

The
Official
Journal
of the
Organization

The Hoboken Historical Museum Newsletter

OF
BY
And FOR
Museum
Members.

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Preserving the Future by Honoring the Past

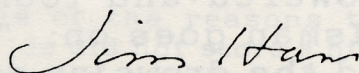
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Occasionally an assumption or a casual remark, not maliciously intended, can hurt a young organization like ours. Without knowing the facts someone might say that we're on the way to becoming a rich organization, or that our motives are political; neither is true. The Museum has no endowment, nor is it by any stretch of the imagination about to become rich. A reserve fund, a fund that would tide the Museum over in a period of economic stress, does not yet exist. For this reason, the Trustees, Joyce, our confident Treasurer, and I watch very, very carefully the expenditure of money and keep expenses and overhead to a minimum.

As to politics - as long as I am president, this organization will be completely apolitical. We will leave the politicking up to the politicians. As a non-profit, artistic, civic and educational organization, we are happily dedicated to serving the city as a whole and stimulating interest and pride in Hoboken history, architecture and genealogy.

Since its incorporation in May, 1986, the Museum has attracted a lot of attention for its worthwhile projects; it has exhibited and utilized diverse materials from sources and collections both contemporary and historic, and hopes to continue to do so.

Sincerely,



Jim Hans

If you would like to become more closely involved with the Museum, please contact Jim Hans at the office. - 653-7392

PORTRAIT OF MAYOR DONATED TO MUSEUM

Museum member June Ponte, an artist originally from this area who's lived in Hoboken since 1983, donated her recent portrait of Mayor Thomas Vezzetti to the Museum at the September meeting.

The very impressive oil painting, measuring 24" X 36", took over 40 hours to complete.

The Museum has made plans to unveil this excellent likeness of His Honor at the opening of our 2nd Annual Exhibition at City Hall November 20, at 4:30 p.m.

NEWSLETTER ACQUIRES ADDITIONAL EDITOR

Museum member Paul Lippman and his son David attended our September 8 meeting and are becoming actively involved with Museum projects. David took the minutes in our Recording Secretary Mary's absence, and Paul has agreed to help with the Museum's literature and publications. A portion of the production of this issue of the Newsletter is the result of his generous efforts.

HOBOKEN TERMINAL FESTIVAL

We here at the Newsletter went to press a few days before the festival - so the report on our doings at that event are not in this issue. The results of our having a table at the festival will be announced at our monthly meeting, Monday, October 5th. Please try to make this one - we can really use all your ideas and suggestions aimed towards a wonderful Second Annual Exhibit.

Thanks for lending your support.

The great Weber & Fields play Hoboken

By Jim Hans

Until a copy of Felix Isman's 1924 book *Weber and Fields* turned up, we were not certain if these two great vaudeville comics ever played the Lyric or Germania Garden in Hoboken.

Then on page 63 the book mentions that in 1883 Joe Weber and Lew Fields encountered hard times and "were reduced to taking thirty dollars [for a stay] at Col. Bob Waring's German Beer Garden in Hoboken." Waring's establishment was on Hudson Street between First and Second Streets.

According to others, in 1886 Waring took over a theater down the street, near Hudson Place and opened it as "Waring's New Opera House." It later became the Lyric Theater.

Some of Waring's character is revealed by Isman: "An act was an act to the Hoboken colonel, and he had one price--thirty dollars for teams, fifteen dollars for singles, take it or leave it. The first four acts to apply were as apt as not to be hired, and all turned out to be acrobatic turns. It was said that he once had engaged four separate and distinct ventriloquists for the same bill."

Isman continues: "Joe and Lew never doubted it, for on receiving his program that Sunday night the colonel discovered that three of the four turns were Dutch [German-American dialect] comedy numbers. As the two others were better known to him, he paid the boys [Weber and Fields were 16 years old at the time] two dollars and fifty cents apiece after the Sunday show and fired them.

"Within a month they had descended, from one hundred and twenty-five in this case, to thirty dollars and the hook after one performance in Hoboken."

According to Isman, Weber and Fields did not want to talk about their Hoboken disaster once they were back on their home ground, the theaters of Manhattan's Bowery. However, the comics did continue to visit Hoboken.

"Monday night," Isman continues, "they returned to Hoboken as usual. There was a rival beer garden down the street. [Presumably one on the site the Lyric later occupied.] The manager was not interested, but they quoted bargain rates. He closed with them at a dollar and a half a night for the team and a night-to-night contract. After the last performance Saturday night they carried their trunk to the ferry--a trunk with genuine leather straps now." [Matters had improved some from the time of their first engagements.]

"On the Manhattan side, [the Christopher Street ferry terminal on the east bank of the Hudson at Greenwich Village]" Isman writes, "they hefted the trunk again and set out afoot for the Bowery. It was 1:30 A.M. and three miles or more to go," but there was no place for baggage-handling expenses in the budget of an act that was paid a dollar and a half a night.

The saga goes on: "Two partly grown boys carrying a trunk through the streets in the dead of night was a spectacle that could not escape the eye even of a New York policeman of the 1880's. They were halted before they had crossed West Street.

"Actors, eh? A likely tale, that! No nonsense now, and open up that trunk!"

"At Ninth Avenue [probably Greenwich Street, which becomes Ninth Avenue at about West 12th Street], a second patrolman stopped them, at Bleecker Street a third, as skeptical as the first and not to be convinced under twenty minutes. And with only eight blocks to go, a fourth copper not to be convinced at all."

In Isman's narrative, Weber and Fields plead "Here, look in the trunk and see for yourself."

"I'll look into the trunk, but it'll be at the station house," the policeman answered and took them there.

Isman goes on: "It was a dull hour, and the drowsing sergeant thought he might believe their story if they should put on their costumes and dance for them. Dawn was creeping over Williamsburg [then a city, now part of Brooklyn, where the comics lived] when



they came home. The taste of Hoboken is bitter in their mouths after forty years," Isman mournfully concludes.

Perhaps one of the reasons that Weber and Fields did not score a hit in Hoboken was their parody of German immigrants new to this country. In those days, Hoboken had more than its share.

A note on Weber and Fields.

Joseph Maurice Weber (1867-1942) and Lewis Maurice Schanfield (1867-1941), both born in New York City, began performing together at the age of eight on the Bowery and shortly after began their professional career. In chin whiskers, loud checked clothes, and low-crowned derbies, they were adored by millions and became the prototypes of future comedy teams. They were noted for slapstick antics, dialect jokes, and burlesques of popular plays. Their retirement in 1930 coincided with the end of the vaudeville era.

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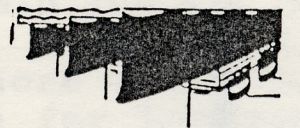
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NOTICE

Our next meeting is Monday, October 5,
at 7:30pm precisely, until about 9 at
the Clam Broth House on Newark St.,
Hoboken. All members are invited, and
potential new members and guests are

always welcome to sit in without
obligation. The date on the masthead
of this newsletter will correspond with
our monthly meetings, which are held
in the early part of each month.

HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM



MUSEUM HOURS
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
weekdays
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
wednesday evenings