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The Mabel Tainter Memorial Theatre: A
PICTORIAL CASE STUDY OF A LATE NINETEENTH-
CENTURY AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE.
The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1969
Theater

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THE MABEL TAINTER MEMORIAL THEATRE
A PICTORIAL CASE STUDY OF A LATE
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN
PLAYHOUSE

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Charles William Bousliman, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1969

Approved by

[Signatures]
Advisers
Department of Theatre
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VITA

November 20, 1939

Born - Williston, North Dakota

1962

B.A., Carroll College, Helena, Montana

1962 - 1966

Graduate Assistant, Department of Speech-Theatre, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1964

M.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1966 - 1969

Assistant Professor of Speech and Theatre, La Crosse State University, La Crosse, Wisconsin

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Theatre

Studies in Technical Theatre. Professor Walter S. Dewey

Professor George C. Crepeau

Studies in Theatre History Professor John C. Morrow

Professor John H. McDowell

Studies in Directing and Production. Professor Roy H. Bowen

Minor Field: English Literature Professor Harold Walley

Professor John H. Wilson

Minor Field: Speech Communication Professor Franklin S. Knower
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INTRODUCTION

Few periods in the history of theatre can lay claim either to such a persistent effort toward or such a high dependency upon the visual spectacle as the nineteenth century. The objective, from a visual standpoint, was to surprise and startle and to surpass previous attempts at either verisimilitude or spectacle. Such was the theatre of the nineteenth century, in large part, and it therefore relied heavily upon the efforts of technical personnel and facilities.

Overall, the theatre of the period was marked by an interdependence between the artistic and technical forces within a facility designed to accommodate spectacle and stage magic. This union of forces had as its basis the physical theatre in which the visual products were displayed. Not only were the technicians and designers obviously geared to a specific type of theatre facility, but, in many instances, the playwrights were dependent upon it.

Unfortunately, much of the evidence of the physical facilities in America is fragmentary, for very few nineteenth-century theatres stand in their original form. The architectural plans, like the theatre structures themselves
have been lost over the years. Of those playhouses which escaped ruin by fire, the majority have been converted into movie houses or department stores, or have been leveled to make way for modern structures. The very few still employed for their original purpose have been modernized over the years in order to meet the demands of the contemporary theatre. The installation of new equipment often has necessitated the removal of the original, and, in most instances, the original layout of the facilities has undergone drastic changes. In this manner the playhouses kept abreast of the demands of the contemporary theatre but lost much of their value as nineteenth-century theatre research resources.

In recent decades, a number of the still existing nineteenth-century American theatre buildings have been restored. Although few in number, these structures represent an important step in providing research material for the theatre historian. The Mabel Tainter Memorial Theatre in Menomonie, Wisconsin, is one of these successful restorations. Constructed in 1889 by Menomonie lumber baron, Captain Andrew Tainter, as a memorial to his daughter, the building—accommodating a library and meeting rooms as well as the theatre—was presented to the citizens of the city as a civic and cultural center. The theatre is the building's highlight. Designed according to the architectural vogue of the time, the auditorium is graced by a
profusion of rich Moorish ornament, low rounded arches, stained glass windows and elaborately hand-carved latticework.

From 1890 to 1939, the Tainter hosted more than ninety travelling companies for a total of two hundred and ninety productions. Following the demise of professional theatre, the Tainter was used only for occasional lectures, gatherings, and graduations. More than anything else, the theatre gathered dust. By the mid 1950's, the city proposed to renovate the auditorium for city offices. The plan was met with opposition and, gradually, through the efforts of a newly formed preservation society, funds were secured for the theatre's restoration. The DeNardo Decorating Studio of St. Paul, Minnesota, was contracted to restore the theatre to its original luster, and, by the fall of 1969, a major portion of the restoration had been completed.

Without question, the Tainter Theatre stands as a rare source for historical research. Unlike most theatre structures of the nineteenth century, the Tainter has survived without any major alterations, since it was completed in 1890. All architectural components of both the auditorium and stagehouse remain in their original form, as do a sizeable portion of the fixtures, the stage machinery, and the scenery.

The purpose of this study is to examine the Tainter
as a case study of late nineteenth-century theatre architecture and design. Primary focus will center upon the physical structure—stagehouse, auditorium, and related work areas—as it represents the theatre of its time in terms of architecture, technical facilities, and staging and lighting practices. The study will attempt to discover to what degree and in what way the Tainter typifies the late nineteenth-century theatre structure; what, specifically, about the facilities is nineteenth century in practice, and how the over-all layout relates to theatre architecture of that time; what features of layout and equipment are unique to the Tainter among late nineteenth-century theatres. These are but a few of the questions the study will seek to answer.

The first objective of this study of the Tainter is to describe the structure and its contents. The researcher has undertaken to compile a complete photographic record and a reconstructed set of blueprints of the physical structure for the purpose of describing the theatre building and its furnishings. Photographs of the auditorium's layout and major components are described in conjunction with a reconstructed floor plan and vertical plan of the area. Similarly, the stagehouse is described through a photographic record coupled with horizontal and vertical plans. Included in the examination of the facilities are related service areas and all original
extant equipment.

The study's second objective is to determine the manner in which the theatre building was used. Pivotal to the analysis are the reviews of productions by travelling companies which were printed in the local Dunn County News. While most of the reviews are fragmentary in nature and reveal little information relating to the actual operation of the theatre, some reports provide an indication of the staging effects and the ways in which the stage accommodated the company's production demands.

Placement of the Tainter Theatre in the perspective of the late nineteenth-century theatre structure is the third objective of the study. The question of how typical the Tainter was to the theatre of its time in terms of architecture, furnishings, equipment, and operation is central to this objective. That the Tainter has many of the features common to practices of its time is certain, but the exact extent to which it resembles conventional features of late nineteenth-century playhouses can be determined only after a thorough examination of all of its individual components as well as of their overall layout and arrangement. Relying primarily upon the resources of the Ohio State University Theatre Collection, a criteria of features common to late nineteenth-century theatre structures will be made through an historical
survey. Next, the Tainter will be examined in light of these criteria with particular reference to the building's appearance, arrangements of areas, building materials, staging methods, and equipment.

The final objective of the study is to treat the value of the Tainter in relation to late nineteenth-century theatre structures. In what ways does it confirm what we already know about the theatre buildings of this time? Does it add anything to current information and theory, or does it illustrate more fully what theatre historians consider common practice to the late nineteenth century theatre? What features of the Tainter building strengthen or weaken theories previously based largely upon conjecture? Questions such as these will be considered in the final analysis of the Tainter Theatre.

Limitations of the Study.—The theatre facilities -- stagehouse, auditorium, and related service areas -- occupy the major portion of the Mabel Tainter Memorial Building. Those areas adjoining the theatre, such as the library, recreation room, and city offices, will be included in the analysis only insofar as they bear some relationship to the structure or operation of the theatre. All detailed iconographic accounts will be limited to the theatre itself. The history of the theatre's activity will be contained in an introductory chapter as background information. The nature of the acting companies and their
productions on the Tainter stage is not to be included in this study. Mention of specific productions will be made only insofar as they contribute to information relating to the staging and lighting methods employed in the theatre.

**Sources.**—The chief source of material for the study is the theatre building itself. Complete with all major original furnishings and unchanged in layout, the Tainter Theatre contains a wealth of information about late nineteenth-century theatre architecture which extends far beyond the sets of plans normally used for research purposes.

A second source of primary material is the *Dunn County News*, a weekly Menomonie newspaper. Reviews of all plays from 1890 until 1912 are contained in the paper and are now available on microfilm in the Tainter Library.

Theatre posters, some fifty in number, were uncovered from the attic and have been photographed. While not relating directly to any of the objectives of the study, the posters supplement the reviews covered in the *Dunn County News* and are useful for cross-indexing information about the companies playing the Tainter. They have been included in Appendix B.

Local periodicals relating to various facets of the study have contributed additional information to the investigation. *Western Architect, Pencil Points,*
Merely Players, and Inland Architecture are among those which carried articles relating to the Tainter building or the architect responsible for the design of the structure.

Personal interviews with people associated with the theatre have proven helpful. Larry Richardson of Northern States Power Company, responsible for the repair and replacement of the lighting equipment, contributed a number of facts and details about some of the original lighting equipment and wiring, now lost. A second individual who aided in the research is Menomonie photographer, John Russel. Mr. Russel provided photographs of the original lighting panel prior to its removal for a newer board as well as photographs of eight drops.

Materials from two libraries proved invaluable. A collection of drawings from the University Archives at the University of Minnesota, representing the works of the L. S. Buffington Architectural Firm of Minneapolis, Minnesota, includes three original ink renderings of the Tainter exterior and interior by its architect, Harvey Ellis. The rich resources of the Ohio State University Theatre Collection were of great value for both general background information and iconographic material for Chapter V.

Previous Studies Related to the Tainter Building.—A recent study on the Tainter Theatre was completed by
Lawrence Heagle from the Wisconsin State University, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. An unpublished M. S. thesis entitled "The Cessation of Professional Theatre at the Mabel Tainter Theatre, Menomonie, Wisconsin: A Historical Critical Analysis," Heagle's study makes a chronological survey of all the productions presented on the Tainter stage between 1890 and 1930. Unfortunately, the survey is made without any reference to the nineteenth-century theatre at large. Its chief asset, and that to which this writer is indebted, is the thorough compilation of all professional theatrical activity during the theatre's forty-nine year period of commercial usage. The listing includes the names of all productions, their dates, and the producing companies responsible for them. The listing has been reproduced in Appendix A of this study. In no way does the mentioned study treat the physical, architectural, or technical aspects of the theatre structure.

A second study related to the Tainter is an unpublished M. A. thesis by Eileen P. Manning from the University of Minnesota, 1953. The work, entitled "The Life and Works of Harvey Ellis, 19th Century Draftsman and Architect," contains no direct information about the Tainter but does provide a thorough and fascinating account of the architect responsible for the design of the Tainter building. The nature and conditions surrounding the nineteenth-century draftsman and architect, together
with the extensive list of references contained in the bibliography, serve as pertinent background material.

**Contents.**—Chapter I is devoted to a background of the Teinter Theatre. The conditions surrounding its realization and the people responsible for its completion provide the proper historical basis for the study. A brief synopsis of its theatrical activity, from the theatre's opening in 1890 to its final commercial production in 1939, is made in light of the socio-economic and cultural conditions existing in Menomonie during this period. The final portion of the chapter treats the recent restoration of the theatre facilities and the organization of the local community theatre which utilizes them.

Chapter II provides a comprehensive impression of the building's appearance, arrangement, layout, and staging facilities. Relying upon reconstructed blueprints and a photographic record compiled by the writer, the auditorium and stagehouse components are described in detail. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the functional relationship between the stagehouse and the auditorium.

Chapter III concentrates on stage machinery and rigging equipment. Traps, flat grooves, paint frame, pin and rail system, and related windlass systems are examined according to their location, number, function,
and mechanical operation. Individual drawings and photographs accompany the descriptive discussion of all major staging components.

Scenery and stage lighting comprise Chapter IV of the study. First the extant scenery is illustrated and described in relation to the original inventory purchased upon the theatre's opening. No attempt is made to comment upon the quality or stylistic characteristics of the scenery. Lighting is then examined under the two divisions of service and stage illumination. Like the scenery section, a photographic record is employed in the description of all extant lighting equipment. The final portion of the chapter relates to the staging and lighting practices employed by travelling companies as reported in the production reviews from the Dunn County News.

Chapter V attempts to place the Tainter Theatre in the perspective of the late nineteenth-century American theatre in terms of architecture, layout, staging, and lighting practices. An historical survey is made of American theatre architecture and staging practices following the civil war in order to formulate some picture of conventional features common to late nineteenth-century American theatre structures. With this survey as a basis, the Tainter is then compared to the criteria assembled in the survey for the purpose of determining
its similarity to and difference from those typical features found in transitional theatres of the late nineteenth century.

Chapter VI, the final chapter, contains a summary of the study's findings and conclusions as to the value of the Tainter in terms of theatre history. Herein the Tainter is viewed for its value in terms of the nineteenth-century theatre.
CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE MABEL TAINTER MEMORIAL BUILDING

On the evening of July 3, 1890 the Mabel Tainter Memorial Building was formally dedicated in memory of Mabel Tainter, daughter of Captain Andrew and Bertha Tainter. On behalf of its donors the Reverend H. D. Maxson, pastor of the Unitarian Society, presented the building to the citizens of Menomonie, Wisconsin as a cultural and civic center.¹ In the course of the next seventy-nine years the Tainter building came to play an important role in the social and cultural life of the people of the Menomonie area, standing as a cultural high point in the midst of this pioneering community. The exact extent to which the Tainter building exerted its influence upon the community can be best understood by viewing it in relation to the socio-economic and cultural conditions which prevailed in Menomonie at this time.

I. MENOMONIE 1850-1890

The history of Menomonie is largely the history of the development of the lumbering of white pine during the
second half of the nineteenth century. The company of Knapp, Stout, and Company made its headquarters in Menomonie; as it grew so did the community. The owners of the lumber firm became the organizers of the city and were responsible for its developing from a stopping point for fur traders and trappers to an established community. Schools, churches, banks, and public utilities were all a part of the work of these few lumber barons who acquired large fortunes from the lumbering of white pine in northern Wisconsin.

By 1850, the town of Menomonie began to take on identifiable proportions. It was in this year that Andrew Tainter bought a one-third interest in a small saw mill destined to become one of the world's largest soft lumber industries. At this time the firm adopted the name of Knapp, Tainter, and Company, later changing to Knapp, Stout, and Company in 1853 when H. L. Stout purchased a one-fourth interest. In 1852, the company constructed Menomonie's first school house; within four years a school district was formally organized to meet the demands of the increasing population. In 1855, a post office was established. The town was plotted and the sale of lots was initiated in 1859. The next year citizens of Menomonie saw their first local newspaper, the Dunn County Lumberman. Six years later the name of the newspaper was changed to the still operational Dunn County News.
second and third newspaper, the *Menomonie Times* and the *Dunn County Herald* appeared in Menomonie in 1876 and 1887 respectively.\(^5\)

The continued growth of the community paralleled the increased profits and expansion of the lumbering business, and the development of the lumbering in turn was but an outgrowth of the great socio-economic expansion sweeping America at large. In 1878 the capital stock of the Knapp Company was listed at $2,000,000. Four years later the figure had doubled. In the course of three decades the firm moved from a manufacturing capacity of 5,000 to 7,000 feet of lumber a day to one of 125,000 to 250,000 feet a day,\(^6\) slashing more than two billion board feet of pine in the course of its operation.\(^7\)

Lumbering, while the major industry of the Menomonie area, was not its only industry. The proper type of clay for high quality bricks was available in large quantities in the nearby hills and the brick industry grew quickly. From their beginnings in the early 1870's through the 1890's local brick and sewer yards produced a combined capacity of about 33,000,000 bricks a season.\(^8\) Other industries in the city were geared to the manufacture of veneer, molding, and baskets.

The impressive strides in science and technology seen during the latter part of the nineteenth century reached out across the country. The speed at which
innovations were introduced into the more rural areas was dependent, to a large degree, upon the demand, the population, and the potential profits to be earned from the investment. Because of the wealth of the lumbering business, the Menomonie area attracted many of these technological improvements very early. Electricity in limited quantities was being utilized in the lumbering operations prior to 1890, and in 1892 Knapp, Stout and Company owned and operated its own electric light and water plants, supplying the city with electric light from the same source. In 1895 the citizens of Menomonie were afforded another luxury, the telephone. Transportation as well as communication continued to improve with the presence of two railroads. Before the end of the century the United States and American Express Companies and the Western Union Telegraph Company were established services of the community.

Entertainment.--By 1889, Menomonie was a prosperous lumbering community with a population of approximately 4,000. Seven years earlier it had been incorporated as a city and new business firms, civic and religious groups, and community organizations continued to appear. However, opportunities for entertainment, cultural or otherwise, were rather scarce. When the saloons were closed in 1874, the women of the city initiated a publicly supported library and reading room.
By 1889, the library, a poor substitute for the saloons in the minds of many, could hardly serve the total needs of a growing community. Until 1870, the old Menomonie courthouse had been the only structure which served for dances and other forms of entertainments. In that year Grob's Hall, a frame structure, was constructed near the center of town. It is reported to have been furnished with a stage, scenery, and staging equipment. In 1884 Grob's Hall was destroyed by fire, and for the next two years the people of Menomonie were without a theatre and entertainment center. In 1886, three years prior to the opening of the Tainter, Menomonie saw the completion of the Grand Opera House complete with an auditorium accommodating 600 people, a stage (twenty by forty-four feet) and equipment, and a large dance floor. The Grand Opera House sponsored entertainments described by contemporary reports as those designed primarily "for the working class in the form of minstrels, magicians and melodramas." Cultural and general entertainment opportunities remained the same for the next four years, until July of 1890 when a new center was opened -- the Mabel Tainter Memorial.

The Tainter building afforded the citizens of Menomonie and of the surrounding area social and cultural opportunities never before possible. For the first time in the history of the city there existed a home for civic,
social, religious and cultural groups. Presented to the
town as a gift by the Tainters, the new structure served
as a source of community pride for more than three
quarters of a century. One of the best reflections of
this pride is the large number of civic, social,
religious and military groups who congregated before the
impressive main entrance for group photographs; local
business firms, religious societies, veterans of the
Spanish American War and World Wars I and II are among
these discovered by the writer. To use the words of a
contemporary account following the dedication of the
building, "...this Memorial building fairly stands as
an embodiment of the highest type of the architecture of
today, and in its possession this community has good
reason to be justly proud."15

II. ORIGIN OF THE TAINTER MEMORIAL

The unanimous appreciation of and pride in the
Tainter result from two factors: its continued service
as a social, cultural, and religious center of community
life and its outstanding beauty and architectural quality.
In turn, these factors can be attributed to the fortunate
blend of specific circumstances and key individuals
responsible for the structure.

Four people stand out as instrumental in the
realization of the Tainter building: Captain Andrew
Tainter, his wife, Bertha Tainter, the Reverend H. D. Maxson of the Unitarian Society and the architect, Harvey Ellis. From the combined efforts of this group a building was realized for the citizens of Menomonie in memory of Mabel Tainter -- a building which stands today as one of the finest and best preserved late nineteenth-century theatres in the country.

When Mabel Tainter died in 1886, her father was one of the most respected citizens in the Menomonie community. The one-third interest in the Knapp and Wilson Lumber firm which Andrew Tainter had purchased thirty-six years earlier, had made him a high ranking member of that group of pioneers who reaped large profits from slashing the virgin white pine forests of northern Wisconsin.

Contemporary accounts of the man describe him as strong and vigorous: a man who never failed to command the attention and respect of others. While writers often described his means of achieving his ends as something less than genteel, one must remember the time and conditions which prevailed in this pioneer existence. His was the task of supplying the mill with logs and of taking the manufactured lumber down the river on rafts. When the company purchased its first steamboat, it was Andrew Tainter who commanded the craft during its first two years and for this he gained the name "Captain" Andrew Tainter.
With the expansion of the lumber business, logging operations extended farther up the river; the new tasks of furnishing supplies, establishing camps, banking logs during the winter and then driving them to Menomonie in the spring were assumed by Andrew Tainter. When he retired from the lumbering business around 1885, Andrew Tainter continued to be active, turning his efforts to the banking business and to the raising of thoroughbreds on his stock farm outside the city.

The Tainter wealth certainly eliminated any financial obstacle to the construction of a memorial building. But there is far more to the origin of the Tainter than Andrew's monetary backing. A building so carefully planned to serve the educational, cultural, and religious needs of the community called for someone with an understanding of and appreciation for both the arts and education. Such a person was Andrew's wife, Bertha Tainter, formerly a young widowed school teacher. Her writings pertaining to the uses and functions of the Memorial provide ample evidence of her feelings concerning the arts and youth education. The degree of her influence on the energetic lumber baron can never be fully determined, but the presence of the Tainter building with all its cultural and educational benefits seems sufficient proof that her influence was considerable.
While Bertha Tainter possessed a deep appreciation and awareness of the needs to be served in the areas of education and the arts, the actual idea of a memorial building as well as the name itself was contributed by a third individual, the Reverend Henry Doty Maxson. Two years after the death of Mabel Tainter, Reverend Maxson settled in Menomonie and organized a Unitarian Society. Contemporary accounts describing the early years of the building's history reveal that the Tainter's readily accepted Maxson's suggestion for the erection of a building in memory of their favorite daughter -- a building which would serve not only as a cultural and educational center but also as a headquarters for the Unitarian Society.

The architectural firm of LeRoy S. Buffington of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was commissioned to design the building. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Buffington firm ranked as one of the midwest's busiest architectural organizations. From the Buffington firm came the fourth person who would prove instrumental in the realization of the structure and, most importantly, the realization of its outstanding architectural quality -- a vagabond architect-draftsman named Harvey Ellis. Although never credited for the designs of the Tainter, it was Ellis who actually designed the building. Ellis joined the Buffington firm in 1886
An unusually gifted man, and part of that group of young artists who first rejected the ruler or straightedge in favor of freehand renderings, Harvey Ellis demonstrated an unmistakable style which won him admiration throughout the country. According to architect and critic, Francis Swales, Harvey Ellis was an "Architectural artist par excellence in pen and ink, charcoal and water color; designer of architecture in a very original and individual style...painter of charming decorative pictures." Architect George Eckel believed that Ellis was "...a scenic painter before turning to architecture." The Ellis renderings of the Tainter exterior and interior attest to his outstanding ability as both draftsman and architect.

The fact that a draftsman from so large an architectural firm could act as the artist in charge of the design for the Tainter and never be credited for it is understandable in light of both Ellis' personal nature and the relationship which existed between draftsman and architect during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Some historians see Ellis' lack of recognition as the result of his deliberate quest for anonymity. But more important was the unwillingness of architects, Buffington among them, to give proper credit to the individual artists responsible for work produced within
their offices. While Buffington failed to identify the work of his more competent assistants, he exerted little control over their efforts and several architectural styles issued simultaneously from his office. The Romanesque style did not appear in the work coming from the Buffington office until after Ellis joined the firm. This style was employed in a majority of Ellis' works, and a style which best describes the Tainter exterior.

Four people, then, proved instrumental in the realization and preservation of a most outstanding structure. Had it not been for the Tainter's love for their daughter, Andrew's fortune, Bertha's love for the arts and foresight in regards to the building's continued preservation as stipulated in the original letters of stated uses and provisions, Reverend Maxson's vision for a memorial to house the Unitarian Society, and the gifted genius of the architect, Harvey Ellis, the Tainter would undoubtedly never have been realized.

The Site.--Shortly after the architect was commissioned to design the Tainter a site for the building was selected. A part of lots 5 and 6 in Block 84 -- a tract 116 feet by 102 feet in the center of town -- was chosen by Andrew Tainter. According to Charles Freeman, attorney for Tainter,

The reason Mr. Tainter did not in the first
instance deed the whole of the S 116 feet of the two lots to the society was that he then had in mind the erection of a memorial building on the portion reserved, to the Civil War veterans upon which the names of all men who enlisted from Dunn County should be inscribed.

Construction.--Specific records of construction periods and other related details were not recorded in any public file and at best can be determined only in approximate terms. The reason for the lack of information during the planning and construction periods was discovered in a newspaper article dated December 16, 1889. The article related to communication from Andrew Tainter to the Unitarian Society.

To the Trustees of the Unitarian Society of Menomonie: It is my purpose to convey the Memorial building for certain public uses and purposes, among which is the tender to your society and congregation of a place for the prosecution of its educational, charitable, social and religious work.
I hope to have the building ready for use on or before the middle of May next.
A. Tainter
Menomonie, Wis., December 16, 1889.

This was the first public bulletin issued to the community concerning the function and completion date for construction. According to the newspaper editor of the Dunn County News

...Mr. Tainter entered upon this work with his usual business methods and, very naturally did not see any more reason to take the entire public into his confidence in this case than he would in any other matter of business. Hence, to the curious
inquiring he has had no statement to make and no information to give in regard to the building. 24

The construction of the building must have begun sometime around the middle of 1889. Records state that the construction period was approximately one year in length, and, as the building was dedicated in July of 1890, the construction must have been initiated in the spring of 1889.

Sandstone from the nearby Dunville quarries served for the exterior shell of the structure. The large stone blocks, originally light in color, were hauled from the quarry in the shape of large crude slabs and then hand chiseled to exact shape at the foot of the building site. Figure 1 shows the main entrance to the building with some fifty stone cutters gathered before and on the wooden scaffolding; the huge sandstone slabs which were to form the exterior of the entire building rest before the men at the bottom of the photograph. The arch over the main entrance is still smooth, as the delicately carved scrollwork of leafy design had not yet been carved from the stone slabs. For the purpose of comparison, Figure 2 shows the main entrance in its completed form. According to Paul Schoeknecht, early caretaker of the Tainter, "...the carved designs were hewn by an architect who worked under a tarpaulin which apparently eliminated shadows and highlights undesirable
in attaining the correct lines." An examination of the carving work on the main entrance will be treated in the following chapter under the discussion of layout and architectural design. It is interesting to note at this point that Figure 1 shows a small portion of the brick partition for the interior walls before they were plastered and painted. The bricks for the building were supplied by a local firm in Menomonie.

The only other source of material relating to the construction of the Tainter prior to its completion is the set of specifications for plumbing from the firm of Hobart and Willis. The plans for the plumbing specify types of materials to be used and show the signed approval of the architect, L. S. Buffington, December 10, 1889. No plans of the building accompanied the plumbing specifications. Examination of the facilities show that, from all external appearances, the plans were closely followed by the contractor.

Andrew Tainter had planned to see the building completed by May of 1890 but was forced to move the dedication date to July 3 as a result of delays. An article in the Dunn County News of June 10, 1890 accounts for some of the problems causing the postponement of the dedication.

...In spite of the fact that the work is being pushed with utmost vigor it is possible the building may not be completed
Figure 1.
Main Entrance of Tainter Memorial During Construction. Courtesy of John Russell

Figure 2.
Main Entrance of Tainter Memorial in Finished Form. Courtesy of John Russell
in all its parts at the time fixed for dedication. But the auditorium and its accessories will be finished by that time which will furnish all the room required for the purposes of the meeting.

Captain Tainter has had his patience sorely tried this week by receiving word from the firm under contract to build the organ, to the effect that it would not be made ready at the time agreed on. Several vigorous messages have been forwarded to the delinquents, remonstrating against a violation of the contract, and insisting upon its completion at the time fixed. 26

The exact date on which the organ arrived was August 18, shortly after a second article appeared in the local newspaper in reference to the awaited arrival of the "...large organ now in process of construction by a firm in Springfield, Mass., the contract price of which is $4,100." 28 Although the cherry-wood organ may seem like an incidental subject to the discussion, it should be mentioned that the organ which caused Andrew Tainter heated concern was the same organ which necessitated alteration in the architect's original plans for the auditorium. The extent to which the organ affected the originally planned layout of the auditorium will be discussed in the following chapter.

