned each year. These twelve years were financially prosperous.

There were 233 other shows which appeared during this time. In order to present a complete picture of the twelve seasons, this study will now consider these additional shows. There will be no attempt to name every production and star; but by giving a brief summary of each season, it will be possible to discover what kind of shows came to the theatre, how often the same shows reappeared, and how they were accepted by the audience.

1899-1900

The 1899-1900 season opened on September 3, 1899, with the comedy Have You Seen Smith and it closed, on May 5, 1900, after a three week appearance of the Wilbur-Kirwin Opera Company. The season was thirty-
five weeks long and was considered by the management to have been financially successful.

There were five minstrel companies, Field, Richards and Pringle and Rusco and Holland, Primrose and Dockstader, West, and the Black Patti. Leon Herrmann made his annual appearance and Mildred and Rouclere presented an unsuccessful pseudo-vaudeville show.

Two scenic extravaganzas appeared. The Klaw and Erlanger production of Jack and the Beanstalk, January 29, and The Evil Eye, February 12, and both played to big business. James O'Neil was one of the brightest spots of the season with his production of The Musketeers and The Count of Monte Cristo. Another play, The Three Musketeers, with Harry Glazier did "fair" business. The other romance of the season, Under the Red Robe, had a bad number two company and was not at all popular.

One of the best plays of the season was William Gillette's comedy, Because She Loved Him So. It was well done and well attended. The remainder of the year was divided between the melodramas and the farces.

There were five melodramas, which included the old favorites The White Slave and an old Herne drama, Shore Acres. An adequate number two company presented the Frohman melodrama, Colonial Girl, to good audiences.

The season contained a total of fourteen farces. Two of these, The Telephone Girl and What Happened to Jones?, had appeared at the


261 Picayune, November 6, 1899, p. 5.
Tulane the previous year and were now playing the Crescent with different stars and lower prices. The first fared well, but the second had only average business. One show, Who is Who, was a repeat from the season before; it did only "fair" business. The other eleven farce comedies included such shows as Why Smith Left Home; Murray and Mack in Finnegans Ball; Ward and Vokes in Floor Walkers; A Texas Steer; and the Rays in A Hot Old Time, which had the biggest business of the season. Another of the better and more successful comedies was the Christmas attraction, Hotel Topsy Turvy, which starred one of the greats of musical variety, Eddie Foy.

That was the first season of the Prosperous Period and it was indicative of the eleven which followed. The greatest number of shows were musicals or farces; and they were the most popular. Minstrels and melodramas had a good following, but the really outstanding weeks were those when the "ordinary rough farce-comedies, without the slightest pretense of either art or refinement" came to the Crescent.

1900-1901

In a season which began September 2, and ended April 20, there were twelve repeats from the previous season, and two shows, Secret Service and My Friend from India, from the inaugural season. Only one production moved from the Tulane; it was "that pleasant and refined comedy. . . ." Mistakes Will Happen. This season saw the first

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262 Picayune, May 6, 1900, sec. 2, p. 8.
263 Picayune, December 25, 1899, p. 10.
264 Democrat, September 17, 1900, p. 3.
265 Picayune, October 15, 1900, p. 6.
appearance of McFadden's Row of Flats and Al Wilson's starring vehicle, Watch on the Rhine. There were five other musical farces and "a French pantomimic musical comedy in three acts," Le Voyage en Suisse. Most of them did well.

It was also a good year for melodrama at the Crescent. On September 23, an old Sol Smith Russell play, A Poor Relation, with a poor company did "poor" business. It was followed the next week by a highly colored melodrama, The Man-o-Warman, with another poor company and "poor" business. On October 7, came the third consecutive melodrama of the season, The Sorrows of Satan, and the "title drew good houses." In December, a badly written Chinese melodrama, The King of the Opium Ring, did "good" business. The Bowery After Dark, which came the 30th of December, was destined to be popular. It starred a prize fighter, Terry McGovern; it had kidnapping, snake pits, Chinese gang leaders, opium dens, a mistreated wife, and a noble former lover to rescue her. It could not fail.

A production of Faust became one of the worst failures of the season. The "electrical effects were magnificent" but the company was poor. Arizona, starring Lionel Barrymore, played the week of March 17, and was rated at the end of the season as "one of the best things presented at the Crescent this season, and was a good drawing

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266 Picayune, February 18, 1901, p. 4.
268 Picayune, April 28, 1901, sec. 4, p. 14.
269 Picayune, December 31, 1900, p. 5.
270 Picayune, November 19, 1900, p. 6.
The final production of the 1900-1901 season was a return visitor to New Orleans. It was entitled The Still Alarm and had a hero designed to bring out "the sighs, the sentiments, the love and humor of the whole story."\(^{272}\)

In addition to these there were engagements of In Old Kentucky and Sis Hopkins. Out of a season of thirty-four weeks there were four minstrel shows, Black Patti, one magic show, and ten melodramas. This may partially explain a statement made by a reporter following the summary of the season's business: "This summary shows that the grade of attractions, not being very high, with few exceptions they had the attendance that was expected."\(^{273}\)

There were some shows which did well. For the second time the engagement of Emma and Johnny Hay was the most successful of the season. Other big successes were McFadden's Flats, the Field Minstrels, The Floorwalkers, Black Patti, The Telephone Girl, The Evil Eye, The Watch on the Rhine and Arizona.

1901-1902

Twelve shows from the 1900-1901 season reappeared during the 1901-1902 season. Another, The Prisoner of Zenda, with Harry Leighton, came back after a three year absence.

Five of the best and most popular productions of the season were imports from the Tulane. Frances Stevens headed a company of The

\(^{271}\)Picayune, April 28, 1901, sec. 4, p.14.

\(^{272}\)Picayune, April 15, 1901, p. 7.

\(^{273}\)Picayune, April 28, 1901, sec. 4, p. 14.
Little Minister and appeared the week of October 14. On November 25, The Belle of New York, which was a "tuneful and gorgeously-dressed extravaganza" was "even stronger, brighter and more entertaining than when it was here last." Another musical was The Burgomaster, which appeared in February and was exactly as it had been when it appeared early in the season at the Tulane. Two religious plays, The Sign of the Cross and Quo Vadis, were as successful at the Crescent as they had been at the more fashionable Tulane.

The rest of the season was a mixture of farce and melodrama. Human Hearts made its first appearance; Joseph Murphy, "the stage's richest actor" presented his Kerry Gow; and the "charming Adelaide Thurston" starred in Sweet Clover, which "was like a breath of pure country air."

One of the most noteworthy and successful events of the season was the appearance of the Cohan family in George M. Cohan's musical farce, The Governor's Son.

When The Governor's Son returned to the Crescent on February 2, 1903, Mardi Gras week, its popularity was reaffirmed and "The Four

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274 Picayune, November 25, 1901, p. 2.
275 Picayune, February 24, 1902, p. 12.
276 Laurie and Green, op. cit., p. 183.
277 Picayune, March 10, 1902, p. 12.
278 Picayune, February 17, 1902, p. 12.
Cohans broke the record for business at the Crescent Theatre. As a whole, however, this was the least successful season which the popular theatre had during the entire twelve year period.

The opening attraction was Herrmann the magician. He was followed by a musical farce starring the German dialect comedian, Pete Baker, which was marked with "good business for a poor company." The third week had McFadden's Flats, "a silly play which did more business than it deserved." The Devil's Auction did poorly. Then Murray and Mack brought A Night on Broadway, on September 28, during a street-car strike which had paralyzed the city and did "splendid" business despite it.

The remainder of 1902 had only two good weeks. Al G. Field and George Sidney gave the only successful performances. During the three month period, from October through December, there were eight melodramas whose attendance ranged from "bad" to "fair." Perhaps the reviewer of My Partner, by Bartley Campbell, was speaking for melodramas in general when he said, "Were Campbell here today and writing, he would recognize that the play is not fitted to offer in things theatrical today." Even the loyal Crescent audiences could find little to please them during the three months.

The new year opened with a return engagement of The Belle of New York and business picked up a bit, but not much. The only real

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279 Picayune, April 19, 1903, sec. 3, p. 12. Seasonal Summary.
280 Idem.
281 Idem.
282 Picayune, November 17, 1902, p. 3.
money-makers of the spring were the production of Mason and Mason, the Primrose and Dockstader minstrels, Effie Ellsler, Al H. Wilson, the Cohans, and a show called Happy Hooligan. This last production was a "mixture of vaudeville, singing... with no respect for proper time or story." The comment at the end of the season was "a rotten show, wonderful business."  

The record for the worst business of the season belonged to a show entitled The Irish Pawnbroker. In the yearly summary the management tersely dismissed the show with "The worst that ever happened, no business."  

There are two explanations for the poor business of the 1902-1903 season. Many of the productions were not very good. In the case of shows like At the Old Cross Roads the script was bad. In other shows, such as The Two Orphans, the company was "not of the highest order."  

The other reason for such bad business could have been the fact that out of a total of thirty-three attractions which came to the theatre, fourteen had appeared before and eight were new shows built around stars who appeared annually. That meant that only eleven shows during the season were new to the Crescent; and of that eleven, five had appeared before in New Orleans.  

283 Picayune, March 2, 1903, p. 3.  
284 Picayune, April 19, 1903, sec. 3, p. 12.  
285 Idem.  
286 Picayune, November 24, 1902, p. 5.
The season of 1903-1904 was better, both financially and artistically. There were fourteen of the "regular" shows performed that year, but some of these had been revised and some had new casts. McFadden's Flats, for example, had "been completely redone and modernized." 287

The biggest appeal of this season, however, lay in the twenty new productions. Such shows as Mr. Jolly of Joliet, with Edward Garvie; Nat M. Will's A Son of Rest; an extravaganza called The Storks; and the Wizard of Oz, with the popular minstrel comic Bert Swor, all played to big audiences. 288 They proved that the popular-priced audience would still come to the theatre when they were given something to see.

Of the thirty-four attractions that year, only six played to "bad" business. They were Pickings from Puck, "a musical potpourri;" 289 Under Two Flags, from an original story by Ouida. The Eight Bells was given a very poor production, with the Byrne Brothers. In fact, this show received some of the strongest criticism of any show which played the Crescent all year. "There is dialogue, but it is nonsensical, and even if one tried to follow it so as to make out what the story is, the actors who do speak, employ monotones and swallow whatever is

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287 Picayune, September 14, 1903, p. 4.
288 Democrat, April 24, 1904, sec. 3, p. 8. Seasonal Summary.
289 Democrat, October 5, 1903, p. 3.
intelligent to the lines."  

Andrew Robson's production of Richard Carvel, another of the six, was hampered by a bad cast. This was also true of the play A Friend of the Family. The last of the "bad" shows was The New Dominion, with Clay Clement. It possessed a fairly good company and was a good show, but it played the last week of the season and no one came.

The biggest week of the year was the week following Christmas when In Old Kentucky appeared for its eleventh season.

One production was omitted from the rating prepared by the management at the close of the season. This was a musical, The Smart Set. The cast was all-Negro. One newspaper, The Picayune, reviewed the play but was disturbed that such a show was presented in a first class theatre. There was no review at all in the Times-Democrat and neither paper carried advertisements for the show.

1904-1905

There was no published financial summary for the 1904-1905 season, so this study can make no definite statement as to the monetary success of the offerings. It was, however, a typical Crescent schedule and there was no particular reason for the shows to receive less than their usual patronage. The Crescent audience was possessed of an indomitable optimism. It would therefore be safe to assume that some of the

290 Picayune, March 7, 1904, p. 2.
291 Picayune, April 18, 1904, p. 9.
292 Democrat, April 24, 1904, sec, p. 8.
293 Picayune, November 16, 1903, p. 10.
mediocre productions did poorly but that the majority enjoyed their usual good receipts.

The season opened on September 5, with a new cast in the Klaw and Erlanger extravaganza, The Liberty Belles. The second show of the year was a rousing melodrama, Darkest Russia, which was very old but which had never played the Crescent before. 294

These two productions were followed by nine weeks of "reruns;" a drama supposedly set in Louisiana, Under Southern Skies;295 Kerry Cow; and Human Hearts. During the rest of the season there were seven musicals and seven "dramas." Two of the musicals, A Girl from Dixie and The Runaways, were specifically noted as having received good attendance. Terrance, with the singer Chauncey Olcott on his first Southern tour, received perhaps the best reviews of the season. 296

The remainder of the season excited little comment.

1905-1906

Again there was no financial review prepared by the management. Again the offerings were typical Crescent fare. The only notable discrepancy was that only ten of the annual shows were presented that year. Part of this was due to the yellow fever plague which had kept the city under quarantine until the end of October. Thus, some of

294 Picayune, September 12, 1904, p. 11.
295 Picayune, November 21, 1904, p. 10.
296 Picayune, January 30, 1905, p. 9.
the regular productions which always came early in the season were forced to forego New Orleans.

Of the new shows which filled out the season, only four were dramas. Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch and The Old Homestead made their initial appearance at the Crescent. It seems safe to surmise that both had successful weeks. A comedy with "a hint of tears," A Texas Steer, starring Tim Murphy and a detective melodrama, Secret Service Sam, completed the list of "serious plays."

There were ten new musical productions. The spectacular Babes in Toyland; Checkers, a "slightly emotional comedy;" and the ever-popular Buster Brown were the most publicized, and probably the most interesting, of the new musicals.

1906-1907

The management called the 1906-1907 season the "most prosperous ever enjoyed in New Orleans." Campbell added,

"Of course, this is to be accounted for by the steady and rapid growth of the well-to-do classes in New Orleans and by the city's ever-increasing popularity as a winter resort. . . . From a financial viewpoint it has been the best, from an artistic point of view that is best judged by the theatre-going public."

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298 Picayune, November 13, 1905, p. 7.
299 Picayune, January 29, 1906, p. 11.
300 Democrat, April 21, 1907, sec. 4, p. 11.
During this season the Crescent was, for the first time in its history, the temporary home of a stock company. The Baldwin-Melville Company presented three plays as a preliminary season. They had good business.

The regular season began on September 16, with the annual appearance of McFadden's Flats. Sixteen of the season's engagements had previously appeared at the Crescent. In addition, Nat M. Wills returned in a new play; and Raffles, which had appeared at the Tulane the preceding season made its first popular-priced tour. One of the oldest shows during the year was the forty year old spectacular, The Black Crook. Although it had been presented many times in New Orleans it had never appeared at the Crescent.

In spite of the absence of new productions, six of the shows played to "capacity" houses. They were the Field Minstrels; Metz in the Alps; Checkers; A Lucky Dog, the Wills show; Buster Brown and Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch. Not one show that season had "bad" business.

The biggest social event of the season was the Crescent appearance of Miss Lillian Russell in The Butterfly, February 11, 1907. It was the first time she had been in New Orleans in many years; and, although there "were some dull moments" in the show, Miss Russell gave the Crescent patrons a gay Carnival Week.

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301 Picayune, April 21, 1907, sec. 3, p. 3. Seasonal Summary.
302 Picayune, February 11, 1907, p. 15.
Despite the stockmarket panic in New York, the 1907-1908 season was a big year for the Crescent. Nine attractions played "capacity" houses. Once again over one-half of the attractions were the "old familiars," but they retained their popularity.

Some of the more important engagements of the season deserve special notice. The new Cohan show, George Washington, Jr., for example, was one which had and deserved "capacity" audiences. The Virginian made its first appearance at the popular theatre. Kelcey and Shannon played the Crescent in a good production of The Walls of Jennico. Ironically these two stars who usually appeared at the Tulane had only "fair" attendance at the Crescent.

Mardi Gras week saw "One of the best musical shows of the time" when The Ham Tree played a "big" week with James McIntyre and T. K. Heath. The "most important engagement of the term at this house" was the appearance of James O'Neill in The Count of Monte Cristo. It was the twenty-fifth year for the play. O'Neill had played the role over 6,000 times but it was still popular.

Only two shows of the season were rated as having had "poor" attendance. They were The Black Crook and Little Dollie Dimple.

303 Picayune, April 12, 1908, sec. 3, p. 10. Seasonal Summary.
304 Picayune, January 6, 1908, p. 12.
305 Picayune, March 2, 1908, p. 13.
306 Democrat, April 12, 1908, sec. 3, p. 8.
307 Picayune, March 30, 1908, p. 2.
The latter was described as "a light comedy drama, interspersed with music and vaudeville bits. . . ." It starred Grace Cameron. It should, in all fairness to Miss Cameron, be noted that the show appeared the first week of Lent. This was never a popular theatre week; in Catholic New Orleans it was even less apt to be successful.

1908-1909

In 1908-1909 the Crescent had another financially successful season. This is somewhat fantastic and is a monument to the loyalty of the Crescent audience; since out of a schedule of thirty-one plays, only five were shows which had not appeared previously at that theatre. Three of the new shows, surprisingly, played only "fair" business. They were the "melodramatic" Lena Rivers; The Cat and the Fiddle, an extravaganza with a profusion of scenery and a cast of forty; and the Cohan play, The Honeymooners. The George Ade comedy, Just Out of College, starring William A. Mortimer played a "big" week, and the musical, Lois from Berlin, with Corinne, played to "good" audiences.

Obviously the Crescent patrons had great stamina when it came to their favorite shows. There were four "capacity" weeks for Al Wilson, The Time, the Place and the Girl, Buster Brown, and Mrs. Wiggs. George Sidney, Al G. Field, and Rose Melville played to "big" audiences.

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308 Picayune, March 9, 1908, p. 8.
310 Picayune, April 18, 1909, sec. 3, p. 10. Seasonal Summary.
Only five shows had "poor" weeks. They were The Devil's Auction; Human Hearts; Faust; King Casey, with the Rays; and "an absorbing story of the west," Texas. The rest of the season had either "good" or "fair" attendance.

1909-1910

The 1909-1910 season got off to a slow start, but attendance picked up and the year was relatively successful. Eleven of the perennial favorites returned. Al Wilson, in Metz in Ireland, played the record week for the season. Other "capacity" weeks were recorded for The Girl from Rectors and Buster Brown.

The Girl from Rectors was a combined burlesque-farce and was a bit "suggestive." As one critic remarked, "While the play is not one that would serve as a Sunday School entertainment, it is not half as bad as some people expected it, for it is said that it has been purged somewhat." Nevertheless, it still had bid audiences.

Five productions came to the Crescent after having played the Tulane the preceding year. Only two had "big" business. The Right of Way and The Red Mill, with Bert Swor, had new, but good, casts and were well received. The other three, Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway, The Man of the Hour, and The Lion and the Mouse, had adequate second companies but they played to "fair" business.

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311 Picayune, March 15, 1909, p. 11.
312 Democrat, April 17, 1910, sec. 3, p. 8. Seasonal summary.
313 Picayune, January 31, 1910, p. 2.
The one "poor" week of the season went to a play entitled *Pierre of the Plains*. The play received one of the best reviews of the entire season. The *Picayune* critic said, "the tone is pitched in a high key of emotions, as the action deals with the love and hate, with the life and death of red corpselled men, and so reaches a plane of melodrama of a very high order, with a consistent and probable plot, real characters and true emotions." The cast was described as being strong and well-balanced. But for some reason the play, despite its melodramatic action, did not appeal to the Crescent audience.

1910-1911

The season of 1910-1911 was the last of the Prosperous Period, and "to the surprise of the management" it was a better season than the previous one. As Mr. Campbell was quoted as saying in April, 1911, "Notwithstanding everyone's cry of hard times and the fact that little business has been done in other cities in the show business, New Orleans theatre-goers apparently appreciated the excellent attractions which have been sent here."

Thirty-one shows were presented; thirteen had played the Crescent in previous years. Only two were imports from the Tulane. *Polly of the Circus* had appeared at the higher priced theatre the year before. *Brewster's Millions* had played there during the 1908-1909 season.

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31h *Picayune*, October 11, 1909, p. 12.

Neither had a company as competent as the original, but both did good business. Of the remaining sixteen shows, seven were musical comedies and nine were melodramas or dramas.

Throughout the years New Orleans' patronage of the Crescent had been liberal. The Crescent was a popular-priced theatre so it never experienced the record breaking $10,000 or $12,000 box offices which the Tulane received. The admissions were low, but the income was steady. Despite the lack of variety in scheduling, despite the many second and third rate companies, the twelve year period had truly been prosperous.

Now, however, a new era was about to begin for the Crescent. The melodramas and the musicals would continue to appear on the stages, but the great prosperity was over. From now on the Al Wilsons, Rose Melvilles and George Sidneys would have to share the stage with a large motion picture screen.
CHAPTER IV

"The Erratic Period"

The second period in the history of the Tulane and Crescent theatres, 1911 to 1917, was relatively short. It was not marked by any great changes in the managerial policies of the theatres, the kinds of productions which appeared or the audiences who attended. There was, nevertheless, one outstanding characteristic which distinguished it from the years preceding or following it. These six years had an erratic quality which had been missing in the earlier years.

For the first time, the patterns of scheduling and the policies which were evident in the Prosperous Period began to be unstable. For example, films became a part of the regular Tulane and Crescent season. During the latter years of the Erratic Period, various stock companies played prolonged engagements at the Crescent. When this occurred the shows which properly belonged at the Crescent then appeared at the Tulane at "popular" prices. Even more indicative of the changing times in the theatre, both houses were sometimes closed for a week or more because productions were not available.

It might be said, therefore, that the six years from September, 1911, to April, 1917, were a transition between the Period of Prosperity and the time when the Crescent became a movie and vaudeville house and left the Tulane as the only legitimate theatre running continuously in New Orleans.

In studying this Erratic Period the stars and productions which came to the two theatres will be discussed. In addition, there are
other events which must be considered because of their effect upon the Tulane and Crescent. In actuality, these factors influenced the theatres more than did the attractions which appeared. They were factors which, directly and indirectly, shaped the theatrical history of the Tulane and Crescent and of New Orleans.

The first of these factors, and one which directly affected the shows and the personnel of the theatres, was the prolonged battle which occurred in Louisiana over the Child Labor Laws. Another factor which had a direct influence upon the finances of the two theatres was the personal war which Henry Greenwall was waging against the Syndicate and its monopoly over the New Orleans theatre. The two remaining factors, which were not native to New Orleans but which affected the theatres of the city, were the increasing popularity of the motion picture with its accompanying vaudeville attractions, and World War I.

The Child Labor Law

In July, 1908, the State of Louisiana passed a child labor law. This was brought about, primarily, by the efforts of one woman, Jean Gordon. Miss Gordon, the daughter of a prominent New Orleans educator, had been appointed factory inspector for the city. Through the knowledge gained from this position, her interest in child welfare was aroused. With the help of her sister, Kate, and with the backing of the Era Club, a pioneer woman's club of the city which supported civic projects, she drafted a bill for the regulation of child labor

in the state. "Fighting against what appeared at times to be insurmountable obstacles, she succeeded at the 1907 session of the Legislature, in having the new law passed, modeled on acts that had proved effective in other states."²

The Bill, which was approved by the Legislature on July 9, 1908, regulated the employment of children, young persons and women in the state. Section I of the law stated:

It is unlawful. . . to employ any child under the age of fourteen years to labor or work in any mills, factories, mines and packing houses, manufacturing establishments, workshops, laundries, millinery or dressmaking stores, or mercantile establishments in which more than 5 persons are employed, or in any theatre, concert hall, or in any place of amusement where intoxicating liquors are made or sold. . . . Any violation of this provision shall be punishable by a fine of not less than $25 or more than $50 or by imprisonment in the Parish Jail for not less than ten days or more than six months, or both, in the discretion of the Court.³

The effect of this law upon the theatres of New Orleans was not immediate, but it was, eventually, costly. For the first year there was no trouble and stage children were not prohibited from appearing in New Orleans. Then in 1909, Miss Gordon became aroused and began to enforce the measure. During the next three years, in accordance with the law, some shows that were booked for New Orleans were cancelled because of the fact that children played leading roles.⁴ In some instances the management of the Tulane and Crescent ordered the cast changed or the children's roles omitted.

