
VAUDEVILLE 1880-1930

What was it? And how did it get so **BIG**?

- **Vaudeville defined:**

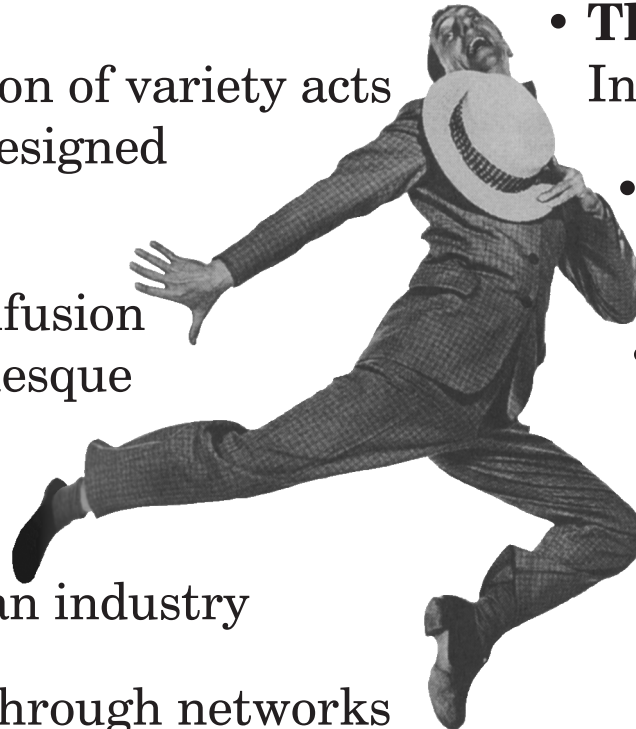
A theatrical presentation of variety acts unconnected by plot, designed for a general audience

- **Misconceptions:** Confusion with minstrelsy & burlesque

- **Setting the scene:**

Beginnings, context, & the early growth of an industry

- **Vaudeville** expands, through networks of theatres, to become a nationwide staple of leisure – with over 4000 venues



- **The decline of Vaudeville:** Internal & external forces

- **The people of Vaudeville:** The famous & the forgotten

- **The flavor of Vaudeville:** Performance segments

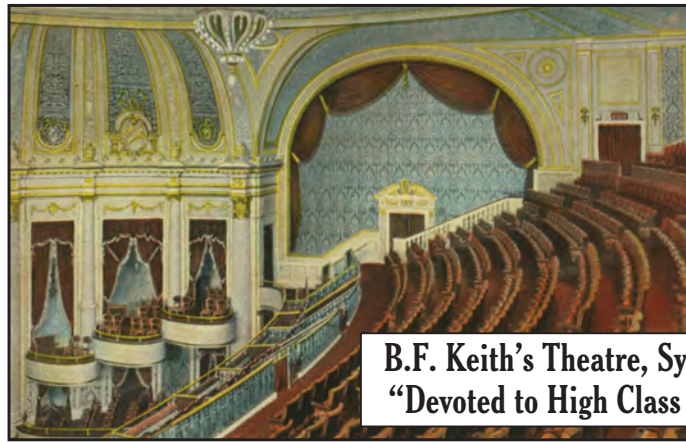
- **Then what happened?:** To the people? Places? Ideas? Influences?

- **21st century manifestations:** *The spirit remains!*

THE THEATRE :

Now for Middle Class Leisure

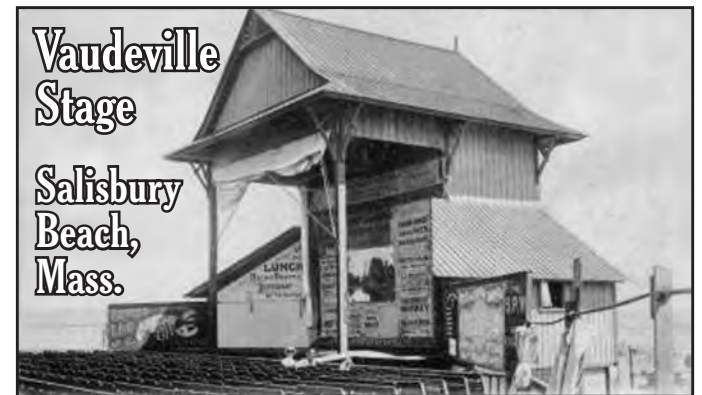
- **When the Vaudeville formula proved successful** in New York & Boston theatres in the 1880s, entrepreneurs stepped forward to present shows in variety of venues:
 - Networks of “Big Time” & “Small Time” theatres
 - Independent theatres
 - End-of-the-line trolley parks
 - Independent wagon shows & tent shows, Chautauqua meets, showboats, resorts, & fairs
- **At the peak of Vaudeville’s popularity** in the early 1920s:
 - over 2000 theatres
 - 1000-2000 additional venues
 - 30,000-50,000 performers
 - thousands of support personnel



B.F. Keith's Theatre, Syracuse, N.Y.
“Devoted to High Class Vaudeville”



Empire Theatre, Lewiston, Maine



Vaudeville Stage

Salisbury Beach, Mass.

BIG BUSINESS

Vaudeville becomes an industry



The winning combination:

- A rail transportation network
- A communications network
- Printing & publicity
- New, well-appointed theatres
- An eager audience
- Talent aiming to please
- Tycoons aiming to profit



THE TALENT THAT MADE IT ALL WORK ...



Song & Dance Acts



Comedy



Novelty



Circus



Drama



Variety



Animals



Survivors to the 1950s TV era



Jack Benny
(1894-1974)



Bob Hope
(1903-2003)

These popular personalities were talented survivors, but they alone don't fully define Vaudeville.



Milton Berle
(1908-2002)



Fred Allen
(1894-1956)



George Burns
(1896-1996)



Jimmy Durante
(1893-1980)



Ed Wynn
(1886-1966)



Sophie Tucker
(1886-1966)



Groucho Marx
(1890-1977)