**Dedication:**--Finally the long awaited day had arrived and on July 3, 1890 the "Mabel Tainter Memorial Building" was dedicated. The Reverend H. D. Maxson delivered a brief address on behalf of Captain and Mrs. Tainter and S. W. Hunt responded on behalf of the
corporation to which the property was conveyed. The principal address of the evening was given by Reverend J. H. Crooker, of Madison, on "The Task of the Modern Church." At this time the auditorium, minus only the organ, was completed but the interior of the adjoining library was still under construction. The library opened its doors six months later in January of 1891.

**Expenses.**—An inventory of expenses for the building was made in December of 1890, six months after the Memorial's dedication. The inventory sheet (Figure 3) shows all firms and/or individuals who provided materials, furnishings or service for the building as well as the total cost made payable to each firm. Unfortunately the products supplied by the individual firms were not included in the inventory, and while some of the names are either self-descriptive or traceable through related source material, it is impossible to determine fully who supplied what for the building.

The total cost of the building in December was $95,937.73. This sum covered expenses for materials and labor from the summer of 1889 to December of 1890. The only firm listed for payment in the year of 1889 was that of Knapp, Stout, and Company for the sum of $26,748.30. The remainder of expenses totalling $69,153.43 was paid out during the first half of 1890. The itemized payments to individual firms whose products or services have been
determined included: Knapp, Stout, and Company, $26,784.30 and $18,163.06 for building materials; Thos. Kane and Company, $1,972.89 for theatre chairs; Hobart and Willis, $2,773.76 for plumbing; the Peter Clausen Scenic Studio of Minneapolis, Minnesota, $1,725.00 for scenery and stage machinery; and Steere and Turner, $4,160.60 for the cherry-wood organ. The final cost of the building, however, ran higher than $95,937.73 as a result of a lawsuit brought by the architect, L. S. Buffington, for the recovery of a disputed part of his commission. The building cost, as determined by the lawsuit, was about $105,000.

Basic construction costs were only part of Tainter's expenses for the building. According to Charles Freeman, Tainter's attorney, "the amount expended by Mr. Tainter for maintenance of the building before his death was not far from $3,000, and for the establishment of the library about $1,500.00 more." More significantly, Tainter provided two endowments in his will: "one of $35,000.00 for the building and one of $30,000 for the library. The income from which was to be expended for the upkeep of the one and for the maintenance of the other." Since the endowments were set up to accrue interest, there were no funds available for upkeep and maintenance in the two years following Tainter's death in October of 1899. As a result, all expenses
Figure 3.

List of Building Expenses for Tainter Memorial.
 Courtesy of Tainter Preservation Association.
from that date through September 1, 1901 were paid out of the Tainter estate. The total, approximately $5,403.56, was charged against the residuary legacy accounts of the Tainter's living children.33

The endowments for the maintenance and upkeep of the building were not the only means taken by the Tinters for the preservation of the building. Two additional steps were initiated by the donors prior to the opening of the building to assure both its permanency and the execution of its intended uses. First, a corporate body to govern the use of the building was formed, and second, an official statement outlining the purpose and conditions relating to the prescribed uses of the building was prepared.

**Formation of Corporation.**—Two months before the dedication of the Tainter, a corporation was formed at the request of its donors. Named the "Mabel Tainter Literary, Library and Educational Society," the corporation was organized for the purpose of receiving the building and executing the prescribed uses and purposes. The purpose of the gift was stated in the articles of incorporation:

1. The establishment, maintenance and use of an auditorium and assembly room for the delivery of lectures and for debates, for practice in declamation and public speaking on literary and scientific, historical, social and moral topics, and for Rational
and Liberal religious instruction, musical concerts or dramatic representations.

2. The establishment, maintenance and use of a free public library and reading room.

3. For the purpose of promoting general interest in any lawful games or mode of amusement.

4. For the purpose of maintaining and using in connection with said purposes a young men's club rooms, parlors, assembly room and other appurtenances in aid of said purposes.

5. To receive, take and accept by grant, devise, bequest, transfer or gift in any form, and to hold any and all property real, personal or mixed for the uses and purposes aforesaid and to sell and convey the same when necessary or proper for more complete and satisfactory accomplishment of said purposes; the proceeds to be devoted to the uses and purposes mentioned, and at the place and in the manner hereinafter mentioned.

6. Generally to have and exercise such powers as may be necessary or convenient in order to promote and accomplish the objects and purposes aforesaid.

The articles of incorporation stipulated that the corporation would be non-profit in nature. The name of the corporation, the nature of its officers, and the methods of their election and duties were also outlined in the articles. Among the thirteen original members of the corporation was Andrew Tainter, president. The corporation became effective on May 20, 1890 with the signed approval of E. H. Weber, Notary Public, Dunn County Wisconsin.
corporation with a set of provisions concerning the use of the building. Written on June 7, 1890 and simply entitled "The Letter," the statement clearly outlined:
1) the Tainter's intentions in erecting the building;
2) the parts of the building and their intended uses;
3) the provisions for the Unitarian Society, and 4) the request to follow the expressed provisions.

According to the Tainters, the basic aim of the building was

...to accomplish something that would be of permanent value and utility to the citizens of Menomonie, -- to contribute something toward the intellectual, social and moral advancement and well being of the community now and in the years to come.36

The areas in the building designed to accommodate the described functions or services included:

- a library, and reading room, an auditorium, assembly room, young men's club rooms, parlors and ladies work rooms, pastor's study, dining room, kitchen and rooms that may be used for city purposes.37

The library opened in January of 1891 with its shelves stocked with more than 3,000 volumes. The donors requested that this facility be a circulating library with the rules and regulations for its operation set by the corporation.38 In addition to serving the needs of the community, the library became the pioneer in Wisconsin for county extension service -- the third of its kind in the nation.39
The young men's club rooms located in the basement provided a suitable place for young people's socials while the dining room, kitchen and ladies sewing rooms offered additional social opportunities for both public and private gatherings.

Two rooms upstairs originally designed for city purposes were located over the library. Both the members of the Memorial Society and the city council mutually agreed that the rooms be used for purposes other than city offices. Members of the William Evans Post No. 58 Grand Army of the Republic requested the use of these two rooms and, in a letter dated February 1, 1891, the Tainters stated that it was their desire that these rooms be devoted to the use of the Post and the Woman's Relief Corps Number 7, an auxiliary of the Post. For a number of years Civil War relics and mementoes were displayed in the two rooms.

The theatre, referred to as the "auditorium," was designed to accommodate a multiplicity of activities ranging from lectures, debates, speeches, religious services to musical and dramatic productions. The latter two forms of entertainment will be discussed separately in the final portion of this chapter. Under the agreement of the provisions in "The Letter," net proceeds from the auditorium for lectures, musical concerts, or dramatic entertainments be devoted exclusively toward
defraying the expenses of maintaining the Building, the Library and Reading Room. 40

The third major provision in "The Letter" dealt with the Unitarian Society. The degree to which the religious society proved instrumental in the form, as well as the intended use of the building is best described in the Tainter's own words:

Unitarians: One of the principle purposes for which the Memorial Building is erected is to provide a suitable and permanent church home for the Liberals or Unitarians of the City of Menomonie and vicinity, and in the construction of an Auditorium, providing an organ, parlors, ladies work rooms, young men's club rooms, pastor's study, assembly room and kitchen.

It is our purpose and desire that the Unitarian congregation...have the use of the auditorium, assembly room, parlor, ladies work rooms and young man's club rooms for the prosecution of their and its work and activities free of charge. 41

For approximately thirty years the Unitarian Society made its home in the Tainter. During that time religious services and lectures, under the leadership of Reverend Henry Doty Maxson were held in the auditorium and related areas.

The final portion of "The Letter" made reference to the necessity for following through with the provisions underlying the intended uses of the building. The same idea had been stated several times within the main body of the provisions and the final paragraph of this statement merely repeated the earlier thought:
We enjoin you and your successors to faithfully carry out the purpose for which your corporation was created, and that neither you nor your successors in anywise exceed its express provisions, or divert the building or any portion, thereof from the specific uses and purposes herein mentioned.

Andrew Tainter
Bertha Tainter

Dated At Menomonie, Wis.
June 7, 1890

Examination of such Tainter writings as "The Letter" clearly reveals the thoroughness and foresight of the donors. Another quality, equally apparent, is their generosity. To provide such an outstanding gift to the community, a gift designed to satisfy a wide range of interests for people of all ages, is certainly a strong reflection of the Tainters' liberal spirit. But the donors went even further in insuring the underprivileged person a share in the enjoyment and use of the facilities:

Poor. It is our wish that lectures, educational instructions and amusements as far as possible consistent with the financial needs of the society be made free, and especially do we desire that you, and your successors, see to it that the poor and unfortunate have every possible opportunity and facility for attending lectures and amusements in the Memorial Building free of charge.

Although there is no evidence supporting actual practice of free admission for lectures and other forms of amusements held in the Tainter, an abundant source of material treating the various forms of entertainments and activities has been recorded. Basically there
existed five categories of activities in the auditorium: 1) religious, 2) civic, 3) novelty, 4) musical and 5) dramatic. The nature of the religious services has already been mentioned. Civic activities included lectures, debates, high school graduations and various meetings. A number of novelty acts also found their way into the Tainter auditorium between 1890 and 1940. Although small in actual number by comparison to the religious and dramatic presentations, these novelties suggest the changing interests and concerns of Menomonie's citizens. Roald Amundsen's program on his conquest of the Northwest Passage played the Tainter as did The Rawers' portrayal of life in the South Sea Islands. Edison's kinescope was demonstrated there, and later the Tainter stage was used for the bane of so many nineteenth-century theatres, the motion picture.

Musical entertainments presented on the Tainter stage were quite varied, including The Minneapolis Symphony, the Romos Spanish Orchestra, Maurer Sisters Orchestra, Bostonia Sexette Club, Myrta French Quarette Company, the Caledonian bagpipe players of Edinburg, and the Skovgaard-Danis violinist. While some of the names may sound awkward to modern ears, these and similar organizations were an important part of the culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, as such, were welcome to the Tainter stage.
III. THEATRICAL ACTIVITY ON THE TAINTER STAGE
1890-1939

The theatre's primary use was as a home for dramatic productions. Between 1890 and 1939 nearly 300 productions by more than 90 acting companies played the Tainter. While a full discussion of the plays or companies who presented their work on the Tainter stage is not practical, a brief survey of the highlights of dramatic activity will be useful in the subsequent discussion. Generally the nature of plays at the Tainter was designed for intellectual as well as surface entertainment value. During this forty-nine year period of theatrical activity, patrons had the opportunity to see some of the finest examples of dramatic literature made available by travelling companies. At the same time, many of the plays were without any literary value. Much of what was presented on the Tainter stage was dependent upon the conditions surrounding the travelling companies, as well as upon the general state of the American theatre during the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century.

During the first ten years of operation, 1890-1900, twenty-seven plays were given at the Tainter theatre. Some of the plays were the popular hits of the day, plays without any literary pretensions: Mixed Pickles, The Jolly Little Host, Tom's Vacation and Pete Peterson.
On the other hand, it must be said that these plays were equaled in number by some of the better melodramas and classics including *East Lynne, Erminie, Faust*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. The greatest theatrical event during this period was the Lesia Morrison production of *Faust*, presented first in June of 1891 and again for a return engagement in 1895. A sum of three hundred dollars was guaranteed in order to secure the attraction by the manager, Newson, and Captain Tainter.44

In the first decade of the twentieth century the Tainter hosted thirty-nine dramatic productions by some twenty-six travelling companies. Approximately one-fifth of these productions were classics including *Romeo and Juliet, Othello, The Taming of the Shrew, School for Scandal*, and *As You Like It*. The remainder of plays fell into the category of popular comedies, melodramas and rural dramas. The problem of a guaranteed sum arose again in 1908 when Askin-Singer Company brought a play entitled, *The Time, The Place, The Girl*. The subscription list was filled and the production was booked into the Tainter for a sum of $500.0045

Between 1910 and 1919 ninety-six dramatic productions were presented on the Tainter stage, a number nearly tripling that of the previous decade. Many of these presentations, however, were repeats and the number of classics was limited to two Shakespearean productions,
The Merchant of Venice and The Comedy of Errors. According to newspaper accounts, one of the most popular plays of this decade to be shown at the Tainter was the 1910 production of The Man on the Box by the Gean Ward Company. In 1913, theatre patrons of Menomonie saw the Benjamin Great Players production of The Comedy of Errors. This attraction was reported to be the most expensive one ever brought to Menomonie; it was well received — "Many had to be turned away because of a lack of room to seat the people." In the midst of this period of prosperity, and of the continual presence of legitimate theatre in Menomonie's Tainter, several things were happening which would change the course of legitimate travelling theatre and cause the presence of live theatre in small communities to come to a near dead stop. Movies were now spreading across the country. In 1909, Menomonie saw the Broadway Theatre open and run its first movie, and in the same year a second theatre equipped to show movies was planned. The latter, owned by the Menomonie Land Company, was named the Majestic and was described as the "handsomest and most commodious place of its kind in this section of the country." On January 15, 1910, the Majestic opened with an evening of entertainment consisting of orchestra and vaudeville acts as well as a moving picture. This meant that three forms of entertainment could be seen at the Majestic for the price of ten or fifteen cents —
considerably cheaper than the cost for live theatre at the Tainter. The standard price of admission at the Tainter theatre ranged from thirty-five cents minimum to more than one dollar when an actor of stature appeared. This economic difference may not have seemed critical in 1910, but it would prove instrumental in the gradual decline of legitimate theatre in the city of Menomonie.

In 1912, full-length, three-reel films were introduced to the movie houses in Menomonie; the prices remained at five and ten cents. Moreover, now the managers of live theatre were threatened not only with the novelty of movies and the ticket price differential, but also with the emergence of the big name stars in the "spectacles." How could the Tainter compete with the Majestic when the former was forced to contract increasingly inferior companies and the latter could present no one less than Sarah Bernhardt in the film version of Camille. The legitimate theatres found themselves in a real dilemma -- because of rising costs big name stars could not be billed regularly and yet the movies were introducing just that. Thus, theatres like the Tainter continued to rely primarily upon plays like The Wolf, Paid in Full and The Fortune Hunter, all of which included unknown actors; the days of competing with big name stars on film had come to a close. Although the Tainter continued to advertise, it should be noted
that the Dunn County News discontinued running play reviews in 1912. In the following year the management of the Grand Opera House saw the inevitable and installed a movie screen in the theatre. One year later the Orpheum theatre was erected, giving Menomonie its fourth movie house.  

Between 1915 and 1916 other factors tended to point to the inevitable difficulty of sustaining live theatre in Menomonie. Movie houses continued to make matters more difficult by incorporating vaudeville acts as a permanent part of the bill, with special notice given to the fact that there would be no increase in prices. The Tainter found it necessary in their advertising to point out that their bills were not motion pictures. This statement, however, had to be changed in the next year when the Tainter bowed to the inevitable by showing its first movie, Birth of a Nation, which drew a total of 2,000 patrons during its showing in Menomonie. In that same year the Tainter Theatre saw very few single performances by travelling companies. The stock companies of Obrecht and Winninger who continued to play the Tainter were forced to advertise reduced rates for their performances, and, in some instances, the ticket prices sank as low as twenty-five cents.

The second decade of the Twentieth century confirmed what all legitimate theatre managers feared -- the threat
of the movies and the subsequent demise of live theatre. While eighty-nine productions were brought to the Tainter stage between 1920 and 1929, the quality of these productions was questionable. Aside from The Mikado, all the plays were popular comedies and melodramas of the day; Shakespeare was not to be seen. Moreover, of the eighty-nine productions, only a few were repeat performances.

The majority of the plays rang a domestic tone as suggested by the titles: Bringing Up Father, Here Comes the Bride, Elevating a Husband, The Matrimonial Beehive, and Which One Shall I Marry. Other productions played on sensational and suggestive aspects of life as indicated by such titles as The Price She Paid, Nighty Night, What's Your Husband Doing, and The Dangerous Age.

Eighteen travelling companies were responsible for the eighty-nine productions during this period. Very few appeared for one night stands; most of them played at least three or four productions within a given trip. The two companies which played most often at the Tainter were the Obrecht Sisters Stock Company, with five repertory stops for a total of fifteen plays, and the popular Winninger Company which made eight stops during their presentation of forty-seven plays at the Tainter between 1920 and 1929.

The final period of professional theatre on the Tainter stage occurred during the years 1930-1939. The end was in sight as the depression hit America. No plays
were given at the Tainter in 1930. In the following year seven plays were presented, six of which were by the Winninger Company. The titles were indicative of the literary merit: Cooking Her Goose, Keep Out of the Moonlight and For Crying Out Loud. In 1932 the Tainter stage was dark to live theatre and only one production was given in 1933. An upward swing occurred in 1934 as a total of nineteen plays were brought to the Tainter theatre. However, all of these productions were the product of a single company, the Crago Players. The theatre was dark again in the year 1935. The Crago Players returned in 1936 with four plays and again in 1937 with eight plays. The only other travelling company to present live theatre at the Tainter between 1933 and 1939 was the Big Ole Show Company. Its production of Kiss Me I'm Fireproof on February 22, 1939 marked the end of professional theatre at the Tainter.

For the next two decades the Tainter theatre was used only for occasional lectures, gatherings, and high school graduations. More than anything else, the theatre gathered dust. In 1957 the city of Menomonie proposed a plan to remodel the auditorium for use as municipal offices. By now most of the upstairs space had been occupied for this purpose. It was at this time that local citizens began to take an interest in the building. Gradually, unsolicited donations began to
pour in; by 1957 the Menomonie Theatre Guild was organized. It brought the theatre back to working condition and began using it for its community theatre productions. The Preservation Association, in turn, was organized in 1959 for the purpose of raising funds for the building's restoration, commissioning the De Nardo Decorating Studio of St. Paul, Minnesota to restore the theatre to its original luster. From 1959 until the present, the Theatre Guild has continued to produce plays for the community and to improve the staging conditions within the stagehouse area. The Preservation Association has concentrated its attention on the auditorium and adjacent areas. By the summer of 1969 a major portion of the restoration had been completed. Thus, because of the foresight and constructive efforts of the Menomonie Preservation Association and Theatre Guild, the Tainter has been spared the fate of most nineteenth-century theatres -- destruction in the name of progress -- and in turn, continues to stand as a vivid reflection of nineteenth-century artistry, opulence, and confidence.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER I

1. *The Dunn County News* (Menomonie, Wisconsin), July 4, 1890.


8. Haines and Dean, pp. 53, 54, 63.


10. Haines and Dean, p. 53.


18Ibid., p. 7.
20Manning, p. 43.
21Ibid., p. 37.
22Charles E. Freeman, "The Memorial," unpublished account of the Tainter Building between 1890-1913, September 28, 1913. (In the files of the Tainter Preservation Association, Menomonie, Wisconsin.)
23Dunn County News, December 16, 1889.
24Ibid.
25Ibid., December 13, 1890.
26Ibid., June 10, 1890.
27Inventory record of expenses prepared by Andrew Tainter and dated December 31, 1890. (In the files of The Tainter Preservation Association, Menomonie, Wisconsin.)
28Dunn County News, August 19, 1890.
29Ibid., July 4, 1890.
30Freeman, p. 11.
31Ibid., p. 12.
32Ibid.
33Ibid.
34Articles of Incorporation as prepared by Andrew and Bertha Tainter, May 20, 1890. (In the files of the Tainter Preservation Association, Menomonie, Wisconsin.)
35Approved seal of Notary Public on "Articles of Incorporation," May 20, 1890. (In the files of the Tainter Preservation Association, Menomonie, Wisconsin.)
36"The Letter," Original manuscript outlining the uses of the Tainter Memorial Building and signed by Andrew and Bertha Tainter, June 7, 1890. (In the files of the Dunn County Historical Society, Menomonie, Wisconsin.)

48 Dunn County News, August 13, 1914.

49 Heagle, p. 15.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.
CHAPTER II
THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND LAYOUT
OF THE TAINTER MEMORIAL

Located in the center of the business district of Menomonie, Wisconsin, the Tainter stands like a massive and weathered medieval fortress. Romanesque in architectural style, square in proportions, and nearly symmetrical in design, the three story sandstone structure mirrors a bygone era of confidence, evidencing both the powerful energetic lumber barons and prosperous pioneers, and the romantic temper of the architect working in the Richardsonian style.

From all outward appearances, the Tainter has remained unaltered in both layout and treatment of decor. Not all modifications are easily observed, however, and without the original architectural plans, the task of drawing positive conclusions concerning the building's original appearance would be virtually impossible. An exhaustive two-year search for these plans resulted in the discovery of three of the architect's original ink renderings among the Buffington Papers at the University of Minnesota Archives. All three renderings can be attributed to Harvey Ellis through either signatures or
style of drafting. The first ink sketch (Figure 4) is of the Tainter exterior and is signed by Ellis. The views of the auditorium pictured in the other two sketches (Figures 5 and 6) do not carry Ellis' signature but obviously display his unmistakable style.

Figure 3 shows the original Ellis ink rendering of the Tainter exterior. The architect's signature can be seen in the lower left hand corner along with what appears to be the date, "Dec. 91." The 1891 date is somewhat a mystery as the building was completed in the summer of 1890, several months after Ellis is reported to have left Buffington to join the firm of George Eckel and George Mann in St. Joseph, Missouri. Sometime in 1891 Ellis returned to the Buffington firm for a short period, and it is conceivable that he made this sketch for the exterior at this time.

For all practical purposes, the rendering is a most accurate representation of the finished product. The fact that the stone blocks are not drawn out in detail is characteristic of Ellis' rendering style. A few of the stones are drawn in detail while the majority are only traced in lightly. This same sketchy treatment is evidenced in his drawings of the auditorium, as will be noted later in the chapter. The differences between the rendering and the actual structure pertain either to omissions or slight modifications in decor. The
ventilation huts located on the main roof are omitted in the rendering. The roof treatment was modified from a Spanish tile to slate shingle for the purpose of fire protection, and the stone owl resting at the peak of the pediment on the building's face was never carved by the stone cutters.

Aside from these minor differences in the structure itself, Ellis' treatment of the setting which surrounds the building must be noted. In the rendering, all traces of identifiable landmarks bordering the Tainter are omitted, being replaced by a large unbroken expanse of grass and trees. Such was not the actual case. An early photograph of the building reveals that there were adjacent structures, streets, and walks. It is most probable, then, that if Ellis made the rendering after the completion of the building's construction, as the 1891 date implies, he did so on the basis of earlier sketches and not on the basis of the actual structure.

The two renderings of the auditorium interior are drawn in the form of a longitudinal section (Figure 5) and an "Elevation Looking Toward the Stage," (Figure 6); neither drawing carries Ellis' signature or the name of the structure. Both renderings are accurate in representing the basic proportions of the actual structure but do not conform to any standard scale in either feet or meters. Like the exterior rendering, these drawings
Figure 4.

Ellis' Rendering of Tainter Memorial Exterior.
Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives.
Figure 5.
Original Longitudinal Section of the Tainter Auditorium.
Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives.
reflect the sketchy ink-line style wherein only a small portion of the intricate detail is drawn. Ellis' omission of certain fixtures -- lighting and seating -- in the auditorium is in keeping with the rendering made for the exterior.

The architect's longitudinal section (Figure 5) is drawn at a point where the balcony meets the side wall of the auditorium and not at the conventional center line of the room. Despite the omission of lighting fixtures and seating for the auditorium and balcony, great care has been taken by the artist to indicate the style and drape of the curtains adorning the boxes, the architectural decor of the walls, and small furnishings (hanging lamps and potted ferns) which complement the overall flavor of the interior.

Figure 6 shows the boxes and proscenium arch on the left-hand side of the auditorium. The only differences noted between this drawing and the finished interior pertain to minor variations in the shapes of the arches and the omission of the star clustered symbol set within the face of the proscenium arch. Like the two other renderings, Figure 6 is an accurate representation of the finished product. The exact extent to which the two auditorium drawings differ from the actual auditorium will receive further attention in the description of the facilities to follow.
A fourth architectural plan was discovered in the form of a printer's block of the seating chart for both the main floor (Figure 7) and balcony (Figure 8). These plans outlined the seating arrangement for the two areas and included basic architectural formations in the area of the auditorium.

Despite the value of the original renderings and seating charts, there remained the problem of procuring a complete set of architectural drawings: floor plans, longitudinal section and transverse section. Original floor plans for the building appear to be nonexistent. Consequently I proceeded to compile a detailed set of dimensions of the entire building from which a set of reconstructed plans were produced. Horizontal and vertical measurements were taken for every portion of the building and cross checked for accuracy by means of diagonal measurements. Similarly, all pieces of stage machinery -- paint frame, stage traps, gridiron, pin rail, and flat grooves were measured for their size and shape.

The reconstruction of the floor plans began with a careful examination of the seating charts in conjunction with the dimensions compiled. Once the seating charts were fitted to a desired scale, they were compared to the dimensions of the actual structure. The charts matched perfectly in both dimensions and layout. This seemed to
Figure 6.

Original "Elevation Looking Toward the Stage" of the Tainter Auditorium. Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives.
Figure 7.

Figure 8
indicate that the printer’s block was taken from the original floor plans of the building. The next step in floor-plan reconstruction was to work outward from the seating areas to all parts of the building. Working within an eighty by ninety foot area (the external dimensions of the structure), a floor plan was reconstructed for each of the three stories. The reconstructed longitudinal and transverse sections of the building proved somewhat more difficult, but were completed by means of a straightline projection based on the floor plans and Ellis’ renderings of the auditorium interior.

The three original ink renderings proved invaluable not only in the mechanics of reconstructing plans for the Tainter, but also, and more importantly, as an authentic source of comparison with the finished product. Without these plans, it would have been nearly impossible to determine fully to what degree and in what ways, if any, the structure has remained unaltered since its completion. For all practical purposes, as will be noted in the detailed discussion to follow, the actual structure matches almost to perfection the style, decor, and layout of the renderings made by Ellis.

I. EXTERIOR OF THE TAINTER MEMORIAL

Architecturally, the exterior of the Tainter falls within the Romanesque tradition which was led by
H. H. Richardson. This was the style Ellis used most frequently throughout his career, and, as a consequence, he was considered by architectural historians as primarily a Romanesque revival designer. An imaginative architect, Ellis handled the Richardsonian style with considerable freedom, at times using it only as a point of departure. According to Eileen Manning, the Romanesque was, "...in his (Ellis') hands more playful and romantic, less pure," examination of the Teinter exterior confirms her contention. Figure 9 shows the Teinter exterior shortly after its completion when the sandstone was light in color. The building resembles a medieval fortress with its square proportions and attached circular turrets at each corner. The Romanesque design, with heavy leanings toward the medieval feeling and fortress flavor, was a favorite of Ellis, and many of his earlier designs demonstrate this interest: the First Regiment Armory of Chicago (1882); his monument to General Grant which consists of a "fortress-like closed square tower with an attached circular corner turret," (1885); the Northwestern Storage Warehouse, "a massive, fortress-like design, medieval in detail"; and the proposed Spencer Library, Penn College, Oskalooska, Iowa (1888) whose facade is nearly identical to that of the Teinter.

