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IN SPEARFISH, SOUTH DAKOTA AND LAKE WALES,
FLORIDA.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1974
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DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLACK HILLS PASSION
PLAY IN SPEARFISH, SOUTH DAKOTA
AND LAKE WALES, FLORIDA

DISSERTATION

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

By

James Campbell Wright, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1974

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

On the northern edge of the Black Hills of South Dakota, nestled in a fertile valley surrounded on three sides by the pine-clad mountains from which the district draws its name, is the little town of Spearfish. Some 2500 miles away, in the heart of Central Florida, located among miles and miles of orange groves, is the town of Lake Wales. Two totally different towns, they have a common denominator: in the summer at Spearfish and in the winter at Lake Wales thousands have witnessed the retelling of a story some 2000 years old. In both locations the BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY is presented.

As the lights are dimmed in the mammoth amphitheatre, a shaft of light illuminates a white-robed figure in center stage. Against a background of soft organ music, the audience hears:

Oh, ye children of God,
Ye, who live and breathe in His infinite love,
Open your hearts, and receive with childlike confidence His great message.

That which you will experience today, Oh, People,
Treasure well within your hearts;  
Let it be the Light to lead you -  
Until your last day.  

With the words of the Prologue, another performance of the BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY begins.  

For two and a half hours one scene blends into another as the play unfolds the story of Christ's last seven days on earth. The stage is filled with pageantry representing the ancient Middle East as mobs of people and animals march across the stage. Jesus makes His triumphal entry followed by a crowd of people praising Him and waving palm branches. The play then moves from a touching farewell at Bethany to the somber beauty of the Last Supper, the betrayal and trial scenes, the crucifixion, and the triumphant resurrection, then ends with a tableau of the Ascension as Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" resounds in the background.  

The history of the play in Spearfish and Lake Wales provides an exciting story as it reveals the aspirations and struggles of one man to make the play a permanent institution in this country. It also reveals the determination of two towns to provide facilities and support for the venture. Finally, it tells how one city fulfilled its part and how the other failed.  

Josef Meier, who plays the leading role of the Christus in the production, brought the play and a small troupe of actors to the United States from Germany in 1932. He and his troupe arrived in this country during the depression
years and endured many hardships while touring the play. Even though he faced many difficulties, Meier decided to remain in America, to become a citizen, and to develop the play into a permanent institution somewhere in the United States. Consequently, he began to search for a permanent location for his production.

Meier's search for a home ended in 1938. In that year businessman Guy Bell of Spearfish, South Dakota, was seeking a tourist attraction for that small town. He heard of the LUENEN PASSION PLAY, the name of Meier's production, while it was playing an engagement in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and decided it was the type of attraction his town needed. Bell and several South Dakota businessmen contacted Meier in an effort to persuade him to settle in the Black Hills. Meier, in turn, sent his representative to Spearfish to investigate the area and, if it proved satisfactory, to negotiate an agreement with the Black Hills businessmen. Eventually an agreement was reached, consisting, in part, of a pledge from the Black Hills group to build an amphitheatre to house the production, since Meier had decided to make the play an outdoor presentation. In the ensuing summer months of 1938, Meier brought the play to the Black Hills for a brief run and approved a location for the amphitheatre. The site was later purchased and the facility built.

The play was renamed the BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY OF AMERICA and commenced its first outdoor summer season in
1939. It has been presented every summer since with the exception of five years during WWII when gas and tire rationing prevented tourist travel. Meier continued to tour for a little while during the war years but soon had to abandon that also. Initially Meier was to be a tenant in the amphitheatre and a local corporation was formed to build and manage it. The two groups planned to divide the proceeds on a percentage basis, but when financial problems plagued the corporation during the first two seasons the officials asked Meier to assume complete control and responsibility of the entire operation and the amphitheatre. Subsequently, through hard work and perseverance, Meier has developed the play into a permanent institution in the Black Hills which has attracted over 100,000 people during the summer season. Meier has also built, rebuilt, and made changes and additions to the amphitheatre to the degree that it is now one of the most modern and attractive facilities for presenting outdoor theatre in the United States and is valued at between one to two million dollars.

Meier planned to terminate production tours during the winter season when the play became financially secure in the Black Hills. This goal took much longer to achieve than anticipated, as the attendance did not increase as rapidly after the first season as expected. Therefore he had to continue the tours to meet expenses.

Because the summer production did not become financially
independent as rapidly as planned, Meier began to entertain the idea of a winter outdoor season somewhere in the United States. In the summer of 1951, businessmen in Lake Wales, Florida, were seeking a winter tourist attraction for their city. The Black Hills Passion Play was suggested, and members of the Chamber of Commerce voted to send a delegation to South Dakota to talk to Meier. In turn, the delegation and Meier negotiated a ten-year contract to bring the production to Florida for an eight-to-ten-week winter season.

Lake Wales, located in the heart of Florida, is a short drive from Tampa, Orlando, and Cypress Gardens. The people of Lake Wales, with the assistance of a grant from the State of Florida, raised nearly $125,000 to build an amphitheatre to house the production. In this small Central Florida city, on a stage setting that is a reproduction of the one used in Spearfish, the Black Hills Passion Play was presented for the first time in January, 1953. Despite many financial hardships the corporation that was formed to build and manage the amphitheatre has continued to operate the facility. The attendance has gradually grown until the play now attracts over 50,000 spectators yearly.

The fulfillment of the dream to make the Passion Play an established institution in the Black Hills during the summer and in Central Florida during the winter, and to establish its place in American culture, has not been an easy goal for Josef Meier to achieve. He has faced a multitude
of problems in his efforts.