⁴*Picayune*, March 19, 1912, p. 6.
In 1909, for example, during the engagement of The Squaw Man at the Crescent, a sixteen year old boy was used in place of the original eight year old. When The Red Mill, with Bert Swor, played the same theatre in January, 1910, "the six little Dutch kiddies, which was one of the attractive features of the show last year, had to be omitted." During a production of Human Hearts, "The child's lines are spoken by one of the members of the company behind the scenes." Such measures satisfied Miss Gordon and prevented unpleasantness between the theatrical managers and the advocates of the law.

In January, 1910, however, during an engagement of Mrs. Fiske's Salvation Nell, Campbell was forced to reach a decision.

For sometime a great deal of trouble has been experienced at both the Tulane and Crescent Theatres because of the fact that no children were allowed to take part in any of the standard productions shown there, and when Mrs. Fiske announced that she would not play in this city unless the children were allowed to act, it was seen that some action would have to be taken to give the law a thorough test. Accordingly, when the curtain rose on Monday night's performance, the two children in the Fiske play, Grace Sharley, aged 13 years, and Antrim Short, aged 9 years, were sent on to act their parts. Immediately afterwards Miss Jean Gordon, factory inspector, made a charge against Mr. Campbell for violating that section of the child labor law which forbids the performance of children on the professional stage.

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5 Picayune, December 20, 1909, p. 12.
6 Picayune, January 10, 1910, p. 2.
7 Picayune, January 30, 1911, p. 11.
8 Picayune, January 5, 1910, p. 9.
Campbell was arrested and the following morning he appeared before Judge Andrew Wilson of the Juvenile Court. After pleading not guilty, Campbell was released until the hearing on Thursday. In speaking to reporters, the manager of the Tulane said that a test case would be made. "We will test the law because we want to understand the situation."

The children performed again and Campbell was again arrested. He was paroled on bond furnished by his lawyers; but he announced that he intended to allow the children to play during the week and that a child would be used the following week in the Lambardi Opera Company production of Madame Butterfly.

On Thursday, the hearing was postponed until a similar case which was then before a higher court could be decided. That was the case of the State vs. Lew Rose, manager of the American Music Hall. Rose had been arrested and convicted by the Juvenile Court for allowing a four­teen year old child, Rosemary Shields, to appear on his stage. When the case was decided the court upheld the constitutionality of the law and affirmed the judgment of Judge Wilson, finding Rose guilty.

Therefore, on January 22, 1910, Campbell, accompanied by his lawyer, appeared before Judge Wilson and pleaded guilty of violating the law on the Fiske and Lambardi engagements. He was fined a minimum $25 on each charge, or $125.

In passing sentence Judge Wilson said:

\[\text{Idem.}^{\text{9}}\]

\[\text{Picayune, January 18, 1910, sec. 1, p. 5.}^{\text{10}}\]
The court understands your attitude in this matter, and I understand also that you were placed in such a position through contracts you had and not thoroughly understanding the law, the law at that time not having been positively determined by the Supreme Court. Of course, every body knows your reputation in the community and in that you contribute to some extent to the good of the community, and in making a plea of guilty in this way I understand that you desire to throw yourself upon the lenience of the court, and I want to meet you in that spirit.

This was not the end of the matter. In April, 1910, the Supreme Court decided that in the case of the State vs. Lew Rose, the Juvenile Court was without the right to try cases involving a violation of the child labor law. In 1911, the manager of the Dauphine, Greenwall's theatre, was charged and fined $75 for allowing a child to appear in The Doll's House. In February and March, 1912, Campbell again faced the courts. He was charged with eighteen violations in allowing children to appear in The Bachelor's Baby, with Francis Wilson, and The Real Thing, with Henrietta Crosman. When the case appeared before Judge Wilson, Campbell again pleaded guilty. Because of his plea, eleven of the charges were dropped and he was fined $175 for seven violations.

When Campbell appeared in Court in March, he denied having heard any rumors that the Legislature would soon amend the law so that stage children could be allowed to perform. It soon became evident that such a prospect was not to be ignored. In March, W. O. Hart, a member of the New Orleans Commission on Uniform State Laws, met with Miss Gordon and others on the Child Labor Committee to discuss the law in

11 Picayune, January 23, 1910, sec. 1, p. 5.
12 Picayune, April 12, 1910, p. 5.
its relation to child actors. At a National Conference of the Commission it had been recommended that a uniform child labor law be considered and this recommendation was to be presented to the various State Legislatures at their next sessions.\textsuperscript{13}

On March 19, 1912, the newspapers announced that a "strong delegation of those interested in the theatres will be present at the next session of the General Assembly and seek to have the law amended so that children can perform in the up-to-date theatres after being given a permit by the judge of the Juvenile Court or whomsoever the Legislature sees fit to appoint for this especial function."\textsuperscript{14} One explanation for this move was that the local managers "were weary of being dragged into court and forced to pay fines whenever a child appears in one of their theatres."\textsuperscript{15} During the period in which the law had been enforced, the local managers had paid over $1,000 in fines to the courts.

Senator George Clinton drew up the amendment and presented it to the Legislature when it convened in Baton Rouge. By June the newspapers were reporting, "The fight over the proposed amendment to the child labor law so as to admit children on the stage under proper protection has suddenly developed into one of the legislative features and both sides are gathered here... in full force, ready for the public hearing tomorrow night."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13}Picayune, March 16, 1912, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{14}Picayune, March 19, 1912, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{15}Idem.
\textsuperscript{16}Picayune, June 11, 1912, p. 1.
In support of the Clinton Bill, the theatrical interests had as their leader Francis Wilson, the star of *The Bachelor's Baby*. Nick Fraish, president of the Central Trades Council, and other labor leaders were also there to argue for the amendment. In addition, the full persuasive power of the *Daily Picayune* was firmly behind the theatres.

On the other side stood Miss Jean Gordon, "determined to fight any encroachment on child labor protection," and the Era Club.

On June 11, "the joint committee of the House and Senate on capital and labor heard arguments ... on the Clinton Bill. ... The House of Representatives was packed with ladies from New Orleans and Baton Rouge, who appeared in opposition to the bill."

Letters of endorsement from a large number of theatrical men were read. Judge Wilson, of the Juvenile Court, wrote that he too approved of the bill since "He found the children who appeared on the stage, especially at the Tulane and Dauphine theatres, especially healthy and moral conditions satisfactory." A number of telegrams from "Former stage children," such as William Gillette, William Collier, Ethel Barrymore and George M. Cohan, were read in support of the bill.

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17 In contrast to the *Picayune*, which gave such a complete coverage of the incident, the *Times-Democrat* remained almost silent.


19 *Picayune*, June 12, 1912, p. 2.

20 *Idem.*
The advocates of the passage of the bill climaxed their arguments with a speech by Mr. Francis Wilson. He said:

I know it is not your intention to abolish the theatre, and you can't have theatre at its best if you rob it of its source of supply, the child.

Every state that enacts such a law is robbing a nation of its opportunity to cultivate its geniuses.

This is not child protection. It is child prosecution. The child might say 'Heaven deliver us from our friends.' The opposition of the child on the stage is absolutely unreasonable. The youth and innocence of the child gave it its protection. The child of the stage has just as many mothers and fathers as there are members of the company. The actors who do not have the advantage of young training have great obstacles to overcome. The stage is not a trade, but an art, and the names of Shakespeare and others cry out in protest against regarding it as anything else.21

The opposition opened its arguments with Samuel Wolfe, of New Orleans, who had made an "exhaustive examination of the question as to whether children are ever really needed on the stage," and concluded they were not.22 Wolfe first read a telegram from Samuel Gompers opposing the amendment. He also claimed that the "act is so badly drawn, so badly written that it would be a disgrace to put it on the statute book."23 He added that the people of Louisiana were opposed to any change in the law and that the sole protest had been from the theatrical interests of New York.

Miss Gordon closed the arguments for the opposition. She said that all of the women's organizations in the state had endorsed the

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21 Picayune, June 12, 1912, p. 3.
22 Democrat, June 2, 1912, sec. 2, p. 6.
23 Idem.
opposition. She charged that the New Orleans newspapers were in favor of the bill because of the advertising given them by the theatres. She closed her speech with these warning words, "The back door of the theater is the easiest way for the white slave trafficker. . . ." 24

The meeting of the two committees was adjourned without any action being taken. Later, the Senate committee, meeting alone, voted three to three and the measure reached the Senate floor. Both Miss Gordon and Mr. Wilson stayed in Baton Rouge.

There were some changes made in the amendment during the committee meetings. When the bill reached the Senate, the penalty clause provided that "any person, firm or corporation licensed or holding a license for any theatre within the state who shall be convicted hereunder shall, upon such conviction, forfeit such license." To further protect the child, the following clause was also added.

In case of a non-resident child, no permit shall be granted unless such child be accompanied by a parent or guardian or a custodian duly designated in writing, attested by a notary public by said child's parents or guardian. 25

The Senate resumed its night session of June 19, and the first measure taken up was the Clinton Bill. It passed the Senate with a vote of twenty-seven to ten. The Bill then had to go before the House. It "received a hostile reception" there. 26 Before being voted upon by the House the Bill had to go before a committee which would study it and then present its report to the House. Chairman Gleason of the

24 Idem.
25 Picayune, June 15, 1912, p. 3.
26 Democrat, June 22, 1912, p. 7.
Committee on Capital and Labor wanted it referred to his committee. However, "on a division, the House by 40 to 31, voted to refer the bill to the Committee on Education. That committee is believed to be unfriendly to the bill." 27

When the matter was considered at a session of the educational committee, on June 26, Miss Gordon opened fire. In a long speech she assailed Judge Wilson for his change of view. She admitted that the situation as it had existed, with children performing and the managers paying a minimum fine, was bad but added, "We can change the judge a great deal easier than we can change the law, and I hope to God that some day we can change the judge." 28

Senator Gleason then spoke for the bill and accused Miss Gordon of a biased attack upon Judge Wilson. As he said, "I believe these ladies opposed Judge Wilson in his recent campaign for re-election, and their opposition resulted in his election by an over-whelming majority." 29 Bernard Shields, father of the child in the case of the State vs. Lew Rose, spoke for the bill and added: "I wish to say that we all appreciate the noble work done by the women on behalf of the children, but I wish to call your attention to the fact that none of the noble women who have been quoted as supporting this bill... are mothers." 30

27 Idem.
28 Picayune, June 28, 1912, p. 3.
29 Idem.
30 Idem.
This time Miss Gordon won. The "House Committee on Education, by a vote of 10 to 5, made an unfavorable report on the Clinton Bill." The bill still had to come before the House. On July 1, the Picayune published an open letter from Francis Wilson in which he supported the bill. On July 6, a notice was put on the desks of all House members which read:

Southern chivalry will probably be invoked against the Clinton stage child bill in order to uphold the ladies of the Era Club, but Southern organized labor is supporting the Clinton bill, and the Southern press, the Picayune, the Times-Democrat, the States and other papers are supporting the Clinton Bill, and all ask its passage as a law which gives the child of genius a chance in life a square deal and surrounds childhood with greater protection than has ever before been legislated to it. The greatest advocate in the world for child protection, Judge Ben B. Lindsey, of Colorado, where there is a similar law, is in favor of the Clinton Bill. The Louisiana Senate, by a vote of 27 to 10, passed the Clinton bill. It is a pattern law that should and probably will be copied by every state in the Union, if it should pass this Legislature.

A Picayune reporter, in Baton Rouge, described the situation as it stood at the first of July.

The Clinton bill, allowing children on the stage under proper protection, has been lying on the House calendar for several weeks, laboring under the unfavorable report from the House committee on education. It will come up possibly next Monday on second reading, reports by committees, and then the final fight will take place over this measure. If the advocates are sufficiently strong, they will advance it to third reading and final passage. If not, it will be put to everlasting sleep so far as this session is concerned. Miss Gordon, opposed, and Francis Wilson, the actor, advocate, have never left the

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31 Picayune, June 29, 1912, p. 10.
32 Picayune, July 7, 1912, p. 9.
scene of battle, and have sat through weary weeks, watching the bill through all of its legislative stages. In a spirit of levity this week's resolutions were sent up granting both Mr. Wilson and Miss Gordon eight days leave of absence, which would have been the end of the session, but they stuck to the ship.  

On July 10, the Clinton Bill was finally presented for a vote by the House. It passed by a vote of forty-four to twenty. As if everyone were tired after the long weeks of haranguing, there was no oratory before the voting. Afterwards, a House member who had opposed the bill gave the following explanation for his negative vote.

I am a Louisianian and am opposed to a New York Syndicate maintaining a lobby here in Baton Rouge for the purpose of influencing the Louisiana Legislature.

It is useless for us to talk about Southern chivalry and the nobility of Southern women if we are to turn a deaf ear to their appeals for help and go to the assistance of a New York 'yankee' who is here at the behest of their cruel and evil-minded syndicate. God never intended that I—the son of a Confederate soldier—should ever be guilty of committing such a crime. Before I will vote for such a measure and dishonor the name of my dead father, whose remains now rest quietly and peacefully beneath the sod in yonder valley, I will return to my home and dispose of all of my earthly possessions, save my wife and baby, and will take one of them in my arms and the other by the hand, and, like the Arabs of old, will fold my tent and steal away.  

Miss Gordon and her supporters had lobbied hard and long, but they lost. After the passage of the bill she went through the House thanking her supporters. The theatrical interests were the victors. Children could now appear on New Orleans' stages. Francis Wilson, and the advocators of the bill, had opposed an organized band of Louisiana women and had won.

33Idem.
34Picayune, July 10, 1912, p. 10.
Greenwall vs. the Syndicate

The second factor which greatly influenced the Tulane and the Crescent theatres during the Erratic Period was the continued opposition of Henry Greenwall to the Syndicate and its theatrical monopoly. As John Kendall said, "In the annals of the American stage he will long have a place as the manager who in the Deep South headed the opposition to the combine, or syndicate, or booking systems, which in the opinion of contemporary observers, did more than anything else to bring to a close the grand epoch of the theatre in this country." 35

When he first entered the fight against the Syndicate, Greenwall was a wealthy man. As a result of the conflict, by 1909, practically all of his money was gone. He had managed, however, to keep three theatres in New Orleans; the Greenwall, the Elysium, and the Dauphine. They were not very profitable or important during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Greenwall was a burlesque house and the Dauphine and Elysium housed various stock companies. In 1910, Greenwall reached an agreement with the Shuberts, representing the Independents, whereby their touring shows would play at the Dauphine.

For the first time, the Tulane had competition; and for the next three seasons there was a noticeable change in the attractions which played the Tulane. Despite a statement by Campbell in 1911, that "So far as my observation went, I could not see any sign of the two factions when I was in New York. It seemed to be Klaw & Erlanger and their allies first, and no second..." 36 there was evidence

36 Picayune, August 22, 1911, p. 5.
of a change in New Orleans. Stars who had previously appeared only at the Tulane were suddenly playing the Dauphine. Tim Murphy, Robert Mantell, Dockstader's Minstrels, Frederick Warde, Wilton Lackaye, and Sothern and Marlowe were making their annual New Orleans visits to Greenwall's theatre instead of Klaw and Erlangers' Tulane and Crescent.

Eventually the Shuberts and the Syndicate realized they were losing money through their prolonged opposition; so "A working agreement was negotiated and their destructive competition ended,"\textsuperscript{37} Greenwall, therefore, could no longer obtain attractions for the Dauphine. In August, 1913, it was announced that for that season the Dauphine would have a stock company.\textsuperscript{38}

Thus the Dauphine's brief period of glory was over and its competition with the Tulane was ended. During the three years in which it had housed the touring companies of the Independents, it had, nevertheless, greatly affected the quality and the patronage of the Tulane attractions.

The Motion Picture

There has been much dispute as to who invented the motion picture, what was the first one, who was the first actor and other such questions. What is definitely known is that it was invented and in 1903, the epoch making film, \textit{The Great Train Robbery}, was produced. This


\textsuperscript{38}Picayune, August 15, 1913, p. 5.
was the first film to tell a story and it was the beginning of a world wide industry.  

At first no one in the theatre paid too much attention to this "novelty." They were very surprised, therefore, when, by 1907, "movies were being seen in virtually every large city throughout the United States and Europe." Meanwhile the theatre had been unwittingly preparing the way for the increased popularity of this toy.

The movement for pictorial realism and the urge toward size which had gripped the theatre during the latter part of the nineteenth century appealed to the theatre going public. "And, to maintain that popularity, the scenery grew heavier and heavier as productions grew more and more elaborate. Treadmills, tanks, trap doors, moving platforms became part of the equipment essential to any well appointed theatre."

When the shows eventually became too large for the theatres, and when the cost of transportation became too great, simplified productions had to be worked out for tours. The inevitable happened. An audience that had once seen Ben Hur or Quo Vadis would never again be content with painted backdrops and casts of a mere ten or twenty people. "At this point movies made their bow, achieving so readily, so naturally the kind of effects that theatre managers could only dream of."  

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Ibid., p. 11.

Ibid., p. 12.
The moving picture did not mean the immediate end of the legitimate theatre, but it was a threat. As early as 1912, a rather astute drama reporter for the Picayune warned

If the producers are not more energetic— if they do not produce more and better plays— the moving pictures will soon crowd them off the field.

Why was the Dauphine dark last night? Why is it necessary to fill in at the Tulane this week with motion pictures? Are they going to sleep through this danger that threatens their very existence?

Is there not something significant in the fact that the people of New Orleans are spending a great deal more on moving pictures than they are on the opera and drama and comedy combined? . . . But from now on the producers will have to be on the alert. They will have to hunt for new plays— and better plays. In short, they will have to elevate their standards, for they have an active enemy in the field.

In 1913, the same newspaper reported "There are 130 moving picture shows in New Orleans. . . . Sixty of these establishments employ vaudeville in addition to the stage attractions." The effect of this influx of motion picture theatres was evident on the legitimate theatres. More and more people were attending the moving pictures, fewer legitimate productions were touring, and soon more movies were being shown at the Tulane and Crescent.

World War I

The fourth factor, which influenced the Erratic Period was World War I and the uneasy years preceding it. Although America remained "neutral" until 1917, the events which led to the war and

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[Picayune, December 1, 1912, sec. 3, p. 8.]

[Picayune, August 24, 1913, sec. 4, p. 5.]
the conditions which evolved from it influenced the entire United States for a period of several years. Indirectly, the theatre of that time was influenced.

America had entered the Twentieth Century with high hopes. "From coast to coast, the country had never seen such good times."\(^45\)

As a modern writer summarized the optimism of the period:

> Countless miracles, boundless prosperity--they would go on and on--it was that simple. And perhaps this feeling that everything was so simple contributed most of all to the optimism and confidence that greeted the twentieth century. Wealth was simple--small boys grew up on Horatio Alger if you were good and worked hard, someday you would be rich. Rules were simple--nice people didn't mention sex, and even smoking was questionable.

> By the same token the future was simple. The rewards would go to the virtuous.\(^46\)

It was a period of naivete, exhuberance, injustice, and smug self-assurance, but it gave extra promise to life.

The financial panic of 1907 had placed a temporary damper on the spirit of optimism, but soon that was over and the population continued riding the crest of well-being. The South shared in the hope of the new century. The hard times of the nineteen hundreds were forgotten as cotton exports rose and the northern industries began their southward move. "Even the usually discontented farmers were happy."\(^47\)


\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 7.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 3.
This was the atmosphere in which the Tulane and Crescent had existed for thirteen years. This was also the bright future toward which they seemed to be proceeding. When Woodrow Wilson was elected president in 1912, the people saw no limit to the possibilities ahead. As the New York World described it, "a new era... a new vindication of republican institutions... a new birth of freedom." No one, therefore, was too concerned when, on June 28, 1914, a Central European Archduke was killed. "As the Grand Forks, North Dakota, Daily Herald put it: 'To the world, or to a nation, an archduke more or less makes little difference.'"

It was to make a big difference. Although America did not enter the war until 1917, the old life began slipping away.

Nothing seemed simple any more. Nothing was black and white. Nothing was 'right' or 'wrong'. . . As the simple problems vanished, so did the simple solutions . . . . But the problems grew and grew--preparedness... taxes... war... Bolshevism... disillusionment... depression... Facism... Moscow... fallout... space... more taxes.

As early as September, 1914, the theatrical interests were saying, "Whether the outbreak of war in Europe, affecting as it does the trans-Atlantic traffic, is going to interfere in any considerable degree with the new theatrical season, is yet to be seen." Although most New York managers confidently predicted that it would

48Ibid., p. 318.
49Ibid., p. 333.
50Ibid., p. 342.
51The Theatre, XX (September, 1914), 98.
all soon be over and that nothing was going to affect the American theatre, some changes did begin to occur.

In one respect the American stage profited. Some of the European stars, designers and writers, unable to work in their own countries, came to the United States and introduced innovations into the theatre. In other respects the theatre suffered in the years preceding the war. Prices continued to rise. New York producers became leery of spending large sums of money. As the New York output decreased, fewer new shows were available to the road.

The South, especially, was hurt economically by the European conflict. As the war in Europe continued, the Eastern manufacturers were able to supply products needed by the Allied countries, but the South was still primarily agrarian. Cotton was the staple product and its production and exportation was the basis of much of the Southern economy. With the British blockade and the danger of destruction of ships by the German navy, cotton exports declined. The "general depression of commerce and the industrial unrest, bad crops, etc., followed."52

The theatres of New Orleans, the "Queen City of the South," soon began to show the effects of the depressed Southern economy. Geographically the city was disadvantageously located for touring shows. In order to reach there, a company had to come the eastern route, through Atlanta and numerous one-night stands, or from St. Louis by way of one-night stands. With the effects of the European

52 Picayune, April 30, 1916, p. 16.
war and the weakening economy, these routes became increasingly unprofitable from 1914 to 1917. As a Picayune reporter explained it:

The European conflict, coupled with unfavorable conditions prevailing throughout the South, has made the road of the theatrical producer, like that of the average business promoter, rocky during the season of 1914-15. It has been more than a survival of the fit. Conditions which threw up an embargo that made the South prohibitive territory to all except the strongest financial backing were decidedly the feature of a season that probably will not see its equal, and which with the promised ending of the . . . chaos next season, is expected to be succeeded by a general re-awakening of the drama.  

As if it were a frantic gesture toward normalcy, the season of 1915-16, did see, in New Orleans, increased attendance at the theatre. The final two years of the Erratic period were not the "very best we could wish for. . . . " but they were an improvement over the preceding seasons.

Perhaps Campbell best summarized the existing situation.

It is somewhat early to predict just what the future holds in store for us. . . . In the past four years the drama has been brought face to face with many set-backs, due to more than one or two causes. The European war upset the stage throughout the world, and the reflex on the American drama was terrific. Then came the lamentable death of Charles Frohman, Charles Klein and others who have always stood for lofty ideals. . . .