The roof of the building with its steep pyramidal shape, recalls the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Small
pyramidal roofs fuse the main roof with the smaller conical roofs of the four corner turrets. The Romanesque style is strongly felt in the horizontal emphasis achieved through the cut of the stone blocks and moldings. The groupings of the windows -- singular, coupled and grouped -- relieves the horizontal line. Further emphasis of the Romanesque comes from the semicircular stilted arches found throughout the building's exterior. Windows on the first story of the west side are framed in semicircular stilted arches, a motif repeated in the turrets on the second story and on the east side of the building. The remaining windows are, for the most part, rectangular in shape with smaller panes spaced directly overhead the larger ones, again reinforcing the
horizontal line. Use of the smaller rectangularly shaped windows for horizontal emphasis is best seen in the window groupings on the front (south) side of the building (Figure 9).

The building's front is dominated by a broad semi-circular arch, a further delineation of the Romanesque style. The main entrance arch (Figure 2) is constructed with receding concentric rings characteristic of Romanesque architecture. A rectangular frame consisting of molding in the shape of circular shafts surrounds the entire arch, with the enclosing frame relieved by the chiseled cornerstone date of 1889. The broad band of delicately carved, leaf-like scrollwork set within the rectangle of the main entrance is in striking contrast to the heavy massive feeling of the Romanesque exterior. Directly above the windows and pillars on the second story, the inscription, "Mabel Tainter Memorial," gives further relief to the design's massiveness because of its chiseled leafy scrollwork and by a horizontal band of stone outlining it. A pediment topped by a smooth rounded stone rests above this horizontal band. Ellis had intended this stone to be cut in the shape of an owl (see Figure 4) but the design was never executed. The owl's presence would have emphasized further the architect's playful and romantic treatment of the Romanesque. While the owl was a far departure from the
pure Romanesque form, it did, nevertheless symbolize the intention of the building. Additional external features of the building which take it further from the style fostered by Richardson are found at the base of the main entrance. Here a ship's prow and curling sandstone waves serve as a reminder of Andrew Tainter's days as "Captain" of a steamboat on the Chippewa River.

II. INTERIOR OF THE TAINTER MEMORIAL

Like the exterior, the interior of the Tainter is a confirmation of quality craftsmanship and imaginative artistry, and of unrestrained use of funds to secure the finest of furnishings and finish for all portions of the building. Although the exterior and the interior of the building share similar romantic characteristics, the interior departs radically from the massive medieval fortress-like feeling of the exterior. Inside, all is elegant and lavish, reflecting the ostentatious use of money by those few who, like Tainter, were fortunate enough to have it. Turkish rugs, Mexican onyx, silk draperies, terra cotta moquette carpet, Mecca draperies, Bayadere striped curtains, hardwoods including walnut, mahagony, oak, and cherrywood, and German Silver fixtures are but some of the furnishings and materials which grace the Tainter's interior. The profusion in quality and quantity of materials and treatment of decor
was referred to in numerous local newspaper accounts, including this one:

From the silver cup, chains and even silver caps to which they are attached, to the marble tiling under your feet, and the highly polished and expensive marble wainscoting, as seen as you enter the vestibule, all shows that expense was of minor consideration.

The walls and ceilings were painted entirely by hand, some areas being covered in nearly a dozen different shades of gold and bronze. Stained glass windows, in rich colors and bearing the names of Andrew, Bertha, and Mabel Tainter, lend a vibrance to the walls they fill. Another of the building's notable furnishings is a set of five original oil paintings by William Cogswell, noted artist of the nineteenth century who was commissioned by Congress to paint the Lincoln portrait for the White House.

While it is not the purpose of this study to discuss portions of the building not part of the theatre facilities, a brief description of the general layout is in order before examining the area central to the study. Reference to any of the reconstructed ground plans (Figures 10, 16, 31) indicate both the square proportions of the building and the four corner turrets. The only facility other than the theatre on the first floor is the library reading room, with its book stacks, located along the east side of the building. Like the first floor, the second floor is occupied primarily by theatre
facilities. The pastor's study is situated off the rear of the balcony in the southwest corner turret. The space above that occupied by the library on the first floor was designed originally for use by the Women's Relief Corps and the Grand Army Post, known as the William Evans Post of Menomonie; for the past ten years it has been utilized for city offices. The basement contains a variety of rooms designated for non-theatrical purposes, including additional library stacks, a young men's club room, billiard room, sewing room, kitchen and service areas. A contemporary account of the basement facilities refers to the fact that

...It is as thoroughly finished and as complete in all its appointments for the uses intended as any part of the building.

The Young Men's club room is of the same size and form as the reading room above. It is furnished in antique oak, with Mecca draperies, and the floor overlaid with Turkish and American rugs. Connected with the club room is the billiard room, also finished in antique oak, and the floor covered with Brussels carpet.

A dining room 40 x 49, finished in oak, draped with Bayadere stripped curtains, and a kitchen 17 x 17 fully equipped with all articles, required in a well-regulated culinary department is another notable feature...Adjacent to the dining room is the ladies sewing room neatly finished and furnished with convenient closets and shelves. 10

The service facilities serving the entire building indicate the thoroughness in the planning of the structure. Hot water heat to every part of the building was
accomplished by means of a mammoth boiler located in the northeast corner of the basement adjacent to the coal room. A central ventilation system was another feature included in the building, as air was distributed through the latticework in the auditorium walls by means of a large fan located high above in the attic. A means of fire control was also incorporated in the planning of the structure, as witnessed by the numerous fire hoses placed at strategic points about the building. Additional precautions against fire and fire damage are the slate roof and the fireproof vaults for the library stack rooms. The lighting for the building was designed to render service regardless of conditions: if the electricity failed, the old reliable gas system stood ready for operation.

Auditorium Layout.—The theatre is unquestionably the highlight of the Tainter. Occupying approximately fifty percent of the building’s total space, the theatre facilities have remained virtually unchanged for the past seventy-nine years. Actually, two types of changes are possible in any given structure: first, changes or modifications between the plans and the finished product, and, secondly, those revisions made upon the structure following its completion. In discussing the Tainter, references will be made to both forms of alterations, for, although all the changes were minor, each had a
direct bearing on the functional disposition of the
facilities under examination.

The floor plan for the first floor (Figure 10) shows
the layout of the theatre auditorium, stagehouse, dressing
rooms, and box office, as well as that of the library
reading room and stacks. More than seventy-five percent
of the total space of this floor is occupied by theatre
facilities. The box office is located nearly directly
opposite the main entrance on the south side of the
building. To the left of the box office is an L-shaped
passageway leading to the foyer. "Box A" is located east
of the foyer opposite this passageway. At each end of
the foyer, in the southwest and northwest corner turrets,
are the parlors which served as reception and retiring
rooms. The Ladies Retiring Room occupies the southwest
corner turret. A view of it as seen from the rear of the
auditorium is given in Figure 11. Directly east of the
northwest parlor is a double passageway, the left
corridor leading to the balcony and the right corridor to
"Box B." Beyond the box area is a door leading backstage.

The auditorium is located in the approximate
center of the first floor. It measures thirty-seven feet
in depth and fifty-one feet in width and, with the
reception rooms in either corner opposite the stage,
occupies the entire west side of the building. The
auditorium is basically fan-shaped with the seating
broken into three sections by the two aisles which run from the foyer to the parquet. Each aisle is three feet in width. There are 314 seats in the theatre, with 208 chairs located on the main floor and 106 located in the gallery.

Figures 12 and 13 are reconstructed longitudinal and transverse sections providing a vertical view of the building. The auditorium floor slopes toward the orchestra pit with a pitch of approximately one and one-half inches per foot. Within the twenty-three foot slope, the floor angles at seven degrees. The total height variation from the base of the auditorium floor nearest the orchestra pit to the foyer at the rear comes to two
Figure 12.
feet eight inches. The level of the stage floor is identical to that of the foyer. The ceiling of the auditorium extends twenty-four feet six inches from the level plane of the floor, with shallow concave vaulting along the corners on all four sides. At approximately two-thirds the distance from the rear of the auditorium -- in the direction of the stage -- the ceiling is interrupted by a framed arch whose design is identical with that of the proscenium arch. This arch spans the entire width of the auditorium and suggests a separation between the balcony and the upper boxes. The rear wall of the auditorium is lined with five rectangular stained glass windows. These windows, as viewed from center stage, are shown in Figure 14.

The side walls of the auditorium, identical in layout, are each interrupted by three openings. At the rear is a large doorway leading to the reception room in the appropriate corner turret. A small draped doorway is located directly beneath the front of the balcony and, finally, a wide archway provides space for the lower set of boxes adjacent to the proscenium arch. Figure 15 provides an excellent view of the north wall of the auditorium with the described openings. The lower set of boxes on this side is designed to accommodate five spectators, while that on the other side, as well as the upper boxes on both sides, include room for only three
Figure 14.
Rear Wall of Auditorium. Author's Collection.

Figure 15.
North Wall of Auditorium. Author's Collection.
spectators. The reason for this difference in the number of positions is the result of the cherrywood organ shown in Figure 15. Originally Ellis had intended the lower boxes to be identical in shape and form, as indicated in his ink rendering (Figure 5). However, the emphasis placed by the donors upon the auditorium's functioning for church services as well resulted in some modifications. It was the Tainter's wish that the Unitarian Society have unlimited use of the auditorium for religious purposes. Central to these services was, of course, the organ which, if placed in the box as originally designed, would have left too little space for the choir which assisted the organist during the church services. Consequently, it was necessary to enlarge "Box A," this enlargement being one of the few significant alterations which occurred between the original plans and the finished product.

Figure 16 is the reconstructed floor plan for the balcony. Referred to as the "Gallery," this area accommodates 106 seats arranged in the shape of a flattened horseshoe. The front seats in the balcony are twenty-two feet from the edge of the apron, while the farthest seat in the last row is approximately thirty-four feet from the apron's edge. The height of the balcony from the auditorium floor is nine feet six inches at the front and fourteen feet nine inches at the rear. This five foot variation makes the pitch of the floor much
Figure 16.
too steep for the use of a raked floor and in its place are a series of steps in the form of aisle-ways, an arrangement typical to most nineteenth-century galleries. Four aisles interrupt the seating arrangement dividing the four rows of seats into three sections. The two center aisles run parallel to those of the auditorium below; the side aisles provide access not only to the balcony seating but also to the boxes, “D” and “C”.

The architect's sectional view of the boxes and proscenium arch (Figure 6) provides an accurate picture of the arched doorway leading to the upper boxes from the balcony side aisle. Equally apparent in the rendering is the auditorium arch fashioned in the same design as the proscenium arch. We might note here the second alteration or modification made from the original designs as it occurred here in the balcony. In the original rendering (Figure 5) a series of multifoiled arches are shown along the south wall of the balcony, with three of the openings filled with intricate lattice work and the remaining two serving as passageways from the first floor to the balcony seating area. In the actual construction, only two of the arches were filled with the latticework thereby providing more space for audience traffic from the balcony to the corner turrets which lead to the stairways to the first floor. It might also be noted at this time that the latticework fill between the columns of the arches was
much more intricate and Moorish in flavor in the rendering than is the finished product. Figure 17 is an end view of the balcony showing the three opened arches and the two filled arches previously described.

Returning to the level of the auditorium floor we find one more area necessary for consideration. The orchestra pit, shown in Figure 18 as viewed from the balcony boxes, is located between the front of the auditorium and the forestage. The front of the pit is semicircular in shape, with the center of the radius located behind the proscenium arch. This same radius center applies to the curve of the seating arrangement in both the auditorium and the balcony. The total depth of the pit measures six feet three inches with the front edge of the pit resting approximately twenty inches below the adjacent auditorium floor. The stage floor rises four feet four and one-half inches above the pit. Due to its shape and particularly shallow depth, it is immediately apparent that only a relatively small orchestra could be comfortably accommodated in this area. At the same time, as will be discussed later, the sight-lines are such that the musicians, when seated in the pit, do not distract from the stage action. Access to the basement from the orchestra pit is made through a small doorway built within the face of the stage apron (see Figure 31).
Figure 17.
End View of Balcony. Author's Collection.

Figure 18.
Orchestra Pit. Author's Collection.
Architectural Style of Auditorium.--One of the most outstanding features of the building is its architectural style and treatment of decor. The auditorium exemplifies imaginative architectural artistry and craftsmanship. Following the completion of the Tainter in July of 1890, several newspaper articles extolled the merits of the building, particularly the auditorium:

The auditorium is a study in itself, and has elicited the warmest admiration from all who have seen it, and is considered by those conversant with the subject as not being excelled in costly furnishings and general completeness anywhere in the Union.11

A full comprehension of the almost perfect symmetry of its proportions and the meticulous blending of form and color into one harmonious whole can only be gained by personal views. No mere casual glance will reveal the full measure of its real merits, but a careful critical study is necessary to unfold to the mind the grand and perfect work of the artist. We have seen many auditoriums in our day and generation, but recall none that seem so near perfection in all its parts -- in design, finish and decoration -- as does this exquisite temple.12

The style adopted for the auditorium interior can be termed as Moorish in general and as Neo-Saracenic specifically. The Moorish treatment makes itself felt particularly in a variety of Saracenic features throughout the walls and ceilings. The horseshoe arches, pierced stone tracery, and rich decoration in geometric and flowing patterns are features characteristic of this style, and each is prominent in the Tainter auditorium. The
Saracenic style dominates the wall treatment of the auditorium primarily through three distinct types of ornamentation characteristic of its school: the superimposed ornament, the stalactite, and the Mnemonic ornament. The superimposed ornament is "made up of conventional designs in different planes, in which one scheme of design forms a background to the one over it." These designs, plainly visible in Figure 19, are obtained by joining together straight and curved lines forming geometric figures. Note the use of the painted geometric patterns which, in turn, are relieved by a geometric pattern of wooden molding running vertically from the lower boxes to the ceiling. It is also interesting to note in Figure 19 that the cherrywood organ located behind the lower boxes was designed with geometric patterns similar to those found on the auditorium walls.

A second form of Saracenic ornamentation evidenced in the auditorium is the stalactite. Primarily used to form the pendentives of domes and in the decoration of doorheads, the stalactite pendentive is comparatively rare in the Spanish Saracen. The proscenium and center auditorium arches contain excellent examples of the stalactite ornament. Figure 19 shows the stalactite formations at the bases of the proscenium and auditorium arches in the shape of inverted pyramids.
A third distinctive form of Saracenic ornamentation found in the Tainter auditorium is the Mnemonic. The form consists of Arabic inscriptions from the Koran which are worked into decorative panels. The Tainter's Mnemonic ornamentation is located above the arched doorway leading into the upper boxes, and may be seen in the section of Figure 6 reproduced here as Figure 20.

Another feature attributed to Saracenic architecture and evidenced in the Tainter is the enclosure of an arch within a rectangle. Examples of this technique are found in the proscenium arch, the auditorium arch, and the archways enclosing the upper and lower boxes. An illustration of this feature is provided in a front view
of the proscenium arch (Figure 21). The face of the proscenium is outlined by a frame enclosing an arrangement of interlocking geometric molding. The molding, in turn, is relieved by a painted Arabic motif. The interlocking molding seen here bears a striking similarity to the decor on the exterior walls of the Giralda in Seville.
In the arches for the boxes, the triangular space between the corners of the rectangular frame and the curve of the arch, properly referred to as the "spandrel," carries additional overtones of the Saracenic style by means of the circular glass filling containing multi-colored cuts of stained glass. Like the proscenium arch and the auditorium arch, the arches enclosing the boxes are scalloped or multi-foiled, which is an especially Spanish feature. The pillars and capitals supporting the arches of the boxes (Figure 22) bear a most notable resemblance to those found in the Alhambra in Granada (Figure 23).

Finally, there is an extensive use of delicate wooden lattices, a motif in keeping with the Saracenic
tradition. The Tainter auditorium displays an abundance of intricate latticework in the form of geometric patterns found along the walls between the boxes and the proscenium arch and immediately overhead the boxes near the ceiling. Figure 24 shows the latticework both directly above and immediately behind the upper boxes on the north wall. In this case, the open geometric patterns of delicately carved wood serve as functional decor; the organ pipes extend upward from the organ in the lower boxes, behind the upper boxes and terminate inside the open latticework near the ceiling of the auditorium, thereby permitting the organ's sound to carry throughout the entire auditorium.

Overall, the Tainter auditorium displays a rich profusion of Saracenic decor and motifs, both painted and
three-dimensional in form. In addition to the three distinctive Saracenic types of ornaments, an abundance of painted motifs of interlocking geometric patterns fused with flowing patterns grace the walls and the ceiling of the auditorium. It is evident that the architect made no attempt to be historically accurate in his use of the Saracenic style. Instead, common forms of the multi-foiled arch, interlocking geometric patterns laid in relief, extensive latticework, stalactite and Mnemonic ornamentation were employed in a romantic and imaginative manner for the purpose of producing a
lavishly rich Moorish feeling throughout the auditorium.

The remaining auditorium furnishings were designed to complement the Moorish interior. The gold-colored, silk-mohair carpet was woven in India. The theatre seats were provided by Thos. Cane and Company of New York. Based on the most recent patent, they featured a folding seat and back, and were fitted with bronze castings and mohair upholstery. The boxes were originally draped in satin and the arches trimmed in velour. The Steere and Turner cherrywood organ installed in the lower box shortly after the completion of the theatre at an original cost of $4,100 is equipped with a total of 1,597 pipes and 25 stops. The main curtain, recently replaced by a new one, was of heavy coral velour and the teaser, with its geometric patterns in blue and gold, appeared like an oriental carpet. The first reception room (ladies' parlor) was separated from the foyer by a heavy boudoir curtain finished in blue silk draperies. Inside the parlor are lounge seats, covered in crushed blue silk and elliptical in shape, to follow the curve of the turret.

Stagehouse Layout.--Like the auditorium, the stagehouse has undergone no major changes; those alterations made have left the facility with basically the same functional disposition as it had in 1890. With the exceptions of a modern lighting system backstage, the
removal of a portion of the catwalk and four sets of upper flat grooves, and the replacement of a few headblocks, the stagehouse remains today as it did seventy nine years ago.

Measuring sixty feet in width and twenty feet in depth, the stagehouse is separated from the auditorium by a brick wall twenty-two inches thick (see Figure 10). A small doorway in the wall leads from "Box A" to the wings backstage right. The only other opening in the thick wall is the proscenium arch. A small apron projects from the corners of the proscenium arch with a maximum depth of four feet six inches at center stage from the upstage side of the arch. Near the edge of the apron is a sunken footlight trough. The width of the proscenium arch is twenty-six feet five inches and the height twenty-one feet three inches at center. Pine wood covers the stage proper and the wing space stage left. The major portion of the stage right wing floor is covered in hardwood. What might be termed the stage proper (the acting area) measures twenty-six feet five inches by twenty feet, excluding the small apron. Located in this area are openings in the floor for three elevator traps, downstage left, downstage right, and center stage. A fourth opening, located upstage center, has a trap cover for transporting scenery and properties from the stage floor level to the basement. The amount of wing space for stage left and
stage right differs considerably, with the former measuring nine feet three inches and the latter twenty-five feet four inches. Figure 25 views the off stage left wings. Note the fire hose in the upstage corner and the catwalk above, under which is suspended two sets of upper flat grooves.

The off stage right wing area, nearly three times the size of its counterpart, provides egress to the street outside on the north wall, to the dressing rooms in the upstage right corner, and to the dressing rooms and trap room along the rear wall of the stagehouse (see Figure 10). The double door leading outside is five feet in width and ten feet in height, including the removable section at the top. A small rest room in the upstage right corner of the wings adjacent to the door leading to the dressing rooms is shown in Figure 26.

A very narrow stairway from the downstage right wing area leads to the scenery storage landing and catwalk (see Figures 10 and 16). The scenery storage level overhangs a portion of the stage right wing space and is twelve feet three inches above the stage floor. Directly over the scenery storage landing are two windows along the roof line. The narrow staircase continues from the scenery storage level up to the catwalk which is located twenty-one feet three inches above the stage floor. Figure 27 shows the stage right section of the catwalk and stairs.
Figure 25.
Stage Left Wing Space. Author's Collection.

Figure 26.
Rest Room Stage Right and Door Leading to Dressing Room. Courtesy of John Russell.
leading down to the scenery landing as viewed from the gridiron overhead.

The catwalk extends on three sides of the stagehouse and is approximately four feet in width. Originally the catwalk was larger on the sides but was foreshortened in 1906. Mention of the change was made in the Dunn County News:

The stage at the Memorial is being enlarged this week to accommodate larger curtains. Doolittle and Bunker are doing the work. The stage had carried a 32 foot curtain but will now have room for a 38 foot curtain, which is, says manager F. W. Schaeffer, usually carried by theatrical companies that make cities the size of Menomonie.
The newspaper account is the only reference to the alteration and fails to specify what actually was done to the stagehouse to accommodate the larger curtains, that is, drops. Examination of the facilities reveals that the only possible type of change allowing thirty-eight foot curtains instead of the thirty-two foot curtains would be in the alteration of the catwalk. The existing catwalk extends on three sides of the stagehouse, with the ends against the proscenium arch and a small extension projecting out near the edge of the arch (see Figure 16). The distance between the face of the catwalk near the arch is thirty-two feet, the same measurement mentioned as the size of the drops accommodated originally. The distance between the face of the catwalk from stage left to stage right, upstage of the small extensions, measures thirty-eight feet -- the dimension of the larger drops utilized following the alteration. This would seem to confirm the hypothesis that the "enlargement of the stage" consisted of no more than cutting away a portion of the stage right and stage left catwalks as shown in Figure 28.

All three sides of the catwalk are equipped with a heavy handrail serving the function of a pin rail for the stage right and stage left sides. Figure 29 shows the upstage portion of the catwalk which runs parallel to the curtain line along the rear wall of the stagehouse.
Figure 28.
Note the open space between the catwalk and the rear wall through which the paint frame travels. At the far end, in the upstage left corner of the catwalk, is the auxiliary windlass for the paint frame.

The gridiron is identical in dimensions to the width of the proscenium arch (26' 5") and depth of the stage floor (20' 0") and is mounted thirty-eight feet three inches above the stage floor. Constructed of rough timbers, the gridiron is laced by a network of blocks and lines for the pin and rail system, as shown in Figure 30. A large windlass and guide frames, designed to raise and lower the paint frame, are mounted on the grid, upstage center. A detailed account of this unit will be given in
Figure 30.
General View of Gridiron.
Author's Collection.

Figure 31 is a plan view of the basement floor. The associated stagehouse facilities on this level, consisting of the two rooms located directly beneath the stage, consume only a small portion of the total space. The trap room is shown under the stage right portion of the stagehouse; the orchestra retiring room, separated from the trap room by a brick wall perpendicular to the curtain line, is shown under the stage right portion of the stagehouse.

The trap room measures twenty feet in depth by twenty-two feet six inches in width. Its floor is
fifteen feet below stage level. Each of its four walls is pierced by a doorway: the east wall doorway leads up to stage level, the north wall doorway leads directly to the furnace room, the west doorway opens into the dining room, and the fourth door, located near the corner of south wall, provides access to the orchestra retiring room.

The orchestra retiring room, adjacent to the trap room, is equipped with a small rest room and a storage closet. The room has no unusual features worthy of mention aside from the mechanism for the downstage left trap and a stairway leading to the orchestra pit as indicated in Figures 31 and 32.

Dressing room facilities are located in the northeast corner turret on the first and second floors. The first facility, designated for the leading actors, is found on the first floor directly east of the stage right wing area. It is divided into four compact compartments (see Figure 10) all of which are equipped with mirrors, an overhead gas and electrical fixture, and tables. Directly across from the end compartment farthest from the stage is a rest room. The second facility is located on the second floor, directly above those on the first floor, but is not equipped with any formal divisions. It too includes a rest room and is presently utilized for the office of the city planner.
Relationship Between Stagehouse and Auditorium.--An examination of the working relationship between stagehouse and auditorium is essential to any study of theatre facilities. Those factors most pivotal to a suitable relationship between the two areas are visibility, audibility, and comfort. Each of these factors, in turn, is dependent on such variables as size, shape, layout, and materials.

A horizontal and vertical view of the stagehouse and auditorium (Figures 33 and 34) show the basic sightline conditions. The stations in the auditorium and balcony for both drawings correspond in identification number for easy reference. Figure 33 shows the horizontal set of
sightlines with the left half devoted to the balcony level and the right half to the auditorium level. It should be mentioned that the wing and border setting laid out on the stage in this reconstructed drawing is based on the actual location of the flat grooves and the size of the still-existent wings and borders. The only conjectural feature in the layout of the wings is the degree to which they rake inward from the proscenium arch. This conjecture is based on experimentation with the original scenery in the groove system. The two tormentor flats are placed directly behind the proscenium arch on each side. Three sets of wings, spaced approximately four feet apart and parallel to the curtain line, are angled inward so that the on-stage edge of the third set of wings rests approximately six feet six inches inside each vertical edge of the proscenium arch. The rear shutter, consisting of two twelve-foot wide flats, runs parallel to the curtain line at a distance nineteen feet from the front of the forestage.

Station 1 (auditorium front row end seat) provides good visible coverage of the stage area, but causes a horizontal masking problem for the off-stage right wings. Visibility is good for station 2 and 3 (end seat at widest part of auditorium and auditorium center seat in back row) both horizontally and vertically. Overall, the vertical sightline conditions are excellent in the
auditorium seating due to the raked floor. The actual rake is one and one-half inches per foot, a ratio still commonly recommended for modern theatre facilities. The orchestra pit is sunken sufficiently so that a musician, when seated, does not distract from the action on the stage (see Figure 34). While some theatres continued to rake the stage as late as the 1890's for improvement of visibility, the Teinter stage is level. The lower boxes (stations 4 and 5) clearly show the problems encountered in a proscenium theatre with seating located at extreme angles to the sides of the proscenium arch. Station 4 is almost directly parallel to the edge of the forestage, thereby permitting only a side view of the actor in this area and no view whatsoever of the action in the upstage corners of the stage. Station 5 is considerably better than 4, as its sightlines catch the extreme area to the side, since it runs approximately parallel to the angle line of the stage left wings. An additional advantage of station 5 should also be noted: the vertical vantage point permits the spectator to view the actor at an angle more pleasing than a spectator sunken in the front row of the auditorium or high above in the upper boxes or gallery.

Stations 6 through 9 are located on the balcony level. For the most part, visibility in the balcony is good, with the best stations located in the front center
section. Station 6 (balcony front row end seat) provides excellent visibility, as does 7 (balcony rear row end seat), which is very similar in its sightlines to 6 but a few feet farther from the stage and at a slightly steeper angle. The only seats in the balcony which prove awkward are those in the upper boxes (stations 8 and 9).

Horizontally, station 8 is very similar to its counterpart on the lower level; a good portion of the upstage corner is lost with the other side visible not only on stage but off stage as well. Vertically, station 8 proves worse than any other station in the entire house. Not much more than the top of the actor’s head is visible if the actor happens to be in the forestage area. The comparison of station 9 with station 8 is very much like that of 4 and 5 on the lower level, with the exception of the extreme vertical pitch.