The Black Hills Passion Play provides an interesting subject for the basis of this study. The objectives of the study, a brief synopsis of the script, and a general history of the play prior to 1938 follow in this chapter. In subsequent chapters an in-depth account of the development of the facilities and production in both locations and the production's managerial organizational operations are discussed. The study ends by assessing Meier's influence on the production, by comparing the operation at the two sites, and by determining the major impact of the production on both cities.

Objectives of the Study

The Black Hills Passion Play is unique in the field of outdoor drama, as the production is one of the few, if not the only one, in the United States to be presented outdoors in both summer and winter seasons. Also it is one of the very few of the present outdoor dramas to be written, directed, and owned by one individual. Josef Meier, who owns the production and plays the leading role, is approaching his seventieth birthday. He was ill during most of the summer season in 1973. Because of his age and the illness, he began to contemplate retirement from acting in the near future. With but one exception he has accomplished his wishes in developing the physical facilities in Spearfish. The
formative era of the production has run its course, and a study of the production is appropriate.

The foremost purpose of the study is to provide an historical account of the development of the production in the two cities. The Spearfish operation began in 1938 when Meier decided to settle in the Black Hills. A corporation was formed to raise funds to acquire land, and to build and manage an amphitheatre for which Meier would be primarily a tenant. Financial difficulties forced the corporation to disband, and Meier assumed complete control and responsibility for the physical facilities in addition to owning the production. The story became one man's struggle to achieve a goal.

The Lake Wales project was somewhat different. A corporation was formed to acquire land and to build and manage an amphitheatre. However, the corporation has remained in existence, and the emphasis has been on an effort to provide and maintain an amphitheatre for the production.

Even though the major thrust of the study is a historical summary, several secondary purposes will be realized, including a descriptive study of the managerial operation of the production with a discussion of directorial problems, personnel selection considerations, special problems peculiar to outdoor productions, and promotional activities of the production.

A study of the Black Hills Passion Play is incomplete
without considering the artistic influence of Josef Meier on the production itself. He arranged the script, directed the production, and played the leading role of the Christus. He has had the tenacity to keep his goal of the survival of his production in mind and to overcome many obstacles in achieving that goal. In recognition of his efforts, Meier has received many awards including a Freedoms Foundation Award for the production, an honorary doctorate degree, and the South Dakotan of-the-year award. While such presentations were probably made more because of his managerial contributions, the role of the Christus remains one of Meier's prime interests even though he has played the role over two thousand times in Spearfish and Lake Wales during summer and winter seasons, plus nearly five thousand times as the play toured from the early 1930's to the early 1960's. Through his ownership, directing, and acting he has literally created the destiny of the production.

Business leaders and city fathers in the two locales where the play is presented agree that the production has become accepted and established in both locations.

A major limitation in this study concerns the financial aspects of the production. A full disclosure of financial records was not possible to obtain; consequently infrequently published accounts or statements comprised the major portion of the obtainable financial information. This made it necessary to omit a detailed financial accounting for the
production, but the financial information that was available has been used whenever it seemed most advantageous for the study.

Synopsis of the Script

A short synopsis of the script is presented here to give the reader a background regarding its content as a bases for understanding many of the terms used regarding the history and other facets of the production.

The play is performed on a slightly curved stage some 300 feet wide by 30 feet deep in front of a permanent simultaneous setting representing various locales in and around Jerusalem. After the houselights dim, the curtain opens on the central stage unit and a shaft of light illuminates the solitary figure of Josef Meier who recites the prologue.

The story then opens as Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (figure 1). The Christus enters riding on a donkey, followed by His admirers, many of whom want and believe He will be crowned the King. The Christus is, however, rebuked by the priests who resent Him, believing that He endangers their work. After healing a blind man, the Christus enters the Temple and becomes so angry with the prevailing conditions that He drives out the desecrators. This concludes Scene One.

The High Priests and Scribes hold council with Caiaphas in Scene Two and decide Jesus must be disposed of as He is
becoming too much of a threat to them. After discussing ways to rid themselves of Him, the suggestion is made to enlist the aid of Judas, one of the disciples of Jesus who is well known for his love of money, to find and arrest Jesus when He is away from crowds.

Scenes Three and Four shift to Bethany at the home of His good friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (the Bethany setting is shown in figure 2). Jesus returned to Bethany to bid farewell to His mother as He knows He will soon die. Little children flock to see Jesus, and Judas tries to prevent the children from approaching but is rebuked by Jesus. A rift begins to grow between the two as Judas voices his objection to Mary's wasting precious ointment to anoint the head and feet of Jesus during a banquet scene and is again rebuked by Jesus.
Scenes Five and Six reveal that the rift between Jesus and Judas has grown to the point that Judas is persuaded to betray his Master. On the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, Judas complains about the shortage of funds and Jesus warns him, "See that the tempter does not overtake thee." Once the group reaches Jerusalem, Judas lingers in the streets and is approached by some of the priests. Finally Judas agrees to betray and aid in the capture of Jesus.

Scene Seven portrays the Last Supper (figure 4). The staging closely resembles da Vinci's famous painting of the event. Jesus joins the twelve disciples to break bread and, at this point, tells them that one of the group will betray Him. He identifies Judas as the one.

Judas leaves the group and in Scene Eight goes to keep
Figure 3. Judas agrees to betray Jesus

Figure 4. The Last Supper
his appointment with the Priests in the High Priest Council room to make plans for the betrayal.