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53 Picayune, April 11, 1915, p. 10.
54 Picayune, April 22, 1917, p. 9.
55 Producer Frohman and Klein, the author of The Lion and the Mouse and The Music Master, were drowned in the German sinking of the Luisitania on May 7, 1915.
No class of business is more susceptible to the pulsation of world events, trade movement and sentiment than the stage. Art thrives on prosperity. With bumper crops at home, a better control of commerce on the seas and steadier and broader trade relationships abroad, I look for the re-establishment of confidence, and future prosperity. The theatre will reap its share of the general improvement, for producers will be able to see their way clear to heavy investments, and the public will be more disposed to seek the playhouse for diversion and entertainment.

On April 6, 1917, America entered the first World War.

The Erratic Period: 1911-1916

The Crescent and Tulane

1911-1912

The first year of the Erratic Period in the history of the Tulane and Crescent theatres opened on a note of hope. As one reviewer commented: "That New Orleans residents are hungry for entertainment was demonstrated yesterday when, despite the warmth, large audiences poured into the three theatres which opened the 1911-12 season." At the Crescent, McFadden's Flats, in its fourteenth year, had a capacity audience plus two hundred and fifty standees for opening night. The Girl in the Train opened at the Tulane to a packed house.

In surveying the 1911-12 season at the Crescent, the most obvious element is the similarity of the schedule to those of the preceding years. Thirty-two shows came during the season.

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56 Picayune, April 30, 1916, p. 16.
57 Democrat, September 4, 1911, p. 4.
Fifteen of these attractions had played the theatre the previous year. These returning shows included *The Virginian*, Field's Minstrels, *Buster Brown*, *The Rosary* and other old favorites. Of the seventeen "new" shows, four, *The Soul Kiss*, *The Traitor*, *The Winning Widow* and *The Third Degree*, had previously appeared at the Tulane. Two others were the long-running *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* and *The White Slave*, and the perennial George Sidney brought back a revival of *Busy Izzy*, which had last played the Crescent in 1904.

There were ten shows which were appearing for the first time. Five were musical farces, two were romances, two were comedies, and one was a melodrama. In spite of the lack of variety in the Crescent schedule, Campbell expressed "satisfaction" over the financial returns for the year.¹⁰⁹

Also, during this first season of the period, there was further evidence of the changes that were to come to the Crescent. There was the absence of some of the regular stars who had appeared so often at that theatre. Such favorites as James O'Neill, Thurston, the Magician, the Rays, and others were forsaking the legitimate theatre for vaudeville. With the increasing popularity of the movie-vaudeville combination and the higher salaries paid to vaudeville performers, more stars were being attracted to this medium.

Another trend which became more conspicuous during this season was the attention given by the reviewers to the moral

¹⁰⁹ *Democrat*, March 31, 1912, sec. 4, p. 11.
quality of the productions. This author is unable to state defi-
nitely whether the attractions were more coarse or vulgar than
usual, or whether the Crescent audiences were becoming more moral.
It was probably a combination of both factors.

Whatever the reason, the reviewers were more critical than they
had formerly been. The Blue Mouse, for example, was described as
"salacious." The Girl From Rectors depended "upon the gross
vulgarity of its lines and situations, principally the latter." Even the Picayune reporter, who was less prone to comment upon
such matters, was forced to say that The Soul Kiss "would have made
an even greater hit with the crowd had several jokes and lines
bordering on the edge of sickening vulgarity been eliminated. This
will be done."

The last and most important event, as far as concerns the
history of the "popular" theatre, was the installation of "two of
the latest moving picture machines." For the first time movies
appeared at the Crescent. In the summer of 1912 there were only
four pictures shown: Fra Diavolo, Jess, Human Hearts and At
Cripple Creek: but they were an indication of the events which
were to follow.

The 1911-1912 season at the Tulane was interesting in several
respects. It was a financially successful year with six shows
playing "capacity" business, eight with "big" business and six

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60 Democrat, March 25, 1912, p. 4.
61 Democrat, September 18, 1911, p. 2.
62 Picayune, October 28, 1911, p. 5.
63 Picayune, July 18, 1912, p. 4.
with "good" business. Only two shows appeared to "poor" receipts. One of these was Jefferson De Angelis in The Ladies Lion— he always did badly at the Tulane—and the other was a return engagement of the farce, Seven Days. In a season of twenty-eight weeks this was a good financial record.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the season was the large number of musical attractions. Fourteen, or one-half, of the shows which appeared in 1911-1912 were musicals. Since such stars as Marlowe and Sothern, Mantell, Warde, and Forbes-Robertson were playing at the rival theatre, the Dauphine, the only "attraction of the season which approached what might be classed a strong play was Henry Miller's appearance in The Havoc.”

The most pretentious offering of the season was the Klaw and Erlanger production of The Pink Lady which appeared the week of January 14, with a company of one hundred. It played one of the "capacity" weeks. Other important, and successful, attractions of the season were the engagements of Elsie Janis in The Slim Princess; Billis Burke in The Runaway; Anna Held in Miss Innocence; Dave Montgomery and Fred Stone in The Old Town; and Ursula St. George in one of the season's biggest hits, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.

Historically the most prophetic event occurred on the afternoon of March 30, 1912. One reviewer described it as "Undoubtedly...

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65 Democrat, March 31, 1912, sec. 4, p. 11.
66 Picayune, January 15, 1912, p. 4.
the opening for New Orleans of a new era in the rapidly developing art of the mute drama." This was not only the first Sunday matinee in the theatre's history, but it was also the first time a "season" of moving pictures were shown at the Tulane. It was a short season, and the films which were shown were excellent examples of the art: Bernhardt in *Camille* and Gabrielle Rejane in *Sans Gene*. Nevertheless the acceptance of the picture industry by the fashionable Tulane would certainly be considered indicative of its growing importance.

This study has not previously concerned itself with the scattered attractions which were presented at the Tulane or Crescent during the summer; but there occurred in June, 1912, an engagement which should be noted.

On Monday, June 3, the newspapers announced the appearance of the famous tenor, Florencio Constantino, and his company, at the Tulane. His engagement was to open June 17, with *Rigoletto*; during the week the company was to perform *La Tosca* and *La Boheme*. A reviewer described the gala opening.

> With a wealth of voice, harmony and brilliancy Constantino stormed his way into the favor of the crowd which gathered... to hear the great artist. Under the spell of his artistry and the sorcery of his voice one forgot the heat, forgot the discomfort of indoors and gave up to the magic of his appeal. Enthusiasm ran riot from his first appearance... until the final curtain had fallen... for the star has surrounded himself with a most excellent

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67 *Picayune*, April 1, 1912, p. 4.

68 These consisted of a few concerts and locally produced plays, dance revues or variety shows.
troupe, and on many occasions they had to respond to encores that were born of enthusiasm that has seldom been equaled in the Tulane Theatre, and but rarely surpassed at the French Opera.69

The enthusiasm of the Picayune was not shared by the reviewer for the Democrat nor seemingly by the audience. On June 19, the company presented Lucia de Lammermoor; the Democrat critic said,

Had not Signor Florencio Constantino... been the star last night at the performance of Lucia de Lammermoor, the function at the Tulane would have been a lamentable failure. The reputation of the singer helped to a certain extent to redeem the work from mediocrity... there was really little to applaud.

He went on to condemn the chorus for their unfamiliarity with the work and added that for the next performance it is to be hoped that the orchestra will consist of at least enough pieces to give adequate value to the performance and not be recruited from the cafes and hotels, as was the case last night.70

With such contradictory reviews and with the gradually dwindling audiences, the engagement took on an atmosphere of failure. There was a later announcement that Constantino had been refused the license to sing La Boheme 71 and that he would, instead, sing Cavalleria Rusticana and Il' Pagliacci. There was also an announcement of a special Sunday matinee. This afternoon performance was never presented,

69 Picayune, June 18, 1912, p. 9.
70 Democrat, June 20, 1912, p. 4.
71 Picayune, June 22, 1912, p. 10.
It was announced that a matinee would be given on Sunday, and that Sig. Sachetti and Miss Lidia Levy would sing. At different times different operas were announced as the bill, and when the people arrived at the theatre yesterday and learned that Constantino would not sing they suddenly decided that the weather was too hot anyway for opera. Constantino appeared in the arcade wearing a large smile, but those who had expected him in tights were disappointed and hurried home for Sunday dinner. . . .

There were only about ten people in the audience, and, finding that this was not sufficient inspiration either artistically or financially, the management announced that Miss Levy was sick and could not go on. However, that young lady in full costume and tears, said that she was not sick and had not been sick. The latter statement, however, was not made to the audience, which had already left the theatre without even a brava or a vivo Constantino.

Further tragedy struck the company on June 27, when, during a performance of The Barber of Saville, Constantino stabbed one of the bassos, Giovani Gravino. The audience was dismissed. The injured basso did recover, but the company disbanded in New Orleans on the following Sunday. Constantino stated that "His losses for the week are estimated at about $14,000. . . ." 73

1912-1913

There is little to be said of the 1912-1913 season at either the Tulane or the Crescent. The most exciting event of the year was a fire which occurred in a nearby building and resulted in the theatre arcade being "water soaked." Fortunately neither theatre

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72 Picayune, June 24, 1912, p. 4.
73 Democrat, June 29, 1912, p. 5.
suffered damage, but performances were cancelled for one night because of the hazard of broken glass. 74

The one interesting factor of the schedules was the absence of many long-running favorites and the appearance of new faces at both theatres. In a season of thirty weeks, the Crescent had only nine shows from the previous season. Several new "social dramas" and melodramas appeared. Such plays as The Common Law, The Call of the Heart, A Man and His Wife and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine were a little different from the usual Crescent fare. They dealt with "social problems, a trifle tragic at times, but... nevertheless true to life in nearly every respect." 75 When these were added to the melodramas, Oklahoma, The Confession, A Kentucky Romance, Where The Trail Divides, Madame X, The Rosary, In Old Kentucky, and The Old Homestead, they comprised an unusually large part of the Crescent season.

Despite the great number of serious plays, the financial hits of the season remained the "more than usual quota of burnt-cork minstrels." 76 Field, Neil O'Brien and Evans all appeared to full houses. The other "capacity" shows of the season were the melodrama Confession, for which the local Knights of Columbus sold tickets, 77 and the comedy, Mutt and Jeff, with Ed West and Jerry Sullivan. In Old Kentucky, which gave its 100th performance in

74 Picayune, December 20, 1912, p. 6.
75 Picayune, October 7, 1912, p. 6.
76 Democrat, April 18, 1913, sec. 4, p. 10.
77 Picayune, October 14, 1912, p. 2.
New Orleans on December 30, 1912, and Ward and Vokes, who presented the Mardi Gras attraction, had "big" business. Al H. Wilson earned from the management, in its seasonal survey, the term "great"; the other shows ranged from "poor" to "good."  

Since the Dauphine was again receiving the Shubert attractions, several new faces also appeared at the Tulane during the 1912-1913 season to replace the stars the Syndicate had lost to the Shuberts. The most popular show of the year was the Christmas attraction, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, with the young star, Charlotte Walker. There were "capacity audiences for every performance, including an extra matinee. Before the engagement was ended, hundreds were turned away, unable to secure seats."  

Julian Eltinge, "known as the best female impersonator on the stage" played a "capacity" week for his first engagement in New Orleans. Donald Brian made his first appearance in The Siren; and the Belasco actress, Frances Starr, "brought theatre-going New Orleans to her feet," in The Case of Becky. The other popular shows of the season were Elevating a Husband, with the long time favorite, Louis Mann; The Pink Lady; The Littlest Rebel, with Dustin Farnum; and the Carnival week attraction, Over The River, with Eddie Foy. Officer 666, a "ripping good melodrama" was

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78 States, April 13, 1913, sec. 2, p. 10. Seasonal Summary.  
79 Democrat, April 13, 1913, sec. 4, p. 10.  
80 Picayune, January 13, 1913, p. 2.  
81 Democrat, April 13, 1913, sec. 4, p. 10.  
82 Idem.
fairly successful.

Films came for two weeks when the Paul J. Rainey African Hunt Pictures appeared. For the first week the attendance was "big," but when the picture returned for another week at the end of the season, "it did not do so well." 83

In 1913, for the first time in its history, the theatre was closed for a week. During Holy Week, which was usually a poor attendance week in New Orleans, the Tulane, Crescent, Dauphine and Greenwall all closed. Although the season was technically the usual length, only twenty-three plays appeared at the Tulane during the season.

1913-1914

Unfortunately there was no yearly summary of the financial success of the 1913-1914 season. It was, however, an unusual season for both theatres. As a reporter said in April, "what ever the fortunes of future seasons may be the milepost of 1913-14 will hold its place long as a distinctly important season—so far as this city is concerned." 84 Another reporter went even further and said it had been "the most successful season this city has ever experienced." 85

The Tulane, which was open for thirty-two weeks, had a remarkable schedule. During that time it presented four weeks of movies

83 Idem,
84 Picayune, April 19, 1914, sec. 3, p. 8. Seasonal review.
85 States, April 19, 1914, sec. 2, p. 9.
and one week of Pavlova and her dancers. Of the twenty-six plays presented during the year, only one had appeared previously at the theatre.

There were several reasons for the excellence of the season. The most important was that the agreement between the Syndicate and Shuberts had forced the closure of the Dauphine as a touring theatre. Most of the great stars were back under the Syndicate banner. Because of the uncertainty of theatre in Europe, the Stratford on Avon Players were touring the United States and presented one of the most outstanding weeks which the Tulane had ever had. In addition, the theatre was the recipient of some of the best plays which were being presented in North America.

The Tulane Theatre opened on August 31, with a two week run of the movie Quo Vadis, which was witnessed by approximately 25,000 people. This attraction was followed by two weeks of another picture, North of 53, or "life of the Far North." The regular season then opened with a Strauss musical, The Merry Countess, which "met with favor from the play hungry audience." It was at that time that Campbell made a promise to New Orleans. Since there had been continued complaints from the reviewers concerning the morality of the contemporary theatre, Campbell promised:

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87 Picayune, September 15, 1913, p. 2.
88 Picayune, September 29, 1913, p. 5.
This is to be a season of clean plays in New Orleans. This man's town will have a chance to put itself on record for or against the play that for generations has sustained the position of the stage.

He said he felt that the

preference of local playgoers is for the drama with a punch in it, strongly fortified in theme by a true conception of problems of the day other than those of the underworld.

The Tulane season is exceptionally free of the tales of the seamy side.

And it was a clean season. Only four of the modern "social" plays appeared and they had all stood the test of censorship. One was *Bought and Paid For*, which expressed the "vital idea that marriage is more than a mere celebration, but is the expression of a holy union." As one critic commented, "while the dialogue is at times brutally frank, there is no suggestion of the salacious, nor is there that feeling of sordid vulgarity that has distinguished some of the plays that have dealt with the serious sex-relations."

*Fine Feathers*, with an all-star cast which included Rose Coghlan, Robert Edeson and Wilton Lackaye, although a psychological study, was one of the best productions of the season. The other two serious plays were *Within the Law*, "a story of sex hygiene that bears the endorsement of medical America," and *Damaged Goods*,

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89 *Picayune*, October 6, 1913, p. 5.
90 *Picayune*, October 20, 1913, p. 5.
91 *Idem*.
92 *Picayune*, October 6, 1913, p. 5.
with Richard Bennett. This last play, by Brieux, which expressed the idea of the father's sins being put upon the child, was called "unquestionably the strongest presentation of social evil that has ever been made. It seems as if there could be nothing more to add."\(^9\)

As if to allay the seriousness of these moral studies, the rest of the season was light, tuneful, humorous or romantic. Six musical shows were presented, *The Merry Countess*, *Robin Hood*, *Little Boy Blue*, Cohan's *Broadway Jones*, *Adele*, and the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1913*. This was the first time the *Follies* had travelled South and the New Orleans reviewers were tremendously impressed. One called it "more expensive than any other modern musical production."\(^9\) Starring Leon Errol, Nat Wills and all the Ziegfeld girls, it was

> The biggest thing ever seen in New Orleans... and the limit is reached in a daring assembling of novelties that delight and astonish the people out front and seems to quite fully reach the popular desire for the sensational. Everything is daring in the production, dancing, dialogue, singing and costumes, but the daring is not of the sort that partakes of the crude or offensive, but rather, as in the matter of costumes and dancing, serves to emphasize some phase of the artistic, either in grace or shapelessness.

> It's all a dazzling panorama...\(^9\)

In the field of comedy, Rose Stahl appeared in *Maggie Pepper*; and the young Taliaferro sisters, Mabel and Edith, gave pre-

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\(^9\) *Picayune*, April 13, 1914, p. 4.


\(^9\) *Picayune*, March 16, 1914, p. 5.
Broadway performances in Rachel Crother's *Young Wisdom*, which the States called "epochal." *Peg O' My Heart*, which was still running in New York with Laurette Taylor, was presented on two separate occasions with Blanche Hall in the title role. John Drew returned to the Tulane with *Tyranny of Tears*. May Irwin starred in a new play, *Widow by Proxy*, and a "good cast" presented the farce, *Stop Thief*.  

Other shows which do not fall into any particular classification were presented throughout the year. Two of the biggest productions were *The Blue Bird* and *Kismet*. Maurice Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, with a company of one hundred, was called "magnificent." It was said that "the memory of the play, of the actors, of the beautiful dances and above all of the spirit that has been achieved will long live as a most delightful memory."  

*Kismet* starred Otis Skinner and as a reviewer said, "It will probably be long before the theatre-going public will have an opportunity of witnessing anything so great, either in the way of the imaginative poetic drama or in scenic beauty and stage realism." Three other popular shows were *Little Women*, a mystery with Robert Hilliard called *The Argyle Case*, and *The Grain of Dust* with James K. Hackett.  

Dramatically the two most important events of the year were the engagements of the Stratford Players and of Nazimova. The

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96 *Picayune*, January 26, 1914, p. 5.  
97 *Picayune*, January 12, 1914, p. 4.  
98 *Picayune*, April 7, 1914, p. 4.
English group presented Richard II, Merry Wives of Windsor, King Henry IV, Hamlet, Merchant of Venice, As You Like It and Othello. Nazimova appeared in only one show, Bella Donna, but it was called "a real dramatic event." 99

It was really an outstanding season, truly one of the greatest in the Tulane history. As the Picayune reporter said, "There have been so many important engagements seen here that it is delicate and rather irksome, from an analytical point of view, to make a choice as to what is entitled to first place." 100

While the Tulane was presenting the best attractions which were available outside of New York City, the Crescent was surviving a year of Contrast. The season at the popular-priced playhouse opened with the annual production of McFadden's Flats. This was followed by Mary's Lamb, with Dan McGrath in the Richard Carle role. Little Miss Fix-It was to have appeared next, but "misfortune overtook the company at Montreal, Canada" 101 and, instead, the motion picture Quo Vadis was shown at popular prices. A melodrama, The Printer of Udell, played the next week to small audiences, then Quo Vadis filled in for another week.

The next five weeks saw a return of Mutt and Jeff, Al Field, The Confession, and two new shows, A Man's Game and Shepherd of the Hills. Then came one of the dramatic highlights of the season.

100 Picayune, April 19, 1914, sec. 3, p. 8.
Annie Russell was to have played the Tulane in *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The Rivals*, but another play was already booked there; so the classics came to the Crescent. The reviewer called it the "best that has been here within the memory of the present generation." Unfortunately there is no record of the audience reception.

During the winter months, *The White Slave*, *Common Law*, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, *Evan's Minstrels*, *Al H. Wilson*, *The Rosary* and other shows appeared. Then on February 7, movies came again. The attraction for that week was *Antony and Cleopatra*. The Carnival Week show was, surprisingly, a return engagement of the Evans Minstrels.

More plays appeared, such as *The Girl of the Underworld* and *A Modern Eve*, and the season closed with a film called *Smashing the Vice Trust*. There had been melodramas, minstrels and musicals. The motion picture was assuming more importance. Often it was used to fill space between touring companies, and as the number of companies decreased there was more and more space to fill.

During the final week of the season it was announced that the New Orleans Comic Opera Company would appear in a twelve week long post-season engagement. They were to present light operas at a popular price. The plans materialized and the company opened on May 3, in *Wang* and "scored a complete success." The second

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102 Picayune, November 12, 1913, p. 6.
103 Picayune, April 5, 1915, sec. 3, p. 2.
104 Picayune, May 4, 1914, p. 4.
week they presented Boccaccio. Although much was being written about the new cooling device at the Crescent, which consisted of a fan and 2000 pounds of ice per night (the fan drew the air over the ice and then expelled it into the theatre), it became obvious that not even a cool theatre could keep the audience coming. The reviewer for the Picayune gave the performances good reviews but attendance decreased. The company played two more shows, El Capitan and The Bells of New York then closed. After only four weeks of the promised twelve "The last dying gasp of the theatrical season was gasped last night when the curtain was rung down at the Crescent Theater. . . . The opera was good, but the patronage poor, so it was decided to quit."105

1914-1915

The 1914-1915 season was somewhat disappointing although a few important events did take place. There were some changes in policy during the year which resulted in major changes in the scheduling at both theatres. The most important change took place at the Crescent. During the entire season the theatre had only nine touring companies.

The first seven productions of the season were presented by the Emma Bunting Stock Company. The group seems to have been a

capable one; but a prolonged engagement by a stock company was a departure for the Crescent. During the seven week engagement they presented *What Happened to Mary*, *A Woman's Way*, *Merely Mary Ann*, *House of a Thousand Candles*, *Mam'zelle*, *At Cosy Corners* and *Girls*. The various reviews were favorable; but since there was no attendance summary, it is impossible to know just how well-attended the productions were.

Beginning October 24, with Frank Craven in *Too Many Cooks*, there were nine touring productions. Only three of the regular companies came that year. Field's Minstrels and Al H. Wilson made their usual appearance and *The Old Homestead* returned, in its twenty-ninth year. The other shows were new to the Crescent. Thomas Dixon's play, *The Sins of the Father*, starred the author and afforded him an "admirable opportunity to express his own views anent a subject regarding which his own stand is well known." 106 The comedy *Bringing Up Father* came on November 15. Beulah Watson appeared in the Harold Bell Wright play, *The Winning of Barbersworth*, and *Fine Feathers* appeared with a new cast. The other production of the short touring season was *One Day*, a "story of unrequited love and the wages of sin . . ." 107 Large audiences attended it in order to see the "sensational lovemaking . . . but it was no more risque than scores of other plays now on the American stage." 108

106 Picayune, November 9, 1914, p. 4.
107 Picayune, December 7, 1914, p. 4.
108 Idem.
On December 27, 1914, another stock company took over the theatre. The star was Percy Haswell, and her company remained for eight weeks. At the end of her engagement one other attraction appeared. The Samuel B. Grossman All-Star Yiddish Dramatic Company played a one-week engagement beginning February 21.

On February 29, 1915, the motion picture took over. Tillie's Punctured Romance was followed by The Fight, What Happened to Jones, Bernhardt in Camille, and Neptune's Daughter with Annette Kellermann. The latter was so popular that it was held over for another week. The theatre closed April 18.

While all the various types of attractions were being shown at the Crescent, the Tulane too was experiencing changes. Campbell had predicted an "exceptionally successful season." Conditions outside of New Orleans belied his prediction.

Henry W. Savage's Sari, which was promised New Orleans; The Whip, Kitty McKay, the Scotch comedy; Fanny Ward in Madame President; Help Wanted and The New Henrietta either met reverses or because of unfavorable conditions which made long tours prohibitive for expensive productions, were not seen here this season. Several of these were withdrawn in the East. Ruth Chatterton's production of Daddy Long Legs. . . has been retained for its continued run in the East. The Little Cafe, because of its expense- ness, was not ventured on the long and costly Southern tour. Sari, like The Garden of Allah and The Garden of Paradise, other expensive musical productions, went into the storehouses to await better times.