If the action of a play were contained in the confines of the space inside the wings, as shown in Figure 33, most of the performance could be viewed comfortably from all stations except 4 and 8. Generally speaking, the vertical sightlines are very good. The steep balcony rake allows for excellent visibility. The only real liability with balcony sightlines is the slight distortion in the painted perspective of the scenery resulting from the high vantage point. Horizontally, the theatre provides quite suitable sightlines, even at the extreme side seats.
in the auditorium and balcony.

The acoustics of a theatre, like visibility, are dependent upon proper conditions. Adequate absorption of sound, proper types of reflecting surfaces, and size of the facility dictate the quality of its acoustics. The size and layout of the Tainter theatre lend themselves very well to sufficient audibility, since no seat is farther than thirty-five feet from the front edge of the forestage. The problem of absorption is satisfied by the carpet covering the entire auditorium floor, by the upholstered seats, and by the draperies which line the entrances to the parlors and boxes. While the reflection surfaces may not be considered ideal -- particularly the concave corners joining the walls and ceilings -- there is no noticeable echo or dead spots in any portion of the auditorium or balcony.

Comfort is a relative term which can mean many things depending upon the people and the time. By today's standards, with people larger, the comfort of the Tainter auditorium would not be ranked as one of its chief assets primarily because of the closeness of the rows of the seats and their size. But in its own time, the auditorium was considered to be an extremely comfortable, if not an actual luxury, facility. The seats were the best money could buy -- each folded separately, and had a hat rack mounted under it, and was plushly cushioned; and, if a man had extra long legs,
he was relieved to find notched holes for his feet in
the back side of the row directly in front of him.
During the warm summer nights, small fans along the
walls, working in conjunction with the still operational
large master fan in the attic, passed air through the
wooden latticework directly over the upper boxes on the
right side of the auditorium. During the winter months,
radiators located at the center of the corner turrets
served as convenient handwarmers and provided heat
throughout this portion of the building.

Having attended two dramatic productions in the
Tainter theatre, I can say with assurance that the
general working arrangement between the auditorium and
stagehouse is most satisfactory. Acoustical conditions
satisfy every ear in the auditorium. The sightlines,
save those few seats mentioned, enable the spectator
to have a good view of the stage action from any portion
of the house. Despite the awkward closeness and size of
the chairs, by today's standards, an overall warm and
intimate feeling prevails between the stagehouse and
auditorium.
Figure 34.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER II

1. The Buffington Papers consist of a collection of architectural drawings and sketches produced by the firm of L. S. Buffington, Minneapolis, Minnesota and are now the property of the University of Minnesota Library, Department of Archives.


3. Ibid., pp. 60, 61.

4. Photograph of the Tainter exterior taken shortly after the completion of the structure in July of 1890, and now contained in the files of the Dunn County Historical Society, Mananomie, Wisconsin.

5. Manning, p. 53.

6. Ibid., p. 54.


8. Ibid., p. 56.


10. Ibid., July 5, 1890.

11. Dunn County News, February 13, 1891.

12. Ibid., July 5, 1890.


14. Ibid.

15. Dunn County News, July 5, 1890.

CHAPTER III

MACHINERY AND STAGING EQUIPMENT

The theatre of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries concentrated a major share of its efforts on the production of startling scenic effects. Speed and precision often proved critical to the success of the desired theatrical magic -- be it an actor rising from a stage trap or the execution of an instantaneous transformation scene. Consequently, stage machinery and related equipment played a dominant role in the attainment of the spectacle anticipated by the audience. The following chapter attempts to report on those items of equipment and machinery in the Tainter theatre which aided in the staging of a dramatic production. Lighting, both gas and electric, will be discussed in conjunction with scenery in the following chapter.

Although it is not the purpose of this section of the study to comment in detail on how the machinery used in the Tainter compared with that used in other contemporary theatres, it can be stated that most of the machinery and equipment is conventional for its time. The value of
this chapter, then, does not lie in its identification of conventional machinery but, rather, in the specific details it provides of the operation, size, and location of that machinery. In each case, the particular piece of machinery or equipment will be examined according to function, location and quantity, physical characteristics and mechanical operation.

I. FLAT GROOVES

Because wings and shutters comprised the bulk of scenery utilized in the nineteenth-century American theatre, the flat groove was a common item to most stagehouses. Constructed in the form of a slotted wooden frame, the flat groove facilitated rapid horizontal movement of the wings and shutters on and off stage. The size and number of grooves was dependent upon two factors: the size of the stagehouse and the condition of the sightlines. At least four sets of grooves usually occupied the side walls of the stagehouse. The lower set of grooves consisted of a small wood stripping nailed to the floor in which the wings were placed and slid into position. Directly above the lower grooves were the upper grooves which were suspended from above and designed to hold and guide the top of the wings. The number of slots for each set of grooves depended on the number of settings to be utilized for a
typical production. Most often flat grooves are shown to have four or six slots, thereby permitting that number of wings to fit into the groove framework. Although this system permitted quick changes in settings, flexibility in angling was not among its merits; the wings always had to be placed parallel to the curtain line.

With the advent of the box setting and the development of more sophisticated staging equipment, the faces of the wings were angled inward which, in turn, resulted in the abandonment or limited use of the flat groove system.

When the Tainter purchased scenery from the Clausen Scenic Studio in 1890, provisions were made for the acquisition of accessory machinery and staging equipment. In an inventory sheet from the studio, mention is made of the flat grooves:

The House to furnish all woodwork in connection with the stage frames for Flats and Wings, Rulers (Cylinder) and Counterweight for Drop Curtain and paint frame; frames for set pieces, Batting for Drops and Sky Border and 8 Scene Grooves.

While only four of the original eight sets of upper flat grooves remain intact, careful examination of the area revealed the original location of all eight sets. Figure 35 is a reconstructed horizontal plan of the eight sets of upper flat grooves all of which are secured to the underside of the catwalk, approximately three feet apart from one another. It has been mentioned previously
that a portion of the catwalk was removed in 1906. Conceivably, the four missing sets of flat grooves were removed at that time, for, had they remained in position, provision for support from the gridiron would have had to have been made. Many theatres around the country had dispensed with the system of flat grooves by the end of the century as stock companies were replacing the wing and border setting with the box setting. Because the Tainter relied entirely on travelling companies for its production, it seems most likely that the four missing sets of flat grooves were removed at the time of the catwalk renovation.

Broken into three sections, each five feet in length, all eight sets of flat grooves extend eight feet on stage from the proscenium arch. Each section of the flat groove is hinged to the other, and the two on-stage sections, not permanently mounted to the catwalk, are equipped with a line from the catwalk allowing them to be drawn vertically against the face of the pin rail and out of sight of the audience when not in use (Figure 36). Figure 37 shows the upper flat groove in its in position. Note that the off-stage section is fastened permanently to the underside of the catwalk while the other two sections are simply hinged together and supported by the light weight chain used to draw them into the out position. Two of the three sections (farthest off stage) are
Figure 36.

Downstage Left Upper Flat Groove in Out Position. Author's Collection.
constructed with four grooves (Figure 38); the remaining on-stage section has only two grooves. The extreme upstage set of upper flat grooves are designed to accommodate the shutters and have four sets of grooves in all three sections as seen in Figure 39. All traces of the floor grooves have been removed due to the wear over the years.

II. FLY SYSTEM

Designed to raise and lower the drops, borders, cutouts, and lighting equipment, the pin and rail system fits the conventional pattern common to the late nineteenth-century theatres. The basic components of the
Figure 38.
End View of Upper Flat Groove.
Author's Collection.

Figure 39.
Upper Flat Groove Loaded With Shutters.
Author's Collection.
pin and rail system are the gridiron, the catwalk, and
the pin rail and its related equipment -- pulleys, head
and loft blocks, belaying pin, and lines. The Clausen
Scenic Studio, which provided the theatre's scenery, also
provided some of the equipment for the fly system, as
evidenced by their inventory sheet:

- Hickory Belaying Pins; Swivel Blocks,
single and double; Clancey's movable
Loft Blocks, ropes and Pulleys...

The reconstructed horizontal plan of the gridiron
and catwalk (Figure 40) indicates the overall layout
and 'size of the system and the location of the lines.
The gridiron supports the head and loft blocks for the
fifteen sets of lines on stage left and the twenty-four
sets of lines on stage right. The lines extend from the
batten, up through the open slats in the gridiron floor,
pass through the loft blocks, across to the head blocks
(Figure 41) and on down to the pin rail where they are
secured to the belaying pin (Figure 42). One can note
the difference in models of head blocks in Figure 41, as
two of the originals flank a more modern model recently
installed.

A series of windlasses on the gridiron and catwalk
complement the fly system for the purpose of raising and
lowering units too heavy for the standard lines
operated from the pin rail. Extant in the Teinter are
windlasses for the main curtain, the act drops, the
HORIZONTAL PLAN OF
GRIDIRON AND CATWALK

Figure 40.
Figure 41.
Head Blocks.
Author's Collection.

Figure 42.
Pin Rail Stage Left.
Author's Collection.
light pipe, and the paint frame. The windlass for the main curtain is located on the scenery storage landing, stage right; that for the act drop on the stage right corner of the catwalk; that for the light pipe on the stage left corner of the catwalk; and that for the paint frame on the upstage center of the gridiron with an auxiliary windlass in support of it located along the upstage left corner of the catwalk. All but the windlass for the main curtain are shown on the plan view of the gridiron and catwalk in Figure 40.

**Paint Frame.**—Rather than needlessly describing the operation of all the windlasses, only the windlass for the paint frame will be discussed. Although considerably larger than those located on the catwalk, this central paint frame windlass works on the same basic principle in layout and operation as do all the others.

Because of the emphasis and reliance on two-dimensional painted scenery, the paint frame was an extremely useful item to the nineteenth-century stagehouse. Even for those theatres which purchased pre-painted scenery from the studio, the paint frame proved valuable in the process of transporting the scenery from the storage area to the stage. It was common practice at this time to place the scenery storage landing above the wings and, consequently, an adjacent paint frame eliminated the burdensome task of man-handling the scenery.
from the upper landing to the stage floor. The Tainter paint frame provided easy access to the scenery landing for transporting the heavy wings and shutters to and from the stage. The basic components of this paint frame include the wooden frame (Figure 43), the shaft (Figure 44), the central windlass (Figure 45), the auxiliary windlass (Figure 46), and the counterweights and lines.

Figure 47 is an oblique view of the unit and helps clarify the fundamental operation of its use in transferring scenery from the storage landing to the stage. The raising and lowering of the paint frame is accomplished by winding either the central windlass or the auxiliary windlass. Three lines secured to the top horizontal member of the paint frame (lines A, B, C,) extend upward to various positions. Lines A and C run off from the inner drum to the paint frame through a series of pulleys; line B extends from the center brace of the paint frame up to the gridiron at center stage and then across to stage left and down to a wooden box where it is connected to counterweights. Line D originates at the outer drum of the central windlass and runs across the gridiron and down to the catwalk where it connects to the auxiliary windlass in the upstage left corner. When properly weighted, the frame can be raised and lowered easily by means of the auxiliary windlass.

Figure 47 also shows the scenery storage landing on
Figure 43.
Paint Frame.
Author's Collection.

Figure 44.
Paint Frame Riding in Shaft.
Author's Collection.

Figure 45.
End View of Central Windlass atop Gridiron Floor.
Author's Collection.

Figure 46.
Auxiliary Windlass in Upstage Left Corner of Catwalk.
Author's Collection.
Figure 47.
the stage right side of the stagehouse. The small extended lip of the storage landing facilitates the sliding of scenery from the landing directly onto the lower ledge of the paint frame when the latter is drawn up parallel with the lip. From here, the frame is lowered to the level of the stage where the scenery is removed and positioned as desired. The fact that the paint frame was included as part of the original equipment installation is verified by mention of it in the inventory sheet from the scenic studio which supplied the Tainter with scenery and staging equipment.

III. STAGE TRAPS

An essential ingredient to nineteenth-century stage spectacle was the element of surprise, sometimes witnessed in the form of an instantaneous scene change, or a startling lighting effect, or, commonly, in the magical appearance or disappearance of an actor. This latter effect was accomplished by means of a stage trap. In well-equipped theatres, traps were placed strategically about the stage floor, permitting an actor to appear, disappear, and even reappear at another part of the stage much to the astonishment of the audience. Stage personnel went to great lengths in concealing the source of entry by the type of trap cover and the method employed in its removal prior to the ascent. Some trap covers consisted of steel
bands covered with canvas, others were fabricated from pieces of rubber or a band of bristles. These tops were hardly detectable and therefore heightened the effect of surprise more than the conventional wooden trap covers which had to be removed in sight of the audience before the actor's ascent or descent. Contemporary accounts of traps relate the fact that, prior to the development of the counterweighted trap, earlier models worked off a winch system handled manually by stage hands.

The three traps in the Tainter are located downstage left, downstage right, and center stage. The opening of each of the two downstage traps is two feet square and designed to admit one person; the center stage trap opening measures four feet by two feet and is sufficient in size to accommodate two people. All three traps work from a counterweight system with the actual mechanism located in the basement. The trap room contains the mechanism for the downstage right and stage center traps. The adjacent orchestra retiring room, separated from the trap room by a brick wall perpendicular to the curtain line, houses the mechanism for the downstage left trap. Access to the trap room from the stage is made by a flight of stairs in the upstage right side of the stagehouse, while passage to the downstage left trap in the orchestra room is, as mentioned earlier, made directly
through a door in the brick wall separating the trap room from the orchestra room. Figure 48 shows, from left to right, the door to the orchestra room, the stage center trap, and the opening in the brick wall against which the downstage left trap is located in the adjoining room.

Note the wooden landing parallel to the brick wall which serves as a walkway from the loading platform to both the downstage left trap and the center stage trap. This landing, then, accommodates the needs of both traps insofar as a means of access from the basement floor to the trap shaft is concerned. Despite the fact that the downstage left trap is located and operated from the orchestra retiring room, no provisions for entering the shaft from this room exist.

The overall construction of the three traps is nearly identical except for variations caused only by the size difference between the two downstage traps and the larger center trap. Assembled entirely of wood except for the supporting mechanism units -- winch, brake handle and counterweights -- each trap consists of the following basic components as illustrated in Figure 49: (1) trap housing, (2) carriage and platform, (3) a winch system, (4) counterweights, (5) trap cover and attached lines, and (6) a collapsible post which supports the trap cover when the trap is not in use.
In the course of photographing and measuring the traps, I discovered that, with a few minor repairs, the traps could be made operational. A complete and thorough testing of the traps revealed that all three did not work alike due to differences in the arrangements of the lines connected to various parts of the trap. The downstage left and center stage traps have identical
mechanisms and work on the same principle. The downstage right trap works on a principle similar to that of the other two but differs in some of its mechanisms and directions for use. For the purpose of simplification, no further reference to the downstage left trap will be made as whatever comments are made about the stage center trap apply to it as well. Except for size differences, the stage center trap differs from the downstage right trap in that the former is designed for descents and the latter for ascents. Although each can make both ascents and descents, it is not, as will be noted, without complication and serious drawbacks.

Before discussing them individually, let us note the similarities in mechanical operation which occur between the two types of traps. Both work on the principle of the counterweight -- weights are adjusted according to the load which is to make the ascent or descent. Both have a removable trap cover supported by a collapsible post and a slotted area for the cover to rest in when the trap is in use and both control their carriage within the trap housing by means of lines connected to a drum or winch system.

Stage Center Trap.--The stage center trap is designed to facilitate descents from the stage floor to the basement. Figure 49 provides front and side views of the trap with each basic component identified. A descent via the stage
center trap is prepared and actuated as follows:

1. Release of the lock at the back of the collapsible post (D) causes it to drop down as shown in Figure 49 thereby releasing the support of the trap cover (E).

2. Draw line F causes the trap cover (E) to drop a few inches onto a small ledge where it is guided back through the slotted joists and into a secure landing free from the trap opening (H).

3. The carriage and platform are wound up to the level of the stage floor by means of the cylinder filling the opening in the stage floor (H).

4. The actor on stage walks onto the platform of the carriage (A) and disappears from the stage into the basement. From there the actor moves onto the landing (J) and from there to the level of the basement floor.

5. Line K is drawn causing the return of the trap cover (E) to the opening in the stage floor (H) and the collapsible post (D) is locked into place in support of the trap cover.

If the trap will be used again shortly, the trap cover remains in position G and the carriage is returned to the level of the stage floor for reuse following the actor's exit from the carriage to the landing (J).

If it becomes necessary to use the stage center trap for an ascent, assistance from stagehands is necessary. In this case the carriage is set within the trap housing with the actor standing in position on the carriage platform. The trap cover is removed as before by releasing the collapsible post and drawing line F. The stagehands must then wind the cylinder, causing the actor to make his ascent to the stage floor. At best this produces only a
slow gradual appearance and eliminates any use of the trap for a descent without a change in counterweights.

**Downstage Right Trap.**—The downstage right trap is the only trap designed to facilitate ascents from below to the level of the stage floor. Figure 50 is a side view photograph of the downstage right trap and shows the carriage and platform set within the trap housing — that position necessary for the actor to enter in preparation for an ascent. Like the other traps, the downstage trap works on the counterweight principle, with a removable trap cover and collapsible supporting post. Unlike the other, this trap is equipped with a brake mechanism and supporting rope and pulley arrangement necessary to make a rapid ascent from the basement to the stage without the assistance of stagehands winding the winch system.

Figure 51 shows a front and side view of the trap, along with an identification table of its basic operating components. The steps involved in operating the trap and making an ascent from the basement to the stage floor are as follows:

1. Counterweights are adjusted in ratio to both the weight of the actor riding the trap and the desired speed of the ascent.

2. The actor enters the confines of the trap shaft, which has been coated with grease to permit easy movement of the carriage, and stands on the carriage platform.

3. Just prior to the actual ascent, the supporting post is collapsed by turning the release
knob on the post, thereby allowing the trap cover (G) to drop onto the ledge below.

4. Drawing line I is drawn causing the trap cover to move into the slotted area (H) free from the opening.

5. On cue, the brake mechanism (E) which had held the carriage in place is released.

6. When the brake is pushed forward, the carriage is thrust upward along the confines of the shaft until it hits a block of rubber so positioned that it stops level with the stage floor.

Once the actor is brought to stage floor level, he moves from the carriage platform. The decision to return the carriage to the housing and bring in the trap cover is dependent upon future use of the trap.

If the trap is required for a descent soon after the ascent, then one of two things must happen: (1) to use the trap without any changes, the actor making the descent must be considerably heavier than the actor who made the ascent in order to counteract the heavy weights which brought the original actor up to the stage; (2) if the same actor who made the ascent must make a descent, then stage hands below are required to wind the windlass by hand in order to counteract the weights used for the ascent. This, however, is most awkward and, at best, can provide only a very slow gentle descent. If, on the other hand, there is a long time lag between the ascent and descent, the platform carriage can be returned to the
A. Carriage+platform.
B. Cylinder to raise and lower "A".
C. Trap housing.
D. Collapsible post which supports "E".
E. Trap cover.
F. Line to move "E" into position "G".
G. Ledge for "E" when trap is in use.
H. Trap opening.
I. Counterweights.
J. Trap landing.
K. Line to move "E" from "G" to "H".

Figure 49.
Figure 50.

Downstage Right Trap. 
Author's Collection.
Figure 51.
bottom of the housing (moving the trap cover back over the opening) and the weights are reloaded to facilitate the descent.

Experimentation with the stage traps revealed several interesting factors aside from the basic operation of the mechanism. The noise released from the spinning of the winch system, pulleys, etc. could prove very distracting and destructive to the element of surprise. Due to the rugged treatment the mechanism receives, considerable care and maintenance would be necessary to keep it in quiet running order. The rubber pads along the lower ledge of the trap opening are designed to reduce the noise of the carriage colliding with the ledge, but the pressure and abuse would necessitate frequent replacement and repair.

I made several trips both up and down on two of the traps in the Tainter. In the course of this experimentation an interesting discovery was made relating to the descent. Because the housing is enclosed on all four sides for some four feet, the carriage, as it enters the housing, creates an air pocket, thereby slowing down the carriage and resulting in a soft and quiet landing. The air pocket does not begin to develop until the actor's head is completely out of sight of the audience so that the decrease in speed is unnoticed from the auditorium.

Figures 52 through 65 provide a variety of views of the trap components and positions during use.
Figure 52.
Trap Cover Removed.
Author's Collection.

Figure 53.
Overhead View of Figure 52 Showing Top of Trap Carriage and Shaft.
Author's Collection.
Figure 54.
Empty Trap Housing.
Author's Collection.

Figure 55.
Trap Cover Filling Opening in Floor.
Author's Collection.
Figure 58. Collapsible Post Released. Closeup of Lever on Collapsible Author's Collection. Post. Author's Collection.

Figure 60. Winch System for Stage Center Trap. Author's Collection.

Figure 59. Closeup of Lever on Collapsible Post. Author's Collection.

Figure 61. Winch System for Downstage Right Trap. Author's Collection.
Figure 62.
Counterweights in Stage Center Trap.
Author's Collection.

Figure 63.
Slotted Joists to Accommodate Trap Cover.
Author's Collection.

Figure 64.
Trap Landing to Provide Access to Stage Center Trap and Downstage Left Trap Through Opening in Brick Wall.
Author's Collection.

Figure 65.
Brake Mechanism Following the Release.
Author's Collection.
IV. GROUND CLOTH

A series of holes in the stage floor, some of which contained steel pins, suggests that a ground cloth was used in the Teinter theatre sometime during the period between 1890 and 1939. No written accounts tell of when the holes were made in the floor. Careful measurement of the location of all the holes is reproduced in Figure 68. The symbol + indicates the position for each of the one-half inch holes. Steel pins, approximately two and three quarters inch in length with heads slightly larger than the holes, were discovered in some of the openings, and are shown in Figures 66 and 67. It is very probable that a ground cloth was secured to the stage floor by means of dropping the pins through grommets spaced about the edge of the cloth and into the appropriate holes, as indicated in Figure 68. Two different sets of holes outline the acting area, probably for the purpose of
Figure 68.

HORIZONTAL PLAN
GROUND CLOTH LAYOUT

THE MABEL TAINNER MEMORIAL
MENOMONE, WISCONSIN
using two ground cloths, one on top of the other. In this case it would be possible to remove one cloth in a short period of time and thereby somewhat change the appearance of the setting by means of the floor treatment.

Other items of staging equipment listed in the original inventory sheet from the Clausen Scenic Studio are: "Stage Screw Eyes, Brace Hooks and Eyes, Irons for Extension Bearers, Half Mortice, Flat Sheaves, Loose Hook Pin Back Flaps."³ Some usage of the box set is confirmed by the existence of the original stage braces ("Irons for Extension Bearers").

In general, the Tainter was unique for its type not only in terms of the outstanding quality of craftsmanship and artistry in architectural design and furnishings outside the stagehouse but also in terms of its completeness backstage. The stagehouse contains all basic pieces of stage machinery and equipment considered essential to the larger theatres in metropolitan areas. Moreover, the Tainter proves itself most functional to the demands backstage for which it was designed, namely to accommodate the travelling companies. The original flat grooves served the needs for the basic wing and drop set carried by many of the companies. The gridiron was sufficient in height to accommodate standard size drops, and with the 1906 renovation of the catwalk, it was possible to fly thirty-eight foot drops also carried by the companies.
for those scripts calling for appearance and dis-
appearances, there existed three counterweighted traps.
In addition, there were dressing rooms designed for
convenience adjacent to the stage -- a feature many
contemporary theatres cannot claim.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER III

1 Inventory Sheet of scenery and staging equipment from the Peter Clausen Scenic Studio of Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the Mabel Tainter Theatre, Menomonie, Wisconsin, 1890.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

SCENERY AND LIGHTING

Today it is generally agreed that lighting and scenery evolve from a unified principle, one an extension of the other, both contributing to the total visual product. In the modern theatre, lighting often dominates this visual product. This, however, was not always the case. Lighting has always affected the scenery and the production in general, but not until man developed a readily controllable illuminant and learned to consider lighting as an art in itself, did this branch of the visual media become an important factor in dramatic art.

Prior to the advent of electricity, the visual theatre belonged to the scene painter, who went to great lengths in achieving illusionistic effects on the two-dimensional wings, cutouts, drops, and borders. The scene painter worked the proper balance of light and shadow upon canvas-covered frames with unrivaled precision; even the shadows were left to the discretion of his brush stroke. Then came the development of the incandescent electric lamp with the result that many theatres were quick to adopt electricity, abandoning the
earlier illuminant which architect, John Fox in 1879 referred to as "...that dirty, explosive, poisonous material -- gas."¹

With the arrival of Edison's incandescent electric lamp, the theatre witnessed a further development in the search for verisimilitude, a search which, in its efforts to reproduce, as faithfully as possible, illusionistic effects, already had resulted in the adoption of real doors and windows, the use of three-dimensional built-up scenic units, and the technique of angling wings across parallel lines. Edison's discovery, combined with this new movement in staging, revolutionized the entire make-up of the theatre's visual product.

The following chapter seeks to report on these trends; first, by examining the Tainter's scenic and lighting equipment, including the extant inventory, and second, by treating those instances wherein travelling companies carried their own scenery, lighting, and other equipment during visits to the Tainter.

I. SCENERY

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, scenic studios were scattered throughout the country -- Denver, Kansas City, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Columbus, Philadelphia and New York -- with each seeking to serve the scenic needs of both small and large theatres as well
as the travelling companies. According to W. J. Lawrence (writing in *Gentlemen's Magazine* and quoted in *The Theatre*), "...commercial enterprise and the universal custom of touring have occasioned the upraising of several scenic depots where orders from innumerable small theatres which abound in the States are completed with promptitude and dispatch."²

The scenic studio excelled in the second half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries when every city considered an "opera house" an absolute necessity in order to accommodate the generally accepted form of theatre -- the travelling road companies which covered circuits across the nation. Like the theatres of the period, most of the studios are unknown to us today and our knowledge of them is based on the records of a few which have survived either as written accounts, or as musty scenery which somehow escaped ruin or destruction. In general, the studio supplied scenery and even machinery to theatres both large and small, ranging from the elaborately equipped stages of metropolitan America to the tiny ill-equipped opera houses of the mining towns of the west. The quality of scenery differed according to the price paid, the ability of the studio's painters, and the amount of competition which existed with other firms in the immediate area. Advance publicity usually included price lists, types of
scenery available, and stipulations regarding provisions for furnishing the frames for the scenery. Most often the theatre had to furnish at least a portion of the frames unless it wished to pay an additional cost. Reputable firms designated the type of materials, methods of construction, prices, and the period of delivery to be expected by the purchaser. Studios like the Armbruster Scenic Studio in Columbus, Ohio, accepted sketches as sources of suggestions for the scenery desired, or, in the event no specifications accompanied the order, simply designed what they thought appropriate. The quality of the scenery was often designated according to classes, with appropriate prices paid for each class of scenery. Figure 69 shows a reproduction of the brochure sent out by the Armbruster Studio; the types and classes of scenery are outlined, and prices and types of materials as well as terms for delivery and payment are specified.

