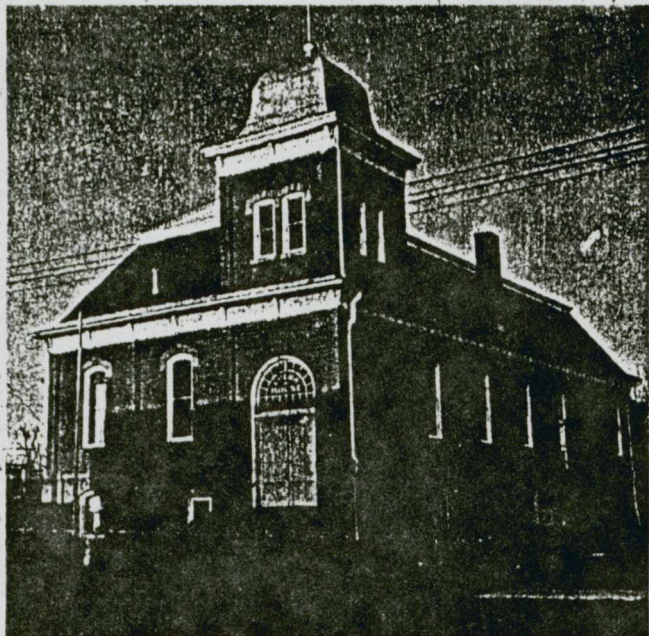


April 24, 1975

Vermontville Maple Syrup Festival EXTRA

Opera House - A Place for Entertainment and Memories

By Sherry Hummel



Opera Houses were used to entertain people in small towns, so the Vermontville Opera House was no different from any other Opera House. Back one hundred years ago, until televisions were made, Opera Houses were a big hit because there wasn't much to do for enter-

tainment and they filled an important community need.

The first original Vermontville Opera House was built in 1879, for a stage coach stop, travelling shows, and local talent.

Clown, performer and workman L.

Verne Slout of Vermontville presented his first tent show in Vermontville's Opera House, then traveled throughout all this midwestern area for many years. His last performance was back where he started, at the Opera House.

Entertainment wasn't the only thing that the Opera House was used for. Sometimes you could see many folks going there for supplies, also some men would bring their horses in to be shod and some came in for the town meetings. In the mid 1890's that center of activity in the community was destroyed by fire.

On August 6, 1895, the property on which the present Opera House stands, was purchased from Henry H. Graham of Chicago, Illinois. Now that the land was there the community made a project out of the building of the new Opera House. The new or second Opera House was completed around 1898, the date is still uncertain, although construction began in 1896.

In the early 1900's, the Opera House was used for: plays, movies, roller skating, Boy Scout meetings, school plays

both Jr. and Sr. plays, graduations, dances, library, storage of fire engines and other school and social events. Also during this time both boys and girls basketball games were played there.

In the era 1916 - 1918, the famous Chautauquas was a series of entertainments once a month for about four months. It was offered by a group of entertainers from a nearby college.

Coat Check, Bell-fry, Balcony, and Auditorium are some of the rooms in the Opera House. For those who have performed on the Stage there is a Dressing Room and a Box Office when there is an admission charged.

The Opera House in the last few years has served to house a dance studio, square dances, church services, wedding receptions, talent shows, fire barns and free movies. Local, State and Federal elections, as

well as the official room for the Town Council and Township Board meetings. During the Festival there have been exhibits. In case of rain on the day of Festival the Queen will be crowned in the Opera House. The Maple Valley Players present their melodramas on the authentic stage all day during the Festival.

Community rest rooms and the Vermontville Public Library are in the downstairs of the Opera House.

This is one of the few Opera Houses left in Michigan today. It is a rare and unique building, so if you haven't seen or been in this building drop in and look around.

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