110 Picayune, August 26, 1914, p. 12.

111 Picayune, April 11, 1915, p. 10.
Due to these various conditions, the Tulane was forced to be closed for two weeks and to depend upon movies for three weeks. Too, because of the change in the Crescent policy, the theatre received both the Evans and O'Brien minstrel groups. Despite these factors and despite the fact that the theatre closed at least one week earlier than usual, there were some worthwhile attractions.

Three shows, Adele, Peg of My Heart and Within the Law returned from the preceding year. Warfield brought back his big success, The Auctioneer; and two other shows, Alma, Where Do You Live? and The Ham Tree, with McIntyre and Heath, were revived. The rest were new.

The social event of the season was the final engagement, Pavolowa and her dancers. As one reporter described the engagement, "The resplendent Pavolowa presentations were a fitting climax to the general sporadic scintillations that survived to delight New Orleans in a season notable for Cimmerian gloom, stranded shows and fallen (theatrical) angels."

Some of the "sporadic scintillations" were such shows as the Musical Hanky Panky which delighted capacity audiences. "It has been many a month since the local patrons of the bald-headed row had enjoyed such a treat as the shapely chorus. The Klaw and Erlanger production of the musical Oh! Oh! Delphine, although "risque", also had pretty girls.

References:
- States, April 8, 1915, p. 6.
- Picayune, October 5, 1914, p. 4.
- Picayune, October 12, 1914, p. 4.
The only show which played twice during the season was To-Day. "Bald and intense to the point that no adjective short of terrible describes the vivid picture it paints, nor the lesson it draws..." it appeared in November and again in January.

Otis Skinner opened his new play The Silent Voice at the Tulane, and "largely because of Mr. Skinner's success here, the play was sent almost direct into the Liberty Theatre, New York, where it had a run of five weeks." Maude Adams appeared just after Christmas in The Legend of Lenora and The Ladies Shakespeare. Nat Goodwin and Raymond Hitchcock came in their respective shows, Never Say Die and The Beauty Show. Miss Billie Burke appeared in Jerrie.

The three biggest, and best, weeks of the season occurred in February. During the first week of the month, Margaret Anglin starred in a "revival of the scintillating comedy," Lady Windermere's Fan. The second week saw George Arliss in Disraeli. Then for Carnival Week the theatre presented The Poor Little Rich Girl. "The biggest thing since Ben Hur" the fantasy played to "capacity crowds."

The season was not too bad, but it was not up to the usual standards. It had been, surprisingly, more profitable than the

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115 Picayune, November 2, 1914, p. 4.
116 Picayune, April 11, 1915, p. 10.
117 Picayune, February 1, 1915, p. 4.
118 Picayune, February 15, 1915, p. 5.
preceding seasons, and Campbell was hopeful. He felt that the future would see

... a reawakening of interest in the theatre throughout the South... the elimination of the over-night promoters with their indifferent wares. High class producers, with first class attractions, already have invaded the one-night stands, and with an improvement of business affairs sufficient to justify the ventures, sane producing managers will offer a commodity so modelled and staged as to elbow out entirely the cheap speculative promoter whose only interest in the stage is built on an eagerness to mulct the public with cheap and indifferent commodities bearing the alluring label of high class attractions. 120

1915-1916

In September, before the opening of the 1915-1916 season, Campbell gave an interview to the local newspapers in which he stated:

In order to avoid confusion of ideas I want to make it positive at the outset of our season that the Tulane, Crescent... theaters will not at any time show moving pictures. With the exception of the Griffith spectacle, which goes beyond the scope of the moving pictures, the Klaw & Erlanger theaters will be devoted exclusively to the presentation of the highest class of legitimate drama during the season of 1915-16. This policy is fixed and will not be departed from. I wish to emphasize the positiveness of this announcement more particularly because of the character of plays and players that Messrs. Klaw & Erlanger have been able to engage for New Orleans. 121

119 Picayune, April 30, 1916, p. 16.
120 Picayune, April 11, 1915, p. 10.
121 Picayune, September 13, 1915, p. 4.
This policy was "departed from." On January 5, 1916, the Crescent opened as a full-time moving picture house. Before that there were sixteen weeks of legitimate drama at the popular-priced house. Six of these weeks were devoted to the Baldwin Stock Company and ten were filled by touring shows.

Walter S. Baldwin brought his group to New Orleans and opened the season on September 4, with *Within the Law*. Admissions were 10, 20, 30 and 50 cents for nights and 10, 20, and 30 cents for matinees. The group was rated as one of the best stock companies to visit New Orleans in many seasons, and they had a fairly successful six weeks. During their stay they presented *Stop Thief*, *Man From Home*, *Broadway Jones*, *The Divorce Question* and *One Day*. It had been announced in September that they would remain through the winter months but they closed October 16, to go to the west coast.

During the next eleven weeks the Field Minstrels, Mutt and Jeff, Al H. Wilson, and *Bringing Up Father* reappeared. *Damaged Goods*, with a popular-priced company, and *A Fool There Was* were the two serious plays of the short season. Two musicals, *September Morn* and *Henpecked Henry*, and one Opera Company appeared. The Tulane import, *A Pair of Sixes*, came with a new company. It was a short dramatic season for the Crescent.

It was arranged that the theatre was to present Paramount pictures. In order to make it a place that would "attract representative audiences," the building was completely modernized. The stage was rebuilt and the entire area redone.

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122 Picayune, September 6, 1915, p. 4.
123 Picayune, September 5, 1915, p. 15.
124 Picayune, January 2, 1916, sec. 3, p. 3.
The stage settings alone cost $20,000 and the Crescent is to be the first photoplay house in the South to have such magnificent settings. A magnificent plush curtain covers the screen and completes the broad arching effect when the pictures are not running. On either side of the proscenium are receding arches which give a pleasing distance to the general effect. . . . Uniformed ushers will anticipate every need. The atmosphere of refinement will be maintained in every detail. 125

The lighting system had been changed to give a "mellow glow to the house" while the pictures were running. An orchestra of twelve pieces was to provide accompanying music.

The program was to change on Sunday and Thursday and there were to be four performances daily. Each performance was to include a news program, a travel picture, a comedy and a vocal selection plus the feature. It was to be "the show place of New Orleans."

The opening attraction was the movie, Temptation with Geraldine Farrar. According to the newspapers all ran according to plan for the next two months. Then on March 20, 1916, an article appeared in the Times-Picayune which began with the statement, "A large number of persons who were expecting to see the 'movies' at the Crescent Theater Sunday afternoon and night, waited in vain for the doors to open, for T. C. Campbell... had locked the doors and kept the keys." 126

According to the article, the theatre had been losing money and had "paid expenses but two weeks since it was transformed into a

125 Idem.
moving picture house." For one week the box office receipts were $700 and the cost of running the theatre was $1800. Klaw and Erlanger, tired of losing money had informed the Paramount service that they wished to close the theatre. Paramount was unwilling. Some weeks later Klaw and Erlanger learned that Paramount had made arrangements with another house to show their pictures and were planning to leave the Crescent before the expiration of their contract on May 3, 1916.

Campbell was then told to inform the picture service that he would close the theatre on March 18. Paramount ignored the warning. They announced the week's attractions in the newspapers and denied that they were closing. Campbell then locked the doors on March 18, and refused to open them. Despite complaints and threats from Paramount the theatre remained closed. Thus the season ended for the Crescent.

Despite the erratic conditions at the Crescent, Campbell was able to say at the end of the 1915-1916 season that the "Tulane and Crescent Theaters had a season of prosperity which exceeds by nearly fifty percent the business of the season preceding it. This, in face of the fact that the preceding season was the best in seven years. . . ." He added, "New Orleans will probably lead the Klaw & Erlanger theaters in America in the general showing, both as to the number of high class stars and plays that were presented and by the record of patronage." 127

127 Picayune, April 30, 1916, p. 16.
The fifth year of the Erratic Period had been, in fact, a rather good one for the Tulane if not for the Crescent. Twenty-five plays were presented. For the first time in many years there was a better scheduling of musicals and dramas. The opening attraction was a "dainty musical comedy"128 When Dreams Come True. Then came Guy Bates Post in Omar, the Tentmaker, "the red letter event of the current theatrical season."129

During the week of Post's appearance there was another important occurrence. On Wednesday, one of the worst hurricanes in the history of the city struck New Orleans. The glass covering the arcade was smashed and the skylights over the stages of the two theatres were shattered. Some scenery was destroyed and the Wednesday night performance was cancelled.130 A Pair of Sixes was supposed to open the following Sunday, but because of heavy damage to railroads the troupe could not make the trip from Natchez, Mississippi, until Tuesday.131 When it did arrive, the company played to bad weather all week.

The weather was still inclement for Mrs. Patrick-Campbell's first appearance in New Orleans on October 11. Despite the rain and the flooding, her performances in Pygmalion and The Second Mrs. Tangueray were well received.132 She was followed by a musical, The Only Girl. Then on October 24th, New Orleans was able to see the popular Daddy Long Legs. The road company starred Frances Carson

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128 Picayune, September 20, 1915, p. 4.
129 Picayune, September 27, 1915, p. 4.
130 Picayune, September 30, 1915, p. 4.
131 Picayune, October 5, 1915, p. 9.
132 Picayune, October 12, 1915, p. 10.
and George Allison, and was considered "satisfactory in every respect."\textsuperscript{133}

The greatest dramatic event of the season was the appearance of "perhaps the greatest of English actors...\textsuperscript{134}" Forbes-Robertson in repertoire. He opened in Hamlet and then played The Light That Failed and The Passing of the Third Floor Back.

It is difficult to name any of the other shows which were presented that season without naming all of them. This was a time when the road was not particularly profitable, so only the very good or very popular shows were able to survive the strain of a tour. Most of the shows which appeared that season at the Tulane were of a high calibre. They included such stars and shows as Jeanne Eagels in The Outcast and Pauline Lord in On Trial. The Pink Lady and The Prince of Pilsen were two of the bigger musicals. The modernized Henrietta, called The New Henrietta, starred William Crane, Amelia Bingham, Mabel Taliaferro, and Maclune Arbuckle. Everywoman was presented again and called "one of the treats of the season."\textsuperscript{135}

Louis Mann presented the comedy, The Bubble, and William Faversham came in The Hawk.

The two elaborate spectacles, The Garden of Allah and Sari, which had been prevented from appearing the previous season, finally appeared in "charming\textsuperscript{136} and "magnificent\textsuperscript{137} productions. Capacity

\textsuperscript{133}\textit{Picayune}, October 25, 1915, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{134}\textit{Picayune}, November 2, 1915, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{135}\textit{Picayune}, January 10, 1916, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{136}\textit{Picayune}, February 28, 1916, p. 3.
crowds greeted Margaret Illington and C. Aubrey Smith in The Lie and John Drew in The Chief.

*On Trial* gave "those in a sophisticated first night audience a genuine surprise on its initial appearance." In this play the revolving stage was seen for the first time in New Orleans and the audience was very impressed by the rapid shifting of scenery and by the performances of Pauline Lord and Douglas Wood.

It was an impressive season, but the climax occurred on March 12, 1916, when *The Birth of A Nation* opened for the first time in New Orleans. This was the "first time a $2 to 50 cent film ever attempted to come into the Crescent City" but the Griffith spectacle had no difficulty in amassing large audiences.

On March 26, one reporter enthusiastically declared

> Applause that echoes through the Tulane Theater twice daily continuing sometimes for ten minutes at a stretch, has stamped the swift dashes of the Klux Klan the most thrilling scenes in *The Birth of A Nation*, the mighty spectacle of war and reconstruction which is still attracting great throngs to the Tulane Theater.

Another article written the same day stated that nothing in the theatrical history of New Orleans had so stirred the city. "It has brushed aside the records established by *Ben Hur*, *The Garden of Allah*, and other spectacular offerings of mighty caliber and by remaining for three weeks at a $2 scale it will have established itself in a class by itself."

By April 2, "Upwards of

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139 *States*, March 12, 1916, p. 4.
140 *Picayune*, March 26, 1916, p. 3.
70,000 persons" had witnessed the movie and it was predicted that by the end of its fourth week the total attendance would not be far
below 100,000. 142

Perhaps the most exciting day of the entire engagement was on Monday, April 3, when "In their spic and span uniforms of gray, fifty of 'the boys' from the Soldiers' Home and thrice that number from the city at large attended the matinee as guests of the New Orleans Rotary Club." 143 It was an appreciative audience. There was no discussion of the artistic merits of the picture, just "some tears the rebel yell--a little thin perhaps, and a little broken and less husky than it was two-score and ten years ago--but nevertheles, it was the rebel yell." 144

Because of the enthusiastic reception of the picture in New Orleans the tentative engagements for Biloxi and other small southern towns were cancelled; and on April 23, the movie opened its seventh and last week at the Tulane. When the picture closed on Saturday, April 29, 1916, "nearly 200,000 people" had seen it and its seven week run had established a record for New Orleans theatrical history. 145 It could truly be said that "In falling victim to the spell of The Birth of A Nation New Orleans had taken its place with Richmond, Atlanta, Nashville, Memphis and other important cities of the South.... the spectacle has broken all records." 146

142 Picayune, April 22, 1916, p. 8.
143 Picayune, April 4, 1916, p. 16.
144 Idem.
145 Picayune, April 29, 1916, p. 5.
It was a fitting climax for an Erratic Period.

1916-1917

The final year of the Erratic Period, 1916-1917, had very little to recommend it. When Campbell returned to New Orleans in April, 1916, after his conference with Klaw and Erlanger, he was "just as talkative as a spellbinder at a political rally when it came to discussing the outlook for the theatrical season in New Orleans." 147

Klaw and Erlanger had arranged to spend $50,000 in rehabilitating and redecorating the two theatres. They were to be repainted and redecorated inside and outside. Eleven hundred new seats were to be put in the Tulane and the lighting equipment was to be completely modernized. Big shows with big stars had been scheduled. Some of the shows promised to the Tulane were Warfield in The Music Master, the Ziegfeld Follies, Ethel Barrymore, Maude Adams in A Kiss For Cinderella, Sir Herbert Tree, Chin-Chin, and Justice. The Crescent, after its brief career as a motion picture house, would open in September with "the finest line of popular price attractions shown" in many seasons. 148

A reporter summarized the optimism,

147 Picayune, August 22, 1916, p. 6.
148 Idem.
Whatever the verdict will be this spring, there is no question but that theatrical managers and those who have the business end of stage attractions under their care are anticipating one of the greatest seasons known in the amusement field in this country in many years. Hope springs eternal in the breast of the theatrical promoter at this time of year, and it dies hard. There have been about enough lean years to look back upon but, with the impression that the country is over-flowing with wealth, the theatrical managers now assume that the public will be pleased to spend some of it in amusement.

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With an optimistic spirit now abroad there is reason to believe that the attendance at New Orleans theatres will be greater this year than ever before.149

Campbell was still optimistic in April, 1917, when he was forced to admit that the season had not been the best he could wish for but that "with the hoped for end of the war by fall of this year we can look for a tremendous renewal of interest in the theater. . . ."150

The 1916-1917 season was a period of unrest and uncertainty. America was not in the war, but the country was beginning to realize that it might soon be engaged in the fighting. "Nervous Americans sought relief in entertainment. Show business boomed that year, aided by the boom in paychecks which followed 'preparedness.' Musicals and revues sold out for weeks in advance."151

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150 Picayune, April 22, 1917, p. 9.
The road, however, still suffered because it had little to offer its patrons. It was still too precarious to venture out with many of the big shows. Conditions were too uncertain; transportation rates were too high, managers were too cautious.

In spite of these hardships, both the Tulane and the Crescent were able to remain open throughout the season. During the year the Tulane presented twenty-three plays and the Crescent housed twenty-seven. The latter was closed only two weeks, March 14 to March 17, because of the lack of attractions. The Tulane had seven weeks of motion pictures during the season, The Birth of a Nation, Griffith's new movie, Intolerance, and Joan, the Woman, but it was not closed at all.

The most unusual thing about the Crescent season was the large number of dramas and melodramas. Thirteen of the shows presented were of this type. Only seven musical shows came. Too, it was a season of new shows. Only one of the twenty-seven plays had ever appeared before at that theatre. This was The Old Homestead.

A few of the old stars, such as Field, Wilson, O'Brien, and Thurston, returned; but they brought new shows. Even Bringing Up Father and Mutt and Jeff had been changed to Bringing Up Father in Politics and Mutt and Jeff in College.

Some of the musical comedies were Keep Moving; Dream Girl O'Mine, with the Irish singer Clifford Hipple, who deserved better patronage than he received; Pretty Baby and A Prince for a Day.

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One of the most popular engagements was that of Peg O' My Heart; but
the show which received the best review was My Aunt from Utah, with
Kate Elinore. It was called "by far the best show that has played
the Crescent this season."  

The most numerous attractions of the year were the melodramas.
Such titles as The Girl Without a Chance, The Cry of Her Children,
The Little Girl God Forgot, The Millionaire's Son and the Shop Girl
and Hour of Temptation were characteristic of the season. One of
the most interesting reviews of the season was that which followed
the opening of A Little Girl in A Big City. It was not a favorable
review nor was it particularly objective; but it illustrates the
quality of many of the productions and the manner in which they were
received by the audiences.

... a condensation of all melodramas that have
gone before. It sparkles with brilliant and original
lines, prominent among them being: 'Yes, the document
seems genuine.' 'There's the locket mother gave me
when a child.' "I came to New York from the country
to seek my mother-- I don't know where she lives, but
am sure I'll find her within the next hour.'
At times the audience is unable to restrain itself
and audible comment was frequent. A child and two
women in the orchestra could be heard sobbing above
the strains of 'Hearts and Flowers' played by the
orchestra every time the 'little girl' made her
appearance, while from the gallery came fairly good
imitations of ducks and cats.  

Yet throughout the year the Crescent did a "good average business."  

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154 Picayune, December 18, 1916, p. 5.
155 States, April 22, 1917, sec. 2, p. 7. Seasonal Summary.
The Tulane did not receive all of the promised attractions and stars, but it did have a fairly good season. *Experience*, a morality play, which was presented the week of January 29, "attracted probably as much attention in New Orleans as any stage spectacle produced here in a decade... It... played to record business."¹⁵⁶

The other most talked of dramas were *Common Clay* and *The House of Glass*. Called a "melodrama of the ultra-modern type,"¹⁵⁷ *Common Clay* starred Catherine Tower and Thomas E. Shea. *The House of Glass* was a Cohan and Harris production and was "humanly presented by a very capable cast of artists..."¹⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that these were the only serious plays presented from the opening of the season on October 8, until January 21.

Out of the twenty-three plays presented at the Tulane, eleven were musicals. Some of the more exceptional were *The Lilac Domino*, which opened the season; *Watch Your Step*, by Irving Berlin; *Very Good Eddie*, by Jerome Kern; *Sweethearts*, and *A World of Pleasure*. The musical *Flora Bella* was a good production, but it was not well-attended. Coming on February 25, it was the first show in Lent and it followed the Mardi Gras attraction, *A World of Pleasure*. As a reviewer said, "If *Flora Bella* had come earlier in the series of musical shows she would have been a big hit."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *Idem.*
¹⁵⁷ *Picayune*, November 27, 1912, p. 2.
¹⁵⁸ *Picayune*, December 4, 1912, p. 3.
¹⁵⁹ *Picayune*, February 26, 1917, p. 2.
Daddy Long-Legs, on a return trip, was again well received. Maude Adams delighted large audiences in The Little Minister. On opening night "Curtain calls followed each act, and even with the last drop the audience, instead of filing down the aisles, stood up and applauded until Miss Adams appeared and made her final bow." 160

Julian Eltinge and John Drew both appeared in new shows. Eltinge, "bigger and better than ever," 161 was in the musical comedy, Cousin Lucy; Mr. Drew appeared in Major Pendennis. The Picayune critic described New Orleans' reaction to Drew.

Going to see John Drew is a time-honored custom in New Orleans, and there were a considerable number of Drew habitues at the Tulane Theater. . . . Attending a Drew performance is like spending all evening in the best society, where one is sure of clever entertainment, charming manners, good morals, and not too much excitement. 162

Otis Skinner, too, reappeared. The play was Mister Antonio and it was called "a perfect performance." 163 Robert Edeson not only starred in, but also wrote his vehicle, His Brother's Keeper. The English actor, Cyril Maude, made his first appearance in New Orleans in Grumpy with a "performance that is a classic of delight." 164

On April 21, 1917, with the closing of the Tulane, the "legitimate dramatic season of New Orleans" came to an end. The Crescent had closed on March 23, War had been declared on April

162 Picayune, March 20, 1917, p. 16.
163 Picayune, March 27, 1917, p. 4.
5, 1917. With the close of the 1916-1917 season and the end of the Erratic Period, the Tulane and the Crescent theatres were to enter yet another phase in their history.
CHAPTER V

The Divergent Period: 1917 to 1926

The third period in the history of the Tulane and Crescent Theatres began in September, 1917, when the Crescent first opened as a movie and vaudeville house under the management of the Marcus Loew interests. The Divergent Period lasted for nine years. It ended on April 3, 1926, when Loew opened his new theatre, Loew's State, and moved from the Crescent. The Crescent, departing from its position as the popular priced house of legitimate drama, served continuously from 1917 to 1926 as a movie-vaudeville theatre. This left the Tulane as the only playhouse in the city of New Orleans which offered legitimate drama.

It was an eventful nine years, not only for the two theatres, but also for the United States. It was an especially eventful time for the South. The United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, and the first draft act took effect on June 15. The year of America's entrance into World War I was a year of confusion and hysteria. "For show business, the first half of 1917 was a drunken joyous spree. The latter half proved a hangover."

The country was in the midst of an economic splurge. Production of war materials boomed. Even before the declaration of war,

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considerable inflation had taken place, both in prices and in profits. Even the agrarian South profited. Unfortunately, 1917 had been a bad crop year, but "in 1918 and 1919, the farmers outdid themselves, selling their mules to the army, purchasing tractors, and plowing up the pastures." 2

Despite the wartime boom, the theatre suffered. President Wilson once said, "The theatre was one of the most potent contributing factors to American victory in the World War." 3 The war, however, contributed little to show business. Box office receipts dropped as more money went into Liberty Bonds and more men went into the army. The draft thinned out not only the audiences but the casts as well. "Musical comedies eliminated chorus men entirely and backstage technicians soon became irreplaceable." 4

Increasing prices and shortages also hurt the theatre. Paper, cloth and paint became scarce and expensive. The road shows suffered in much the same way as did the theatre in the metropolitan centers. The South had made 1917 a banner road season. "... as a result of 26¢ cotton and the opening of many Army camps. Flushed Southerners flocked to box offices. ..." 5 Then in December, 1917, came the death blow to the road.

3Laurie and Green, op. cit., p. 115.
5Ibid., p. 184.
Increased production was of no use to the war efforts if the products could not be transported. So, on December 18, 1917, President Wilson put the nation's railroads under a Railroad Administration which was to run all lines as one unified system.

This government control of railroads, as well as the increased rates, brought about the complete demoralization of one-night booking, and made it increasingly difficult for the large expensive shows to tour.

In 1918, the war was over, and a "wave of disillusionment and unrest swept through nation after nation. . . . Americans gaily set about kicking hell out of their lives by frantic, hysterical play." Show business changed greatly during this period which was to be remembered as "The Roaring Twenties." The movies became "the opiate of the people" and left every other form of amusement far behind.

Radio, which had been a passing novelty in 1920, was by 1922 a strong competitor with over 2,000,000 sets in operation.