While Judas is with the High Priests, Jesus leads the remainder of the disciples from the Upper Room into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Suddenly out of the darkness Judas appears with the officials and soldiers, identifies Jesus with a kiss, and He is apprehended.

Jesus is led to the High Priest's council room in Scene Eleven to stand trial (figure 5). He is quickly condemned to death and then led away. Judas, realizing his mistake, enters the council room and, begging for the freedom of his Master, returns the thirty pieces of silver. The priests remind him, however, that a bargain has been made and will remain in effect.

Five of the next six scenes depict Jesus before Pilate, with Herod, and returning to Pilate. From the council room where the Priests condemned Jesus they take Him before Pilate who cannot find fault in Him. Wishing to avoid an unpleasant issue and relieve himself of the responsibility, Pilate decides to send Jesus to King Herod who happens to be in Jerusalem because of the Passover Feast. Herod, making sport of Jesus, presents Him with a purple cloak and a scepter and proclaims Jesus the "King of Fools." Herod believes Jesus' case is a political issue and, not wanting to make a decision that would cause too much agitation among the religious leaders, he decides to send Jesus back to
Figure 5. Jesus before the High Priests

Figure 6. Jesus before King Herod
Pilate, also wanting to avoid a controversy, assures the Priests he will have Jesus lashed with a whip before setting Him free. The Priests refuse to accept the decision. Pilate, thinking he can avoid a confrontation with the Priests and at the same time free Jesus, decides to leave the choice to the people as to whether he should let Jesus or Barabbas go free, as it was the custom to let a prisoner go free at the Passover Feast time.

Incited by the Priests, an angry mob gathers at Pilate's palace and demands that Jesus be crucified. Finally Pilate gives in to the crowd's demand to let Barabbas go free and to have Jesus crucified. In an effort to show his unwillingness to accept the responsibility for the crucifixion, Pilate literally washes his hands of the affair and then orders his guards to make the necessary preparations to have Jesus crucified.

In the midst of the scenes when Jesus faced the Roman hierarchy, Meier has written in one of the most dramatic scenes in the play. Judas, in Scene Fifteen, shows his remorse for his actions in a soliloquy that tries to humanize the role he has played. He reveals he is haunted by the immensity of his guilt and is unable to escape his own contrition. The heavy guilt leads him to hang himself.

The march to Golgotha is presented in Scene Eighteen. Mounted on white horses, the Roman guards lead the
procession to Golgotha. A highly intense scene in the play occurs as Jesus meets His mother. Her heart all but breaks at the sight of her suffering son. The guards get the procession moving again, and it slowly winds its way to Golgotha.

Scene Nineteen is the crucifixion. Jesus is placed on the cross between two thieves. Asking the Father to forgive those who have placed Him on the cross, Jesus gives up the
spirit. Suddenly thunder and lightning break forth, and the people gathered at the cross run for their lives.

Figure 8. The Crucifixion

The elements finally calm. Scene Twenty shows the body of Jesus being reverently removed from the cross and carried to the tomb. The entrance to the tomb is sealed with a stone, and the Roman guards take up their watch to prevent anyone from trying to remove the body.

Suddenly the audience hears a thud as the stone in front of the tomb falls away, and the risen Jesus stands in a brilliant shaft of light. The next day the women come to anoint the body. As they approach the tomb they are greeted by an angel who proclaims, "Christ has risen."

The play concludes with a tableau of the Ascension (figure 10). In the background Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus"
Figure 9. The Resurrection

Figure 10. The Ascension
peals forth to reinforce the climax of the story.

For two and one-half hours one scene blends into another without an intermission. The audience members, who have been asked not to applaud, usually leave the amphitheatre in a rather hushed manner and wind their way to various means of transportation. Thus another performance of the Black Hills Passion Play has been concluded.

Background of the Play Prior to 1938

Passion plays have a long history in the theatre dating from the Medieval period when short playlets portrayed stories from the Bible. These simple dramatizations formed the foundation for the Medieval religious theatre. Passion plays developed from such beginnings in communities throughout Europe. Only a few have survived to the present time, with the most famous one being that enacted at Oberammergau, Bavaria, in southern Germany, every ten years as a result of a vow the villagers made in 1633.

According to Meier, the Luenen Passion Play he brought to the United States originated much earlier than the one at Oberammergau. He states his production was begun near Luenen, Westphalia, in northern Germany, by the monks of the Cappenbury Monastery in 1242 A.D. If so, the play would be nearly four hundred years older than the famous one at Oberammergau.

Gradually the play followed the trend of Medieval
theatre that originated in the church setting. Sometime during the seventeenth century, about the time the Passion Play at Oberammergau was conceived, the monks turned the production over to the laity. The townspeople then elaborated on the production and presented it during the Lenten season. Even though the laity took charge of the production, the play remained an indoor presentation.

Some changes in the Passion Play came about after the production was undertaken by lay actors. One of the first alterations was to change the dialogue from the liturgical Latin, the language of the original script, to the vernacular German. This change made the play more understandable to the viewers. Gradually as the play evolved, several tableaux about the early life of Christ, including the Bethlehem scene, His early ministry, and several others, were added to the play.