The scenic painter was pivotal to the studio's success. Prior to the development and use of three-dimensional scenery, the visual impact belonged primarily to the painter. The demand for scenery from permanent theatres and travelling companies required that the larger studios employ several painters in order to meet the large orders. "...the firm of Sosman and Landis of Chicago," writes Lawrence, "which employs about twenty-five
**M. ARMERBRUSTER'S**

**COMBINATION OF STAGE SCENERY**

**Drop Curtains, Set Pieces and Accessories.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST CLASS</th>
<th>SECOND CLASS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rustic Scenes</td>
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<td>Palace</td>
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<td>Proscenium Border &amp; Wings</td>
<td>Proscenium Border &amp; Wings</td>
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<td>Drop Curtains</td>
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<td>Set Rocks</td>
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<td>Ballustrades (a pair)</td>
<td>Ballustrades (a pair)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statues</td>
<td>Statues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flower Vases (a pair)</td>
<td>Flower Vases (a pair)</td>
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<td>Wings (apiece)</td>
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By the above figures, I propose to paint and furnish canvass for first-class work and heavy muslin for second and third class. And in order to introduce my combination with accuracy and safety, I propose to furnish all the vertical parts of the frames. Set pieces will be furnished complete.

**IF DESIRABLE, I WILL FURNISH FRAMES COMPLETE, AT REASONABLE FIGURES.**

**ROLLING SCENERY.**

(Muslin or Canvass, included.)

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<tr>
<td>Extérieur Scenes</td>
<td>$15.00—$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Scenes</td>
<td>25.00—35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interieur Scenes</td>
<td>20.00—35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop Curtains, Set Pieces, Borders and Wings, the same as classified above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My extérieurs, for sliding scenery, are all arranged according to the key of my combination. My interieurs are all reversible, thus making another set, the palace excepted. The difference in the three classes is not so much in the painting, as in the size and style of the work; but for all classes, good work will be guaranteed; the best material used, and carefully shipped to all parts of the United States, with directions for framing, etc.

**Terms Cash, within 14 Days after Delivery.**

Figure 69.
artists, has in the course of nine years supplied upwards of a thousand places of entertainment with complete stocks of scenery." No doubt a variety of styles and practices resulted from this multiple employment of artists, and, since the scenery usually bore only the name of the studio and not that of the individual artist, it becomes extremely difficult to credit the proper individuals for the design and execution of specific work.

Contemporary accounts never failed to comment upon the grand and spectacularly realistic quality of the new scenery purchased for the city's own opera house. Without any opportunity for comparison, it was only natural for theatre staffs and patrons in the more rural areas to be amazed by the scenery supplied by a neighboring scenic studio. Others, however, were more critical of the mass-produced scenery coming out of the average studio. Because of the great demand, speed was, of course, imperative, and often necessitated mechanical methods destructive to the quality of the product. In criticism of the work of some studios, Lawrence wrote, in 1889, of the artists of marked inferiority who turn out work which bears as much resemblance to the genuine article as chromo does to an oil painting. Produced almost entirely by mechanical means, no wonder it has facetiously been dubbed 'patent medicine machinery.'
That such work falls short of the domain of art is clearly proven by the fact that it is not unusual for these firms to receive an order by telegraph in the morning for a scene, say thirty feet square, which will be completed, dried and sent on its way to the purchaser before nightfall.*

Obviously not all studios were guilty of producing inferior scenery, and one can only grant that with the "hack" work coming from the studios described by Lawrence, there existed a great deal of better quality scenery from the more reputable studios. Regardless of the artistic quality, almost all the scenery tended to share the common features of the basic stock type settings.

Scenery at this time was generally classified according to type, with no reference, other than the obvious, made by the demands of the individual script. Unlike modern scene design, sets were designed with a standardization in mind, and one set of scenery often served the needs of several plays calling for a given locale. Among the more popular types of stock sets were the "light" or "dark" fancy interior, the plain chamber interior, the wooded interior or exterior, the palace interior, the dark prison, and the kitchen interior. Usually a stock setting consisted of a series of wings, two rear shutters, and appropriate matching borders. Drops, used frequently in conjunction with the wings, were similarly classified according to types of locales, and included a rocky pass, a garden, a landscape, and a street scene.
Like almost every other theatre in the country during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Teinter purchased a complete set of stock scenery to complete its backstage furnishings. Upon the occasion of the building’s dedication, the Dunn County News, reporting on the beauty and charm of the magnificent structure, referred to the recently purchased scenery:

The dimensions of the stage are 60 by 20 feet. It is fully equipped with all the modern improvements in the way of stage fixtures, and furnished with eleven separate sets of scenes. The drop curtain is a realistic painting of a desert scene with a caravan of camels trudging wearily across the sandy waste, and the proscenium is draped with heavy curtains of rich coral velour, trimmed in blue and gold.

The scenic studio supplying the scenery and accessories was the Peter Clausen Studio of Minneapolis, Minnesota. An itemized inventory of that original purchase, referred to in the previous chapter, is reproduced here in its entirety in Figure 70. The studio specified the types of settings, the number of scenic units comprising each setting, the set pieces, the materials to be used for the scenery, the provisions for the house to furnish all woodwork for frames, and the total cost for the goods. According to this original inventory sheet, the cost of scenery was to be $1,500, but according to the sheet itemizing the building’s cost (Figure 3) mentioned in Chapter I, the total sum paid to the Clausen Scenic Studio
LIST OF SCENERY

for

MEMORIAL HALL MENOMINIE, WIS.

According to Plans:-

One Drop Curtain, Tormender Border and 2 Wings

FLATS:-

- Street (Ancient) and Frontal Door 6 Wings
- 2 Door Kitchen and 2 Door Entry 6 Wings
- 2 Door Plain Chamber and 6 Wings
- Center Door, Fancy and 6 Wings
- King's Palace
- King's Palace Arts Set Piece 6 Wings
- Gothic Center Door Chamber 6 Wings
- Reception Center Door Chamber 6 Wings
- Prison 2 Door 2 Wings
- Dark Wood 6 Wings

DROPS

- Horizon 6 Wings
- Cut Wood
- Rocky Pass
- Garden
- Landscape

Set Pieces

- 2 Set houses, one Rustic and one Modern
- 2 set Rocks; 2 set waters and landing; one set Bridge;
- 1 Garden, Illustration; 2 Statues; 2 Flower Pots;
- 1 set Wing and Entance (Romano); 1 set Wing and Fire-place; 3 Sky; 3 Wood and 3 Drapery Border

Will furnish Emerald canvas, paint, material, State Screw Eyes, Drap hooks and Eyes; Irons for Extension Sceners; Half Horace, Flat Sheaves; Loose Hook Pin Back Flaps; Hickory Belaying Pins; Swivel Blocks, single and double; Clancy's movable Loft Blocks, Ropes and Pulleys, necessary for Scenery above mentioned.

Scenes to be glued on the Frames and all completed in first class artistic style and in good running order for the sum of Fifteen Hundred Dollars ----- ($1500.00)

The House to furnish all woodwork in connection with the stage

Frames for Flats and Wings, Rules (Cylinder) and Counter weight

for Drop Curtain and paint Frame; Frames for set pieces, Battening

for Drops and Sky Border and 8 Scene Grooves.

Figure 70.

Inventory of Tainter Scenery from the Peter Clausen Studio.

Courtesy of the Mabel Tainter Preservation Association.
was $1,725. Since inflation had not yet come to play such a dominant role in the economic backbone of the nation, the difference of $225 may have resulted from the studio's having furnished extra items not listed on the original inventory sheet.

A large portion of the original scenery remains intact and is stored along the scenery landing beneath the stage right side of the catwalk. The condition of the extant scenery varies from units which are badly faded and scarred with water marks and tears, to wings and drops in remarkably good condition in both construction and painted surface. Approximately thirty of the original fifty-eight wings and five of the ten sets of shutters from the Clausen studio have survived the theatre's seventy-nine year history. All five original drops remain suspended from the fly lines in addition to two others acquired sometime after the original purchase. Among the two-dimensional set pieces found in the theatre are two statues, and a flower urn.

**Wing and Shutter Sets.**—The four complete wing and shutter sets and pieces of two others were arranged on stage according to the original flat groove positions and were photographed under white light. All sets consist of six wings and two shutter flats parallel to the curtain line. Figure 71 is an ancient street scene. Actually, the downstage right wing does not belong to the setting.
but was used in place of the missing unit to fill out the stage. The wings are painted to form a variety of street exterior walls with appropriate moldings, balconies, and windows. The two rear shutters carry the street line into the distance. More building exteriors flank the street in the center of the rear wall and are complete with shadows cast from the sunlight. On the horizon, beyond the furthest houses, is a range of mountains set against a pastel colored sky. The other extant exterior wing and shutter setting is the dark mood, (Figure 72) a common favorite of the time. The six wings and the shutter wall depict a heavy forest scene lined with trees and with a narrow path leading up and around on the stage left side.
of the shutter. The trunks of the somewhat gnarled trees on the shutter are interrupted throughout by heavy branches with leaves quite different from those on the trees of the wings. Both are tied together with similar types of shrubbery and with white flowers which lie at the base of the trees and along the dirt pathway. The wings are cut in irregular patterns along the edge to accentuate the leafy tree texture. The kitchen and palace interiors are the only two interior settings which have survived in their entirety. Two wings which accompanied the extant rear shutters of a third interior, a dark prison, are missing. The kitchen set is shown in Figure 73 and, like the exterior, consists of six wings and two shutter flats. In the haste of assembling the
units for photographing, the wings were not raked sufficiently to show two doors or the fireplace unit. The setting is painted to represent light cream-colored plaster walls, some of which are broken away revealing the lath behind, with an array of woodwork at the top and bottom. A total of four doors -- three interior doors and one exterior door -- line the three walls. A fireplace stage right (3 w r) is partially visible in the photograph. There is nothing striking or unusual about this setting; it seems to resemble the standard kitchen setting so often a part of a theatre's scenic inventory.

The second complete extant interior wing and
shutter setting, the King's Palace, (Figure 74) is, without question, the finest of all the stock purchased in 1890. In addition to the six wings and two rear shutters, a cutout arch shutter is located between the last set of wings and the rear shutter. The ten piece unit depicts a lavish marble, gold, ivory, and green palace interior with a steeply raked vanishing point in the shape of a long receding hallway, running along the center of the rear wall. The wings stand as huge towering pillars with white marble bases and gold trimmed molding at the top and bottom of the green-glazed polished marble. The arched cutout follows the basic design of the wings and is dominated by a semicircular arch atop small circular green marble columns. The receding pillars and arches with the pattern floor are painted on the shutter unit.

A closeup of the arched cutout (Figure 75) reveals the painting treatment on this particular unit. The green pillar displays both the wet blend and the dry brush technique -- the wet blend found in the overlaying of shades of blues and greens for the marble texture, and the white brush lines as highlight by means of dry brush stroke. The gold painted molding serves as trim in relief of the ivory colored arch. Three visible shades of gold give the molding the appearance of a three-dimensional object. A lacy motif in gold provides further
Figure 74.
King's Palace. Author's Collection.

Figure 75.
Closeup of Figure 74.
relief to the arch's untextured face.

The prison set is shown in Figure 76 minus the two missing wings. One of the best painted sets of the entire stock, the heavy massive stone interior is characterized by a large painted archway backed by a wall with two doors. The door on the left is fitted with a steel casing while an iron grille fills an arch at the top. A huge vertical stone pillar separates the stage right door from the stage left door which is partially filled with a recently painted wooden door. A suggestion of sunlight pouring in from the stage left side between the pillar and the rear wall is evidenced by gleams of highlighting around the edges of the stonework.

Figure 76.
Prison Scene. Author's Collection.
Two tormentor flate placed a few inches inside the proscenium arch were included in the original set of scenery; one of the two flate found with the scenery is shown in Figure 77. The flat is painted in the shape of a heavy crimson velour with gold braid -- a combination very common to the palace interior settings. Although faded somewhat from watermarks and wear, the tormentor is a good example of the wet blend method for the painted simulation of the shadows and highlights of fabric.

Figure 77.
Tormentor Flat. Author's Collection.
Construction of Wings and Shutters.—Structurally the scenery, both frames and materials, remains in excellent condition because of both the high-grade materials used and the original careful construction. The frames are constructed of white pine, and all joints are secured by a mortise and tenon joint. The wings measure five feet in width and sixteen feet in height. The shutters are the same height but are twelve feet in width. Both are covered with heavy canvas. The frames for all the standing scenery are tapered, with the bottom stile approximately the size of a 2"x4". The rails taper from 1 5/8" at the bottom to 3/4" at the top. Each shutter is equipped with two casters (Figure 78) for easy sliding on and off stage. Note in the photograph the construction of the frames and the steel caster set within the bottom stile.

Figure 78.
Bottom of Shutter Flat Showing Groove Wheel. Author's Collection.
Figures 79 and 80 provide a front and rear view of how the shutters are locked into position when slid to center stage forming one solid wall. The back flaps are staggered and prevent the two flats from swaying away from one another once they are in position.

Two-Dimensional Set Pieces.—The original set of scenery included twenty-six set pieces — set houses, balustrades, statues, flower urns, borders — only three of which are extant: a flower urn and two statues. Figures 81 and 82 show a front and rear view of the two-dimensional flower urn cutout. The front view reveals an arrangement of assorted shrubbery and flowers resting in a decorated urn. The rear view shows the construction of the unit and its method for support. The two statues (Figure 83) were photographed before the rear side of one of the wings. White with gray shadows, each statue is approximately three-quarter life size and rests on a painted textured pedestal. Of all the extant scenery, the intricacy of light and shadow is best exemplified in these statues.

Drops.—Six drops were uncovered along the catwalk and fly lines. It is difficult to determine fully which of these came originally from the Clausen studio as the descriptions fit some, but not all, of the drops. The desert scene, the wood cutout, and the rocky pass are certainly among those listed in the Clausen inventory sheet.
Figure 79.
Rear View of Shutter Flaps Joined. Author's Collection.

Figure 80.
Front View of Shutter Archway Showing Back Flaps. Author's Collection.
Figure 81.
Front View of Two-Dimensional Cutout. Author's Collection.

Figure 82.
Cutout Showing Brace Support. Author's Collection.

Figure 83.
Two Statue Set Pieces. Author's Collection.
The remaining three are open to question as far as source and time of purchase. Although all the drops are constructed of heavy duty canvas, only one, the front drop desert scene, carries the Clausen sign and date as shown in Figure 90. With the exception of the wood cutout (Figure 85), which is badly faded and worn, and the city square (Figure 86), all the drops reflect a romantic treatment in color, shape, and subject. Common to all the exterior drops set in the great outdoors was a painting technique described in Van Dyke's *Secret of Scene Painting*:

> In painting a wood be sure and get your back foliage grey, and not green and as you come up to the front gradually get the color more green. 

All the exterior wooded drops show the distant area very greyed in comparison to that found in the more dominant foreground. All the greens of trees, shrubs, and grass fade into lighter values of grey producing a neutrality in tonal value. In essence, the horizon becomes a blue-grey haze, accentuating the feeling of distance common to romantic painting. Only the rocky mountain pass drop (Figure 84) is described because it best reflects the common characteristics of the majority of the painted scenery. The remaining five drops are shown in Figures 85-89 on the following pages.
The feeling of remoteness which produces a very strong sense of the "enchanted" is most apparent in the rocky mountain pass drop as a result of the hazy horizon. Huge clusters of rock dominate the foreground in back of which rushes the swirling river. Snow capped peaks serve as an appropriate backing for the icy river waters. Far off in the horizon is a muted multi-colored pastel sky, hazy yet warm, and rich from the reflected colors of the distant setting sun.

Having examined the Tainter's extant scenery, let us turn to the area of lighting before discussing the uses of scenery and lighting carried into the Tainter by travelling companies.

Figure 84.
Rocky Mountain Pass Drop.
Courtesy of John Russell.
Figure 85.

Figure 86.
City Square Drop. Courtesy of John Russell.
Figure 87.
Garden Drop. Courtesy of John Russell.

Figure 88.
Wooded Lake Drop.Courtesy of John Russell.
Figure 89.
Desert Drop. Courtesy of John Russell.

Figure 90.
Closeup of Figure 89 Showing Name and Date of the Scenic Studio. Author's Collection.
II. LIGHTING

Prior to the use of electricity in Menomonie, people relied on gas service. The small carbide plant which serviced the community was located directly behind the theatre. The first arc lights were installed in a nearby sawmill in 1883. The Tainter building, completed in 1890, made use of the two sources of light: gas and electricity. The gas was drawn from the adjacent carbide plant while the electrical current was generated from a portable electrical plant used in the sawmill operations. Newspaper accounts of the interior furnishings make reference to the fact that "more than 600 electric lights are required and the system is so arranged that gas may be used if necessary." The use of gas as a backup system for electricity was a common practice, since electricity, particularly in the more rural areas, was not considered absolutely reliable. Within the last fifteen years, the Tainter's original lighting arrangement has been overhauled to meet the demands of the National Electrical Code and the needs of the local community theatre. The original lighting panel was removed and in its place a modern auto-transformer dimmer bank was installed. New wiring replaced the old worn material which was considered too dangerous for continued use, and modern spotlights were added to the building's inventory.
Fortunately the articles dismantled from the original lighting layout were preserved and the original lighting fixtures -- gas as well as electrical -- remain unaltered.

Careful examination of the facilities revealed two important factors regarding the Tainter's lighting. First, gas was never used backstage for illuminating theatrical productions, and second, the gas fixtures were considered only a reserve illuminant to be used in the event that electricity failed. For the purpose of clarity, this discussion of lighting will be divided into service and stage use. Essential to the discussion of service lighting is consideration of the fixtures, types of lines, and accessory pieces -- switches, receptacles -- for both gas and electricity. Consideration of stage lighting includes instruments, dimming devices, lamps, and battery power employed to supplement the electrical service.

**Service Lighting.** The areas which fall within the category of service lighting for the theatre facilities are the auditorium, dressing rooms, lobby, parlors, and basement. All service areas are illuminated by both gas and electricity. The auditorium is lighted extremely well throughout: along the rear wall, inside the boxes, along the ceiling, and across the underside of the balcony and auditorium arch. All lighting fixtures are standard incandescent electrical lamps except for the rear walls of
the balcony and auditorium. Here each lighting fixture consists of two incandescent electric lamps and one gas mantle (Figure 91). Each source of light is enclosed in a cut-glass scone and equipped with individual switches at the base of the socket.

Figure 91.

Electric and Gas Lighting Fixture Along Rear Auditorium Wall. Author's Collection.

A more detailed view of the gas mantle employed in the dual fixture is shown in Figures 92 and 93. The socket for the incandescent electric lamp was the Packard model -- one predating the modern screw base socket. Figure 94 shows a top view of the Packard socket. Note the threaded pin in the center of the socket housing into which the lamp base screwed. The type of lamp designed to work with this brand of socket is shown in Figure 95.

Exactly when the screw base lamp was developed is
Figure 92.
Gas Mantle, Front View.
Author's Collection.

Figure 93.
Gas Mantle, Top View.
Author's Collection.

Figure 94.
Packard Receptacle.
Author's Collection.

Figure 95.
Incandescent Lamp With Packard Base.
Author's Collection.
not known but according to McDonald Hald, "...by the end of the century (nineteenth) the present type of screw base had been developed." Buildings like the Tainter found, in the use of the small adaptor, an easy solution to the problem of fitting the screw base lamp into a Packard socket. The top half of the adaptor (Figure 96) consisted of a regular threaded interior, no different than those contained in today's standard socket, while the bottom half (Figure 97) was centered by a female thread identical to that of the original lamp. The adjustment was easily made and consequently all the original Packard receptacles remain intact in the lighting fixtures.

Figure 96.
Screw Base Adaptor-Screw Base End.
Author's Collection.

Figure 97.
Screw Base Adaptor Packard End.
Author's Collection.

Since Edison's perfection of the first incandescent lamp in 1879, all portions of the lamp (base, filament, and bulb) have undergone continual change and modification in
both design and materials used. According to McDonald Held:

One of the first improvements in the filament was in 1888 when the charred bamboo was coated with asphalt. This considerably improved the efficiency of the lamp... The next improvement in the filament came in 1893 when cellulose replaced bamboo. The cellulose had less resistance than bamboo, so it was necessary to increase the length of the filament in order to obtain sufficient resistance. In order to get the longer filament into the bulb it was necessary to loop it.

Figures 98 and 99 are two variations of the extended loop which was used to achieve the degree of resistance mentioned above. Both lamps were found in the basement of the Tainter and were described by a local electrician as having come from fixtures on the main floor. The lamps have miraculously survived and the filaments remain unbroken. Figure 100 is a model more recent than the single curl anchored filament lamps.

Figure 98. Packard Base Lamp With Single Curl Anchored Filament. Author's Collection.

Figure 99. Screw Base Lamp with Single Curl Anchored Filament. Author's Collection.
The supporting areas of the theatre -- retiring parlors in the corner turrets, dressing rooms, and basement facilities -- are lighted in a conventional manner. In the parlors, a large ornate electric and gas fixture hangs overhead in the center of the room. In the dressing rooms, each compartment is lighted by one dual gas and electric fixture (Figure 101). Passageways in some places, such as the stairway from the stagehouse to the basement, are illuminated by means of a gas mantle (Figure 102). Evidence of the gas lines are found in the basement trap room as shown in Figures 103 and 104.

Control of the service lighting was located backstage behind the stage right side of the proscenium arch and consisted of a series of open knife switches and
Figure 101.
Dual Gas and Electrical Fixture.
Author's Collection.

Figure 102.
Gas Fixture.
Author's Collection.

Figure 103.
Front View of Gas Valve.
Author's Collection.

Figure 104.
Side View of Gas Valve.
Author's Collection.
a reactance dimmer. The original name plates identifying the function of each knife switch were recorded. A total of fourteen open knife switches -- single-pole, single-throw and double-pole, single-throw -- controlled the lights for areas throughout the entire building. Those switches pertaining to service lighting for the theatre included boxes, arch, circle, auditorium, ceiling, gallery, front lobby, rear entrance, parlor, and vestibule. Evidence exists that at least two areas in the auditorium were controlled by a dimmer. Located along the right hand side of the lighting panel, a reactance dimmer carries an identification plate of "Rear Gallery and Rear Auditorium." This unit is listed at ten amps and is shown in Figures 105 and 106. Fortunately this dimmer was not removed during the modifications made in the 1950's, and was consequently photographed during the course of research. A similar model to the one in the Tainter was described and illustrated by Dr. J. A. Fleming in The Electric World, of November 1890 and reproduced in Ward Leonard's Theatre Lighting -- Past and Present. The following description which accompanies the illustration of that reactance dimmer, might just as well pertain to the one found in the Tainter:

The circuit diagram shows how, by moving the core in the coil, more or less voltage is produced across the terminal of the lamps. With the iron core completely within the section across the lamps, maximum voltage is
produced, and with the core in the section in series with the lamps, maximum reactance and minimum voltage are produced — the effect of which is to cut down the current through the lamps.

Figure 105. Reactance Dimmer — Minimum Voltage Produced with the Core Removed from the Coil. Author's Collection.

Figure 106. Reactance Dimmer — Maximum Voltage Produced with the Core Completely Submerged in the Coil. Author's Collection.

Stage Lighting.--Evidence of the stage lighting facilities in the Tainter is limited to extant furnishings, equipment, and fragmentary accounts of those productions meriting mention for the lighting effects produced. As with the service lighting, no written accounts of the original installation were recorded. Unlike the service lighting, stage illumination was limited to electricity and a small amount of battery power. Gas in no way was connected to the lighting of stage productions.
The primary instruments used for lighting the stage were footlights and borderlights. The footlight trough outlined in the reconstructed ground plan (Figure 35) can be viewed below in a closeup photograph (Figure 107). This portion of the trough shows three of the twenty-six lights which follow the line of the apron. The trough itself is sunken nine inches from the level of the stage floor. The back side of the trough is lined with sheet metal and painted silver to intensify the degree of reflection. The socket receptacles are similar to the one shown in Figure 94 but have an added feature, a swivel neck which allows angling of the lights for some directional control.

Figure 107.
Portion of Footlight Trough.
Author's Collection.
The borderlights are of the simplest possible design, consisting of a steel trough approximately eighteen feet in length and lined with twenty receptacles. Figure 108 shows a portion of one of the borderlight troughs suspended from the basement ceiling. The receptacles contained in the troughs are identical to the one shown in Figure 94. A total of six borderlights are stored in the theatre. The time of purchase for this equipment is not known.

Figure 108.
Borderlight Stored From Ceiling of Basement.
Author's Collection.

The stage lighting control system is located with the service lighting controls behind the proscenium arch on the stage right side. A rare photograph of the original lighting panel (Figure 109), obtained from a local
Figure 109.

Original Lighting Control Panel.
Courtesy of John Russell.

Menomonie photographer,¹² provides an indication of the original lighting layout and control devices prior to the renovation and installation of the modern control equipment. Several interesting features are apparent in the photograph. Note the speaking tubes running vertically against the lighting panel. The one on the left runs from the lighting panel to the basement for communication between lighting personnel and the stagehands in the trap room and even, possibly, those in the orchestra retiring room. The second speaking tube is shown between the panel and the reactance dimmer; it begins at the level
where the first tube terminates and extends upward to the scenery storage landing (curtain operator) and catwalk (pin and rail operators). Unfortunately, these particular tubes were removed when the new lighting board was installed. Actually, the entire building is lined with a network of speaking tubes -- library desk to stack areas on the main floor and basement, for example -- for facilitating direct inner-building communication.

Mentioned previously were the fourteen open knife switches mounted horizontally along the wall backstage. The corresponding name plates identify two of the switches as having controlled the footlights and borderlights. The capacity of these lines was not determined and no records were ever made in this regard. In addition to the throw switches indicated in Figure 109, is the reactance dimmer, noted earlier, which controlled the rear auditorium and gallery lights.

The open knife switches were supplemented by two reactive coil dimmers at the base of the lighting control panel. These units were bolted to the floor and are shown in Figures 110 and 111. Both dimmers are rated at 52 volts and carry a patent plate with the date, February 1889. They were manufactured by the Thomas Houston Electric Company, Lynn, Massachusetts. It is not known when the two dimmers were purchased or the extent to which they were used in controlling the stage lighting.
The stage left wing area along the back side of the proscenium arch is equipped with a limited number of switches and electrical lines (Figure 112) identical to those mounted on the lighting panel. The function of these lines could not be determined because the power had been disconnected when the building was rewired for the modern lighting equipment.

Although no standard floor pockets were installed in the stagehouse, there is a small wooden trough in the floor upstage left which accommodates two Packard sockets. Shown in Figure 113, the receptacles are the same design as those illustrated earlier. In this case, each socket is equipped with a control switch. It is apparent that this set of receptacles could have functioned as floor pockets as well as general work lights with the proper adaptors.
Battery source power contained in glass jars was retained backstage in a small wooden cabinet along side the lighting control panel. A front view of the cabinet
containing the jars of chemicals is shown in Figure 114. The top shelf holds a small coil and meter wired to the chemical jars. The chemicals are labelled as Laclede Battery from the Electric Appliance Company, Chicago. A closeup of the jars (Figure 115) indicates a handwritten note on the face of one of the shelves marked "changed, April 15, 1899." The vessels of chemicals have remained wired to the central coil over the years but it is not possible to determine for what purpose the batteries were employed. Perhaps this source of power was designed for a buzzer system, for low voltage electrical effects, or as a reserve source of emergency power.