On January 16, 1920, alcohol became illegal, therefore highly desirable. The night club and the speakeasy became the entertainment center for the pleasure seekers. By 1925, "... the thrill of thumbing a nose at Prohibition was no longer sufficient inducement for patrons of night haunts." Entertainment came back into

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6 Freidel, op. cit., p. 183.
7 Laurie and Green, op. cit., p. 204.
8 Ibid., p. 215.
9 Ibid., p. 231.
10 Ibid., p. 223.
favor, especially in places which offered Ziegfeld-type revues. The musical comedy and the revue became the biggest and most profitable attraction which the theatre could offer.

Pure vaudeville, unable to compete with the other forms of entertainment joined forces with the moving pictures. The movie-vaudeville combination spread to numerous theatres and had several profitable years before it became obvious that the films were the major attraction and not the vaudeville acts. Thus "the tide of mass entertainment engulfed the perishable talent" of the two-a-day performers and the audiences turned to more freakish and ribald entertainment. The legitimate theatre managed to survive. Sensitive to the national feeling it "sexed up its plays for a public that wanted to be shocked and titillated. Spice was the accent in revues and musicals." 12

"The midtwenties were a golden interlude of prosperity for a large part of the American people." 13 For the American farmer, however, income declined drastically in the post-war period. With the removal of price controls and the lessening of the European market, prices continued to drop until 1921. After the financial panic of that year, the farmer regained a share of the national prosperity, but only a very small share. The conditions of the agricultural regions improved somewhat from 1921 until 1929; but comparatively

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12 Laurie and Green, op. cit., p. 204.
speaking these regions were far below the standards of the industrial areas.

Once again, New Orleans, as one of the few large cities in the midst of an agricultural South, felt the economic pinch of its surroundings. Especially did the "road" suffer. Yet most people determinedly ignored the signs of approaching doom. Show business became bigger. The "revival of the road" was always predicted for next season. Everyone refused to accept the fact that the "Golden Age" of the travelling companies was over and that it would never return.

The Tulane

In the theatre "September brings a new alignment of amusement enterprises; new hopes, new plans, new aspirations, new trials and new conditions." In September of 1917, the country was on an escapist spree. The public mind was demanding distraction from the realism of World War I. New Orleans' theatres were booming. The Orpheum, built in 1902, was playing vaudeville. The Palace, a new theatre, offered vaudeville and films. The Crescent, under the Loew management, was ready to begin its new career as a movie and vaudeville theatre. The Dauphine was dark and there were no stock companies in the city, so the Tulane was the only theatre which offered legitimate drama. However, as the Picayune reporter said,

It matters not what may be the character or the claims of other candidates for public favor, the Tulane Theater will always stand as the exponent of the best that is to be offered in dramatic art. It

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is the aristocrat of the local amusement world, and yet it has never been allowed to be regarded as snobbish.15

In discussing the theatrical activities of the two theatres during this third period of their history, this study will treat each theatre individually. Although the same general conditions affected both theaters, they were offering different kinds of attractions. They were under separate management and they had problems which were different. Since the Tulane has always been considered the more important of the two theatres, it will be discussed first.

In actuality, during the nine year period, from 1917 to 1926, the Tulane history may be divided into three different phases. The first phase lasted from September, 1917 to April, 1921; the second from September, 1921 to April, 1924; the last from September, 1924 to April, 1926. This division is based on financial conditions.

The first four years of the period provided few outstanding dramatic events, but they were successful years from a box-office viewpoint. Then with the beginning of the 1921-1922 season, the bottom dropped out of New Orleans show business. For three seasons the shows were rather bad and the business was very bad. By 1924, however, the financial outlook was somewhat brightened. Some great productions appeared at the theatre, and many mediocre shows appeared; but the city wanted amusement and they went to the theatre. Business boomed again.

15 Idem.
In September, 1917, the Tulane opened with a pre-season run of light opera. The Broadway Comic Opera Players presented four weeks of popular music to "enthusiastic applause." The most shocking event of the engagement occurred during the week of September 17, when the group presented *Let's Go* and for the first time, a jazz band appeared at the theatre.

It took the Tulane patrons off their feet when the crash and flare of the ragtime band first burst upon their ears. This is the first time that the sacred precincts of the Tulane stage, always heretofore devoted to the highest forms of the more or less exclusive drama, have been invaded by the very newest of syncopated music forms.

The regular season opened on October 7, with the comedy, *Twin Beds*. This show was indicative of the entire season. Music and comedy held sway. "The problem play of the last few years, with the unpleasant and gruesome," were absent. Musicals such as *Pom-Pom*, with Mitzi Hajas; *Chin-Chin*; *Have a Heart*; *Molly Dear*, with Andrew Mack; and *Oh Boy* were some of the best, biggest and most popular engagements of the year.

An outstanding success of the season was the musical romance, *The Bird of Paradise*, which was presented for the first time in New Orleans on March 17, 1918. The effects were magnificent;

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16 Picayune, September 3, 1917, p. 4.
17 Picayune, September 17, 1917, p. 3.
18 Picayune, October 21, 1917, sec. 2, p. 10.
"the final scenes where Luana sacrifices herself in the crater of a flaming volcano, have been unequalled in effective realism in the Tulane Theater." Huge clouds of steam mingled with the "lurid flames of the caldron of seething lava" to cause a shudder throughout the auditorium.

The choice as to the most popular play of the season fell between two shows, Turn to the Right and Pollyanna. Turn to the Right was a "production of love-- mother love-- sweetheart love-- filial love." It played a "record breaking week."

Pollyanna appeared in February. Starring Helen Hayes in the title role, it was so successful the first week that it was decided to extend the engagement for a second week. The play "undoubtedly aroused more interest among the higher type of New Orleans playgoers than any other of the season's offerings, except Mantell. . . ."

Although Turn to the Right and Pollyanna were more attractive to the general audiences, nothing reached the dramatic heights of the Mantell engagement. The Shakespearean actor, "like an oasis of the sublimely serious, in a theatrical desert of musical lightness and intentless of purpose levity (Sic)" came to the Theatre on January 7. At the close of the two week engagement of Shakespearean repertoire, the reviewer claimed that "Not in the memory of

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19 Picayune, March 18, 1918, p. 3.
20 Picayune, March 11, 1918, p. 3.
21 Picayune, March 24, 1918, sec. 3, p. 10. Seasonal Summary.
the present decade has a Shakespearean apostle been extended an ovation so magnificent as that which has been given Mr. Mantell throughout the two weeks' engagement."\textsuperscript{22}

The regular season closed on March 23, 1918. There had been problems. The theatre was dark for one week because of "war-time railroad exigencies." The Flame, which had been booked for the week was unable to obtain railroad transportation beyond El Paso, Texas. In January it was announced that in compliance with the orders of the Fuel Administration all theatres within the city would close for the following ten Tuesdays.\textsuperscript{24} Several shows which had been booked before the season opened, did not reach New Orleans, either because of transportation difficulties or because they could not stand the financial losses of a road tour. The theatre had closed earlier than usual.

Yet, despite the difficulties engendered by the war, the season was "from the showman's standpoint... entirely satisfactory."\textsuperscript{25} The management was not at all times "able to offer the kind of attractions it wished to furnish its patronage, the general run of shows has been very much above the average."\textsuperscript{26} The only

\textsuperscript{22} Picayune, January 19, 1918, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{23} Picayune, February 24, 1918, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{24} Picayune, January 22, 1918, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{25} States, March 24, 1918, sec. 2, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{26} Picayune, March 24, 1918, sec. 3, p. 10.
movies which appeared during the year were presented as a post-season extra. In April, *The Kaiser, The Beast of Berlin*, with musical accompaniment and accessories,\(^{27}\) was shown for two weeks to "scenes of riotous enthusiasm." \(^{28}\) *Cleopatra*, starring Theda Bara, then appeared for two more weeks. Both engagements were quite successful.

Theatrically, 1918 to 1919 was a peculiar year for New Orleans. A combination of circumstances had upset the theatrical world. The war, the drafting of actors and the problems of railroad transportation had created hardships for those on the stage. Just when it appeared that the war was nearing an end, an influenza epidemic swept the country and forced all theatres to close for six weeks. The Shuberts and Klaw and Erlanger were fighting again and the Shuberts had opened the Lafayette Theatre \(^{29}\) in December and presented their shows in competition with the Tulane. Despite all of this, the Tulane had the best season of the past four years.

As a reported commented in March of 1919,

Not in several seasons have the purveyors of established entertainment enjoyed such an unprecedented revival of business as has been noted since the passing of the equally unprecedented obstacles that threatened to disrupt the entire field of amusement earlier in the season. The standard theaters have had the best patronage that they have enjoyed for years and all of them can boast of making money during the last few months.

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\(^{27}\) *Picayune*, April 8, 1918, p. 4.

\(^{28}\) *Picayune*, April 13, 1918, p. 13.

\(^{29}\) Formerly the Shubert Theatre.
The standard attractions which have come South all confess to making— not barely a little money, but a good, substantial profit. The Tulane Theater has had a remarkably good season. ...  

The Tulane opened on September 1, with motion pictures. Lillian and Dorothy Gish appeared first in *Hearts of the World* and then Theda Bara's *Salome* ran for one week. The first regular attraction was a musical *Watch Your Step*, which was not "remarkably brilliant, nor... perfect..." Next came *Out There* with Pauline Lord. The play was frankly "war propaganda" and "no stronger preaching in favor of every person doing his bit could be presented." Next came *The Brat*, with Cecil Spooner, was the third show of the year, but because of an epidemic of influenza it was unable to continue for the entire week. On Wednesday, October 9, all motion pictures and theatres were ordered closed. At that time there were more than 8000 cases of influenza in the city of New Orleans and approximately 100,000 throughout the state.  

By October 15, a total of 12,066 cases of "flu" had been reported in New Orleans. The city was in a state of panic and was even discussing closing all saloons and soft drinking establishments. On October 30, it was announced that during the last two weeks of...
October, over 900 persons had died in New Orleans. The worst was over, however; on November 6, the State and City Boards of Health announced that the ban on theatres, schools and moving picture houses would be raised on November 16.

The "flu" was over; the war was over. Salaries were at an all time high and money, even in the traditionally poor South, was abundant. When the theatres reopened they were packed; this situation continued, in varying degrees, for the rest of the 1918-1919 season.

There were few really outstanding productions during the year. Bringing Up Father At Home, Pollyanna, Chin-Chin, Turn to the Right, The Bird of Paradise, Neil O'Brien Minstrels, Warfield's The Auctioneer all returned. Some new musicals, such as Flo Flo, Going Up, Miss Springtime, and The Riviera Girl appeared for the first time.

One of the most elaborate productions was Raymond Hitchcock's Hitchy Koo. It was described as "a rollicking, lilting riot of song, senselessness and shimmering radiance that keeps the audience in a roar of laughter." It had no plot, a large chorus of pretty girls, magnificent stage settings, and it required sixty-eight men backstage to run the show.

Al H. Wilson made his first appearance at the Tulane in Once Upon a Time. "Of course a crowded house was the reception in

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35 Picayune, April 27, 1919, sec. 3, p. 10. Seasonal Summary.
waiting for the popular actor. ... " Margaret Anglin brought a new comedy, *Billeted*, which was one of the best shows of the year. Other hits were *Boomerang*, a Belasco production; the melodramatic *Blind Youth* with Lou Tellegen, who had formerly appeared with Bernhardt; and *The Country Cousin* with Alexandria Carlisle.

The regular season closed on April 5, 1919, but there was a three week showing of a moving picture to climax the year. The film was called *The End of the Road*. Prepared by the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities, it was a part of the social hygiene campaign of the government. The film was "intended to stimulate and strengthen the efforts being made to teach the womanhood and girlhood of our country the vital need of right social adjustments." It played a remarkably successful three week engagement to close a remarkably successful season for the Tulane.

Prosperity continued. The 1919-1920 season was another big year for the theatre. In fact, Campbell claimed that it was "the most successful and most prosperous season of its history. ... " Dramatically it was a better season than the previous ones. There were twenty-eight attractions during the year. Although there was still a preponderance of musical attractions, there were some dramatic productions to enable the audience to "get away from these

37 *Picayune*, March 10, 1919, p. 4.
38 *Picayune*, April 7, 1919, p. 4.
39 *Picayune*, April 18, 1920, sec. 4, p. 3.
frothy, flippant and irresponsible conglomerations, consisting of about three tinkling songs; a stereotyped series of 'jokes' and an aggregation of pitiful prototypes of perpetual youth, under the guise of chorus, which constitute the musical shows...

For the first time in several years, the theatre opened without a preliminary showing of movies. The first attraction was Julian Eltinge in *Revue of 1919*. This style of production became very popular during this period. The typical revue was based on a vaudeville or burlesque format with different acts; it allowed for specialties which could not be easily written into the show with a plot. Few productions equaled those of Ziegfeld, but many stars were appearing in this type of show.

Several shows and stars of previous years reappeared. *Going Up* returned with a new and much better cast. Emma Bunting starred in a comedy-drama, *Scandal*, which was on the verge of being risque. Alexander the Magician came and appealed to the women, "due to woman's natural curiosity..." Boomerang, Flo Flo and Twin Beds gave repeat performances. Two minstrel organizations, O'Brien and Al Field, played the Tulane.

The new shows drew some of the largest and most responsive audiences. In November, De Wolf Hopper appeared in *The Better 'Ole*, a British war comedy. The show was so popular that it was brought

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back in March for another successful week. Another new play was The Masquerader with Guy Post Bates. This "tense" and "complex" drama was not only brought back during the season for a second week, but in its opening week broke "the Tulane's attendance record for its entire history."  

George Arliss came for the first time in several years and presented Jacques Duval to a "large and distinguished audience that enjoyed every instant of the production."  

The only attraction to play two consecutive weeks was the Robert Mantell company in Shakespearean repertory. During the two week engagement he presented such shows as Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Richard III, Romeo and Juliet and "smashed his own fine record of two seasons ago."  

It was in many respects a remarkable year. Even with the increased admission prices which the Tulane was now charging, the attendance was high. As one reviewer remarked,

> The public appears to be amusement mad and the managers of theaters are at their wits' ends to devise means of taking care of the patrons. . . . The people are not to be blamed for seeking surcease from the trials of the business and industrial obligations and the theater affords them the most dependable sort of entertainment.  

In early 1921, the United States suffered from a financial panic. For a few months the people paused on their merry-go-round

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43 Picayune, April 18, 1920, sec. 4, p. 3.
45 Picayune, January 11, 1920, sec. 3, p. 11.
46 Picayune, November 9, 1919, sec. 3, p. 8.
of prosperity. Caution was observed while the nation waited for a new president to take office and to determine if the golden era was to continue. The New York managers were particularly careful that year. Few new shows were produced and even fewer were willing to hazard a road tour.

Increased railroad rates also had an effect upon the theatrical business of the season. This resulted in limiting the number in the chorus and in many cases the scenery was reduced to a minimum. Because of these factors there were few really spectacular shows during the season. Nevertheless, the box office receipts remained at a high level.

There were a few melodramas and the usual minstrel and magic shows, but primarily it was another season of music and comedy. Only three shows could be categorized as serious. The first was Robert E. Lee, by Thomas Dixon, a "play of the South from a Southern viewpoint." Walker Whiteside and Sidney Shields, a New Orleans girl, starred in The Master of Ballantrae, a romantic drama, which was also one of the best shows of the season. The only truly "dramatic" engagement was that of Robert Mantell. Once again he appeared for two weeks in the usual Shakespearean repertoire.

A large part of the year was devoted to such musicals as Hitchy Koo, "decidedly secondrate;" The Rainbow Girl, "rather lacking in vivacity and snap;" Irene, "a superlative

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47 Picayune, November 22, 1920, p. 2.
48 Picayune, September 27, 1920, p. 5.
49 Picayune, November 15, 1920, p. 7.
production;" and the Winter Garden Revue The Passing Show. Several good comedies appeared. Some of the better ones were Nightie Night; Booth Tarkington's Clarence; and Three Wise Fools, a John Golden production starring Helen Menken.

Only two other engagements of the year are worthy of attention. The first was Miss Nelly of N'Orleans, starring Mrs. Fiske. The play itself received a very poor review. Mrs. Fiske was praised, but "With any less skilled actress than Mrs. Fiske in the title role, the play would be impossible." The cast was very inadequate and the play "supposed to be a comedy of moonshine and makebelieve" was artificial and creaking. The name of Mrs. Fiske, however, was sufficient to induce large attendance.

The other noteworthy attraction was Lightnin'. This play had starred Frank Bacon in the leading role in the New York production. The road company featured Milton Nobles and seems to have been successful in New Orleans.

As a reviewer said just before the engagement of Robert Mantell,

The theatrical season has been a strange one in New Orleans— in fact, it has been a strange one the country over. There have been musical shows a-plenty, girl shows galore, several light comedies, but strangely enough, there has been only one serious play at the Tulane during the entire season.

"... Some say that this is the result of the war— that the public is demanding light plays."

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50 Picayune, December 13, 1920, p. 3.
51 Picayune, October 17, 1920, p. 17.
52 Picayune, March 6, 1921, sec. 4, p. 1.
What ever the cause, it was definitely a one-sided season; but the audiences paid to see the musicals and the comedies and the year was a prosperous one.

1921-1924

It might be said that the bottom dropped out of show business at the Tulane for the 1921-1922 season. After four years of unbelievable prosperity the management was to endure three very bad years. As Campbell predicted in September of 1921, "it seems certain that few producing managers will send big shows on the road on account of the labor situation and the high railroad rates." This was definitely true.

Because of the influx of people to the Northern cities, more and more theatres were being built there. The attractions that might have been able to survive the hazards of a road tour were thus finding an audience in these major cities, so the producers preferred to do less traveling. This resulted in the outlying cities receiving the older or less successful attractions. Even those shows which did travel had the cast and scenery cut to a minimum. For example, the musical comedy Dardanella had a chorus of eight girls and four men. To an audience that had been nurtured on musical productions boasting a company of fifty to seventy persons these new musicals seemed tame and uninteresting.

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53 Picayune, September 4, 1921, p. 4.
54 Picayune, December 5, 1921, p. 2.
Campbell promised, and gave, the Tulane patrons the best available shows. There was just not much available.

The theatre opened with a two week revival of *The Birth of a Nation*. Typical Crescent attractions such as *Bringing Up Father* in *Wall Street*, *Sunkist*, and *Mutt and Jeff in Chinatown* then followed. "Gripping and spectacular" melodrama was offered in *The Storm*, which featured a blizzard and a "sweeping forest fire."

The *Al Field and Neil O'Brien Minstrel Companies* made their annual appearance.

The first really stellar attraction appeared on November 13, when Charles Winniger brought *Broadway Whirl of 1921*. As one reviewer sardonically remarked, "How Broadway ever allowed him to stray away for a road tour is hard to understand." Another show, *Listen Lester*, on December 11, was called "Above Average."

Attractions were so scarce that the theatre closed from December 18 to December 25. When it did reopen, it was for the Italian picture, *Theodora*, which stayed for two weeks.

In the middle of January the Tulane finally received a few real stars. De Wolf Hopper appeared in the comedy *Ermine* with "a well balanced supporting cast and a capable orchestra and chorus. . . ." *Three Wise Fools* came for a second year with a good cast and Nance O'Neill appeared in *Passion Flower*.

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55 *Picayune*, November 7, 1921, p. 3.
56 *Picayune*, November 14, 1921, p. 15.
57 *Picayune*, December 12, 1921, p. 3.
58 *Picayune*, January 16, 1922, p. 4.
Beginning with Carnival Week, February 27, the Tulane regained some of its original status as a high class theatre. James M. Barrie's *Mary Rose*, with Ruth Chatterton, appeared for one week. The Russian Grand Opera Company presented a week of opera repertoire. Lou Tellegen brought back *Blind Youth*. Although his supporting cast was not exceptional and the play was not very good, it was noted that he "as usual, charms and delights." The Victor Herbert musical, *Angel Face*, was a good show with, surprisingly, good sets and excellent costumes.

The final production of the season was also the best production of the season. Otis Skinner appeared in *Blood and Sand*. Others in the cast included Catherine Calvert and Cornelia Otis Skinner, the daughter of the star. It was said of the show,

> Coming at the end of a season which has given theater-goers the poor and the exceptional in rapid succession, *Blood and Sand* ranks as first in a number of successes. Some of the plays have succeeded in spite of poor acting, and some actors have succeeded in spite of poor plays. Splendid acting, faultless settings and tense action combine to set *Blood and Sand* above such notable presentations as... The *Passion Flower*, *Mary Rose* and *Three Wise Fools*.

It had been the least auspicious schedule the Tulane had ever presented. Even the hopeful Campbell admitted that the "past season was beset with many vicissitudes" but, characteristically, he added that he expected "that prosperity would again reach the theaters

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59 Picayune, March 13, 1922, p. 3.
60 Picayune, March 20, 1922, p. 4.
61 Picayune, March 28, 1922, p. 3.
during the fall." The attendance which the theatre did receive served to show the loyalty of the Tulane patrons.

The following year 1922-1923, the South was still suffering the effects of the depression of 1921, but there had begun a slow climb back to normalcy. The rest of the country had recovered and was at the beginning of the whirlwind climb which was to reach its peak in the early part of 1929. The prospects for the theatre were better than they had been for the previous years. In 1921-1922 there were an "unusual number of successes produced in New York ..." and a few of these were planning to tour. Klaw and Erlanger had reached another agreement with the Shuberts and once again the Tulane was to receive the Independent attractions.

In September, Campbell announced that he had booked for the Tulane such successes as The Merry Widow, The Passing Show, Tangerine, Blossom Time, Lightnin', The Circle, The Bat and others. The Tulane had been renovated and everything was set for an auspicious season. As Campbell said, "Things look mighty fine for a most enjoyable and successful legitimate theatrical season."  

For the first few weeks the prophecy seemed to be fulfilled. The season opened with an "adequate" production of The Man Who

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62 States, April 22, 1922, sec. 2, p. 11. Seasonal Summary.
63 Picayune, September 4, 1922, p. 5.
64 Picayune, September 10, 1922, sec. 4, p. 2.
65 Picayune, September 17, 1922, sec. 4, p. 2.
66 Picayune, September 25, 1922, p. 3.
Came Back. The second week was the first big success of the season when Mitzi Hajos appeared in the musical comedy, Lady Billy. De Wolf Hopper then played two "successful" weeks of Gilbert and Sullivan. During the engagement he appeared in The Mikado, Pinafore, Yeoman of the Guard and The Pirates of Penzance.

"Like a long-lost friend was The Merry Widow greeted upon its return... and theatergoers, bearing with them fond memories, turned out en masse, as it were, to greet her." The show starred James Liddy and Marie Wells and featured Jefferson De Angelis; it played a week to "capacity" business.

Mary Robert Rinehart's mystery, The Bat, was one of the season's better shows. Another good production was Somerset Maugham's The Circle. Called a "rare bird among road show offerings," it was an all-star production with Amelia Bingham, Wilton Lackaye, Charlotte Walker, Henry E. Dixon and Norman Hackett. The Greenwich Village Follies had a snappy overture, whirlwind dances, life and vivacity, but a poor script. "For the comedy depends on the suggestive for the major part of its laughs; and what is not 'smutty' is so musty with age that the jests pop up like forgotten old friends of the brown derby." Some of the other musicals were better. Tangerine, The Passing Show, Up in the Clouds, and As You Were were all well staged and popular.