The first layman selected to play the Christus was one Heinrich Meier, a direct lineal ancestor of the present Josef Meier. This selection eventually led to the Luenen Passion Play's coming into the hands of the Meier family. Josef Meier states he is the seventh in his family to play the role of the Christus. It had become traditional for the role of the Christus to be handed down from father to son. Usually the eldest son was heir to the role, but when Josef's oldest brother died and the next in line for the role decided to go into the ministry, Josef became heir to
the part. During the early 1930's when the political situation was rapidly changing in Germany, Fred Hardesty of Pittsburgh saw the production and was impressed by it. He pleaded with Meier's father to bring the play to the United States; the elder Meier in turn asked Josef to give up his medical studies at the University of Munster and bring the Passion Play to America. After much deliberation between the Meiers and fellow neighbors, the final decision was reached to bring the play to America. In Meier's words,

I recruited ten principal players of the cast to go with me. Our company arrived in New York with an assortment of Biblical costumes, a brass chalice 300 years old, and a tattered text.

The first performance in this country was presented in Pittsbug at the Syria Mosque Theatre in 1932. The troupe then toured through Pennsylvania to Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, and then back to the East coast.

Meier made the first translation of the script into English while in Germany, but, after performing the play in this country for a few years became more fluent in English, and decided to rewrite the script in 1935. With this revision he eliminated several scenes and concentrated the story on the last seven days in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, which he believed constituted a more unified play for an American audience.

Simplicity was a major guideline in Meier's revision of the script. He wanted a story that could be both easily
understood and produced in a relatively short amount of
time. He decided also to rewrite many speeches and elimi-
nated several objections he had with the script. One dif-
ficulty centered on some of the speeches of the High Priests.
He believed the speeches contained crudities not character-
istic of the times.

Logic told me that the old version could not
be close to the truth. The priests, after
all, were the most scholarly people of the
time, and not given to hateful language, how-
ever bitter toward Jesus they may have been.10

Meier added a soliloquy for Judas that helped to humanize
the man as he ponders his reasons for his betrayal of
Christ. Minor changes have been made in the script since
1935, and Meier explains that changes will continue to be
made in order to achieve a greater clarity and stronger
dramatic impact.11 The playing time of the script is now
between two and one-quarter and two and one-half hours.

One of the innovations added to the play in the United
States has been the use of live animals in the cast.
Meier's use of a donkey for the Triumphal Entry launched a
greater desire for pageantry. Meier could not resist the
temptation to add more animals, and gradually camels, sheep,
dogs, horses, and even birds were added.12 The production
toured in almost every major city in the United States ex-
cept New York between the years 1932 and 1938. At the out-
set the actors played the "whistle-stop" circuit and deliv-
ered their lines in broken English. They had to serve as
their own stage hands and recruited extras to play the mob scenes. Times were very hard and often the audiences were very small. Many times company members were forced to do odd jobs to support themselves. As the group became more fluent in English, the script was rewritten, and the popularity of the play increased.

One lesson Meier learned while touring helped to guide the development of the production both in Spearfish and Lake Wales. He learned community support was essential for the production. He began to book his production through local sponsors. No matter what type of an organization sponsored the production, he also realized that the approval of the city's church leaders determined the production's financial success in any given city. He began to get church leaders in one city to recommend his production by letter to church leaders in another town. Also, he tried to get all of the clergy in a given city, regardless of their denomination or sentiments toward the play, to attend at least one performance. He discovered that when he was able to get the clergy to attend, he had greater success in getting an endorsement for the play, especially from the Catholic clergy. Today he tries to maintain community involvement in the play primarily through the use of townspeople to play the non-speaking roles.

Inspired by the growing reception of the play and its potential in this country, Meier decided to produce it
exclusively in this country, attempting to make it a permanent institution in American life. Along with Meier's decision to keep the play in this country, he decided to become an American citizen.16

Meier began to investigate locations for a permanent home for the production as he toured throughout the country. He had several specifications in his mind for the ideal city which would host his play. He wanted a location which was not too close to a large urban center with its accompanying noise; yet the ideal location had to be capable of providing a large audience each year. The site needed to be in a community that would lend moral support for the production. Also he wanted an area that had ideal weather in the summer.

He investigated several locations and was particularly interested in one in the Ozarks, but he decided against the site because the summer weather was too humid and warm for the heavy costumes his actors wore. Therefore he had to continue the search.17

While the group was playing an engagement in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Leo Craig of that city suggested that the Black Hills be considered as a possible location. Ironically, at the same time, Guy Bell in Spearfish, South Dakota, had become interested in Meier's production as a possible tourist attraction for his city. Bell and a group of Black Hills businessmen met Meier's representative and learned of his plans to make the production an outdoor
summer presentation. Through a series of negotiations, the decision was reached in July, 1938, to make Spearfish the permanent headquarters for the Passion Play. Eventually the play was brought to Lake Wales, Florida, for a winter season. The story of the play's development in both Spearfish and Lake Wales is presented in the following chapters.
CHAPTER I

NOTES

1 Josef Meier, prologue to the BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY cited in souvenir program, n.d.

2 For a photographic description of the scenic units see Appendix J.

3 Scene descriptions cited come from the publicity pamphlet, "History and Synopsis of the BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY," file Black Hills Passion Play, n.d.

4 Program description of scene five.


9 As quoted by Aubrey B. Haines, "A Passion Play Comes to America," Pen, XLIII (April, 1968), 4.


12 Nicholson, Saturday Evening Post (reprint).

13 Haines, Pen, p. 5.

14 Nicholson, Saturday Evening Post, (reprint).

15 Ibid.


17 Peifer, The Liquorain, p. 49.
CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PASSION PLAY

IN SPEARFISH, SOUTH DAKOTA

From 1938 to 1939

Seemingly, one of the last places in the country to become the home of a Passion Play would be an area noted for its association with the old wild West of the last century. The small town of Spearfish, South Dakota, is located in a section of the country that abounds with reminders of a time when possession of a pistol qualified a man as judge, jury, and executioner, where men crazed with the desire for gold fought, shot, and stabbed each other in the streets, saloons, and gulches. Incongruous a location as it may have seemed events occurring in the summer of 1938 made the western town of Spearfish the future home of the Luenen Passion Play, which traces its origins back to the European Middle Ages.