Figure 114.
Cabinet Stage Right Containing Jars of Chemicals for Battery Power.
Author's Collection.

Figure 115.
Closeup of Chemical Jars Shown in Figure 114.
Author's Collection.
III. SCENERY AND LIGHTING CARRIED BY TRAVELLING COMPANIES

It is a well established fact that many travelling companies carried their own scenery, lighting equipment, and costumes. But just how many of the companies which played the Teinter relied on its basic lighting and set of stock scenery is difficult to determine from the fragmentary evidence available. The local newspaper carried reviews of the plays from the opening of the theatre in 1890 until 1912. In 1912 the reviews were discontinued thus leaving only an advance notice of coming attractions in the paper. Of the some three hundred productions which were played on the Teinter stage between 1890 and 1939, only a handful of reviews included mention of scenery, lighting or costumes. Like the plays, the companies varied radically in stature and popularity, some being described as local groups from nearby cities, while others came from New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis. More than likely, many companies brought their own equipment without any note of it being made in the local newspaper, but the occasional references to scenery and lighting carried by visiting troupes give an indication of the stage's use with other than its stock equipment.

The first company credited with carrying its own special equipment and scenery was the Lewis Morrison Company which played Faust in May of 1891. The Teinter
was then only ten months old and had hosted but five
previous productions. Three hundred dollars was
guaranteed for the single performance with seats priced
at $1.00 and $1.25. An advance notice in the Dunn County
News makes mention of the fact that

This company is a standard New York organization playing only the large cities, and its visit to Menomonie should be hailed with
delight as its like may never be seen here again. They bring with them a 60-foot car-
load of elegant scenery, 12 calcium lights
and a complete electric plant for their
wonderful electric effects.13

Attached to this information in the same article was a
cutting from the Washington Star describing the production
as performed there:

Mr. Lewis Morrison's new production of Faust,
which was seen at Albaugh's last night for the
first time in this city, is one which is most
creditable to him as an actor and an artist.
The scenery is superb and the mechanical effects
are intricate in many instances thrilling. He
has given the most careful attention to the
elaboration of all the details of spectacular
effect, and the result was that each separate
scene was loudly applauded as it came before
the view of the large audience which watched the
entire performance with deep interest. The
garden scene, the duel in which Valentine is
killed, the Brocken scene and the final
apotheosis of Marguerite were stage pictures
whose beauty has rarely been surpassed.

How much of the above was seen by Menomonie spectators is
not known, but the fact that the scenery was outstanding
is certain. It was designed by the Armbruster Scenic
Studio of Columbus, Ohio, and the original designs have
been examined by the writer.14 The fact that special
scenery was complemented by twelve calcium lights is not surprising, as these were standard equipment for the better companies at this time.

One month later, in June of 1891, the McCutchson and Cooley production of After Dark received acclaim in the News' theatre review section, with the reviewer particularly impressed by the marvels of the great bridge scene and the underground railroad scene. In November of 1892, Monte Cristo was performed at the Tainter with scenery made especially for the play and carried by the company. The Dunn County News commented:

Much interest has been taken in the extra fine display of scenery promised which is said to be the most elaborate ever seen in Menomonie. The gorgeous Plus Palace, the Harbor of Marasilles, the realistic Storm at Sea etc., are said to be veritable triumphs of artistic skill.

The reference to the "realistic Storm at Sea" would not only have necessitated scenery owned by the company but, most likely, some special lighting equipment. The Boston Ideal Comic Opera Company's presentation of Galatea in 1893 included "elegant costumes, and scenery prepared expressly for it (and)...the use of powerful calcium and lime lamps." In November of 1894, the Calhoun Opera Company was credited for its "most gorgeous scenic effects" in their production of Amorita.

A return engagement of Morrison's Faust in September of 1895 attracted the attention of effects not mentioned by the reviewer in the previous production of 1891:
Some very novel ideas are introduced into a spectacular production of Faust by the Morrison Company... during the garden scene Mephisto causes flowers to bloom where before all was barren ground. At the wave of his hand, the flowers open, disclosing beautiful colored points of electricity. In the church scene, a chime of rich toned bells and a quartet of experienced singers is heard. The brocken scene with its weird apparitions, flashes of lightning, and avalanche of fire is given with wonderful effect. During the performance there is almost a constant running accompaniment of orchestral music which includes many numbers from Gounod's Faust and other standard selections.

References to the garden scene and the Brocken scene are similar to those mentioned earlier in the Washington Star prior to the 1891 production given at the Tainter. The lighting effects described are nearly identical to those detailed by Arthur Hopkins in Magic, particularly the opening of the flowers which disclose beautiful colored points of electricity. The reviewer of the News is accurate in referring to the Brocken scene as one with "weird apparitions." The Armbruster rendering for that setting shows a maze of tangled and gnarled knots, vines and monsters, set within the confines of a standard wing and border setting.

The last nineteenth-century play mentioned by the local newspaper for its own scenery and lighting was a production called Shaft Number Two, presented on the Tainter stage December 3, 1898.

Equipped with magnificent scenery and many new mechanical devices, "Shaft No. 2" will be
the attraction at the Memorial, Saturday, December 3.

A workshop run by electricity is one of the features of the first act and later a shaft in a mine is shown and there is an explosion. The storm scene in the third act is admirably realistic and is said to be one of the grandest and most thrilling spectacles ever seen on the stage. It is the work of J. C. Mayrhofer, who furnished the realistic effects for "Urania."20

Because this review was written in advance of the performance by those responsible for the play, one must question its accuracy and reliability. It is difficult enough to interpret a review written by an impartial critic let alone a person responsible for the actual work. Perhaps the production fully reflected the above description or, perhaps, it was, like other reviews of this type, a reflection of the company's temperament rather than their talent. We will never know.

Four years prior to the discontinuance of the theatre reviews in the Dunn County News, a final reference is made to a production transporting its own scenery. The play, presented April 22, 1908, was entitled The Time, The Place, The Girl. It had played a week earlier at the Metropolitan Opera House in St. Paul and asked a guarantee of $500, the largest sum ever paid a company for a single performance in the forty-nine year theatrical history of the Tainter. The company consisted of forty-eight people and carried a 60 foot baggage car of special scenery.21 If the quality of the production approached the sum
requested, it must have ranked high among the plays performed on the Tainter stage.

After 1908, some of the travelling companies obviously continued to bring in their own scenery. However, there is no account of this standard practice. All that is known is that the quality of the companies continued to grow weaker and the engagements longer until the theatre closed in February of 1939 with *Kiss Me I'm Fireproof*.

Insofar as the nature of theatrical activity in the Tainter is concerned, one can say only that it observed the standard practices common to so many other theatres which hosted travelling companies during the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. The quality of the company's productions varied as did the quantity and quality of the scenery they carried. One must admit that reviews of the type quoted in the previous pages are useful only as a means of suggesting the staging practices of the time and the use of the hosting facility. Examination of those reviews does not reflect the quality of the work but only confirms the fact that practices common to the metropolitan theatres found their way into the theatres of the provinces in some shape or form.

Examination of the extant scenery and lighting equipment, and related original records tends to confirm
the fact that the building was thoroughly furnished in every respect. Backstage the scenery storage landing was filled with eleven complete wing and border settings. Suspended from the fly lines were five drops ranging from romantic exteriors to a desert and city square scene. Two-dimensional set pieces complemented the drops and wing setting for greater variety. Although the lighting arrangement does not permit as clear an understanding due to the renovations, it is certainly evident, from the extent furnishings and the photograph of the original lighting panel, that the lighting system equalled the quality of the building's other features and furnishings. Both gas and electricity serviced the building's lighting needs. Over six hundred electric lamps lined the walls and ceilings of the building. Control of the auditorium lights was achieved by means of throw switches and a reactance dimmer located backstage. Stage illumination was supplied by means of borderlights and footlights. Control of these instruments is believed to have been achieved by the two coil dimmers mounted to the floor under the lighting panel. The extent to which the Tainter's scenery and lighting, like its architecture layout, and staging machinery, compares to the theatre of its time is the subject of the next chapter.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER IV


3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 374.

5 The Dunn County News, July 5, 1890.


7 Report from Larry Richardson, manager of Northern States Power, Menomonie, Wisconsin, July 1968.

8 Dunn County News, July 5, 1890.


10 Ibid., pp. 195-197.


12 John Russell, professional photographer of Menomonie, photographed several features of the Tainter building prior to the renovations of both the auditorium and backstage lighting facilities. Through kind permission, some of these photographs are included in this study.

13 Dunn County News, May 8, 1891

14 Presently, the original works of the Armbruster studio are being prepared for a study by Robert S. Joyce for Ohio State University.
15 Dunn County News, November 18, 1892.

16 Ibid., April 20, 1893.

17 Ibid., November 30, 1894.

18 Ibid., September 26, 1895.


20 Dunn County News, December 1, 1898.

21 Ibid., March 5, 1908.
CHAPTER V

THE TAINTER THEATRE AS IT REFLECTS TRANSITIONAL
AMERICAN THEATRE ARCHITECTURE AND STAGING
PRACTICES IN THE LATTER PART OF THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the last four decades of the nineteenth century, the evolution of modern theories in stage lighting and scenic design paralleled innovations in theatre architecture, in methods of handling scenery, and in stage lighting equipment. These innovations provided the basis by which the new theories could be set into practice, but, like the theories themselves, the changes in the physical theatre did not occur simultaneously across the country. The change was a gradual one emerging from a select few theatres in the east and slowly infiltrating the theatres of less populous areas. Some theatres were quick to adopt the new methods and equipment, while others held on to familiar practices and traditional forms of equipment. In some instances, theatres retained certain conventional features while simultaneously adopting some of the more modern innovations in staging methods and forms of architecture. Such was the physical theatre of the
latter part of the nineteenth century in which century old staging practices and forms of architecture were dismissed or modified to correspond and complement the new theories and methods; such was the "transitional theatre" from which the modern theatre of the twentieth century would evolve.

It is this transitional theatre of the late nineteenth century which will provide the basis for placement of the Tainter in its proper historical perspective. Specifically, the objective of the following chapter is to examine the Tainter as it reflects the theatre of its own time in terms of architecture, stage lighting, and methods of handling scenery. Considerable reliance has been made on previous studies relating to this period. Three studies, in particular, serve as important background material for this chapter: John Cornwall Edwards' *A History of Nineteenth Century Theatre* Architecture in the United States provides a comprehensive examination of architectural trends and innovations over a hundred year period from coast to coast; *Stage Rigging in the American Theatre of the Nineteenth Century*, by John Green, outlines the progressive history of stage rigging and methods of handling scenery, along with some reference to the relation of these to evolving theatre architecture; and McDonald Watkins Held's *A History of Nineteenth Century American Stage Lighting* completes the picture of the
changes occurring in the nineteenth-century theatre. While reliance has been placed on other studies and materials, these three mentioned sources, together with iconographic materials from the Ohio State University Theatre Collection, provided the major background information for the following chapter. Pertinent facts have been assembled from all the studies in the form of a comprehensive impression of the transitional theatre of the nineteenth century. No attempt has been made to mention every theatre contributing to the changes in architecture and staging, but, rather, to select in chronological order a sampling of structures which best reflects both the notable innovations and the retention of traditional practices.

I. THE AMERICAN THEATRE 1860-1893

The significance of this period cannot be over-estimated, as it represents changes in nearly every facet of the theatre's physical operation: in theatre architecture, which undergoes changes in the form of the rejection and modification of major components in the auditorium and stagehouse; in staging methods and types of machinery to facilitate a more flexible system in place of traditional systems; and, finally, in the theories and practices of stage lighting with the electrical incandescent lamp replacing gas as an illuminant for both
service and stage lighting.

The first theatre deserving mention as a forerunner in staging innovations is Booth's Theatre (Figure 116) constructed in 1869. Although the architectural style and layout resemble many other theatres of the time, the backstage facilities and staging practices employed in Booth's Theatre set it apart and ahead of all other New York theatres at this time. Odell refers to the novelty of the theatre's equipment as "...far beyond anything then known in the American theatre."¹ The removal of the groove system enabled stage hands to set the wings at oblique angles for better side masking with support provided by the stage brace as related in *Appleton's Journal*² and suggested in the setting for the theatre's opening production, *Romeo and Juliet* (Figure 116). In addition to the standard traps and stage elevators designed to raise and lower the scenery from the sub-stage area, the fly gallery was reported to have the highest loft -- seventy six feet -- of any theatre of its time.³ Brockett reports that the stage floor was flat,⁴ and Green adds that "the curtain roller was also discarded...curtains were now lifted retaining their exact perpendicular and not rolled."⁵

Such revolutionary changes not only distinguish Booth's Theatre from those playhouses adhering to traditional practices but also point to staging methods
Figure 116.
Booth's Theatre 1869.
OSUTC Film No. 1449*.

which were to become conventional to the American theatre. Moreover, Booth's foresight can be appreciated even more in lieu of the fact that some of the traditional features dismissed by him were still recommended by architects ten years after the completion of Booth's theatre. In an article by John Fox, in 1879, the author-architect, conscious that some theatres had gone to the level floor, still recommended that the stage floor "...should slope toward the footlights with a pitch of about 3/8 of an
Following the destruction of Niblo's Garden Theatre in 1871, the theatre reopened one year later only to refinish the backstage facilities in a manner similar to the one before it. Niblo's Garden did, however, lay claim to one innovation earlier in the century -- the first use of limelight in the American theatre. In the rebuilt facilities, patrons of Niblo's Garden found little change from the conventional design, layout and staging system of the earlier model. The auditorium (Figure 117) consisted of the standard orchestra, parquet circle, galleries, and the proscenium boxes planted squarely on the stage at oblique angles. The staging facilities were enlarged but did not depart much from conventional practice as evidenced by mention of its seven grooves, fifteen traps, and five working bridges. As for innovations to the redesigned theatre, Green brings to our attention the fact that although there was a retention of the traditional staging systems, "the term rigging loft is not used, but gridiron takes its place," thus making the first reference to our conventional gridiron of the twentieth century.

The name of Steele MacKaye stands as one of the leading theatre managers and inventors of staging devices of the transitional theatre. Even prior to the construction of his own theatre MacKaye demonstrated his
intentions and abilities through the management of existing structures. The Fifth Avenue Theatre of 1862, renamed the Madison Square Theatre in 1879 when MacKay assumed ownership and management of the structure, was renovated under his supervision and contained innovations unique to theatre architecture. Figure 118 shows the interior of the auditorium to the Madison Square Theatre. Tradition was broken by arranging the balcony in three curves which moved it away from the stage further than in conventional theatres. Moreover, there were no columns for support of the balcony; instead, a set of iron trusses, bolted together, provided the necessary stability. The main floor was called the
parquet and the first balcony was given the name ‘orchestra circle.’ The auditorium was common in layout with the retention of the parquet circle as shown in Figure 118. Placement of the orchestra high above the proscenium arch was another of MacKaye’s ideas incorporated into the theatre. The most important innovation, however, was realized backstage. In 1879 Thomas Edison perfected the incandescent lamp. Until that time the gas argand burner provided the brightest and most efficient source of light. MacKaye made a contribution in the lighting for the new theatre when ‘He placed all of his lights behind glass and provided separate ventilation for each lamp. Thus he drew away
the excessive heat and prevented contamination of the air as well. Another innovation was the set of elevator stages which enabled the stage hands to set one setting while the other was in use. Although MacKaye continued to invent imaginative devices for staging, the theatre, as a whole, was slow to accept them. While not all of MacKaye's inventions were realized by the theatre in general, it can be said that all of them together provided a significant part of the impetus to move from rigid to more flexible methods of staging.

In the same year that MacKaye assumed control of the Madison Square Theatre, architect John Fox published a series of articles on theatre architecture. The material reflects with considerable accuracy, the status of American theatre architecture in 1879 and foreshadows many specific changes and modifications which would be adopted in the nineteenth century's remaining two decades.

Architects and theatre managers were conscious that the traditional shape of the auditorium required revision if it were to satisfy proper sightline conditions. Aware that the shape of the auditorium is dictated in large part by the sightline conditions resulting from the size, the shape, and the use of the stage, Fox wrote:

The modern theatre possesses the necessity for seeing into the set scene to a considerable distance back of the proscenium line which necessitates the abandonment of the end seats of the semicircular plan and an arrangement
more in the fan-shape; or more accurately, a portion of the sector of a circle, the center for the radius of which shall be behind the proscenium, instead of in front as it is in the Greek form.14

Fox's understanding of the physical disposition between stagehouse and auditorium in a proscenium theatre was ahead of its time in actual practice, for very few theatres at this time had incorporated the fan-shaped auditorium. Yet, it must be noted that even the most farsighted individuals are prone to retain something of the tradition in the course of striking out for new forms and methods. In this particular case, Fox incorporated, along with his innovations, several conventional features of auditorium layout and design. Figure 119 clearly reveals the intermingling of the old and the new. This illustration, designed by Fox, shows a plan and sectional view of the recommended fan shaped auditorium. At first sight, the plan appears to be similar to a modern theatre auditorium. One example is the splay space; instead of nineteenth-century boxes, it contains stairs, lobby space, and dressing rooms, as in modern theatres. However, a more careful examination of the plan and sectional view reveals the architect's retention of several traditional features in auditorium layout. First, there is the standard parquet at the rear of the auditorium (orchestra) seating. The two areas are separated by the standard handrail and a height
variation. Note that there is no access from the parquet directly onto the auditorium area (orchestra seating) -- a feature most uncommon to the modern fan-shaped auditorium, but conventional to the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the shape of the parquet, the flat of an ellipse, is an abrupt departure from the traditional sweeping horseshoe shape of this time. Another important feature of Figure 119 is the retention of the conventional wing and shutter setting. One might well expect to see a departure from the traditional arrangement of the wing and shutter system with the adoption of modern features in auditorium design. Fox's view of the auditorium and stage clearly refutes such a theory. As was stated earlier, the evolution of modern practices was a gradual one -- fragmented in nature -- in which old practices were intermingled with new ones. The auditorium layout recommended by Fox certainly helps illustrate the fact that with the adoption of architectural or staging innovations, some of the traditional features were abandoned outright (boxes), others were modified in shape or design (parquet), and finally some of the conventional items were retained without alteration (wing and shutter setting and parquet rail).

In the years to come, many theatres would adopt an auditorium design similar to the one described by Fox. Between this time and nationwide acceptance, only a few
Theatres took the lead in departing from the traditionally shaped auditorium. One of the first New York theatres to have a fan-shaped auditorium was Daly's Theatre (1879). Originally called Banvard's Museum, Daly remodelled the interior reducing the house capacity to 1500. The three levels — main floor, balcony, and second circle — were retained but not without alteration. Of particular importance is the design of the auditorium. Figure 120 shows a plan view of the three levels in Daly's Theatre. The top plan is of the auditorium level. Observe the fan shape consisting of three seating sections and four aisles. In one way Daly's auditorium is more of an innovation than the one described by Fox: the parquet has been
eliminated. But, like Fox, Daly chose to retain certain traditional features in the theatre, in this case the side boxes.

The tendency to flatten and foreshorten the gallery and parquet is evidenced in Daly's Theatre. Both the balcony floor and the second circle (Figure 120) extend from the side boxes. Unlike earlier models, the balconies do not terminate at the proscenium arch. With the use of an illustration (Figure 121) Fox comments on the changes occurring in the shape of the balcony for the proscenium theatre:

> The curves of the gallery or parquet circle fronts are important matters of appearance and use, but changing so continually with the varying conditions of the size and shape of the hall that it is difficult to lay down any rules for them. The old, elongated, horseshoe form has nearly fallen into disuse, it being serviceable only in the very large auditoriums or where boxes are substituted for open galleries.

> Perfect provisions for seeing is very rare in theatres. It can be had by stopping the galleries short of the proscenium and by flattening the curve considerably.15

Another theatre which displays the traditional design fused with the innovations described by Fox was Pope's Opera House (Figure 122) of St. Louis, built in 1879. The main floor, seventy feet in width by seventy-three feet in length, consists of an orchestra and a large parquet. The orchestra carries some suggestion of the fan shape, with three seating sections divided by two aisles.
Figure 120.
Daly's Theatre 1879.
OSUTC Film No. 1494*

Figure 121.
Shapes of Galleries and Parquets.
Architect, John Fox, 1879.
American Architect and Building News, Vol. VI, No. 189, p. 44.
Back ing the orchestra is an open horseshoe parquet with its conventional handrail. Unlike earlier designs, this parquet terminates short of the boxes at a point parallel to the third row of the orchestra. On stage, the floor was equipped with six traps and two rows of bridges, and with five sets of grooves accommodating twenty foot high flats. Pope's Theatre is recorded as being one of the first two theatres in St. Louis to install electric lights for both general service and stage illumination as a result of incorporating electricity in 1885. However, the
theatre followed the format of many others by retaining the gas system in case of accident. Both Pope's Theatre of St. Louis and Daly's Theatre of New York confirm some adherence to Fox's recommendation for either the flattened curve front or termination of the balcony and parquet short of the proscenium arch. Other theatres followed suit in time, but still others continued to cling to traditional design. In a design project for a theatre in Minneapolis (Figure 123) by L. S. Buffington in 1880, the parquet and gallery terminate at the side boxes. The deep sweeping horseshoe shape follows the traditional design which is characteristic of older New York playhouses. The balcony is very deep and sightlines are extremely poor on the sides. The retention of the proscenium doors is another notable feature for this theatre of 1880, as most playhouses had abandoned this feature by the middle of the century. Certainly Buffington's retention of traditional features was not indicative of all theatre designs in Minneapolis during the 1880's. The reconstruction of Woods Second Opera House of Minneapolis in 1883, following its destruction a few months previously, included only two boxes in contrast to the twenty-two boxes in the first structure.

Wallack's New Theatre of 1881 (Figure 124) consists of a typical admixture of a transitional architectural
Figure 123.
Buffington's Theatre Project, Minneapolis, Minn. 1880. Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives.

Figure 124.
Wallack's New Theatre, 1881. OSUTC Film No. 1449*
layout and an advanced system of staging facilities. Architecturally, the theatre is characterized by its two, conventional, horseshoe, sweeping balconies set deep within the auditorium. In this case, the curve of the balcony incorporates the side boxes -- a feature later to be employed in other theatres in America. The eight boxes, four on each side, are set some distance from the proscenium arch. The theatre is conventional for its inclusion of the boxes and yet unique because of their physical separation from the proscenium arch.

The arrangement of the seating on the main floor, divided into two sections with a central aisle, suggests a slight fan shape.

The actual innovations in Wallack's Theatre occurred in the stagehouse area. Green credits Wallack as the first man to make use of hydraulic power in the American Theatre, but fails to mention where the hydraulic mechanism was employed. The scenery loft was sufficiently high so that scenery could be flown out of sight despite a thirty-four foot high proscenium. An opening in the floor permitted removal of scenery into the cellar. Fifteen rooms under the stage accommodated company members and musicians. In addition, there was a painting room located over the stage which included a moveable bridge for the painting of the scenery. The greatest break with traditional practice was the removal
of the raked stage and all sliding scenery. The significance of this move in terms of stage rigging for the box set is described by Green:

Here is definite evidence to the removal of the raked stage. Furthermore, the evidence is presented in relationship to the removal of grooves from the stage. Such a relationship is of infinite value in establishing the true significance of the flat stage. Before the introduction of the modern box set, with lashed flats, etc., there was little reason for the stage floor to be without its customary slant upward toward the back wall.20

In the field of stage and service lighting, the American theatre was making marked progress with the incandescent electric lamp. The larger metropolitan theatres made almost immediate use of Edison's discovery. Held states that "By the fall of 1884 there were six important theatres in New York using electricity for illuminating purposes."21 He immediately adds, however, that this was the exception to the rule as the country would continue, as a whole, to rely on gas for another decade. Nevertheless, the breakthrough had been made, and theatre, between 1880 and the turn of the century, would gradually rid itself of gas as an illuminant. Finally, with the development of the resistance dimmer, the house lights could easily be dimmed, and by "1885 dimming of house lights during a performance was common, though not universal."22

Nearing the last decade of the nineteenth century, America would see one of the most mechanically elaborate
and architecturally lavish theatres of its time -- the Chicago Auditorium. The theatre's tremendous size and its inventory of equipment and materials is best realized by quoting one of the many contemporary accounts of the physical structure: 

The number of electric lights in the Auditorium proper is 4,500 and the hotel and balance of the building nearly 5,500 making about 10,000 in all; there are eleven dynamos, eleven boilers ... there are over twenty five miles of gas and water pipe; there are 230 miles of electric wire and cables.

There are over ten miles of steel wire cable required to operate stage machinery...The total depth of the stage from footlights to rear wall is 60 feet, and from the curtain line to the rear wall is 62½ feet, leaving an apron of 6½ feet. The clear width between side walls is 98 feet, giving the total available stage room of 6,862 square feet.  

The 4,237 seating capacity was distributed among the main floor's orchestra and parquet (1,442 seats), forty boxes, a main balcony (1,632 seats), and two galleries (526 and 437 seats). Figure 125 is a traced reproduction of the original floor plan. The shape of the orchestra section is a definite fan until it meets the parquet rail. The parquet, conventional in principle, is a radical departure from the deep horseshoe shape found in earlier theatres. Set far back from the proscenium arch, the extreme ends of the parquet front meet to form a very shallow curve, complementing the fan-shaped orchestra. By far the most shallow horseshoe-shaped parquet evidenced in this survey, the sightlines on the extreme
sides can be termed as most adequate -- a feature certainly unique to the conventional nineteenth-century parquet or gallery. In one way, the Chicago Auditorium broke the trend of reducing the number of boxes by their inclusion of forty boxes as a part of the auditorium seating.

Revolutionary moves in the direction of staging machinery matched the size of the huge stagehouse area. The Chicago Auditorium marked the most extensive use of
the hydraulic lift of any American theatre to this time. Hydraulic power had been used in 1882 by Wallack; later, in 1885, Steele MacKaye relied on hydraulic power for the house lights, the ventilation apparatus, and the orchestra pit in the Lyceum Theatre. The Auditorium's twenty-six hydraulic lifts, located under the stage, were designed for raising and lowering the reducing curtain, the fire curtain, the star traps, and the bridges. The hydraulically operated reducing curtain facilitated a reduction in the size of the proscenium opening from seventy-five by forty feet to forty-seven by thirty-five feet. With the use of the hydraulic jacks, the stage could be divided (raised and lowered) into moveable sections. No longer were the star traps raised and lowered by the standard counterweight system, but, rather by means of hydraulic jacks. Another modern feature was the counterweighted fly system. Located on the stage floor level, it permitted the movement of drops and other flow equipment more quickly, more safely, and with less difficulty than did the traditional pin and rail system.

