

# EMPIRE THEATRE PROGRAMS COLLECTION: A Guide

## OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

- Repository:** Crandall Public Library.  
Center for Folklife, History, and Cultural Programs,  
Glens Falls, NY.
- Creator:** Empire Theatre (Glens Falls, NY)
- Title:** Empire Theatre Programs Collection
- Dates:** 1899-1982 (bulk 1900-1907)
- Abstract:** This collection mainly consists of over 300 programs of theatrical productions, 1899-1933, primarily at the Empire Theatre in Glens Falls. Most of the programs date from 1903-1906. The theatrical productions were mostly musicals, comedies, romance, historical dramas, farce and minstrel shows. There is also related material, including a descriptive pamphlet about the Empire Theatre; a few newspaper clippings, 1918-1982; and a 1976 historical paper on the Empire Theatre by Mrs. Ely Goldsmith.
- Quantity:** 0.2 cubic feet (2 boxes)
- Identification:** Archives & Manuscripts: Businesses

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Empire Theatre opened on South Street, Glens Falls, N.Y. on October 5, 1899. Addison B. Colvin was the first president and the general manager of the Empire Real Estate and Theatre Company through 1913. James A. Holden (1861-1918) was one of the original stockholders of the Empire Theatre and served at times as its manager, secretary, and treasurer. Holden was active in the business affairs of Glens Falls, along with various civic and cultural associations in the area throughout much of his life. Also known for his interest in local and regional history, Holden was New York State Historian from 1911 to 1916.

The Empire Theatre was owned by the Empire Real Estate and Theatre Company. The building was designed by the architect J. B McElphattrick. When it opened in 1899, the three-story building housed an auditorium, a banquet room, kitchen, card rooms,

parlors, toilette rooms, and a ballroom. The stage curtain depicted “Sappho and her friends.” The first play staged in the theater was “Way Down East.” For many years the Empire Theatre was a successful venue for vaudeville, theatrical productions, and musical performance.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the theater competed with local movie houses to show moving pictures, but by the 1940’s it was losing money. When the building came up for public auction on July 18, 1946 there were no bidders and the title passed to Judge McPhillips, who held a second mortgage on the property. Empire Theatre was remodeled as an office building in 1950.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE RECORDS**

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## **PROVENANCE**

290 PROGRAMS FOR THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS AT THE empire Theatre in Glens Falls, New York, were purchased in 2000. The programs are dated 1900-1907, but some are undated.

Programs, 1899-1933; newspaper clippings, 1918-1982; and related materials from the Glens Falls Vertical Files and from the pamphlet collection were added to this collection.

## **ORGANIZATION OF RECORDS**

Arranged chronologically.

## **INDEX TERMS**

**Topics:** Minstrel shows—New York (State)—Glens Falls  
Musical theater—New York (State)—Glens Falls  
Performing arts—New York (State)—Glens Falls—History  
Theater programs—New York (State)—Glens Falls  
Theaters—New York (State)—Glens Falls—History  
Vaudeville—New York (State)—Glens Falls

**Organizations:** Empire Real Estate and Theater Company (Glens Falls, N.Y.)

**Important People:** Goldsmith, Mrs. Ely

## **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

**Preferred Citation:** Empire Theatre Program Collection  
Center for Folklife, History, and Cultural Programs,  
Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, NY.

**Processing Information:** Arranged and described by Albert W. Fowler

## **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE RECORDS**

### **Box 1 – Programs purchased from ----**

1900 – 8 programs  
 1901 – 7 programs  
 1902 – 9 programs  
 1903 – 23 programs  
 1904 (April-August) – 7 programs  
 1904 (September) – 18 programs  
 1904 (October) – 11 programs  
 1904 (November-December) – 12 programs  
 1905 (January) – 13 programs  
 1905 (February) – 11 programs  
 1905 (March) – 13 programs  
 1905 (April-June) – 16 programs  
 1905 (September-October) – 14 programs  
 1905 (November-December) – 14 programs  
 1906 (January) – 8 programs  
 1906 (February) – 15 programs  
 1906 (March) – 15 programs  
 1906 (April) – 16 programs  
 1906 (May) – 8 programs  
 1906 (October) – 12 programs  
 1906 (November) – 14 programs  
 1906 (December) – 11 programs  
 1907 – 1 program  
 Undated (month and day provided, year omitted)-- 17 programs.  
 Glens Falls Opera House, undated – 1 program  
 Theaters outside Glens Falls – 3 programs

### **Box 2 – Theater Programs and related material from other Crandall Library collections**

Programs, 1899-1912 – 13 programs (from Glens Falls Pamphlet Collection)  
 Programs, 1923-1933 – 5 programs (from Glens Falls Vertical Files)  
 Schedule, 1904-1905 – 1 small card

Program, undated, Glens Falls Opera House – 1 program  
Programs, undated, unidentified Glens Falls theaters – 2 programs  
Programs, undated, theaters not identified even by place – 8 programs  
*Empire Theatre of Glens Falls, N.Y.* (descriptive pamphlet, undated, 2 copies)  
Newspaper clippings – advertisements for Empire Theatre, 1918.  
Newspaper clippings, 1946-1950 – sale and dismantling of Empire Theatre  
Newspaper clippings, 1977-1982  
Paper presented to College Club of Glens Falls, May 13, 1976, by Mrs. Ely Goldsmith.  
*Ben-Hur*; souvenir album of the play, presented at the Empire Theatre, April 9-11, 1906.  
(program donated to Crandall Public Library by the Washington County Historical  
Society, Kathryn Taylor, Librarian, 2005) [2005-014]