Guy Bell, a colorful businessman from Spearfish, liked to promote various community projects. A used-car salesman by profession, Bell had promoted activities almost all of his life from airplane rides in the 1920's to rodeos with apparent success.¹ Bell saw that the Black Hills were
developing rapidly as a popular summer tourist area and believed that Spearfish needed some attraction to bring more tourists into the area. The nearby towns of Lead, Deadwood, and Belle Fourche already had some popular summer attractions, but Spearfish had none.

Through Henry Bauer of Rapid City, South Dakota, Bell heard that the Luenen Passion Play was playing an engagement in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. This gave him an idea. Although he had little money to back such a venture, Bell decided to try to get the production to come to Spearfish. As a small boy in rural North Dakota, he had heard his mother tell about the Oberammergau Passion Play in Europe. She was so enthusiastic about the European production that it made an impression which was reborn in Bell's mind when he heard that a Passion Play was playing in Sioux Falls.

Unknown to Bell at the time, Josef Meier was looking for a place to locate his production for a permanent summer season. During the Sioux Falls engagement, Leo Craig of that city made the suggestion to Meier to consider the Black Hills as a summer location. Taking Craig's suggestion, Meier sent his advance agent, Forrest Creighton, to investigate various towns in the Black Hills, and on that trip Bell met Creighton and was introduced to Meier.

Bell convinced Meier to give Spearfish a chance to back the production and become the permanent home for the production. In July, 1938, Creighton met with officials and
businessmen from the Black Hills to work out the necessary
details to bring the production to their section of the
state. Creighton outlined the project and presented
Meier's requirements at the meeting. The production would
use Spearfish as the headquarters, would be presented twice
weekly during the summer months, and would tour during the
fall and winter months. Creighton further explained Meier's
desire to make his production a part of the American tradi­
tion in an environment that would not be hostile to the
Passion Play. It was of utmost importance that a site be
found which would insure the success of the undertaking.
First, Meier wanted to locate away from large industrial
centers and large areas of population. Spearfish, which
was certainly remote from any large urban center, seemed to
have the sought-after "hometown" atmosphere. Furthermore,
the town was situated in an extremely scenic section of the
United States, located at the entrance to Spearfish Canyon
on the northern edge of the Black Hills. Because of the lo­
cation, the small town had the potential of attracting large
numbers of tourists.

Spearfish offered additional advantages. Situated some
3,600 feet above sea level, the air is dry and cool in the
summer. The Chamber of Commerce boasts that summer days are
warm but the nights are cool. The weather in Spearfish
seemed ideal to the Meier organization. The small city en­
joys another advantage in that it is free of mosquitoes
during the summer. The ideal climate and the absence of mosquitos became the deciding factors for Meier in making his decision to settle in the Black Hills. The area presented an added attraction to Meier as it reminded him of his home in Germany.

Questions were raised about other factors in Spearfish. One important issue was the possibility of competing with another attraction on performance nights. In choosing a location away from large population centers, Meier realized competition for the tourist trade became keener. He feared the small town of Spearfish could not support two or more attractions on the same evening. He was promised that there would not be any other major attraction on performance nights.

There was even greater concern regarding the potential moral support from the community. In order to get the desired pageantry and a degree of verisimilitude, a large number of extras would be needed each evening to play the non-speaking roles in the mob scenes. The cost of producing the play would become exorbitant should the 100 to 150 non-speaking extras require payment for their services; consequently Meier wanted a location where the extras could be obtained as volunteers so he need only pay his core of professional actors playing the some thirty-odd speaking roles. Again he was promised the Black Hills area would furnish the extras and the area would show pride that the Passion Play
was in its midst.

In Meier's opinion Spearfish met all of the conditions he required. The town seemed to have a favorable attitude toward his play. Further, there was no major event to conflict with the production, as there would have been had he chosen Deadwood, which was running the "Days of 76," or Belle Fourche, which sponsored a Rodeo. He felt the town could wholeheartedly support his production.

The next items to be discussed were the financial requirements necessary to bring the Passion Play to Spearfish. First and foremost, the necessary land had to be purchased and an amphitheatre built to house the production. Financing this part of the venture would be the responsibility of the local community. Second, the proceeds from ticket sales would be divided on a percentage basis between Meier and the local community. It should be noted that at this time there was not an official organization in Spearfish to control the amphitheatre. In exchange for building the amphitheatre and backing the play, Meier would bring his production to Spearfish, change its name, and publicize the Black Hills while on tour.

The Black Hills businessmen were anxious to know more about the economic security of the Passion Play. This led to a second financial agreement. A decision was reached to bring the production to Spearfish for a trial run during August, 1938. The trial production would allow the community
to become better acquainted with the nature of the production and would give Meier the opportunity to inspect and approve the proposed location for the amphitheatre. The local Normal School auditorium was obtained for the August performances. In order to get Meier's company to Spearfish, the local businessmen had to raise $2,000. The meeting adjourned before final decisions were made on the agreement.