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67 Picayune, April 29, 1923, sec. 4, p. 3. Seasonal Summary.
68 Picayune, October 23, 1922, p. 3.
69 Picayune, November 13, 1922, p. 3.
70 Picayune, December 4, 1922, p. 2.
The classics for the year were presented by Fritz Leiber and his company in Shakespearean repertory. They played the Taming of the Shrew, Macbeth, Hamlet and other plays for a "particularly successful" week.

Walter Whiteside and Sidney Shields returned in a new mystery melodrama entitled The Hindu. The Al Field and Neil O'Brien minstrels were joined by the Lasses White group to make a total of three weeks of minstrelsy for the Tulane.

After a comparatively successful beginning there was trouble near the end of the season. First, on January 25, a fire destroyed a greater part of the block on Baronne between Canal and Common Streets. The theatres were not burned, but "Falling water and debris resulted in the almost total destruction of the glass roof of the . . . Arcade. The structure was valued at $5000 and it is estimated that its damage will reach $3000." 72

Later, on February 24, the theatre was forced to close for two weeks due to the lack of companies still on the road. As Campbell said, "Managers of worthwhile attractions look askance on Southern tours. . . as they have not panned out well, New Orleans having been the one bright spot. . . ." 73

There were three more engagements at the end of the season. The First Year was a comedy of young married life and featured Ruth Gordon. It was followed by a musical, The Gold Diggers, and one of

71 Picayune, April 29, 1922, sec. 4, p. 3. Seasonal Summary.
72 Picayune, January 26, 1923, p. 1.
73 Picayune, February 16, 1923, p. 16.
the best shows of the year, Woman of Bronze. This final play of the season starred Margaret Anglin. It was described as "jerky and mechanical in construction and exasperatingly wordy" but it provided Miss Anglin with a good role. To close the season, a movie, Robin Hood, with Douglas Fairbanks played for two weeks.

An innovation took place at the Tulane the second week in April. A musical revue stock company began an extended engagement. It was headed by Jimmy Hodges and was to present a new show each week for an "indefinite" length of time. The group produced only four shows before terminating the engagement. It seems they played to crowded and enthusiastic galleries, "but down below the audience began displaying a bored attitude."  

One other important event took place at the Tulane during the season. Without any fanfare or "fuss and feathers" the San Carlo Grand Opera Company played a week of opera and "taxed the capacity of the Tulane Theater at every performance." The performances were so successful that definite arrangements were made for another engagement the following year.

The 1923-1924 season was another failure. Every big show which was touring the South came to the Tulane during the year. Unfortunately there were not many shows brave enough or financially secure enough to make the attempt. Campbell was forced to admit that "the season has not been a record-breaker from a financial

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74 Picayune, March 20, 1923, p. 2.
75 Picayune, April 16, 1923, p. 3.
76 Picayune, April 29, 1923, sec. 4, p. 3.
It was a long season; but eight weeks of it were devoted to motion pictures, three weeks were minstrel engagements and two weeks were filled by the San Carlo Opera Company. Only seventeen plays appeared at the theatre.

Two shows were popular enough to warrant a two week run. The first was Channing Pollock's play, The Fool, which was viewed by large audiences throughout its engagement. The only other play to be presented for two weeks was the operetta, Blossom Time. It was "one of the outstanding hits of the season..." and was so well received at its first appearance in November that it was re-engaged for the week of Christmas.

Another big success of the year was the musical revue, The Passing Show. It starred Willie and Eugene Howard and lots of girls. "There were scores of them—blondes, brunettes and all the intervening shades." Other comparatively good productions were The Bat; The Climax with Guy Bates Post; Magnolia, "a scathing satire of the chivalry and the code of honor of the South of the days before the Civil War," starring Leo Carrillo; and The Old Soak, with Raymond Hitchcock.

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77 Picayune, May 11, 1921, sec. 4, p. 6. Seasonal Summary.
78 Picayune, November 12, 1923, p. 3.
79 Picayune, May 11, 1924, sec. 4, p. 6.
80 Picayune, January 28, 1924, p. 10.
81 Picayune, October 15, 1923, p. 4.
Only two other events of the season were worth mentioning. For the first time the reviews in the newspapers were signed. The other event was another fire. Again the theatres escaped injury.

1924-1926

The Mid-twenties were golden years for the American playwright. Such dramatists as Sidney Howard, Eugene O'Neill and George S. Kaufmann were writing some of their greatest plays. In fact, "Show business of 1924 was bulging at the seams. There were 21,897 theatres, museums and concert halls...." in the United States. But this condition was true only in major Eastern cities. The road was in a perilous state.

Economically throughout the country "the brakes were off, and nobody wanted to listen to the prophets of gloom. Between 1924 and 1927, Americans were dazzled by the news that the crop of millionaires had increased from a paltry 75 to 283." The nation was prosperous, but it was a precarious prosperity. It was much too easy to overlook the unevenness of the prosperity, especially the disparity between the rural and urban incomes. "It was a rich and fruitful era, but it carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction."

A nation was ready for entertainment, but the entertainment was not available. New Orleans had always been considered a good

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82 Laurie and Green, op. cit., p. 207.
83 Freidel, op. cit., p. 207.
84 Freidel, op. cit., p. 275.
theatre town and the standards of the audience were rather high. As the quality of touring companies decreased, so did the audience. By the mid-twenties the only shows which drew large audiences were the elaborate revues, which appealed to the younger "flapper" generation, and the few plays each year which attracted the more conservative audience because of its stars, advance publicity or known excellence.

Because of this trend there had come to be a higher percentage of musicals each year. In 1922-1923, there had been thirteen musical shows, in 1923-1924 there were twelve, in 1924-1925 there were ten shows with music and by 1925-1926 of the seventeen companies which appeared, ten were presenting musical shows.

The last two years of the Divergent Period, 1925-1926, were years of contrast. The greatest number of shows were musicals, good musicals, mediocre musicals and bad musicals. Occasionally, in this desert of music would appear one of the really great American plays. Unfortunately there were usually presented by second companies. Only a few of the great stars still came. It was as if they refused to notice the prophets who were saying the road was dying and hoped to keep it alive by the mere fact of their presence.

The 1924-1925 season almost closed before it opened. The stage unions were demanding a thirty percent increase in salaries for their employees. Campbell, claiming that the theatre was already losing money, threatened to close the theatre permanently. He said that the demands of the unions would increase operating costs at
least $10,000 and that the management simply could not afford the loss. On September 24, however, Campbell announced that the "season's schedule... proved so attractive that the management is willing to take a chance on the added patronage it is expected to draw." Thus he accepted the demands of the stage hands and musicians' unions.

The *Times-Picayune* had a new critic, and a heretofore absent honesty was now evident in the reviewing. The reviewer was Kenneth T. Knoblock. Although he had personal preferences and prejudices, he gave a much better picture of the state of drama in New Orleans than had been given in preceding years.

During the 1924-1925 season there were some good shows. Otis Skinner appeared in *Sancho Panza*. In November, Zoe Atkin's *Foot-Loose*, with Margaret Anglin and William Faversham, was "everything a play should be, and more."  

In the same month there appeared at the Tulane one of the greatest plays of the twenties, *Rain*, with Hilda Vaughn in the Jeanne Engles role of Sadie Thompson. Knoblock make an interesting comment concerning the play and the typical Tulane audience.

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85 *Picayune*, September 6, 1924, p. 7.
86 *Picayune*, September 24, 1924, p. 11.
87 *Picayune*, November 10, 1924, p. 2.
The play is great and its presentation deserves the same extravagant praise. The only fault that could be found last night was with the audience. New Orleans, fed on pap recently while frankness has been developing elsewhere demonstrated a tendency to take some of the tense moments of the drama in the spirit in which a bedroom farce is taken. Said tendency should be deplored, and hereby is. Sex is a fact, and need not be a funny fact. 88

Despite the critic's condemnation of the audience, the play remained for two weeks "doing the best business of the season. . . ." 89

There were two other attempts at stark realistic drama at the Tulane that season. White Cargo neglected the "Mid-Victorian gloss which finds its epitome in bedroom farce. . . ." 90 and presented an interesting and powerful drama. The other play, Simon Called Peter, was not good nor was it well received. Knoblock said:

A play apparently written deliberately for box office purposes around a single pornographic situation and played with justifiable stupidity . . . . proves nothing except that the legitimate drama can 'get by' with nakedness and prurience forbidden the Dauphine theater in its palmiest burlesque days.

This mess is an attempt at a compromise and is neither fish nor fowl, nor good red herring. And repeating for emphasis, it is played abominably. 91

This was to be characteristic of the last two seasons of the Period. Some few excellent productions and much that was written

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88 Picayune, November 24, 1924, p. 3.
89 Picayune, November 30, 1924, sec. 4, p. 1.
90 Picayune, February 2, 1925, p. 2.
and presented for the entertainment hungry "bathtub gin" set was
the fare which the Tulane gave to New Orleans.

Fritz Leiber appeared again in 1925, for a week of Shakespeare,
and Olga Petrova returned in her two plays, Hurricane and The White
Peacock. The Fool played again; and a new play, Seventh Heaven,
which had been a great success on Broadway, was well attended at
the Tulane when it was presented with a second company. The rest
of the year was devoted to music and laughter.

Some of the best musicals were Blossom Time, Sally, and Little
Jesse James. Some of the worst were Land of Joy and that "joyous
example of theatrical dictatorship of the proletariat," Bringing
Up Father in Ireland.

In September 1925, it had been predicted that the mood of the
coming season would be comedy. In March, 1926, it was noted that
only six plays without music were offered during the preceding
season. As Knoblock explained:

The dearth of travelling 'drama' has been
rather lamentable, but the shows just haven't
gone out, when they have they failed before
reaching New Orleans.

It is to be hoped that next season will be
less musical and more dramatic, but that rests
rather with the Eastern producers than with
Colonel Campbell. If they fail to send out plays
by Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Howard or George Bernard
Shaw, the Colonel can't play them. In so failing
they are no doubt justified. Really good plays
that miss the popular chord... find hard sledding
on the road, especially in the South of so many
miles and few theatres.93

92 Picayune, December 15, 1924, p. 3.
The best example of how tragically true that last statement could be even in New Orleans, was demonstrated with the one really "classic" production of the season. On November 16, 1925, Mrs. Fiske opened in The Rivals, with James T. Powers as Bob Acres. The following Sunday, the Picayune reporter lashed out at the theatre-going public:

_The Rivals fared shamefully in New Orleans, which is rather pitiful, considering what it was and all the chances it had. Its failure to draw is inexplicable..._

_Everywhere the play had broken records, but New Orleans, supposedly cultured and eager to support the good things of life, gave it less, perhaps than it has given any other play this season. The company was the best in years, if not in history, the play is a classic..._

_However, all that's over. The blot is on the 'scutcheon, and the next all-star company that goes touring may ignore New Orleans because of it._

Another good example of New Orleans' growing tendency to give only lip service to culture occurred during the opera season. The San Carlo Company chose to present a series of subscription performances at the Tulane. The first presentation was on November 23, and the engagement was concluded on December 19. For society it was a brilliant success. As entertainment for the average theatre-goer, the month was a complete failure.

_The city, with its French Opera traditions, has the reputation of being receptive to the form... But what has happened. The theater is crowded on subscription nights, filled beyond anything in_
its recent history. But on 'popular' nights when all seats are available to the general public instead of balcony and gallery seats remaining after the subscribers have taken theirs, the patronage has been miserable.

What's the matter? Who knows.

'I mourn', says Colonel Thomas C. Campbell . . . . 'I mourn more than anybody else.'

There were some big successes that year. First there was the comedy mystery, The Gorilla, which was so popular that it was held over for a second week. The other show to play two weeks was the musical comedy, No, No, Nanette. George White's Scandals "drew the first sell-out house of the season." In fact, it "was the most successful run of the . . . season" with a chorus which "was in the greatest state of undress, in certain scenes, that has ever been achieved in a public theater in the city of New Orleans." 96

The Student Prince deserved the patronage it received during a successful two week engagement; and George Kelly's The Show Off was successful, at least with "the patrons of legitimate. . . ." 97

The "greatest crowds of the season. . . ." 98 turned out for The Big Parade. A motion picture of epic proportions it starred John Gilbert and Renee Adoree and was a climactic closing engagement for the season.

Despite the quality of many of the performances, the great number of musicals had made for two successful years. As Campbell

95 Picayune, December 6, 1925, sec. 4, p. 1.
96 Picayune, January 4, 1926, p. 3.
98 Picayune, March 27, 1926, p. 4.
stated, the years had been successful "from the box office point of view, largely because of the slightly topheavy list of musical shows." During the nine year Divergent Period the Tulane had been through years of great success and great failure. It had lost much of its reputation as the "fashionable temple of Thespis," but by changing with the moods of the people it had managed to survive. The last two years of the period were financially good, and Colonel Campbell remained optimistic.

The Crescent

There has been much said and written about vaudeville. Its origins have been attributed to different ages and different people. In America, vaudeville as we know it really began July 13, 1865, when Tony Pastor's Opera House opened in the Bowery in New York City. At that time it was "a sort of catch-as-catch can business." With the entrance of such vaudeville giants as Benjamin Keith, Willie Hammerstein, Martin Beck and E. F. Albee, show business meant vaudeville and vaudeville meant big business.

"The years 1905-1913 were Gold Rush days, for show business, with eager pioneers staking claims in what they hoped would prove the biggest lodes." By 1909, the movies had become a vital force in the entertainment field; so most vaudeville magnates quickly

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100 Joe Laurie, Jr., Vaudeville: From the Honky-Tonks to the Palace (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933), p. 16.
101 Ibid., p. 17.
102 Laurie and Green, op. cit., p. 5.
added motion pictures to their bills.

During World War I, vaudeville held up extremely well despite the hardships which crippled the rest of show business; but in the Roaring Twenties vaudeville began its downward plunge. "Too rigid to change, too incredulous to believe that its day was over, it stood helplessly as its empire was first absorbed, then destroyed." The monster which devoured vaudeville was the motion picture. Originally the pictures had been used to clear the audience between vaudeville shows; now the variety acts served as a fill between the pictures. The one man who most successfully bridged this change, and profited most by it, was Marcus Loew.

Marcus Loew had been in the fur business. He saved enough money to buy an apartment house. At about the same time, David Warfield also bought an apartment building next door to Loew's. This was the beginning of a life-long friendship and partnership which made both of them millionaires. Loew soon became interested in the penny arcades which were running in New York. So he and Warfield began buying a few. In six months they owned forty nickelodeons.

In 1908, an unemployed actor asked Loew for a job. There was no opening for an operator, cashier or ticket taker; so Loew asked him if he could recite "Gunga Din" between the pictures. This was the beginning of the Loew movie-vaudeville empire.

\[103\] Ibid., p. 204.
\[104\] Ibid., p. 378-380.
\[105\] Ibid., p. 378.
By 1919, vaudeville had resolved itself into a tug-of-war between small time and big time. "Small time was the Marcus Loew Circuit, recapitalized with $100,000,000 at 50¢ top. . . . Loew vaudeville was machine-built for a mass audience--the kind that wanted their money's worth with a movie and 'some acts.' Marcus Loew's credo was 'a low price so the entire family could go.'"\(^{106}\)

Since the price was aimed at family attendance, so were the shows. Loew's policy was to "present programs that will have a special appeal in the vaudeville section to the women and children and to the family circle. . . ."\(^{107}\)

It was in August, 1917, that the Loew interests took over the Crescent Theatre. At that time Loew said that he regarded the "Crescent as one of the very finest of the theaters that make up the New York to the coast chain." In fact, New Orleans was called "the pivot wheel. . . . for a chain of theatres that has no comparison."\(^{109}\)

Although Klaw and Erlanger remained in control of the Crescent, through the managership of Campbell, the name was changed to Loew's Crescent. The performances were to begin at one o'clock every afternoon and run continuously until eleven p. m. There was to be one feature picture, short subject films and a vaudeville bill composed of five acts.

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\(^{106}\) Laurie and Green, op. cit., p. 268.

\(^{107}\) Picayune, August 31, 1919, sec. 3, p. 6.

\(^{108}\) Picayune, August 20, 1917, p. 7.

\(^{109}\) States, August 26, 1917, sec. 2, p. 11.
The Loew's Crescent opened on September 2, 1917. The opening picture was Hashimura Togo, with Sessue Hayakawa. The Picayune reviewer said at that time:

Music bright and snappy and a lot of it, was the dominant tone at the Loew's Crescent Theater at the auspicious opening of that playhouse. ... with a combination program of pictures and vaudeville. ... and there was nothing in the remarkably fine program to cause the least sagging in the interest and enjoyment which characterized the first offerings in the season's run.\footnote{Picayune, September 3, 1917, p. 4.}

The programs changed each Sunday and Thursday, and the theatre was to be open throughout the entire year. By installing cooling systems, "Mr. Loew proved for the first time in New Orleans history that theaters could be kept open year around."\footnote{Picayune, September 5, 1920, sec. h, p. 3.} In December of 1917, Walter Katmann became the Loew's manager and he was to manage the theatre for many successful years. In 1919, it was announced that the average monthly attendance at the Crescent was close to 140,000 persons.

The Loew Circuit made no claim to be big time vaudeville. It presented some of the best films available—along with some of the worst; but their vaudeville acts were definitely small time. Very few of the big vaudeville stars ever appeared at the Crescent. Occasionally some one like Bert Swor, Jimmy Rosen, Andrew Mack or the Primrose Minstrels would appear; but these were rare instances. The usual show contained adequate but not famous performers.
A typical Crescent show during this period would contain something like the following list of acts: Theda Bara in *The Lure of Ambition* or William Farnum in *The Wings of the Morning*; Janet and Warren Leland painting on canvass; Peppino and Perry on piano and accordion; Howard Martelle and Company in a ventriloquist act; Stafford and De Rose in song and dance; and Henry Horton and Company in a comedy skit. Animal acts, such as Swain's Cats and Rats, were popular at the theatres. Also the "nut" comedians such as Hall and Brown, Charles Reilly or Kane and Chidlow were usually pleasing to the audiences.

Some of the more popular movie stars during the period were Tom Mix, William S. Hart, Buster Keaton and Mary Pickford. The two most popular, however, were Rin Tin Tin and the child star, Jackie Coogan. They were always assured of an enthusiastic reception at the Crescent.

In 1919, there began to be complaints about the vulgarity of some of the shows. As the reviewer said on one show, it "is the same kind of performance that has caused the police to close the tough cabarets of the city." In August of the same year it was said of two acts that they were "offensive and persistently belie the claim made by Marcus Loew that his theaters are always safe and proper places for women and children to congregate for amusement."
This condition continued off and on until December 1920. By that time the general public was expressing its indignation in letters of complaint to the newspapers. As one man wrote,

> We have lived here only fourteen months and have been frequent visitors to the theaters and I must say that we have not witnessed one performance but where there wasn't one act and sometimes the whole show that relied upon— not acting by any means— but vulgar jokes and motions to amuse the audience.\textsuperscript{114}

Although there was a law on the statute books prohibiting the "shimmy," many performers even managed to sneak in enough wriggling and "voluptuous contortions" to offend the audience.\textsuperscript{115}

Because of these offensive acts and because of the financial uncertainties in the summer of 1921, business was bad for a few months. By August, however, it could be said that the "theater business in New Orleans is picking up..."\textsuperscript{116} Following this the acts seem to have been "cleaned up." At least there were few complaints in the following years.

During the period of the Loew managership, there had been a gradual increase in admission prices. When the theatre opened under its new management the top price had been thirty cents. By January 1, 1920, "Due to the increased cost of operating a slight increase of prices will go into effect... Matinees 15¢, 20¢; Nights 15¢, 25¢, 40¢."\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{114}Picayune, December 14, 1920, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{115}Picayune, December 23, 1920, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{116}Picayune, August 12, 1921, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{117}Picayune, December 28, 1919, sec. 3, p. 10.
In September, 1923, a new policy was inaugurated. The program was to change only once a week instead of twice. This new policy was to enable the management to obtain better acts and photoplays. . . . 118 At this time there was another change in prices. The top price for matinees was raised to twenty-five cents and the top for nights and weekend matinees was fifty cents. Under the new policy there were to be four shows daily, starting at one p. m. and ending at eleven p. m., and there were still five acts of vaudeville; only the quality of the performance was to change.

In 1923, the new manager, Rodney Toups, stated that during the six years of the Loew's management, "More than 7,000,000 people have been entertained. . . . 3120 vaudeville acts and 624 feature photoplays have been presented. . . ." 119

During the last three years in which the Loew's Circuit occupied the Crescent there was some improvement in the shows. Part of this was due to the gradual improvement in the quality of motion pictures and part of it was due to Marcus Loew. Loew, with his "magic formula of popular-priced films-plus-vaude-- had signed the death warrant of the bigtime theatre men by surpassing them in value, entertainment, theatres and showmanship." 120

118 Picayune, August 31, 1923, p. 9.
119 Picayune, August 13, 1923, p. 9.
120 Laurie and Green, op. cit., p. 271.
As motion pictures increased in popularity and as bigtime vaudeville tottered and sank, more and more of the big acts deserted the "sinking ship of the Orpheum." Thus, Loew, "who now paid more for acts than the bigtime vaudeville houses were able to offer." was, after about 1925, able to obtain better and bigger acts and stars.

Some of the Crescent vaudeville favorites during the years from 1923 to 1926 were Al H. Wilson, Stella Mayhew, Jack Wilson and stars of this type. In spite of the better vaudeville acts, it soon became evident that the audiences were coming to see the pictures and not the vaudeville.

In August, 1925, the Crescent marked its eighth anniversary as a Loew's house. The bill included the Siamese Twins, Daisy and Violet Hinton; Jim Reynolds, a monologist; Boyne and Leonard in a comedy sketch; Kennedy and Davis in a song and dance comedy; Ed Gingras, a juggler; and the movie Eve's Lover, with Irene Rich and Willard Louis. This was the last anniversary which Loew would celebrate in the Crescent.

Because of the increased popularity of movies in New Orleans, Loew was building a new theatre in the city. It was to cost $1,500,000 and was to be called Loew's State Theatre. The opening

\[121\] Ibid., p. 270.
\[122\] Ibid., p. 271.
\[123\] Picayune, September 7, 1925, p. 4.
was set for April 3, 1926. Thus the week of March 27, 1926 was "Farewell Week at Loew's Crescent for Marcus Loew. . . ."¹²⁴

The final review for the nine year period was "a bill of vaudeville neither very good nor very bad."¹²⁵

Thus ended the nine year period of vaudeville and motion pictures for the Crescent Theatre. It had been a financially successful nine years, but the attractions had outgrown the theatre. The Crescent was no longer big enough nor elaborate enough for Marcus Loew.

¹²⁵ Picayune, March 29, 1926, p. 3.
CHAPTER VI
The Decadent Period: 1926 to 1937

The final period in the history of the Tulane and Crescent Theatres began in September, 1926, and ended ten and one-half years later when the theatre buildings were demolished. In actuality, however, the end came much earlier than 1937. For both theatres the last few seasons of their existence were but mockeries of their former years. Their real end came with "Black Tuesday," the closing of the banks and the Great Depression.

"The decade of the 'twenties, which many believed had opened a new and never ending era of prosperity, closed in the most complete economic collapse in American history."¹ There has been much written on the economic depression of 1929 and the 1930's, and there are many theories as to why and how it happened. Whatever the causes, one factor is clearly evident-- the lack of stability in the American economic structure after World War I.

Following a brief post-war recession (1919-1921) prosperity had returned to many lines of industry and many areas of the country.² Yet it was an uneven prosperity. There was over-expansion in such fields as construction and automobile production, while other areas showed continued depression. "Most important was the failure of

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²Ibid., p. 641.
agriculture to respond to the post-war economic recovery."