The first use of the continental cyclorama in America was in the Chicago Auditorium. The cyclorama consisted of a horizontal band of canvas supported by an overhead track in the shape of a "U" and was operated by means of a hydraulic engine. A description of the wonder of this mechanical device even reached the
...the "horizon," a panoramic device moving on a semi-circular iron frame around three sides of the stage, the purpose of which is to do away with the "sky borders" and drops. This horizon has been painted by eminent artists on an endless roll, with alternate sections depicting the sky of every season of the year and every condition of weather, so that when there is an exterior set on the stage the effect will be precisely — under the graduated lights — that of looking at the natural heavens.  

Although the use of the horizontal cyclorama never came into wide use in the modern theatre, the Auditorium's use of it emphasizes further the management's acceptance of European theatrical practices and a concomitant desire to break with traditional staging methods.

At the time the Chicago Auditorium was near completion in 1889, another first was recorded in a successful attempt to use colored incandescent lamps. Reported to be the first of its kind, the Park Theatre of Brooklyn installed, in September of 1889, an electrical system which included colored incandescent lamps. Three months later, when it opened, the Chicago Auditorium was equipped with "borderlights...containing a full complement of colored lamps."  

In a few cases, the practice of incorporating the side boxes as a part of the balcony design continued. Wallack's Theatre had fused the balcony front decoration into the face of the boxes in 1881. Another example of this architectural approach is found in the 1400 seats of
the Fifth Avenue Theatre (1892). In this case, not only are the boxes a part of the balcony front, but also a part of the proscenium arch design (Figure 126). The theatre also reflects the tendency to move in the direction of the shallow curve for the front of the balconies.

Figure 126.

The name of Steele MacKaye has already been mentioned in relation to the Madison Square Theatre. The innovations realized in this theatre were but a part of MacKaye's dreams and revolutionary practices. In 1893 alone, this
visionary man was credited with forty separate patents for production devices. Steele MacKaye's inventions culminated in his never-completed Spectatorium. Designed in connection with the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, the building failed to reach completion as a result of the financial panic of that year. Nevertheless, the plans for the building and its machinery cannot be ignored because of their contribution in the overall development of modern staging methods. The Spectatorium accounted for the first "fully conceived sky dome in the United States." Moreover, MacKaye's inventions gave an impetus for the movement of scenery based on mechanical power in place of the traditional hand driven windlasses.

**Summary.**—The period, then, from 1860 to 1893, was characterized by a series of changes, modifications, and inventions in theatre architecture and stage technology which gradually paved the way for the modern theatre. This period has been labelled as transitional because, while bent on the display of visual spectacularism, it fell short of the firmly defined and universally established practices of the modern theatre. As previously discussed, this was a period in which theatre was undergoing changes by retaining certain practices, modifying others, eliminating some, and creating new ones in place of the discarded. The developments occurring in the mentioned areas affected nearly every facet of the physical theatre -- architectural
style and layout, staging methods and equipment, and stage lighting equipment and practices.

America was witnessing the final trends in architectural styles during this period. Edwards best sums up the nature of theatre architecture during the last four decades of the nineteenth century:

The theatrical buildings which were being put up between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the century were dominated by the Romanesque tradition springing from the influences of Richardson and Sullivan. The romantic element was, nevertheless, to continue in Victorian variations of Renaissance, Gothic and Moorish designs. Often the exterior designs had little to do with the interior.32

Much more pivotal to the nature of the transitional theatre than the architectural styles were the changes occurring in the layout of the auditorium and stagehouse. Prior to the Civil War, the American theatre already had witnessed several architectural modifications. In the 1830's, the parquet was an essential part of several theatres, and, by the middle of the century, it was in general use throughout the country.33 The stage boxes were another feature to change after the 1830's, as they gradually diminished in number. The two exceptions to this case -- the Metropolitan Opera House and the Chicago Auditorium -- have already been mentioned. Although little has been said about the foreshortening of the apron, Edwards tells us that while eastern theatres are difficult
to label or classify in these terms, "after the Civil War, no forestages were found in Chicago and the western theatres." Whereas the boxes only dwindled in number, the proscenium doors were, for the most part, excluded after the Civil War. The one exception of this noted in this review was the design for a theatre by architect L. S. Buffington of Minneapolis in 1880.

The problem of poor sightline conditions resulting from the deep horseshoe balconies and parquets was improved with the changes in the shapes of these areas. Conscious that the old horseshoe shape offered an excellent view of the audience but very little view of the stage, the balcony and parquet shape gradually lessened in depth and sweep of the curve. In the late 1870's, theatres began to flatten the curve and stop the balcony short of the boxes. Other theatres, however, continued to employ the deep horseshoe shape on into the 1880's. Parallel to the flattening of the balcony curve was an effort to make the auditorium in the shape of a fan, and, as with the change in the shape of the balcony, this innovation met with gradual acceptance.

The development of stage machinery and methods of handling scenery paralleled the structural and architectural alterations of the theatre buildings. One of the first, and certainly most important, changes contributing to the modern stagehouse, was the removal of the raked stage.
floor. Although the raked floor was still recommended by some architects as late as 1879, the level floor was introduced early in the 1870's, and increased in popularity in the remaining decades of the nineteenth century. The significance of this move has been noted earlier because of its direct relationship to the development of the functional box setting.

With the levelling of the stage floor and the increased reliance upon the box setting, sliding scenery and related equipment -- grooves, sliders, and cuts -- were discontinued. Theatres in the metropolitan areas were quicker to dispose of the sliding scenery than the smaller theatres in less populated areas, as the latter continued to make use of this traditional method on into the early part of the twentieth century.

The gridiron, sufficient in height and construction to facilitate the functional flying of scenery, was firmly established in this period. Related rigging equipment, including the pin rail and counterweight system, gradually developed into the modern system employed in the twentieth century.

The flexible proscenium arch, with its adjustable teaser and tormentor units, was another innovation made in this period. Related to the flexible proscenium was a refinement in the type and method for moving curtains; the tracked traverse curtain and the adoption of a decorative
curtain in place of the painted act drop came into use.

The most revolutionary changes in the theatre, however, were not in architecture nor staging practices, but in the developments in stage lighting which followed the invention of the electric incandescent lamp. In October of 1879, Thomas Edison perfected the first electric incandescent lamp and almost immediately it was put into use by theatre managers. Prior to that time, the 1860's had experienced the first use of the limelight, an illuminant which became the primary means of spotting the actor. Now, with electricity available, the theatre would advance into technical realms never before possible in its entire history. McDonald Held succinctly describes the development of modern lighting during this period:

This period from 1860 to the end of the century is the most important period in the history of stage lighting. It was during this forty year period that the real possibilities of gas were realized, that localized light was applied to the stage, made possible first by the use of limelight, and that electricity was made useful to the stage through the development of the incandescent electric lamp. It was during this period that stage spectacle ran rampant and Appia and Craig were formulating revolutionary ideas regarding the application of light to the stage. And finally, it was during this period that equipment was developed that has remained basically the same ever since.36

Before considering the Mabel Tainter Memorial as it reflects the transitional theatre of the latter nineteenth century, one more factor must be considered. The theatres
described in this historical survey were, for the most part, leaders in their field and located in metropolitan areas of America. There were other theatres, however, which were also representative of the late nineteenth-century American theatre -- those small playhouses which dotted the map from the mining camps of Marysville, Montana, to the tiny opera houses set within the logging communities of northern Wisconsin. We know very little about these small theatres beyond the fact that they were usually ill-equipped, slow in accepting innovations in terms of staging methods, and very prone to destruction by fire. In many instances, the theatre consisted of not much more than a large room at the end of which was a small elevated platform. Nevertheless, these small playhouses reflected, to some degree, the nature of the late nineteenth-century American theatre. Garrett Leverton considers this issue when discussing the "typical" theatre of the late nineteenth century:

A question might be raised as to what really was the theatre of the period under consideration. Do the large, mechanically equipped theatres represent the era, or does the real theatre of the period lie in the type that dotted the country by the thousands -- the opera house that occupied a prominent place in almost every community?

One can only answer that these smaller theatres did represent an important position of the American theatre along with the well equipped ones in the larger cities. For the purpose of this study it is important only to consider
the existence of the little province theatres in relation to the large metropolitan theatres making the transitions from the conventional nineteenth-century theatre to the modern theatre of the twentieth century.

Generally, the meaning of "transitional theatre" has been identified as that theatre undergoing change, or passing from one form to another. More specifically, the transitional theatre was one in which the change was made in one of three ways, with considerable overlapping. First, there was the dismissal of certain practices: abandoning the proscenium doors, eliminating sliding scenery and the groove system, and discarding the raked floor; secondly, there was the modification of traditional practices or architectural units: foreshortening the apron floor, diminishing the curve of the gallery and parquet; and third, there was the development of new methods and types of equipment: the incandescent lamp, resistance dimmers, hydraulic lifts, and the adjustable proscenium arch. In most instances, the innovations overlapped considerably with the traditional features retained in the theatre. One factor shared by all three forms of change was the element of time: the evolution of the transitional theatre was a gradual process dictated by willingness and foresight on the part of the management, as well as by physical limitations and the monetary backing necessary for the changes. In many cases, the theatres in
New York which continued to work with traditional practices did so only because of physical limitations, not necessarily because of an unwillingness to adopt new practices. In the case of the small theatres in less populated areas, the problem seems to have stemmed from a different cause -- best described as a lack of demand for the innovations. The rural playhouses were dependent upon travelling companies for nearly all their theatrical fare. On the road, these companies relied, to a great extent, upon traditional practices and facilities, with lighting being the exception in given instances. In the latter case, the company frequently was not dependent upon the house, as it often carried its own equipment.

II. THE Tainter AS IT REFLECTS THE THEATRE OF ITS TIME

To proceed with the central objective of this chapter -- how does the Tainter reflect the theatre of its time -- it can be said that the Tainter bears characteristics common to both the small town opera house and the better equipped theatre of the east. Generally, its similarity to the smaller playhouses exists primarily in terms of the basic dimensions, the overall size of the facility, and the practice of retaining traditional staging methods and forms of equipment. On the other hand, there is positive evidence that the Tainter, unlike the
majority of its provincial counterparts, accepted and adopted many of the architectural and technological innovations found in leading theatres of metropolitan America.

The architectural style of the Tainter has been described as Romanesque in exterior and Moorish, or Neo-Saracenic, in interior. In this respect, the Tainter reflects familiar architectural practice of the times, in that exteriors often had little to do with the interiors. As may be recalled from Chapter I, the use of the Romanesque is attributed to Harvey Ellis, who introduced the style to Minneapolis after joining the L. S. Buffington firm in 1886. The Romanesque, under the influence of Richardson, was an extremely popular style of architecture for all types of buildings during the second half of the nineteenth century. The manner in which the exterior differs from the pure Romanesque of Richardson is attributable to the architect, as noted earlier. The interior of the Tainter is a lavish and romantic treatment of the Moorish with heavy emphasis on Neo-Saracenic ornamentation. This style was also in vogue across the country and does not particularly make it unique to its time. The Moorish tradition had been apparent in eastern theatres sometime earlier. In the far west, San Francisco's Alcazar (1885) was dominated by Moorish architecture, and, by 1887, the Moorish tradition
had arrived in Kansas City in the design of the Ninth Street Theatre. In nearby Minneapolis, the Grand Opera House was redecorated in a Moorish style by John S. Bradstreet in 1886. It is very possible that Ellis was influenced by the styling of the Grand's interior, as similarities in both feeling and execution of design are evidenced in the Tainter. The leafy scrollwork found in the Tainter auditorium walls connotes the same feeling as that covering the walls in the Grand Theatre, and, more importantly, the use of relieved three-dimensional arches as decoration for the face of the stage is the very type of decor employed for the front of the boxes in the Grand Opera House. The Tainter also bears similarities in decoration and stencilled design motifs to those in the Chicago Auditorium. The design motifs set along the face of the balcony boxes and vertical partitions of the Auditorium bear a striking likeness to those found along the rear wall of the Tainter's auditorium and ceiling. Despite these similarities, as well as the reliance upon a popularly accepted architectural style, the Tainter interior is unique because of the artistic and imaginative use of the Moorish style, and most would agree that in this respect, at least, the theatre stands out as a "jewel box" of a theatre.

Several features of the Tainter auditorium make for interesting comparison with other structures. The fan-
shaped seating in the auditorium is reflective of the more progressive auditoriums at this time. Daly's Theatre (1879) was noted as being one of the earliest theatres with a fan-shaped seating arrangement on the main floor. Architect John Fox had written about this innovation in the same year, but included the traditional parquet and dividing rail in his recommendations. Like Daly's Theatre, and unlike the Chicago Auditorium, the Tainter auditorium is without a parquet, as the seating on the main floor covers an unbroken expanse of floor space. The pitch of the rake in the floor is one and one half inches per foot. It is important to recall that Fox, while recommending the fan shape, still relied on the two steps per row of seats and not a ramp to make the pitch in the floor as found in Daly's Theatre and the Tainter.

The balcony (gallery) of the Tainter reflects the progressive steps taken to eliminate the problem of poor sightlines characteristic of the older horseshoe gallery. It was noted earlier that the period was marked by a gradual tendency to depart from the conventional horseshoe in the form of a flat ellipse and by the evolving technique of stopping the balcony short of the proscenium arch. The Tainter's balcony, extremely shallow, with the front designed in the shape of a spread-open horseshoe, is much closer to twentieth-century design than those found in Daly's Theatre, Pope's Opera House, or even the balcony
of the Chicago Auditorium. In addition to the shallow
curve, the balcony front stops far short of that point
common to most theatres, and for these reasons, the
sightlines are considerably better than in most other
theatres of the time.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century,
boxes remained a typical feature of most auditoriums.
The inclusion of four boxes ties the Tainter to its time,
but their form gives it a uniqueness all of its own. Most
conventional boxes were separated by either a brick wall
or a small partition, as evidenced in Wallack's Theatre
and the Chicago Auditorium. The Tainter's lower boxes
represent an unbroken expanse framed by an arch which can
accommodate five on one side and three on the other. The
upper boxes also seat three people comfortably on each
side in an unbroken open space. However, in this case,
the boxes suggest a form of separation through the use of
pillars which rest on a handrail. Access to the boxes was
made from the balcony through an archway, a method comparable
to those found in Wallack's Theatre, the New Fifth Avenue
Theatre, and the Minneapolis Grand Opera House. As for the
orchestra pit, the Tainter's matches the one described by
John Fox and can therefore be said to conform to the con­
ventional orchestra pit of the time.

The Tainter stagehouse reflects the common tendency
to retain some traditional items while adopting recent
developments in layout and staging equipment. Handling scenery was accomplished by two methods: the groove system for wings and shutters, and a pin and rail fly system operated from the overhead catwalk on both sides of the stage. The number, the location, the operation, and the size of the grooves does not stray far from those examined in extant plans. The 1906 renovation (removal of a portion of the catwalk) facilitated the larger size drops carried by travelling companies, at which time, the management may have removed the four sets of missing upper flat grooves. The extent to which the groove system was utilized is not known with any certainty, but the type and caliber of companies playing in the Tainter suggest that it must have been employed for a good number of productions. A production comparable to that of Lewis Morrison's was considered something of a rarity to houses like the Tainter so, consequently, the majority of the companies probably relied upon the scenery provided by the house. Since the Tainter had installed a complete set of scenery designed for the groove system, it is safe to assume that it was used in the traditional manner. The one exception to the parallel wings would have been the set pieces — rocks, statues, flower urns, bridge and small houses — supported by either a stage brace or an attached jack. When the groove system fell into disuse, is open to question. Certainly the fly system controlled from the pin rail was
used in conjunction with, or separate from, the wing and shutter arrangement, as evidenced by the emphasis on the flown drops and borders.

Another piece of equipment conventional to the nineteenth-century theatre was the windlass, designed to raise and lower units too heavy for the standard fly lines. The windlass system in the Tainter controlled four separate pieces of equipment, including the paint frame, the act drop, the main curtain, and the front light pipe. Reference to the windlass was common to a good number of theatres until it was replaced with mechanical power in the form of hydraulic lifts in the early 1880's. By 1890, some theatres were relying almost entirely on the hydraulic lifts for the operation of traps, paint frame, orchestra lift, and scenery shifting. These theatres, however, were exceptions to the case and do not reflect the typical transitional theatre in America.

Use of the windlass powered paint frame for the purpose of transporting scenery from the overhead landing down onto the stage is an interesting point for discussion. All well-equipped theatres included a paint frame and an overhead landing for scenery storage, unless the latter was placed under the stage floor. Whether it was a common practice to utilize the paint frame for transporting the heavy scenic flats, as it is believed that the Tainter did, is not known, but evidence certainly points to that
conclusion, since both components were common features to the stagehouse of the late nineteenth-century theatre.

Stage traps continued to be very useful pieces of stage machinery throughout the nineteenth century. The only significant change in the traps during the nineteenth century was in the source of power for their operation. Early nineteenth-century traps were controlled by a simple winch system. Later the counterweight principle replaced the manual operation and, finally, the hydraulic or electric driven lift was developed. The three traps in the Tainter are conventional to their time, operated in part by a hand cranked cylinder or winch system and in part by a set of counterweights. The traps are logically placed in the downstage corners and stage center positions of the stage floor. The fact that very little iconographic information exists is precisely what makes the Tainter traps unique and worthy of microscopic examination and detailed comparison. The closest American source material pertaining directly to traps like those in the Tainter are the explanations and the engravings of Arthur Hopkins (Magic: Stage Illusions and Scientific Diversions) and Arthur Rose (Stage Effects).

Information given by Hopkins comes in two forms: first, an engraving of a trap in operation, with the actor being propelled to the level of the stage floor, and second, a description of what the author refers to as an "ordinary
The two sources do not comply with one another, as the engraving depicts a model of a trap developed earlier than the one described in the textual description. First let us consider the engraving. Below the stage floor are two sub-levels, the first of which is occupied by a technician who is removing the trap cover by hand without the assistance of any levers or lines. Below him are four more stage hands winding two windlasses (cylinders). There is no indication that counterweights were employed in this trap mechanism. The actor is raised to the level of the stage floor through the use of the hand-drawn windlasses. The trap is obviously an earlier version with some similarity to the one described in Rees' *Cyclopedia* (1803-1819), and is not intended to be representative of the typical models being used at the time Hopkins compiled his book in 1897. A much more accurate representation of the Tainter traps is found in Hopkins' textual description of the trap. Those points in the quotation bearing a direct similarity to the Tainter traps have been underlined by this writer.

In ordinary stages the traps are floored over, and before they can be used a portion of the floor of the stage has to be removed. This is done by releasing a lever and letting the section of the floor drop into a groove and slide under the immovable parts at the side of the stage. The opening left in the stage is filled by the floor of the ascending trap. Back of the grave trap there are three narrow strips of openings which are technically called "sliders," then a wider opening which is known
as the "bridge." The rest of the stage is taken up by alternate bridges and sliders. The sliders consist of narrow strips of wood which are made to slide horizontally, right and left, under the stage. They slide in grooves cut in the joists, and are moved backwards and forwards by means of ropes which wind around windlasses which are operated from the mezzanine floor underneath the stage. When both sliders are slid away right and left, the open space in the floor and the space underneath is known as the "cut," and it is in the "cut" that the scenery is placed which is to be raised up from below. Scenes are raised up the "slider cuts" by means of lengths of wood sliding up and down in grooves forming very wide and narrow elevators. The scene is attached to the lower bar. The floor of the bridge is like the slider floor in construction; the only difference is in the width of the opening left in the stage when the section of the floor has been removed. To fill this space a platform of the same dimensions as the opening which is left in the stage where the bridge is removed is used. The bridge is used to raise bodily any heavy scene, furniture, or a group of figures, but it only raises its load level with the stage, while some of the new hydraulic bridges, or the counterbalanced rising bridge, which we will shortly describe, permit of lifting the part of the scene to any height.

The notable similarities to the Tainter traps which were underlined in the preceding quotation helps clarify an important point: namely, that those traps discovered in the Tainter were standard in both layout and method of operation to their time. The differences between the Tainter traps and those described by Hopkins are of minor importance, since the variances seem to stem from size and intended purpose. For example, the sheer size of the bridge covers would have necessitated windlasses for their removal. As may be recalled, the Tainter trap covers
measured only two feet square for the downstage traps
and two feet by four feet for the center stage trap --
both of which could easily be removed by a hand-drawn line
attached to the trap cover.

What Hopkins omits in the description -- the
mechanics of the pulley system, winch or windlass, and the
use of counterweights -- is covered in part by Rose's
explanation and illustration. Herein, counterweights
are shown as having been placed on a small wooden landing.
When the landing is tipped, the weights descend, thereby
propelling the actor to the stage floor. The manner for
release of the weights is a hand operation and, if
described accurately by Rose, would be precarious, if not
a dangerous, one. Like the Tainter traps, the counter-
weights consist of two sets flanking the trap housing.
Rose, however, omits any mention of a winch or cylinder
to wind the bridge (carriage) back down into the trap
housing. More than likely, the trap described included
this feature, but a description of it was omitted since it
did not contribute to the operation of the ascent. Another
omission in Rose's description is the exact manner in
which the trap cover is removed from the stage floor, a
feature fully explained by Hopkins and quoted earlier.

One factor both Rose and Hopkins share in their
descriptions of the trap is the failure to distinguish
between the ascending trap and the descending trap.
Positive proof for their existence was found with the Tainter traps. The stage center trap, largest of the three, operated on the principle of counterweights for descents. The rope and pulley system is similar to the one described by Rose, but is without the tripping device and is, therefore, useful in its fullest capacity as a trap for fast descents. The downstage right trap differs from the other two for its rope and pulley system included the forementioned layout and another set of lines, secured to the bottom of the bridge (carriage), ran down through the center of the housing and onto the winch. With a brake mechanism set within one of the vertical support posts, fast ascents were made possible. One final feature not mentioned in the two quoted sources was the method by which the trap cover was secured and held into position when the trap was not in use. Rees (The Cyclopedia) makes reference to this method of support and release -- "...each aperture is closed by a board supported by an upright piece of wood...when the traps are not at work." He does not, however, include this portion of the mechanism in the diagrams of the trap. The Tainter traps included a post (collapsible supporting post) which, when collapsed, would release the support from the trap cover, thereby permitting removal of the cover into the slotted area by means of an attached line. Overall, the extant traps of the Tainter confirm those descriptions of
Hopkins, Rose, and Rees, while adding further evidence pertaining to their exact construction and details of operation.

One final feature of the Tainter worth restating in this comparison, is the method employed for securing the ground cloth. The one-half inch diameter holes which outline the acting area, and the steel pins which set into the holes were believed to constitute the device by which the floor cloth was held in place. I am not aware of any other use of this method and, while it certainly does not add any revolutionary knowledge about staging practices of the nineteenth century, it is, like the bulk of the material, significant for its contribution to the detailed aspects of the physical theatre under examination.

The question of the Tainter's scenery in its relationship to scenic and staging practices of the time has been answered in part in the previous chapter. It was the scenic studio which supplied the majority of scenery to theatres, save for those select few which employed their own full-time scenic artists. In this respect, the Tainter is most typical of the many theatres, both large and small, which relied on the ingenuity of the scenic studio. All the scenery fits the category of two-dimensional stock flats, border, shutters, drops, and set pieces. With the exception of the small cutouts (set pieces) which were supported by attached jacks or stage braces, all the
scenery was designed for the traditional groove system. Theatres with more sophisticated machinery and methods of handling scenery had dismissed the groove system during the second half of the nineteenth century. The Tainter, in this respect, is typical not of those progressive few in the elimination of a traditional method, but of the average small playhouse which continued to rely on conventional methods of handling scenery for the wing and border setting.

Proceeding on to the final item for comparison -- lighting -- we find that the Tainter, traditional for its sliding scenery, windlass system, and traps, reflects the transitional theatres which took full and immediate advantage of the improvements being made in the field of lighting. In order to comprehend the significance of the Tainter's lighting system, it must be remembered that the city of Menomonie did not have electricity at the time it was installed in the theatre during the summer of 1890. At this time, Edison's discovery was eleven years old and many eastern theatres had completely converted from gas to electricity as an illuminant for both service and stage lighting. In the Midwest, however, although electricity was making its mark, it was doing so at a slower rate and with somewhat more hesitancy. The Tainter followed the standard practice of maintaining a gas system for emergency lighting in the event the electrical system failed. As for the specific lighting equipment for stage illumination
in the Tainter, very little can be said. The system, as
examined earlier, revealed conventional reliance on two
types of lighting arrangements: the border lights overhead
and the footlights at the base of the stage apron floor.
The two coil dimmers mounted to the floor bear an 1889
patent date, but there is no proof that they were
purchased at that time, only that at some time electrical
dimming devices were employed backstage.

In summarizing the degree to which the Tainter
reflects transitional American theatre architecture and
staging practices during the latter part of the nineteenth
century, the following points bear repeating. Architec-
turally, the Tainter is characterized by the use of two
of the most popular styles in vogue during the time of its
construction: the Romanesque exterior which was met with
general enthusiasm across the country for a variety of
types of buildings and the Moorish interior with its
Neo-Saracenic ornamentation fit the general description of
the theatre's acceptance of eastern tradition throughout
the United States. The furnishings of the Tainter are
extremely exotic and plush -- reflective of the ostenta-
tiousness so much a part of the age, and particularly, by
those fortunate few like Andrew Tainter. It must be noted,
however, that the furnishings are not so typical of the
small opera house in rural America.

The architectural layout and design of the theatre
displays a marked influence of efforts made by the pro-
gressive architects to depart from traditional practices
when related to the functional qualities of the building.
In many ways the Tainter is not typical of its time in
terms of layout because of the refusal to follow conven-
tional shapes and designs in the auditorium and balcony.
Without question, this theatre, while maintaining such
conventional features as the boxes, is reflective of the
more progressive theatres for its "transitional" features
in layout and arrangement which foreshadowed the advent of
the modern theatre design.

Inside the stagehouse, the Tainter accommodates an
odd mixture of the traditional and the transitional items
required for the staging of a dramatic production. While
the Tainter was similar to other progressive theatres in
architecture, such was not the case in its use of scenery,
as it continued to rely on the conventional wing and border
setting. In this respect, the Tainter is typical not to
the eastern theatres but of its geographical counterparts.
Lighting is unquestionably one of the features removing the
Tainter from the typical rural opera house which, until the
turn of the century, continued to rely on gas as an
illuminant.