Four days lapsed before the next meeting, allowing local businessmen to discuss the proposal. Many doubted the little town could undertake such a venture since money was still scarce after the depression. Guy Bell was instrumental in persuading the group that the community could and would raise the money. Furthermore, he argued the project had the potential of becoming a major financial asset to the community. On Monday June 25, 1938, Creighton and area businessmen had another conference. A contract was signed at the meeting, the conditions of which were: (1) Meier would bring the production to Spearfish for a limited number of performances in August, 1938; (2) he would present the play annually in the summers commencing in 1939; and (3) Spearfish would become the permanent home of the production to be renamed THE BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY OF AMERICA. In return the local community agreed to raise the necessary funds to transport Meier's troupe to Spearfish for the August performances, to finance and build an amphitheatre including the necessary stage scenery, and to supply the
extras for the non-speaking roles.\textsuperscript{13}

The businessmen realized an enormous amount of work would be necessary to launch the project and decided that some type of organization was necessary to control and direct the project. The group of business leaders voted to form a Passion Play committee. Guy Bell was elected its head.\textsuperscript{14}

The first tasks that faced the newly-formed committee were to raise $2,000 to get the production to Spearfish and to find a suitable location for the proposed amphitheatre. Bell led the group in investigating several possibilities so that definite information about possible sites would be available when Meier arrived in August. In the meantime he worked to raise the necessary money for the August appearance.

Bell became the main supporter of the Passion Play and was able to develop enthusiasm through his salesmanship. Optimism that the play would provide benefits other than the obvious tourist attraction took root. Dr. E. C. Woodburn, President of Spearfish Normal School, became an ardent supporter of the production. He felt the play's presence would help to increase the enrollment at his school because it would make Spearfish better known among young people.\textsuperscript{15} Woodburn was joined by many businessmen who believed the play would mark a milestone in youth activities as it would help to establish a cultural taste for outdoor drama.\textsuperscript{16} Almost all of the educators and clergy believed the play
would provide an educational value as well as entertainment for the children and adults of the community. Many believed a religious play would help strengthen the moral fiber of the community. They further agreed that by serving as extras community members could acquire some background in the art of theatre, especially outdoor drama, through participation in the production.

As stated earlier, when negotiations were in process between Meier's organization and the Black Hills businessmen, the decision was reached to bring the production to Spearfish for a short engagement of six to eight performances during August, 1938. The necessary money was raised and the Passion Play committee set August 18th for the opening performance. Unfortunate delays, however, were encountered in transporting the cast and scenery from Chicago. Meier and the committee agreed the August 18th date would provide too little time to make the necessary preparations. Consequently, the opening performance date was changed to August 28th with additional performances scheduled for August 31st and September 2nd, 4th, 7th, and 9th. The play's rescheduled time allowed it to be running when school opened. Plans were made for a possible matinee to be given for school children.

The community as a whole was unfamiliar with a passion play, and there was considerable skepticism regarding the nature of the play. While some thought a play based on the
Bible was sacrilegious, most adopted an attitude of "wait-and-see" until after the initial performance before deciding whether to attend or support the production. August 28th arrived, and, if Meier had any doubts regarding his decision to make Spearfish the permanent home, they should have been increased after the first night. Only eighty-eight people attended the first performance in the Spearfish Normal auditorium. To make matters worse, an electrical fuse blew, causing the performance to be interrupted for some forty minutes. Even though there were only eighty-eight people present for the first performance, they liked the production and word spread rapidly among the townspeople regarding the play. The following performances were greeted with full houses; in fact, the response was so great that the play committee persuaded Meier to continue the run for an additional week.

Enthusiasm for the play was growing among the townspeople, and Meier and the local committee began to lay plans for the amphitheatre for the following 1939 season. Bell, Meier, and several members of the committee and cast became engaged in a discussion concerning the proposed site for the amphitheatre one evening after a performance. On that bright moonlight night, the group inspected a site in the southwest section of the town only a few blocks from the auditorium where the play was being presented.

The site, as it turned out, was a hillside plot in
widow Bertha Newton's cow pasture. Meier recalls that as he walked along near the top of the hill he could distinctly hear the conversation of two members of the party who had remained at the bottom of the hill several hundred feet below him. He clapped his hands and the sound seemed to carry well without too much echo. He rapidly surveyed the landscape and believed the hillside would be an ideal location for an amphitheatre. Furthermore, the site could be developed into an amphitheatre without extensive excavation. This was the site! Daylight corroborated the decision.

The site was both a natural amphitheatre and very picturesque. The gaudy rim of Hungry Hollow and the pine-covered hills rising up to the Crow Peak range formed the setting at the rear of the amphitheatre. To the front, towards the would-be stage area, the audience would have a view of Lookout Mountain once used by Indians as a lookout during wars with other tribes and used later by white settlers. Certainly the location provided a majestic view in all directions. The site could be serviced by two roads that provided adequate access to the grounds. The next step in Meier's estimation was clearly up to local businessmen to follow through on the agreement.

A misunderstanding occurred which threatened to dissolve the agreement. The Black Hills businessmen had agreed to raise the money to build the amphitheatre, and they realized that obtaining money for the project would be a
difficult task for the small town of 2,200 population so soon after the depression. To make matters worse, a rumor spread through the town that Meier had decided to locate the play in Rapid City instead of Spearfish. This created some consternation among the backers of the production, but Meier assured them and the community he had definitely decided to locate in Spearfish and advised that the amphitheatre project get under way.

Guy Bell was elected to head the building committee to raise funds, acquire the proposed site, and build the amphitheatre. Bell and other members of his committee began to meet with civic organizations in the Black Hills and, as Bell stated, "put the cards on the table," for it was obvious the local committee needed money and "lots of it" if the Passion Play was to remain in the Black Hills. Some large donations of money were received, and one of the largest gifts came from the City of Spearfish. Twenty-five acres behind the Bertha Newton home were purchased and donated to the Passion Play committee for the amphitheatre site.