Of course, there was also the stock market. "Deluded by the insane propaganda inculcating the belief that prosperity was permanent, at least a million people managed to save enough to speculate in stocks." A financial panic on the New York Stock Exchange in October, 1929, was the event that set the deflationary spiral in motion, but the economic instability of the world had made the outcome inevitable.

The decline continued in the United States until the spring of 1933. At that time "estimates of the number of unemployed ran from 13,000,000 to over 17,000,000." Industry was less than sixty percent of normal; and over 10,000 banks had failed. Then in 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became the President and began his widespread, and ultimately effective, battle against the economic depression.

It was, however, too late for any administrative measure to help the "road." The entire theatrical world had suffered from the depression. In 1931, the legitimate theatre had "its most dismal year in almost two decades. Through most of the year, Broadway was about 45 percent dark."

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3 Ibid., p. 642.
4 Ibid., p. 643.
6 Faulkner, op. cit., p. 651.
In one respect, the twenties and thirties were great years for the American theatre. For the first time this country was producing playwrights. Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice, S. N. Behrman, and others wrote some of their greatest plays during these years. This rise of a native school of playwrights made the play rather than the star the primary point of interest. "The day of the third-rate touring company, even in a recent Broadway success, and of the stars who were personages rather than performers, came to an end." This factor, combined with the increasing competition of motion pictures, the invention of the talking picture and the almost simultaneous deprivation brought about by the depression completely finished the touring companies.

Artistically they were great years, financially they were catastrophic. With productions closing faster than new ones could take their place, and with the hardships which were to be met on a tour, few shows even bothered to make the effort to leave the Eastern cities. Some of those which did try were unable to complete their tours.

Although New Orleans was the largest manufacturing city south of Birmingham, it was unable to survive as a legitimate theatre town. Surrounded by an agricultural economy which had never fully recovered from the 1921 financial setback, the city received few attractions during the depression years. As conditions in the city became more severe, even those which did arrive often fared badly.

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The Tulane and Crescent continued in operation after 1929, but neither had any really profitable seasons. The decade of the thirties was indeed a Decadent Period for the once-fashionable Klaw and Erlanger theatres.

The Crescent

After the Loew interests left the Crescent, there was speculation as to the fate of the theatre. The newspapers announced that the Saenger interests had taken over the lease and that the Crescent was to operate as a musical stock theatre. It was to be open on a continuous performance basis, with feature motion pictures "affording an interlude between shows." The admission for nights and weekend matinees was fifty, twenty-five and fifteen cents. The regular matinee price was twenty-five, twenty and fifteen cents.

The A. B. Marcus Show of 1926 was engaged to open the house and to remain for an indefinite period of time. The Marcus Shows were advertised as "beautifully staged musical comedy tabloids." These tabloids, or "tabs" as they were commonly called, were merely condensed musical shows. They were originated around 1911 and before many years they had become a recognized form of show business. The company usually consisted of four or five principals, eight or nine chorus girls, and varying amounts of scenery. They were an inexpensive form of entertainment which could afford to exist on low admissions.

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9 *Picayune*, March 26, 1926, p. 4.
10 *Picayune*, March 28, 1926, sec. 4, p. 2.
A. B. Marcus had a large circuit of these shows on the road and for a while they made money. Ultimately the cheapness of the productions and the inadequacy of most of the companies brought them into disfavor until finally they disappeared.

The first Marcus Show opened at the Crescent on April 1, 1926. The leading members of the company were Eddie Chittenden, Billy Horan, Elmer Cowdy, Edith Miller, Ania Karina, and the Marcus "Peaches". Throughout the following weeks, Chittenden and the shapely chorus of "Peaches" seem to have been the outstanding attractions of the rather mediocre shows. The company changed many times during the next few months. New stars and additions to the chorus appeared and disappeared; and the productions remained surprisingly popular despite their lack of variety and quality.

Knoblock, who was still reviewing for the *Picayune*, was sometimes complimentary, but usually his reaction was critical or astonished. Some comments from various reviews which appeared during the occupancy of the different Marcus Shows will best describe the shows and the audience reaction to them.

During the early weeks, Knoblock wrote, "The Marcus Show this week is just about what it was last week. It isn't entertainment for the discriminating seeker, though it may please the person who goes to a theatre determined to be entertained." Again he said,

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"The Marcus Show, in short, is just a typical tank town tab show, feebler than most because it lacks an outstanding personality."\textsuperscript{13}

After nineteen weeks, a new show called the Marcus "Super" Musical Company appeared at the Crescent. It was a slight improvement over the old group. However, "A Marcus show by any name would be a Marcus show, differing from its predecessors only in a few minor details."\textsuperscript{14}

The most surprising thing about the entire period was the evident popularity of the shows, and especially of the star, Chittenden. As one reviewer said, "Eddie Chittenden and supporting players cavort across the stage according to last week's pattern, and that of the week before, and ad infinitum. But the patrons seem not to hold that against them, thundering applause without stint."\textsuperscript{15}

In January, 1927, the organization celebrated its forty-second consecutive week of production, which "no doubt, demonstrated conclusively that there is an audience for musical comedy and revue of the cheaper sort, and that it is a large and persistent audience."\textsuperscript{16}

In addition to the Peaches and Chittenden, the Crescent audiences received movies which were typical of the infant industry. Some stars who appeared again and again were Buck Jones, Lon Chaney, Hoot Gibson, Viola Dana, Rin-Tin-Tin, Jack Holt and Ken Maynard. Occasionally there would be a picture with a new star such as Gary

\textsuperscript{13}Picayune, May 31, 1926, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{14}Picayune, November 7, 1926, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{15}Picayune, November 1, 1926, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{16}Picayune, January 17, 1927, p. 16.
Cooper, Monte Blue or Joan Crawford, but the most numerous and most popular Crescent attractions were "the theywentthatawayers."\textsuperscript{17}

The Marcus Shows continued to appear until October 22, 1927. At that time the "Crescent theater turned over a new leaf" and became, for a short time, a burlesque theatre. Knoblock was very pleased about this change in fare. As he said,

Frankly, there is a good, large section of the public that is just about sick and tired of the arty pretensions of certain forms of entertainment, of wise-cracks, ballets and clothes-horse shows. Hungry, this public is, for the old, rowdy, wholesome savor of slapstick, pure and unadulterated.\textsuperscript{18}

The new burlesque shows starred Harry and Willy Lander of the Columbia wheel.\textsuperscript{19} Despite good reviews which contained such phrases as "excellent brand of burlesque"\textsuperscript{20} and "spanking good shows"\textsuperscript{21} the burlesque shows did not remain for long. On Sunday, December 3, Chittenden and the Peaches of Marcus returned to the Crescent. Knoblock complained, "There's no comparison between Eddie and the Lander Brothers. . . . Still through one of those queer quirks of psychology Chittenden draws far better than the Landers."\textsuperscript{22}

This time the Marcus group remained for only two weeks. On December 18, 1927, a new group called the Crescent Players took over

\textsuperscript{17}A phrase used in From Vaude to Video, p. 260.

\textsuperscript{18}Picayune, October 24, 1927, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{19}One of the principal burlesque circuits, known as the Eastern Wheel.

\textsuperscript{20}Picayune, November 21, 1927, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{21}Picayune, November 14, 1927, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{22}Picayune, December 3, 1927, p. 27.
the theatre. They presented prolonged vaudeville playlets in con-
junction with moving pictures.

In March, 1928, the Picayune reviewer summarized the Crescent
attractions in these words: "Crescent shows continue to be, after
nearly two years, practically a matter of routine, no matter how
much the company may have changed since the opening. The successive
troupes have practically exhausted the script market and there is,
by now, a great deal of repetition."^{23} The patronage had lessened
during the two years, so the management announced reduced prices for
the theatre. The top for nights was thirty cents and the top for
matinees was lowered to twenty cents.

On May 17, 1928, the newspaper announced that the show for the
following week was to be the film Across to Singapore, with Ramon
Navarro and Joan Crawford, and the tab show "Bits and Hits of 1928."
This was the last published reference to the Crescent Theatre until
October 5, 1930, when the Times-Picayune announced the reopening
of the playhouse.

The Marcus Shows came back. This time the chorus contained
twenty-four "Peaches" and the show was called a "Revue."^{24} The
company, however, received little support from the audience,^{25} and
the engagement ended on November 9, 1920. Once again the theatre
was closed for several months.

^{23}Picayune, March 19, 1928, p. 22.

^{24}Picayune, October 6, 1930, p. 22.

^{25}Picayune, October 27, 1930, p. 20.
Beginning on April 12, 1931, the Chicago Follies, starring Ches Davis and "Honey Gal" Cobb, played a ten day engagement. The revue deserved better patronage than it received in New Orleans."  

For the remainder of the depression years the theatre was dark. Then in September, 1934, the ever-popular Eddie Chittenden and a company of twenty-five people reopened the theatre. "A capacity house greeted his return." The top admission was thirty cents. The management had "pledged itself to a policy of clean musical shows." along with first-run motion pictures. This policy soon lapsed since the shows were not good and the funmakers began "resorting to filth for laughter..." Information as to how long the company remained at the theatre is indefinite. The last review in the Times-Picayune appeared on October 8, but there were advertisements for the shows until October 22. The Item carried a review on October 14, but there was nothing after that.

In March, 1935, the Crescent entered into its last series of productions. Beginning March 4, the Crescent, under the management of Eddie Chittenden, was to present "unusual features." The first of these was the motion picture Children of the Sun which was "said

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26 Picayune, April 20, 1931, p. 18.
27 Picayune, September 24, 1934, p. 17.
28 Item, October 4, 1934, p. 5.
29 Item, October 8, 1934, p. 4.
to be an expose of the nudist camp," with the "Extra added stage attraction--Personal Appearance of Lady Eve and Her Nudist Girls."  

On Monday afternoon the film was confiscated by the police vice-squad and the manager and two out-of-state film agents were arrested. On Wednesday, the operator of the theatre, Eddie Chittenden, applied for a writ of injunction and claimed that the film "is a perfectly decent and clean picture." The following week, the film Birth, "with living models on stage," was shown. This time, however, the men and women attended different performances; so there were no open complaints until March 17, when the Picayune reviewer published this comment.

One sure sign of spring, or something, is the annual effort to unload upon us a flock of films trying to get the public pennies on the plea that they are salacious. If you've ever been stung by them, you know that usually they aren't, and that you can find a lot of snappier pictures in any art museum or even in books on the shelves of our sedate public library. These 'exposes' and whatnots serve merely to draw down censorial wrath upon all movies, and to annoy a number of nice people.

This department has always stood for robust vigor in the films, even at the risk of jolting the strait-laced, but these sickly sheep trying to put on the wolves clothing ought to be sent to the S. P. C. A.

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31 Idem.
33 Picayune, March 9, 1935, p. 6.
34 Picayune, March 17, 1935, sec. 3, p. 10.
The week of March 18, the attraction was Man of Courage, which was "a frank glorification of the Fascist regime in Italy. . . ." During the first day of presentation, eleven members of the Anti-Fascist United Front Committee were arrested for picketing the theatre. By "popular demand," Back to Eden and Birth were presented during the week of March 25. The following week the programs were entitled Girls for Sale and False Shame.

Beginning April 3, 1935, there were presentations of Forgotten Men, a documentary sponsored by the American Legion. The last picture in this series was Streets of Sorrow, with Greta Garbo, which was advertised on April 12, 1935.

The final engagement at the theatre was a two week run of movie and vaudeville which started on April 14, 1935. There were three vaudeville acts starring Wild Bill Strigo and two movies at each performance. The last advertisement for the Crescent appeared in the Times-Picayune on April 21, 1935.

This was the ignomnious end of the popular theatre which had once been the pride of New Orleans. During its early years, some of the nation's greatest comics had appeared on its stage; but like so many of its contemporaries, it was unable to survive the changing taste in national entertainment.

35Picayune, March 18, 1935, p. 22.

For the first three years of the Decadent Period, the Tulane managed to preserve a semblance of its former prosperity. In 1926, the season opened at the regular time, but without the usual optimistic forecast from Campbell or the Picayune. Instead, Knoblock wrote the following words which express not optimism but hopeful resignation.

With the first showing of the screen version of Ben Hur tonight at the Tulane Theater, New Orleans plunges officially into a new theatrical season. The event is familiar and the oldest inhabitants probably remember seventy-five or fifty like it. New Orleans has, in fact, a glorious theatrical tradition. The city's name bobs up invariably whenever the career of one of the titans of the ancient stage is exhumed. New Orleans in the 'good old days,' in fact, was more important than the present theatrical capital of America. The pleasure-loving population took to the stage, once upon a time, and supported it more lavishly than in any other section, except, perhaps, the San Francisco of the gold rush days.

And now, some pessimist is apt to sneer, the sole surviving New Orleans theater devoted to touring legitimate drama is forces to have recourse, for its initial attractions, to what one of the greatest of American sneerers, has called 'the unspeakable drama.' However, Ben Hur is here, and there will be in tonight's audience, no doubt, hundreds of grown men and women who will be seeing their first motion picture. May they enjoy this experience. Certainly they are scheduled to feel amazement. And it is hoped that they will work in the future to make the new art more of an art than it is today.  

Ben Hur remained for two weeks and was followed by a two week run of the picture, The Big Parade. Despite this being its second

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37 Picayune, September 12, 1926, sec. 4, p. 1.
appearance, the latter film played to capacity audiences. On October 11, the legitimate theatre finally arrived. It was in the form of a second-rate production of George White's Scandals in which the "nudity almost assures a sell-out for the week, at least in the gallery." The third week in October was dark; then the Field Minstrel show made its annual appearance. The musical, No, No Nanette then appeared the first week in November.

The engagement of the week of November 8, was one of the few highlights of the season. Margaret Anglin appeared in the Somerset Maugham comedy, Caroline, and "the first piece of strictly dramatic literature professionally acted in New Orleans in two years," Candida. Both shows were well presented. Walker Whiteside's The Arabian followed, and 1926 closed with a four week season of grand opera with the San Carlo Opera Company.

In November, Knoblock reviewed the meagre offerings of the first three months and gave this doleful explanation of the conditions.

The geographical situation of the Crescent City is painfully against the probability of a real return to the 'good old days' that are mourned so soulfully in spite of the fact that they never existed. Except in its Little Theater, New Orleans is never likely again to see any plays that are not almost universal in popularity.

Ibsen and O'Neill and others... can't cross the Great American Desert that surrounds the city. Fare of this sort that is to be consumed locally therefore must be locally manufactured.

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38 Picayune, October 11, 1926, p. 17.
40 Picayune, November 21, 1926, sec. 4, p. 1.
The new year opened with an excellent company, including Charlotte Walker, Norman Hacket, and George Rand, in *The Green Hat.* The best business of the season, however, was given the John Murray Anderson production of the *Music Box Revue.* It was a big show, "comparatively clean and beautifully witty." The *Earl Carroll Vanities* which followed were not clean; but a good cast which included Bert Swor, made "for good fun."  

The headline of the drama section of the *Picayune* for February 20, was "A Sorry Season Nears Its Close With Some Hopes." The final sentences were, "The absolute poverty of the season is apparent to the most casual observer. And still there is no protest, there is no public demand that such conditions be remedied. It should be possible, as it was, to see legitimate drama elsewhere than on Broadway, but it apparently isn't."  

The remainder of the season was little better. William Hodge, a "popular 'road actor' in the East and West," came in *The Judges Husband.* Then on February 27th, came the modern American phenomenon, *Abie's Irish Rose.* The play, by Ann Nichols, had opened on Broadway in 1922. At that time critics lamented the "new depths to which the legitimate theatre had sunk, and spent the next five years thinking of ingenious ways to ignore the existence of the play." It ran

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5. *Laurie and Green, op. cit.,* p. 293.
for 2,327 performances, or five years and five months, and had, at that time, broken every record for long runs in the theatre. The play ran for three weeks at the Tulane. Knoblock, in reviewing the opening performance, agreed with other critics that it was not a good play nor was it a good cast, but added:

Now go and see it, The line forms on the right, and you'll be in it someday before you die. Abie is like that, a 'must' for all the world, no doubt. And all the king's critics and all the king's men can't pull poor Abie in pieces again. It is a play that has solved the mechanically impossible feat of perpetual motion. So buy your tickets early, it may not stay here more than three or four centuries.46

With reduced prices, Robert Mantell managed to have a fairly successful week of Shakespearean repertoire to finish the season. He appeared in The Merchant of Venice, Richelieu, As You Like It, Julius Caesar, King Lear, and Hamlet; and then closed the engagement on March 26, with a production of Macbeth.

The 1926-1927 season was the last during which the Tulane even pretended to run for the regular length of time. The 1927-1928 season did not open until October 2. The first attraction was the Ziegfeld Follies which was making one of its infrequent tours. The stars were Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn and the top price for nights was $4.00. Business was not very good.47

The second attraction was a picture, Old Ironsides, which played one week of good business and "starved through its second week."48

47 Picayune, October 3, 1927, p. 18.
48 Picayune, October 23, 1927, sec. 4, p. 1.
It was a sad beginning for the season with "Hard-Hearted Hannah... up to her old skullduggery again and row on row of vacant seats yawning in the void."

The Field Minstrels; the musical comedy, Kid Boots; and Blackstone the Magician followed. Two successes, the film King of Kings and the Romberg musical romance, My Maryland, came in November. My Maryland played two weeks at $3.30 top admission.

Even the Opera season was shortened that year. Instead of the regular four week engagement, the season was cut to two weeks which would mean "a more concentrated audience, and more money, hopefully." After two weeks of opera, the theatre housed two weeks of musical comedy with Queen High, starring Eddie Garvie and Hit The Deck, "a wow of a show..."

On January 8, 1928, with the announcement of the appearance of the first legitimate attraction for the season, The Constant Wife, Knoblock surveyed the year and gave New Orleans' audiences a verbal spanking.

These be sorry times indeed, when a theater once devoted almost strictly to the drama--such as it was, it is understood--must now give over nearly four months of its season, without a break to girl and music shows, motion pictures and opera. It is the dear but fickle public that is ultimately responsible, though, 'tis true, the producing managers are not without their own damned spot in connection with the execution of the goose that laid the golden eggs.

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49 Picayune, December 6, 1927, p. 4.
50 Picayune, January 2, 1928, p. 23.
Even today with the road more than half dead, you can apply the pulmotor by buying in on the good attractions, and, too, by supporting those that, though perhaps not strictly good, show a managerial intent to do right by our Nell. Such girl and music shows as Queen High and Hit the Deck, for example, may not be perfect as to playing, but they are certainly excellent in other respects and at least competent in their personnel, representing, probably, thanks to your neglect, the best talent that is available for touring purposes.

The final shows of the season were good, but few. Lou Tellegen, Charlotte Walker, Norman Hackett and Emma Bunting appeared in Maugham's The Constant Wife. A very good production of the New York success, Broadway, was held over for a second week after a very "successful" first week. Abie's Irish Rose drew crowded houses for a two week run. Then the final play of the season was The Barker, with Richard Bennett giving "a first rate performance in a first-rate show, with a fair company supporting him and with a well-merited rebuke up his sleeve for the notoriously rowdy New Orleans gallery."

The season officially closed with a week's engagement of the motion picture The World War. All that Knoblock could say in a seasonal summary was that

Something ought to be done to prevent a repetition of such a season. Colonel Campbell can't be blamed, nor does the onus rest on the Northern producers, the fact is that they would have been foolish to send shows south this season on a venture... They can't do that, and then play to half houses and get out of town without being stranded or having to call on their home offices for transportation.  

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51 Picayune, January 8, 1928, sec. 4, p. 1. 
52 Picayune, January 23, 1928, p. 18. 
54 Picayune, February 19, 1928, sec. 4, p. 1.
When Campbell left New Orleans for his annual summer trip North, he parted with these optimistic words for the next year, "I wanted the people of New Orleans to know that we expect a season that will stand out at the Tulane Theater. I am going to make a personal trip to Mr. Erlanger's office and will engage the best that is on the road next season."55

Campbell, however, was not on hand for the opening of the 1928-1929 season. He was ill during the summer and did not arrive in New Orleans until the middle of November. The outlook was bright but whether the scheduled shows would arrive was another problem. As a reporter said of New Orleans, "To reach it, a touring attraction must traverse a veritable Sahara of one-night stands and, more likely than not, will then and there expire for want of water... or something."56 Even if the shows did arrive they were no longer assured of a warm reception. New Orleans was rapidly earning a reputation as a bad show town.

The theatre opened on September 23, with Abie's Irish Rose. Two motion pictures, Wings and Simba, each played two weeks. Then on October 28, it was announced that the theatre would be closed until November 25. As Knoblock said, "The present season seems to be completely shot."57 Even the San Carlo Opera engagement had been cancelled for that year. Mel Washburn, drama critic for the Item, gave this explanation of the closing. The San Carlo company, The

55Picayune, April 29, 1928, sec. 4, p. 8.
56Picayune, October 7, 1928, sec. 4, p. 1.
57Picayune, October 26, 1928, sec. 4, p. 1.
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51 Picayune, January 8, 1928, sec. h, p. 1.
52 Picayune, January 23, 1928, p. 16.
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55 Picayune, April 29, 1928, sec. 4, p. 8.
56 Picayune, October 7, 1928, sec. 4, p. 1.
57 Picayune, October 28, 1928, sec. 4, p. 1.
Vagabond King and two other attractions had all cancelled their engagements. The reasons? The San Carlo failed to reach a satisfactory agreement relative to finances. The Vagabond King reached Birmingham and then turned back because "of the inability to secure theatres in this territory after the Tulane engagement. It is claimed that all other theatres... are in the hands of rival interests and cannot be secured." Washburn added:

There has been much discussion regarding the slow death of the legitimate stage here. The mediocre attractions with rare exceptions that have come to New Orleans in the last two years have been blamed on many things, but few have known that the true blame for the better road shows not coming this far south should be placed directly on the inability of the exhibitors to secure theatres.

Operators of movie theatre chains have secured leases on virtually all the available legitimate theatres in this section and have shut the doors against road shows, presumably to eliminate competition for their movies. 58

The production that reopened the theatre was The Beggar's Opera, presented by an English Company; and

A pitifully small audience last night attended the reopening of the Tulane theater... The city is almost utterly without appreciation, or perhaps it is a lassitude that permits appreciation, but does not send its people out into the cold to show appreciation in the only way that counts in the theater. 59

Friml's Firefly, which played the following week, did some better financially. Fritz Leiber then played "an eminently successful" week of Shakespeare. The Desert Song opened Christmas night and played for two weeks. Rio Rita; The Shanghai Gesture, with Mrs. Leslie Carter;


59 Picayune, November 26, 1928, p. 4.
and *The Royal Box*, with Walker Whiteside, ended the season. The final production closed on February 2, 1929.

On February 3, an innovation occurred at the Tulane. The theatre was occupied by a stock company. Leona Powers and Howard Miller headed the group. They opened in *This Thing Called Love*, and remained until March 23, During that time they presented such shows as *The Big Pond*, *Dulcy*, *Broadway*, *The Trial of Mary Dugan* (which did the best business of all the shows), and *Miss Nelly of N'Orleans*. Even with reduced admission prices and a very competent company, the group had financial difficulties.

The drama was having a hard time in New Orleans. Money was scarce and the people were no longer interested. As Knoblock, who seems to have been a very observing reporter, stated:

> Our fair city has acquired too black an eye... it is notoriously inhospitable to travelling shows, except under rare and unpredictable circumstances. It is no longer a 'key city' for the legitimate drama; that fact must be faced.