The Tainter Theatre, then, was a part of both
metropolitan and provincial tradition. Like the larger
theatres in the east, considerable care was taken
to incorporate features in the auditorium conducive to better visibility, comfort, and an overall feeling of grandeur and luxury. With the exception of the sophisticated electrical driven machinery, similarities between the Tainter and the well equipped theatres in the area of the stagehouse are evidenced by the thoroughness of the staging system, the related service areas, and the method of illumination. Conversely, the Tainter is more than a well designed "miniature" eastern theatre. Like most other small opera houses, traditional practices continued to prevail long after they had been dismissed by the larger and better equipped theatres in the metropolitan areas. Moreover, the Tainter stands as representative of that building found in every hamlet of America at this time -- a building considered the pride of the community, and one which accommodated not only theatrical activity, but a multiplicity of purposes and events for all those concerned.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER V


2. OSUTC Film No. 8. "Booth's Theatre Behind the Scenes" (May 28, 1870).


5. Green, p. 166.


7. Green, p. 171.

8. Ibid., p. 172.

9. Ibid.


11. Ibid., p. 220.


14 Fox, VI, No. 188, p. 36.
15 Ibid., VI, No. 189, pp. 43, 44.
18 Green, p. 178.
19 Ibid., p. 176.
20 Ibid., p. 173.
21 Held, p. 148.
22 Ibid., p. 157.
23 Dunn County News, December 15, 1888.
24 OSUTC Film No. 784. "The Chicago Auditorium."
25 Green, pp. 181, 182.
26 OSUTC Film No. 784.
27 Dunn County News, December 15, 1888.
28 Held, p. 204.
29 OSUTC Film No. 784.
30 Green, p. 176.
31 Ibid., p. 184.
32 Edwards, p. 310.
33 Ibid., p. 312.
34 Ibid., p. 313.
35 Green, p. 176.
36 Held, p. 128.

38 Edwards, p. 297.


40 Hopkins, p. 255.


CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Menomonie's evolution from a small stopping point for trappers to the home of one of the world's largest soft lumber industries stimulated changes in nearly every facet of its economic, social, and cultural framework. During this time, men's energies and interests concentrated on the slashing of the virgin white pine forests of Wisconsin, and, as the earnings of the Menomonie lumber firm of Knapp, Stout, and Company soared upward, so, too, did the city's population and its attendant need for community leadership, public buildings, and service utilities. The lumber barons, Andrew Tainter among them, assumed civic and community leadership as a part of their role in this profitable frontier existence. Through their efforts most of the initial public needs were satisfied, including churches, banks, schools, and service utilities.

One building, in particular, did more than satisfy the people's immediate needs. It came to serve as a reminder of one family's love for their daughter as well as their concern for the community at large. The citizens felt great pride not only in its architectural beauty, but
because the building served as a pivotal ingredient for Menomonie's social, educational, religious, and cultural development for more than three-quarters of a century. That building is the Mabel Tainter Memorial. Standing in the center of the city's business district, the massive Romanesque sandstone structure, seemingly unaffected by the progress and technology of the twentieth century, reflects a bygone era of artistry, opulence, and confidence.

The outstanding architectural quality and beauty of the Tainter, as well as its diversified services for the community, are attributed to what has been described as the fortunate blend of specific circumstances plus the four key individuals responsible for the structure. The primary mover of the four was the energetic lumber baron, Andrew Tainter, whose one-third interest in Knapp, Stout, and Company established him as one of the community's most respected and solvent men. Complementing Andrew's fortune was the sincere appreciation for the arts and education evidenced by his wife, Bertha Tainter. The third person responsible for the building was a Unitarian minister, the Reverend Henry Doty Maxson, who conceived the idea of the Memorial as well as its name. From the architectural firm of LeRoy S. Buffington came the fourth person -- the gifted genius, Harvey Ellis -- who was the chief contributor to the building's outstanding architectural quality.
Following an intensive year of planning and construction, the Tainter was formally dedicated on July 3, 1890. An inventory of expenses, revealed through a lawsuit brought by the architect, set the total cost of the structure and its contents at approximately $105,000. Foresight on the part of the donors was evidenced in the form of a corporation organized at their request for the purpose of receiving the building and executing its prescribed uses. Without question, the explicit instructions regarding the uses of the building saved the Tainter more than once from renovation or complete destruction.

Just as the Tainters' wealth was equalled by their foresight, so too was this foresight matched by their generosity. The building was designed not only to fill the cultural hiatus existing in Menomonie in 1890, but also to satisfy the wide range of interests and basic social needs of people of all ages. To the latter end, the building contained a library, billiard room, young men's club room, dining room, sewing room, meeting rooms, and a home for the Unitarian Society.

The highlight of the building, and the area central to this study, is the theatre. During its active period, the theatre accommodated at least five separate forms of activities including civic gatherings, novelty acts, religious services, musical programs, and dramatic productions. Between 1890 and 1939 approximately three
hundred productions by some ninety travelling companies
played the Tainter. Unlike Menomonie's only other
legitimate theatre, the Grand Opera House, the Tainter's
theatrical fare concerned itself with intellectual content
as well as surface entertainment. With the advent of the
movies in 1909, the Tainter's theatre found operation more
difficult and, by 1916, had bowed to the inevitable by
showing its first film, *Birth of a Nation*. The second
decade of the twentieth century confirmed what legitimate
theatre managers feared most -- the rise of the cinema and
the gradual decline of live theatre. In the final decade
of theatre activity in the Tainter, plays became less
frequent and increasingly inferior in quality. In
February of 1939 the Tainter hosted its last professional
dramatic production. Aside from graduation exercises and
occasional meetings, the theatre remained dark for the next
twenty years. Then, in the late 1950's, following a
successful move to oppose the renovation of the auditorium
for city offices, interested citizens formed the Menomonie
Theatre Guild and the Mabel Tainter Preservation Society.
Through the efforts of the Theatre Guild, the stagehouse
was restored to working order and, in the past ten years,
the group has produced more than thirty plays on the
Tainter stage. The restoration of the auditorium, under
the leadership of the Preservation Society, neared
completion in 1969.
The four objectives of this study were outlined in the introduction. A detailed and microscopic study of the theatres' facilities, in terms of these objectives, yielded the following observations and conclusions. The first objective -- a descriptive examination of the Tainter structure and its contents -- confirmed the writer's contention that the building has remained unaltered, save for a few minor changes, over the past seventy-nine years.

Two sources of material proved valuable in determining the manner in which the stage was used for the presentation of dramatic productions: first, the stage itself and all its furnishings and equipment and, second, the reviews of some of the productions in the Dunn County News between 1890 and 1912. While the reviews provided interesting accounts of some of the more spectacular scenic and lighting effects attempted on the Tainter stage, neither the reviews nor the physical facility suggested any staging or lighting practice not common to more suitably equipped theatres of this period.

For the purpose of placing the Tainter in the perspective of the late nineteenth century theatre structure -- the third objective of the study -- a survey of transitional theatre structures from 1860 to 1900 was recorded. The period, in general, was characterized by a series of changes, modifications, and inventions in the areas of architecture and stage technology which foreshadowed the
modern theatre of the twentieth century. As for the Tainter's relationship to the theatre of its time, the examination revealed that it was highly reflective of both those theatres which tended to retain traditional forms and practices as well as of the more progressive theatres which accepted architectural and staging innovations in favor of the conventional methods and forms. Specifically, the Tainter was found to be most progressive in its auditorium layout and design, reflecting the progressive tendency toward accepting the flattened-shaped ellipse balcony in favor of the traditional sweeping horseshoe balcony, and the trend toward adopting the fan-shaped auditorium and dismissing the conventional parquet.

The Tainter stagehouse, unlike the auditorium, is much more traditional in both its layout and furnishings. The handling of scenery was accomplished by two conventional methods: the flat groove system and the pin and rail fly system. The majority of the theatre's original scenery, purchased in 1690, was designed for the flat groove system. In this respect the Tainter proved to be more similar to the average well-equipped playhouse which tended to retain traditional staging practices long after they had been abandoned by the more progressive theatres. However, this is not to imply that the Tainter was similar to the typical frontier theatre, for such was not the case. Unlike those of a vast majority of its geographic counterparts, the
Tainter's stagehouse was a thoroughly well planned facility as evidenced by its functional pin and rail, flat grooves, three elevator traps, and complete electrical lighting system, its level stage floor, and its series of windlasses.

Architecturally, the exterior of the Tainter bears no stylistic relationship to the interior -- an architectural trend of the time. Both architectural styles, the Romanesque exterior and the Moorish interior, were in vogue during the time of the Tainter's construction, and neither adhere to the pure and historically correct forms from which they were drawn.

In answer to the final objective, I have drawn the following conclusions concerning the Tainter's value. First, no established theories pertaining to the physical facets of the nineteenth-century theatre were refuted. Second, a study of the Tainter further substantiates the contention that the physical theatre of the second half of the nineteenth century -- the transitional theatre -- was a highly fragmented one. Third, the existence of the stagehouse machinery, particularly the stage traps, permits an accurate and reliable working impression of their operation, appearance and construction. As was noted, the material provided by Rees, Rose, and Hopkins now can be supplemented considerably by both actual photographs and the researcher's firsthand account of the Tainter traps.
In this instance, the source material found in the Tainter not only confirms what has been described in textual terms and rough engravings, but, more importantly, permits both detailed examination of the nineteenth-century stage trap's construction, appearance, and mechanical operation, and the recording of the results of that examination in published form. Fourth, the Tainter, as a whole, provides a definite impression of a late nineteenth-century theatre, complete in its furnishings and unaltered in its layout. Through a firsthand examination of the entire facility over an extended period of time, I was able to uncover and record intricate details of theatre construction seldom included in textual descriptions or even architectural plans.

In itself, the study illustrates more fully what has been considered common practice. Along with additional studies of the period, it serves as a portion of the information necessary to the eventual writing of the entire history of the nineteenth-century American theatre. This study, then, represents one additional step taken in the total reconstruction of America's "lost" nineteenth-century theatre.
## APPENDIX A

### THEATRICAL ACTIVITY FROM 1890 - 1939

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<tr>
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<th>Production</th>
<th>Company</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 17, 1890</td>
<td><strong>Ermine</strong></td>
<td>Wilbur Opera Co.</td>
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<td>May 4, 1891</td>
<td><strong>Under a Cloud</strong></td>
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<td>May 5, 1891</td>
<td><strong>The Shadows of a Home</strong></td>
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<td>May 6, 1891</td>
<td><strong>Mixed Pickels</strong></td>
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<td>May 7, 1891</td>
<td><strong>The Silver King</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Faust</strong></td>
<td>The Morrison Co.</td>
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<td>June 8, 1891</td>
<td><strong>East Lynne</strong></td>
<td>Noble Dramatic Co.</td>
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<td>June 29, 1891</td>
<td><strong>After Dark</strong></td>
<td>McCutcheon-Cooley Co.</td>
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<td>July 1, 1891</td>
<td><strong>The Hidden Hand</strong></td>
<td>McCutcheon-Cooley Co.</td>
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<td>Aug. 23, 1891</td>
<td><strong>Pete Petersen</strong></td>
<td>Armstrong Dramatic Co.</td>
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<td>Nov. 11, 1891</td>
<td><strong>Alvin Joslin</strong></td>
<td>Charles L. Davis Co.</td>
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<td>Apr. 8, 1892</td>
<td><strong>Little Trixie</strong></td>
<td>Mary Robbins Co.</td>
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<td>Aug. 13, 1892</td>
<td><strong>Wait Til the Clouds Roll By</strong></td>
<td>Frank M. Wills Co.</td>
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<td>Sep. 17, 1892</td>
<td><strong>Tom's Vacation</strong></td>
<td>Royce and Lansing Co.</td>
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<td>Nov. 14, 1892</td>
<td><strong>In Honor Bound That Girl From Mexico</strong></td>
<td>Sidney Drew Co.</td>
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Nov. 27, 1894  Amorita  Calhoun Opera Co.
Dec. 25, 1894  Our New Congressman  John Dillon Co.
Mar. 27, 1895  Alabama  Thomas Dramatic Co.
Sep. 30, 1895  Faust  The Morrison Co.
May 1, 1896  Nelle Gwynne  Madame Rhea and Co.
July 16, 1896  The Merchant of Venice  William Owen Co.
Jan. 4, 1897  Damon and Pythias  Sanford Dodge Co.
Oct. 31, 1898  The Lady of Lyons  William Owen Co.
Dec. 3, 1898  Shaft Number Two  Edwin Travers Co.
Mar. 16, 1899  A Bachelor's Honeymoon  Ward and Sackett's Comedians
Feb. 20, 1900  The Jolly Little Host  The Corrine Co.
June 5, 1900  A Guilded Fool  William Owen Co.
Aug. 10, 1900  The Sleeping Queen  Myrta Opera Co.
Sep. 27, 1900  Cyrano de Bergerac  Slayton Stock Co.
Jan. 19, 1901  Richelieu  William Owen Co.
Sep. 25, 1901  A Wise Woman  Lamour Co.
Nov. 30, 1901  Romeo and Juliet  William Owen Co.
Oct. 23, 1902  Thelma, A Norwegian Princess  Benedict Co.
Nov. 14, 1902  The School for Scandal  William Owen Co.
Nov. 5, 1903  When Louis XI Was King  William Owen Co.
May 18, 1904  In Louisiana  The Louisiana Co.
Sep. 29, 1904  Jappe Paa Bjerget  Anton Sannas and Co.
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<td>The Lady of Lyons</td>
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<td>Dec. 28, 1905</td>
<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
<td>Margaret Ralph Co.</td>
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<td>Sep. 13, 1906</td>
<td>Over Niagara Falls</td>
<td>Niagara Dramatic Co.</td>
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<td>Dec. 17, 1906</td>
<td>The Poor Relation</td>
<td>Lee D. Ellsworth Co.</td>
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<td>Feb. 7, 1907</td>
<td>The Holy City</td>
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<td>Sep. 9, 1907</td>
<td>The Schoolmaster</td>
<td>The Woodford Stock Co.</td>
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<td>Sep. 24, 1907</td>
<td>St. Plunkard</td>
<td>J.C. Lewis and Co.</td>
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<td>May 20, 1908</td>
<td>My Boy Jack</td>
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<td>Oct. 6, 1908</td>
<td>The Holy City</td>
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<td>Miss Petticoats</td>
<td>Lamour Co.</td>
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<td>Dec. 15, 1908</td>
<td>Quincy Adams Sawyer</td>
<td>Sawyer Co.</td>
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<td>Jan. 12, 1909</td>
<td>A Curious Mishap</td>
<td>Donald Robertson Co.</td>
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<td>May 27, 1909</td>
<td>The Art of Life</td>
<td>Donald Robertson Co.</td>
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<td>Aug. 18, 1909</td>
<td>In the Valley of Kentucky</td>
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<td>As You Like It</td>
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<td>Two Married Men</td>
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<td>Mar. 11, 1910</td>
<td>House of a Thousand Candles</td>
<td>National Road Co.</td>
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<td>Gean Ward and Co.</td>
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<td>The Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>Associate Players Co.</td>
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<td>Oct. 8, 1910</td>
<td>Rosalind at Red Gate</td>
<td>Jane Babcock and Co.</td>
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<td>The Wolf</td>
<td>Rowland and Clifford Co.</td>
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<td>The Lion and the Mouse</td>
<td>The Lyceum Theatre Co.</td>
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<td>Mar. 22, 1911</td>
<td>The Rosary</td>
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<td>Barriers Burned Away</td>
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<td>The Travelling Salesman</td>
<td>Forbes Co.</td>
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<td>Wagenall and Kemper Co.</td>
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<td>Oct. 24, 1912</td>
<td>The Fortune Hunter</td>
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<td>Married in Haste</td>
<td>L. B. Parker Co.</td>
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<td>The Man Who Stood Still</td>
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<td>May 13, 1913</td>
<td>A Stranger from Berlin</td>
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<td>May 14, 1913</td>
<td>Our Cousin Fritz</td>
<td>Winninger Co.</td>
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<td>Aug. 25, 1913</td>
<td>The Shepherd of the Hills</td>
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<td>Aug. 30, 1913</td>
<td>The Great Divide</td>
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<td>Kauffman and Co.</td>
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<td>Madame X</td>
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<td>The Thief</td>
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<td>Oct. 13, 1913</td>
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<td>Where the Trail Divides</td>
<td>C. S. Primrose Co.</td>
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<td>A Bachelor's Honeymoon</td>
<td>Frankenfield and Co.</td>
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<td>Mar. 24, 1914</td>
<td>That Printer of Odell's</td>
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<td>Mar. 27, 1914</td>
<td>Within the Law</td>
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<td>May 7, 1914</td>
<td>A Fool and His Money</td>
<td>Guy Kauffman and Co.</td>
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<td>Don't Lie to Your Wife</td>
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<td>The Isle of Smiles</td>
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<td>Sep. 17, 1914</td>
<td>Kappler's Fortune</td>
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<td>Sep. 26, 1914</td>
<td>Way Down East</td>
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<td>Dec. 1, 1914</td>
<td>The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary</td>
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Dec. 11, 1914  The Lion and The Mouse  United Play Co.
Jan. 29, 1915  The Winning of Barbara Worth  C. S. Primrose Co.
May 24, 1915  The Missouri Girl  Gaskell-McVitty Co.
Aug. 16, 1915  A Royal Gentleman  C. S. Primrose Co.
Aug. 31, 1915  The Calling of Dan Matthews  Studebaker Theatre Co.
Sep. 16, 1915  The Million Dollar Doll  Winninger Co.
Aug. 28, 1916  The Divorce Question  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Sep. 19, 1916  Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm  Gaskell-McVitty Co.
Mar. 16, 1917  Fair and Warmer  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Oct.  4, 1917  The Virginian  Kauffman and Co.
Nov. 19, 1917  The End of a Perfect Day  Winninger Co.
Apr. 29, 1918  Peggy O'Moore  Winninger Co.
Apr. 30, 1918  Broadway and Buttermilk  Winninger Co.
May  1, 1918  The Other Waif  Winninger Co.
May  2, 1918  The Deep Purple  Winninger Co.
May  3, 1918  The Innocence of Youth  Winninger Co.
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<td>May 4, 1918</td>
<td><em>The Barrier</em></td>
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<td><em>Wildfire</em></td>
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<td><em>A Night in Honolulu</em></td>
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<td><em>My Irish Cinderella</em></td>
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<td><em>Johnny Get Your Gun</em></td>
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<td><em>Birds of Prey</em></td>
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<td>Nov. 16, 1918</td>
<td><em>Blindness of Virtue</em></td>
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<td><em>Erstwhile Susan</em></td>
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<td>Feb. 18, 1919</td>
<td><em>Some Baby</em></td>
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<td><em>A Little Mother</em></td>
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<td><em>Il Trovatori</em></td>
<td>International Operatic Co.</td>
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<td><em>Oh Girlie Girlie</em></td>
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<td><em>Rolling Stones</em></td>
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<td><em>Cheating Cheaters</em></td>
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<td><em>Our New Minister</em></td>
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Oct. 16, 1919  A Good for Nothing Husband  Gifford Young Stock Co.
Oct. 17, 1919  The Naughty Bride  Gifford Young Stock Co.
Nov. 5, 1919  The Chocolate Soldier  International Operatic Co.
Feb. 27, 1920  Bringing Up Father In Society  Gifford Sisters Stock Co.
Apr. 8, 1920  Too Many Brides  Otis Oliver Players
Apr. 9, 1920  The Lure  Otis Oliver Players
Apr. 10, 1920  The Soul of Broadway  Otis Oliver Players
Apr. 15, 1920  Robin Hood  Ralph Dunbar Players
Apr. 18, 1920  Going Straight  Winninger Co.
Apr. 19, 1920  Here Comes the Bride  Winninger Co.
Apr. 20, 1920  The Only Son  Winninger Co.
Apr. 21, 1920  Which One Shall I Marry  Winninger Co.
Apr. 22, 1920  My Irish Rose Elevating a Husband  Winninger Co.
May 18, 1920  Jim's Girl  Gifford Young Stock Co.
Sep. 10, 1920  Profit and Loss  Claude Boardman and Co.
Sep. 20, 1920  Tilly  Winninger Co.
Sep. 21, 1920  Cappy Ricks  Winninger Co.
Sep. 22, 1920  The Fox  Winninger Co.
Sep. 23, 1920  Nothing But the Truth  Winninger Co.
Sep. 24, 1920  Merely Mary Ann  Winninger Co.
Nov. 29, 1920 The Brat Beach-Jones Stock Co.
Jan. 20, 1921 The Price She Paid The McDermott Players
Feb. 9, 1921 The Gumps Gifford Young Stock Co.
Mar. 7, 1921 Nighty Night Stanley-Matthews Stock Co.
Apr. 4, 1921 What's Your Husband Doing? Winninger Co.
Apr. 5, 1921 One of Us Winninger Co.
Apr. 6, 1921 A Voice in the Dark Winninger Co.
Apr. 7, 1921 She Walked in Her Sleep Winninger Co.
Apr. 8, 1921 Branded Winninger Co.
Apr. 10, 1921 The Dangerous Ape Winninger Co.
Apr. 18, 1921 The Mikado Ralph Dunbar and Co.
Aug. 29, 1921 The Call of the Blood Hans Hanson Players
Sep. 19, 1921 Officer 666 Earl Young and Co.
Oct. 10, 1921 A Night in Honolulu C. S. Primrose Co.
Nov. 7, 1921 A Modern Reformer Winninger Co.
Nov. 8, 1921 Adam and Eve Winninger Co.
Nov. 9, 1921 Never Say Die Winninger Co.
Nov. 10, 1921 Wedding Bells Winninger Co.
Mar. 13, 1922 Buddies Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Apr. 20, 1922 The Sign on the Door Winninger Co.
Apr. 21, 1922 Scrambled Wives Winninger Co.
Apr. 22, 1922  The Ruined Lady  Winninger Co.
Apr. 23, 1922  Smilin' Through  Winninger Co.
Apr. 24, 1922  The Matrimonial Beehive  Winninger Co.
Apr. 25, 1922  Blind Youth  Winninger Co.
Oct.  5, 1922  The Love Bandit  Winninger Co.
Feb.  1, 1923  Bringing Up Father On Vacation  Gifford Young Stock Co.
Mar. 12, 1923  The Rosary  Loranger Stock Co.
Jan. 21, 1924  Keep It to Yourself  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Jan. 22, 1924  Nighty Night  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Jan. 23, 1924  Put it Off Peter  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Jan. 24, 1924  The Daughter of Mother McCree  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Jan. 25, 1924  Adam and Eve  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Jan. 26, 1924  Up in Mabel's Room  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Jan. 27, 1924  Before Breakfast  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Oct. 11, 1924  My Dream Girl  Beach-Jones Stock Co.
Nov. 10, 1924  The First Year  Winninger Co.
Nov. 11, 1924  The Old Soak  Winninger Co.
Nov. 12, 1924  The Lady Killer  Winninger Co.
Nov. 13, 1924  Connie Goes Home  Winninger Co.
Nov. 14, 1924  Saintly Hippocrates and Honest Sinners  Winninger Co.
Nov. 15, 1924  Thumbs Down  Winninger Co.
Dec. 1, 1924  Light Wine and Beer  Winninger Co.
Dec. 2, 1924  Give and Take  Winninger Co.
Sep. 21, 1925  The Sap  Winninger Co.
Nov. 2, 1925  Dolly of the Follies  The Fred Reeth Players
Apr. 16, 1926  Fool's Gold  The Fred Reeth Players
Apr. 17, 1926  Samanthy  The Fred Reeth Players
Aug. 5, 1926  Apple Sauce  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Aug. 6, 1926  The Show Off  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Aug. 7, 1926  Oh Henry  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Sep. 13, 1926  Her Dangerous Hour  The J. B. Rotnour Players
Feb. 7, 1927  So This Is London  Winninger Co.
Feb. 8, 1927  My Son  Winninger Co.
Feb. 9, 1927  The Four Flusher  Winninger Co.
Feb. 10, 1927  Dancing Mothers  Winninger Co.
Feb. 11, 1927  Beat People  Winninger Co.
Feb. 12, 1927  Jack in the Pulpit  Winninger Co.
May 19, 1927  Just Married  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
May 20, 1927  Pigs  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
May 21, 1927  Billy  Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.
Sep. 12, 1927  Dora Thorns  The J. B. Rotnour Players
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<td>Seventh Heaven</td>
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<td>Apr. 28, 1928</td>
<td>The Poor Nut</td>
<td>Better Plays Extension Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 9, 1929</td>
<td>This Thing Called Love</td>
<td>Winninger Co.</td>
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<td>Jan. 15, 1931</td>
<td>Gossip</td>
<td>Obrecht Sisters Stock Co.</td>
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<td>Oct. 5, 1931</td>
<td>Cooking Her Goose</td>
<td>Winninger Co.</td>
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<td>Oct. 6, 1931</td>
<td>Let and Sublet</td>
<td>Winninger Co.</td>
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<td>Oct. 8, 1931</td>
<td>Perpetual Youth</td>
<td>Winninger Co.</td>
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<td>Oct. 9, 1931</td>
<td>The Only Road</td>
<td>Winninger Co.</td>
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<td>Oct. 10, 1931</td>
<td>For Crying Out Loud</td>
<td>Winninger Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 13, 1933</td>
<td>Her Unborn Child</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Jan. 8, 1934</td>
<td>This Love Racket</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Jan. 18, 1934</td>
<td>In the Wrong Bed</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Jan. 29, 1934</td>
<td>The Comeback</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Feb. 5, 1934</td>
<td>Movie Madness</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Feb. 12, 1934</td>
<td>Mystery Mansion</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Feb. 19, 1934</td>
<td>Stepping Daddies</td>
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<td>Feb. 26, 1934</td>
<td>Tropical Love</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Mar. 5, 1934</td>
<td>Peggy Comes to Stay</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Mar. 12, 1934</td>
<td>His Temporary Wife</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Mar. 19, 1934</td>
<td>Spite Street</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Mar. 26, 1934</td>
<td>Phantom at Large</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Apr. 2, 1934</td>
<td>Why Some Man Don't Marry</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Apr. 10, 1934</td>
<td>Cheating Wives</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Apr. 16, 1934</td>
<td>Why Girls Walk Home</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Apr. 23, 1934</td>
<td>The Showdown</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Apr. 30, 1934</td>
<td>The Humbug</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>May 7, 1934</td>
<td>The Vulture</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>May 14, 1934</td>
<td>Other People's Business</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>May 21, 1934</td>
<td>Let's Get Married</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Oct. 19, 1936</td>
<td>Dolly of the Follies</td>
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<td>Oct. 22, 1936</td>
<td>For Crying Out Loud</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Nov. 22, 1936</td>
<td>Bride for a Night</td>
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<td>Nov. 9, 1936</td>
<td>Almost Decent</td>
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<td>Jan. 7, 1937</td>
<td>Family Merry-Go-Round</td>
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<td>Feb. 18, 1937</td>
<td>Her Unborn Child</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Feb. 19, 1937</td>
<td>The Marriage Racket</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Apr. 6, 1937</td>
<td>Forced Landing</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Apr. 13, 1937</td>
<td>Going Straight</td>
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<td>Apr. 20, 1937</td>
<td>Governor's Lady</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>Apr. 27, 1937</td>
<td>G Men</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<td>May 11, 1937</td>
<td>The Woman Pays</td>
<td>Crago Players</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 22, 1939</td>
<td>Kiss Me I'm Fireproof</td>
<td>Big Ole Show Co.</td>
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APPENDIX B

Theatre Posters.—Arranged in chronological order.

Figure 127.

Figure 128.

Figure 129.

Figure 130.

Figure 131.

Figure 132.

267
Miscellaneous Posters.--No chronological order followed.

Figure 157.

Figure 158.

Figure 159.

Figure 160.

Figure 161.

Figure 162.

Figure 163.

Figure 164.

Figure 165.
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