Bell managed to acquire sufficient funds by January, 1939, to commence construction of the amphitheatre. Some reports indicate that Bell was able to raise approximately $28,000 for the project, but his son Tom remembers his father acquired a considerable amount of the materials used in the construction via trading used automobiles and other
items for necessary commodities. Martin Thompson, a Spearfish contractor, was selected to take charge of the actual construction of the theatre. Thompson had been active in raising funds and supporting the project since the summer. He and Bell went to Chicago in December, 1938, to confer with Meier and reach agreement on the designs for the amphitheatre and scenery. He began construction on the site in January, 1939. The construction plans included eight scenic "stations," five of which were buildings, a tomb, a garden area, and an area for crosses on a hillside outside the amphitheatre, in addition to a seating area that could accommodate eight thousand people. The project was to have been completed by March, 1939. Construction, however, was slower than anticipated, and the scenic units were not completed until mid-May when only the painting and decorating were still lacking.

Seats for the structure were made from long pieces of 2" x 10" wooden beams set on wooden blocks. Bell and Thompson had obtained the materials from the nearby Homestead Lumber Mill at a minimal cost. Funds, however, were exhausted before a box office could be constructed or any landscaping done on the grounds. Consequently the amphitheatre was in a primitive but usable state by June, 1939.

Bell, who had been the leading fund-raiser for the amphitheatre project, continued to be one of the most ardent supporters of the project. He realized early in 1939 before
construction was completed that a definite organization was needed to replace his loose-knit committee. The association had been formed to raise money, but it was without legal status. Since the amphitheatre was to be a permanent structure, a corporate organization was believed to be necessary to have responsibility for the property and to handle the large amounts of money expected from the sale of tickets. He and others formulated plans early in January, allowing time for members of the association to write a proposed charter and elect temporary officers. The proposed corporation was to be known as the Black Hills Passion Play of America, Incorporated, and was to be a non-profit organization with the major purpose of providing an amphitheatre for the presentation of the Passion Play. Guy Bell, Martin Thompson, and Walter Dickey presented the proposed charter to the Secretary of State in March, 1939. The document was subsequently approved by the Secretary of State on March 25, 1939.33

The new corporation decided to have another election of
officers, and Martin Thompson was elected the first president. Other elected officers were Vice-President, Charles Ernst, and Secretary-Treasurer, Guy Bell. Members of the board of directors were Walter Dickey, Joe Fassbender, Ernest Bahrens, J. L. Curran, Edwin Rounds, Henry Bauer, George Blake, Jarvis Davenport, and Ralph O'Crank. The corporation attorney was John Milek. The officers represented several area towns including Lead, Sturgis, and Rapid City in South Dakota, and Sundance, Wyoming, in addition to Spearfish.

The tempo of activities increased for the opening of the 1939 season as the amphitheatre construction neared completion in early May. Meier desired to have a live chorus sing several numbers for the play, especially the closing "Hallelujah Chorus" sung during the Ascension scene. He had previously used a recording but preferred a live chorus over the record. Prompted by Meier's urging, the Passion Play Corporation persuaded the Reverend J. Wendell Walton to undertake the project of organizing a Passion Play choir. Walton went to work, enlisted members, and began rehearsing for the opening of the play in June.

A publicity drive was launched for the summer season. The corporation had undertaken the responsibility of publicizing the production and selling tickets in the Black Hills region of South Dakota. To carry out the agreement, fieldmen were enlisted to promote and sell advance tickets
throughout the area. Guy Bell became as deeply involved in the publicity promotion as he had been in the fund-raising campaign. He took time from his business and scheduled promotional trips throughout eastern South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, and Wyoming. Along the way he spoke to civic clubs and other meetings, met members of the Chambers of Commerce, and distributed literature about the play.

By the first of June plans were completed for a dedication program to inaugurate the new facilities. The corporation and Meier prepared for an impressive ceremony with several state and national dignitaries present which, they believed, would elicit state and perhaps even national news coverage. The dedication ceremony was set for June 18th, the opening date of the summer season. South Dakota Governor Harland Bushfield was the scheduled principal speaker. Officials thought the program would attract some 8,000 people.

Sometimes even the best of plans go awry, and the dedication ceremony was no exception. June 18th dawned, and a cold wind and rain swept across the area holding the attendance down to some 2,000 to 2,500 guests. A greater disappointment occurred as Governor Bushfield was unable to make the trip to Spearfish to deliver his speech. Nevertheless, the ceremony was held. Music was provided by the Homestake Band from Lead. Mayor E. Russell of Spearfish gave the welcoming address, followed by a speech by Josef Meier.
Figure 12. Aerial View of the Amphitheatre and Grounds about 1939 - 1940
Attorney John T. Milek gave the dedicatory address. At last it seemed that Meier's dream to make the Passion Play a permanent institution in the United States would become a reality. He felt that when the production became financially self-supporting it would be a good indication the play had taken its place as a part of the Black Hills and American culture. In actual fact, it took almost twenty years of difficult struggle before the production became a financially stable summer attraction.

The Early Years - 1939 to 1943

Needless to say, Meier was anxious for the Black Hills venture to be successful. In order to achieve the necessary level of success, he realized the need for extensive publicity to attract an audience. The first summer season attracted only 14,852 people. The attendance had to grow in order for the play to become financially stable.