> The chances are against it ever recovering completely; there are too many factors mitigating against a revival... Nowadays there's no doubt of it, one has to go out and get one's legitimate audience in New Orleans, the old way of giving something good and depending on blind patronage has passed into the discard... there's too great a weight of indifference to the theatre in New Orleans to move without great effort.\(^{60}\)

The Powers company moved to the St. Charles Theatre at the end of March. As a sort of afterthought, there were three more performances at the Tulane that season. Under the auspices of the Junior League, the New York Theatre Guild came to the Tulane for three days. They

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\(^{60}\) *Picayune*, March 2, 1929, sec. 3, p. 9.
presented Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma*, Ned McCobb's *Daughter* and John Ferguson, three of their greatest productions. It was a subscription audience, and there were empty seats.

In the fall of 1929, all was silent concerning the opening of the Tulane until October 13. At that time the new reviewer for the *Times-Picayune*, John D. Klorer, wrote, "New Orleans, far flung from the trodden path of the legitimate performance, seems farther away this year as the mighty movie power is getting a stranglehold on almost everything in sight." In the same article, he announced that the theatre would open within a "fortnight." Before the opening, however, historic Black Tuesday heralded the stockmarket crash and the Depression.

The Tulane remained closed until November 17, when *The Vagabond King* arrived in New Orleans. This show was followed by an "international revue" with Nikita Balieff and the "famous Chauve-Souris... that registered the pinnacle of greatness for a New Orleans stage." The theatre was then dark for a week. On Monday, December 16, the Tulane was the scene of a local production. Written by William Fulham, a local author who had written other plays for the Little Theatre, the play was entitled *Last Island*. It was directed by Miss Jessie Tharp and starred Dortha Hammon and Kenneth Thompson. According to the review it was not an unqualified success. Klorer wrote:

> William Fulham... presented his first mystery play at the Tulane theater Monday night before a well-filled house and while the results may have been entertaining to those having a personal interest in the production-- such as friends of the cast-- to a

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disinterested observer Mr. Fulham is not a great
success as a mystery play author nor is his cast
in this production possessed of the enthusiasm and
spontaneity necessary to make the show a success. 63

Journey's End, the only drama of the year, was the only out-
standing production of the year. It played the week of December 22,
"with a mere handful of theatergoers..." present. The
Padlocks of 1929, which appeared the next week, did much better; it
rated the "largest audience that has crowded the Tulane theater this
season." 65

The theatre was dark until January 26. At that time, A Connecti-
cut Yankee, a musical comedy, was presented as the final show of the
season. As the management explained in an interview,

Conditions in the country from coast to coast have
been such that the New York managers have been unable
to meet expenses with road shows, hence the death of
the travelling company. A road show must be high class;
and enormous salaries of actors and musicians and stage
help, to say nothing of travelling expenses, make it
impossible for large shows to leave the large cities. 66

The Tulane remained open for six more years, but only occasional
companies played the theatre. It was dark for weeks at a time; when
a show did come it often played to small houses. During the 1930-
1931 season, six productions came to the Tulane. Strictly
Dishonorable, starring Elizabeth Love and Cesar Romero, arrived to
open the season on October 26. One month later, November 23, the
Theatre Guild's production of O'Neill's Strange Interlude, with

63 Picayune, December 17, 1929, p. 33.
64 Picayune, December 23, 1929, p. 23.
65 Picayune, December 30, 1929, p. 17.
Elisabeth Risdon, appeared.

The December attraction was the first distinct box-office success. It was a comedy by Anita Loos and John Emerson entitled Cherries are Ripe; and was "distinguished chiefly by a stumbling use of the double entendre on the part of the authors, the loveliness of Vila Banky, the clothes-displaying aptitude of Rod La Rocque, the advertising value of both their names as testified to by a fluttering audience, and the acting of Gavin Muir." 67

There were two engagements in January, 1931. Walker Whiteside brought a new play, Chinese Bungalow; and an "average" George White musical comedy, Flying High, ran for a week. Two more productions finished the season. In March, the French troupe of M. Antoine Arnaudy presented four plays, Topaze, Azalé, La Poupee Francaise, and Al Baiser, during a four day run.

For the final production of the barren season, Ethel Barrymore appeared for four days in The Love Duel. This was Miss Barrymore's first Southern tour in many years and her reception was enthusiastic. She admitted, however, that she found it changed country from that she last visited. 68 It was changed country. At the time of her previous tour there were seventy-five and eighty travelling companies appearing each year in New Orleans. In 1930-1931, six companies visited the city.

The opening attraction of the 1931-32 season was called a "Weird Drama." It was titled Mysterie of 1932 and was a combination vaude-

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67 Picayune, December 29, 1930, p. 15.

68 Picayune, April 5, 1931, sec. 2, p. 6.
ville show and magic show. The star was Rajah Rabold and "The opening night audience was enthusiastic. . . ."  

The week of November 23, was a remarkable one for the Tulane. The Picayune reviewer described the opening night with rapturous words.

Great News! The theater is not dead! The stage is still the thing! Who would have expected it? Who would have dared hope that the old Tulane Theater, whose historic portals had been virtually slammed shut because it appeared the legitimate stage was a thing of the past, would Monday night have opened wide to receive a capacity audience vibrating with interest, delight, enthusiasm, to hear and to respond to every scene and phrase of Shakespeare's Hamlet.  

The star of the production was a new actor, William Thornton. During his stay, his company presented, in addition to Hamlet, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merchant of Venice and Romeo and Juliet. The reception of the plays was so enthusiastic and the audiences so large that the engagement was prolonged for a second week. A rather surprising reception for an unknown young actor.

On January 24, 1932, the Herald Square Company began a week in "one of those dramatic repertoire shows which thrilled theatergoers a quarter of a century or more ago, . . ." The Hill Billies. This was the last show of the spring. Three companies had appeared during the season. The theatre had been open for a total of four weeks.

The following season, 1932-1933, the Tulane Theatre reached its lowest point. Only one production appeared during the entire

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69 Picayune, October 26, 1931, p. 6.
70 Picayune, November 24, 1931, p. 24.
71 Picayune, January 25, 1932, p. 16.
theatrical season." On Christmas night, Guy Bates Post opened a week's engagement in Ferenc Molnar's The Play's the Thing. The performance was called an "artistic triumph" and "the audience was most disappointingly small." Fortunately, the attendance increased during the week and the engagement was, according to Post, "surpassingly successful, proving... that the spoken word still has its devotees, and that the stage of flesh and blood will endure forever." Despite Post's confidence, that was the only "flesh and blood" which appeared at the Tulane for that season.

The Tulane and Crescent were not the only theatres which had difficulty during the depression years. The Picayune reviewer gave a glimpse of the theatrical situation in New Orleans. During the 1932-1933 season one play, the Post production, appeared in the city. In the new City Auditorium, which had been built in 1928-1929, Eddie Cantor made a one night appearance. "Of flesh and blood entertainment... all New Orleans can boast is the vaudeville at Loew's State and burlesque at the Dauphine, with even the Little Theater drawing brick-bats every time it tries a drama not written in English."

Two shows appeared during the 1933-1934 season. Green Pastures came the week of November 27 and played a very successful engagement. Due to the demand for seats one extra performance was given.

72Picayune, December 26, 1932, p. 5.
73Picayune, December 30, 1932, p. 16.
74Picayune, April 9, 1933, sec. 2, p. 8.
75Picayune, November 30, 1933, p. 20.
original stories, from which the play was made, *Ole Man Adam and His Children*, were written by Roark Bradford, a former reporter for the *Times-Picayune*; this helped insure good audiences.

In the spring, Katherine Cornell, Basil Rathbone and Orson Wells played a three day engagement of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* and *Candida*. Large and enthusiastic audiences filled the house for all performances. "It was packed to the window sills, the galleries and the aisles." Following the production of *Candida*, the reviewer wrote, "Katherine Cornell last night crowned the triumph scored in her two previous appearances here. The enthusiasm with which the capacity audience at the Tulane theater acclaimed her *Candida*, swept aside calm critical judgment with a wave of emotion tinged with hysteria." It was a great personal triumph for the actress, but it did not make a season for the Tulane.

In October, 1934, the "classics returned to New Orleans. . . with the real flesh-and-blood players, an orchestra in the pit, an enthusiastic audience in the house and Walter Hampden. . . ." and his company in *Richelieu*. Later in the week he also presented *Richard III* and *Hamlet*. All performances were well received, and the "audiences were highly pleased by the presentation of the classics." Knoblock, who was now reviewing for the *Item* gave

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76 *Picayune*, April 17, 1934, p. 4.
77 *Picayune*, April 18, 1934, p. 2.
78 *Picayune*, October 30, 1934, p. 8.
79 *Picayune*, November 1, 1934, p. 5.
Richelieu a magnificent review and then added, "People who don't like it ought not to stay away from it; the theatre needs them if they have any love at all for the theatre. The theatre is dying. . . . It is worth saving. . . . It is a richer life that provides a Colonel Thomas C. Campbell, a pair of cherubs on a ceiling, an orchestra. . . . and that provides a Walter Hampden." 80

When Earl Carroll's Vanities appeared on November 28, the audiences were "for the first time in several years. . . . able to attend a real revue in a real theater." 81 And they did attend. The show, starring Ken Murray, was quite successful.

A most unusual engagement occurred the final week in December and was accorded an unusual reception. The group was called the Oxford Players and was one of the federal acting companies which were being sponsored by the government in an attempt to help unemployed actors. The company had no well-known stars; yet "On their opening night, even Colonel Tom Campbell. . . . stared goggle-eyed at a crowd that overflowed into the top boxes--to see a group of actors nobody had ever heard of." 82 The entire week was an amazing success. Featuring Warren Douglas, Kathleen Fandell, Robert Breen and Wilva Davis, the group presented The Ivory Door, Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet. Each night capacity audiences attended and "laughed constantly and applauded sincerely and quite spontaneously." 83

80 *Item*, October 30, 1934, p. 11.
83 *Picayune*, December 25, 1934, p. 17.
After the triumph of the Oxford Players, Walker Whiteside appeared for a week in the Master of Ballantrae. The attendance was very small and proved a disappointing finish to the season.

The Tulane began its last season on November 5, 1935. The production was Muagham's The Constant Wife and starred Adelaide Hibbard. It ran for three days. The star had a large local following so the engagement was moderately successful.

On December 2, Three Men on a Horse began a phenomenally successful two-week run. As the reviewer commented, "The thing is excellently put on. . . . Nobody ever heard of the actors before and possibly never will again. . . . but it doesn't matter. . . . it is a good show." The cast members so succinctly disposed of by the reviewer included Sheldon Leonard.

On Wednesday, December 26, 1935, the last professional company ever to play the Tulane began an eight-day engagement. The show was Blossom Time which had first appeared at the Tulane in November, 1923. It was now making its farewell tour. It starred Helen Arnold, J. Charles Gilbert and Robert Lee Allen and played its opening night to "a deplorably small house. . . ." Although Blossom Time was the last professional company at the theatre, there was one more show presented at the Tulane. On May 16 and 17, a local group, sponsored by the W. P. A. federal theatre

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85 Picayune, December 26, 1935, p. 4.
project, presented the Boucicault melodrama, *After Dark*. On Monday, May 17, 1935, the Tulane Theatre closed its doors permanently.

The Tulane and Crescent Theatres remained standing, but their era of glory and glitter was over. In early February, 1937, a demolition company began the destruction of the historic buildings. On Monday, March 15, a small group of people witnessed the removal of the cornerstone which, ironically, was cracked during the demolition. Only two persons were there who had been present forty years before when the marker had been put into position by Nat Goodwin.  

The theatres had one more brief moment of notoriety before they faded into the past. During the demolition "the mingled bones from parts of three skeletons, asserted to be those of human beings... found by a wrecking crew beneath the parquet floor of the old Tulane theater..." created a slight furor in the local newspapers. No further investigation was made, but there were many conjectures. The most logical answer was that they were probably left there by medical students when the property was the site of the Tulane Medical School.

Perhaps the best obituary was written by a reporter from the *New Orleans Tribune*, Jack McBryde.

The old Tulane theatre is coming down. Inside the historic old playhouse yesterday was enacted a scene more tragic to lovers of the dramatic art than ever was presented on its stage. The stage was empty and there was no audience. The floor was gone and the damp ground, several feet below, was littered with plaster and laths. Rays from the setting sun came through the rear wall and pointed long fingers through the dusty air to the empty orchestra pit.

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86 The two men present were A. B. Nalle and Charles Phillips.
87 *Picayune*, February 16, 1937, p. 3.
Even the tiers of boxes had been removed and five beams, protruding like great upturned skeleton fingers, marked the outline of each box. High overhead parallel rows of beams showed where once three fat ladies danced on the green ceiling. A long Negro half hidden in the lofty darkness pried loose the timbers and dropped them one by one. Wheel-barrows grated on the roof and at regular intervals heaps of bricks came tumbling down a slide from the pit to the orchestra, sending up wisps of dust.

The old Crescent theatre, like a doomed Siamese twin, is also being demolished. The 39-year-old structures will be gone in 40 days and a parking lot will take their place.

'They've passed their period of economic usefulness,' real estate men say. But old timers here shake their heads, remembering other days.

They will tell you of the gala opening of the theatre in September, 1898, of the swanky carriages that stood outside as crowds watched Richard Mansfield, Sarah Bernhardt, the Barrymores and a host of others. And upstairs they will point to Colonel Thomas C. Campbell's office, where Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Elbert Hubbard and Lord Cherry sat and chatted with the stage producer.

But the passing of the Tulane is not only the end of a famous theatre. It is the end of an era and the final victory, in the South at least, of motion pictures over stock companies.

As another reporter said, "We thought the Tulane and the road shows it housed would go on forever." This was, however, a belief unfounded on fact. A parking lot now occupies the site of the theatres. Few people even remember the Tulane and Crescent Theatres of New Orleans.

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88 Tribune, February 16, 1937, p. 3.

89 Sunday Item-Tribune, February 21, 1937, sec. 3, p. 11.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Tulane and Crescent Theatres of New Orleans, Louisiana, were built in 1898 and were demolished in 1937. Their forty-year history is important not only as the story of the last two major theatres of New Orleans, but also as a part of the much larger history of the professional stage in that city. This study has examined these twin theatres with three objectives: to trace the chronological development and decline of the theatres; to examine the attractions which appeared on their stages during the forty years; and to show how their history was affected by and was a part of a larger national picture.

Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger, leading members of the Theatrical Syndicate, built the Tulane and Crescent for two reasons. First, these newest and most elaborate theatres of New Orleans were constructed to make money for their New York owners. At the end of the nineteenth century, New Orleans was a prosperous, pleasure-loving city which supported its theatres lavishly. Klaw and Erlanger gave New Orleans approximately fifty-five touring shows each year and New Orleans gave Klaw and Erlanger devoted attendance. Even more important, however, the theatres in New Orleans served as a connecting link between the Syndicate's one-night stands in the South and its Western theatres. New Orleans was the only large city in the deep South, but its patronage of theatre made long tours more profitable.
The history of the two theatres has been divided into four periods. Built near the end of the Golden Age of the Road, they enjoyed thirteen years of prosperity, 1898 to 1911. During these thirteen years each theatre was open for approximately seven months each season. The Crescent, the popular-priced theatre, presented minstrel shows, melodramas, and musical comedies. The same shows and the same stars appeared each year, and the same audiences appeared each year.

There was also a sameness in the schedules of the Tulane during this period, but the productions at that theatre were better than the Crescent shows. The Tulane was designed to cater to the more fashionable, sophisticated and intellectual population of the city. Its fare each year consisted of the classics, with such actors as Richard Mansfield, Sarah Bernhardt and Otis Skinner; elaborate musical productions, including a great number of operettas; and an assorted group of newer plays which were both comedies and dramas.

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the two theatres during the early Prosperous Period was the annual appearance of the same stars. The theatre was, during the early years of the twentieth century, still dominated by the star system. Each year actors such as Frederick Warde, Louis Mann, Nat C. Goodwin, George Sidney, Julia Marlowe, The Rogers Brothers, Rose Melville and John Drew formed a company which toured the entire country with one or two shows. Sometimes they played the same
show for several years, as James O'Neill did with *The Count of Monte Cristo* and Rose Melville did with *Sis Hopkins*. More often they presented a new show each year or performed in a repertoire of classics and romantic plays.

During these thirteen years the attendance was large, devoted and relatively uncritical. Audiences had been nurtured on the same stars and the same plays and they enjoyed them. The standards of production were usually adequate and, occasionally as with stars like Mansfield, sometimes high. Even if the show was below the normal level it was usually saved by the appearance of a beloved star or by the fact that the play itself was popular enough to survive despite inadequate companies or scenery.

The Erratic Period, 1911 to 1917, was still prosperous but during the six years there was the beginning of a breakdown of all the old traditions. With the gradual collapse of the star system, brought about by the emergence of new playwrights who wrote a more realistic style of drama and by the death of many of the older established stars, the "road" began to enter a period of decay. The Crescent still received its same stars and same productions, but more often the reviewers criticized the quality of the shows. Also it began to receive stock companies. There just were not enough touring shows to fill the theatre for seven months.

At the Tulane the changing times were even more evident. As more of the old stars died or joined the Independents in their fight against the Syndicate's power, more new stars appeared in
new plays. Artistically these were some of the Tulane's greatest years with productions of George Bernard Shaw, James Barrie, Arthur Pinero and the light operas of Strauss. The classics still played to enthusiastic audiences and the musical attractions became bigger and more elaborate. At the same time there appeared an enemy to the provincial theatre, the motion picture. Each year more movies were shown to larger audiences.

With the opening of the 1917-1918 season the theatres entered a completely new phase of their history. The Crescent gave up its role as a legitimate theatre and opened as a combination movie-vaudeville house under the management of the Marcus Loew circuit. For nine years it housed the Loew attractions. Its admission rates were low, its audiences were numerous and it made money.

With the Crescent presenting movies and vaudeville and all of the other theatres closed or showing movies, the Tulane became the only full time legitimate theatre in New Orleans. Although this factor increased the size of the Tulane audience at times, it changed the over-all standard of the productions. Many of the shows which had formerly appeared at the Crescent now played the Tulane. Motion pictures were shown more often and attracted a different element of the population. The Tulane began to lose its position as a "fashionable high-class" theatre.

This third, or divergent, period lasted from 1917 to 1926. During the nine years the theatre had seasons of fantastic prosperity; toward the middle of the period the weak economy of the
post-war depression gave it some very bad years. Then business became better because people were hungry for amusement and the theatre. Unfortunately, by this time the deterioration of the "road" was an accepted fact. The only shows which toured were very old, very popular or were musical revues. The revue was by then the most successful type of presentation. The audience for the classics had lessened with the years. The theatre-goers of the 1920's wanted entertainment. The lavish, spectacular, loud revue filled their requirements.

In 1926 the Crescent closed as a movie-vaudeville house, and the two theatres entered the last, decadent, period of their history. During its remaining years the Crescent housed tab shows, movies, burlesque and finally "unusual" movies. In 1935 it closed its doors.

The Tulane, during the decadent period, retained its honor, but it too died. For the last ten years of its existence it presented the few remaining shows which were touring, but the "road" was a thing of the past. During the 1932-1933 season, only one production appeared at the Tulane. The theatre closed in 1935. In February of 1937 the two theatres were demolished.

What brought about the decline of the Tulane and Crescent? Why was it that New Orleans in 1890, with a population of 242,039, could support five and six full time legitimate theatres, then in 1930, with a population of 458,762, the same city would not support even one theatre? This study has tried to show that there were two factors which were most influential; conditions within the theatre and conditions outside the theatre.
The Tulane and Crescent were built for one purpose. They were to house touring shows. Inevitably when the "road" became non-existent, the theatres lost their usefulness. The death of the "road" has been blamed on many things; but two causes must receive most of the criticism. The first of these was the motion picture. It provided an inexpensive, exciting and novel form of amusement to a nation that wanted to be amused. Yet the movies were not the complete blackhearted villain the legitimate stage has accused them of being. The stage itself must accept a part of the blame.

During the early part of the twentieth century the stage productions which toured became larger and more elaborate scenically, but in many instances there was a concurrent lessening of quality.

This philosophy which produced years of shallow elaborate spectacles caused a change in the audiences. The sophisticated intelligent playgoer who had cheered Mansfield and Bernhardt was replaced by the entertainment-seeker. Then when the rising transportation expenses forced the big shows to stop touring, the playgoer who had found his entertainment in the big spectacular shows turned to the movies, which were much bigger and much more spectacular.

The producers seeing their golden years of prosperity vanishing became panicky. Lacking either the courage or the desire to recapture the audiences who would still support the theatre if they were given something good, most producers and stars accepted defeat. With their acceptance came the final death of the "road."
Other factors outside the realm of the theatre were also influential in causing the ultimate failure of the "road." At the beginning of the century America was prosperous, confident and relaxed. In such an atmosphere the theatre prospered and enjoyed its prosperity. It became over-confident and a little careless. The good days were upon them and no one had the slightest doubt but that they would continue forever.

Suddenly the entire Western world found itself in the midst of a war. People found it unthinkable. Just as suddenly the confidence and well-being were replaced by nervousness, anxiety and disbelief.

When the war ended the nation tried desperately to recapture the pre-war assurance, but a new generation was ready for new things. The stage, drastically hurt by the war time exigencies, tried to regain its position. In doing so it lost, however, the old traditions of touring and the star system. As the theatre became centralized in the eastern metropolises a great new drama developed. The rest of the nation would have accepted it, and perhaps even welcomed it, but there was no chance for this to happen.

In 1929 came the greatest blow of all, the Great Depression. The nation was plunged into an economic debacle from which it took many years to recover. The stage, outside of the metropolitan centers, never recovered.

The Tulane and Crescent theatres were merely two of the hundreds of provincial theatres which could not survive the changing times, tastes and fortunes.
Perhaps Thomas C. Campbell, the man who managed these two theatres through their history and who knew more about them than anyone else, best summarized the entire forty years. In 1937, as he walked down the steps of the Tulane for the last time, he told a reporter,

It seems as though it was only yesterday that I looked upon this lot from my rooms of Rampart street. I well remember when Nat Goodwin— he's gone now just as so many others I knew then are gone— placed this cornerstone.

The opening. It was a memorable night. I thought as I looked at the stage of the Tulane that night that the same proscenium arch would spread over hundreds of equally great actors in years to come. And it did. The curtain did rise on the greatest actors and actresses of stage. Little did I think when I stood in the rear of the house on opening night that I would live to see that magnificent building struck down by a demolishing crew. Little did I think the first day I walked up these marble steps that I would live to walk down them knowingly for the last time in order to allow them to be taken apart piece by piece to make way for a lot on which to park automobiles.90

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Sadie Faye Edwards Head was born on November 18, 1929, in Viola, Kentucky. She attended elementary schools in Graves County, Kentucky, and then was graduated from Mayfield High School, Mayfield, Kentucky, in 1946.

She received a B.A. from Murray State College in 1950, and an M.A. from Louisiana State University in 1952. From 1952 until 1956, she taught at Georgia Teacher's College and the University of Arizona. From 1957 through August 1963 she was an Instructor in the Latin-American English Language Orientation Program at Louisiana State University while completing the work for a Ph.D. degree.

Since 1953, she has been married to Joseph L. Head and they have two children.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Sadie Kaye Edwards Head

Major Field: Speech


Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMining COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

EXAMINATION COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

July 31, 1963