Before the 1939 season ended, Bell and Meier met to discuss a promotional campaign, and together they conceived a plan they believed would benefit the production. Bell outlined and argued for the plan before a meeting of the Passion Play corporation. He explained during the fall months the Passion Play was received with enthusiasm wherever it was produced, but when winter came attendance dropped and the difficulty of meeting production costs increased. Meier felt he could do more good for the play and
the Black Hills by giving a lecture tour rather than by mounting actual performances of the play. He believed that, through lectures, he could reach more cities and offer more direct personal contact.40

Bell explained the lectures would be divided into three parts. During the first section, slides would accompany a description of the attractions the Black Hills and Badlands had to offer the vacationer. Naturally a discussion of the Passion Play would be included. The second part would be devoted to distributing souvenir booklets and other literature about the Black Hills and the Passion Play. The third part would be a short talk on Americanism. Bell argued the program would be suitable for a wide range of audiences. He further stated Meier planned to give the lecture at least ten times a week to schools, churches, auto clubs, civic groups, and other organizations.41 Each of the groups would be composed of the types of people that might attend the Passion Play.

There was little disagreement among the members of the corporation regarding the intent and format of the lecture tour, but the method of financing it presented another problem. Two alternate plans for financing were proposed by Meier. The first one would require $5,500 from the corporation. In return, Meier would present the lectures, and furnish his own advance man and secretary. Any money received for the lectures would be turned over to the Passion Play
corporation. The second plan included the same services except the local organization would need to raise $3,000 instead of the $5,500. If the organization could raise that amount, Meier would start the tour and take the responsibility for raising the other $2,500 from the lectures. ⁴²

There was considerable discussion over the proposals. The amount of money to be raised seemed too large to some members of the corporation. Both the corporation and Meier were having financial difficulties at the time. Sensing that the members of the corporation were not going to respond positively to the plans, Bell argued, "I have done all I can and have enjoyed doing it, but I can't do it all. The rest is up to the people of Spearfish." ⁴³ He further pointed out, if Meier could return in the spring with his play out of debt, he could give the corporation a better financial arrangement. ⁴⁴

The corporation voted to back the project but had to have a fund-raising campaign to get the necessary money. Bell and other officials went to several Chambers of Commerce in area towns soliciting funds with the argument that the proposed lecture tour would benefit the whole area. Meier was planning to cancel his fall tour to give the lecture programs, but the corporation had so much difficulty in raising the money he decided to keep his commitments, and the lecture tour had to be abandoned. In place of the lecture tour Meier combined speaking engagements at civic clubs
with local performance engagements of the production to disseminate information about the activities in the Black Hills.45

Bell had argued for the lecture with the hope of getting a better financial arrangement for the corporation. Even though the lecture tour had to be abandoned Meier and corporation officials were able to reach an agreement in an effort to put the corporation on a sound financial basis. A new budget plan was formulated and contained five provisions.46

1. The first $500 gross each week would go to Meier to meet the salaries of his actors and other expenses.
2. The next $250 gross each week would go to the corporation to meet expenses of maintaining the theatre, lights, advertising, etc.
3. The next $250 gross would go to Meier.
4. The next $250 gross would go to the corporation.
5. The remainder of the gross ticket sales would be divided equally between Meier and the corporation.

Unfortunately the new financial arrangement had little effect in helping the corporation with its financial woes as attendance dropped fifty per cent from the previous season, or below 7,000, for the 1940 season. To make matters worse the amphitheatre was badly in need of repairs prior to the 1941 season since it had not been renovated since its 1939 opening. A box office had never been built, and tickets were sold by workers standing at the entrance, using the pockets of their carpenter aprons as cash holder. Further, the amphitheatre grounds needed landscaping in order to make
them more attractive and enhance the visual elements of the production.

Meier realized the financial problems of the corporation. In a gesture to help keep the corporation in operation, he offered to present the play thrice weekly in the 1941 season if the corporation thought it was necessary and would help. The corporation mulled over the offer to increase the number of performances per week while considering other problems demanding immediate solutions. After much discussion and deliberation, the corporation decided it was not feasible to continue the operation of the amphitheatre. Subsequently, late in 1940 and early 1941, the corporation officials asked Meier to undertake the whole project of managing the amphitheatre in addition to the production. Meier agreed to the conditions. Gradually he purchased the land and other facilities from the corporation which later disbanded.

Even though he assumed responsibility for the whole project, Meier realized the need for continued moral support from the community. He also realized he needed both promotional help and assistance in enlisting the large number of extras needed for non-speaking roles. One of the most important tools of publicity was local word-of-mouth. Without local backing for obtaining either the extras or publicity the play would face some bleak days at the box office. The Chamber of Commerce agreed to help Meier both in publicizing
the play and getting a sufficient number of extras for each performance. A committee was formed and charged with the appropriate responsibility.

Almost immediately upon the assumption of control of the amphitheatre, Meier began to visualize and plan needed improvements. Two of the first improvements were the addition of a community house and box office facilities. These were constructed in the spring of 1941. The community house was a 50' x 20' rectangular building erected to serve as a dressing room facility and a recreational area for the extras in the production. Keeping the extras occupied to prevent excessive noise backstage and to keep them from leaving the area was a problem. Meier hoped the community house would provide a partial answer. Soft drinks and light refreshments were to be served and a number of small games provided. The second building added was a ticket office and information office. A new coat of paint was added to the existing buildings prior to the 1941 season.

Attendance jumped to nearly 19,000 for 1941, almost triple the attendance of 1940. It should be remembered, however, the number of performances was increased from twice to three times weekly for the 1941 season. Nevertheless, the increase in attendance brought encouragement and hope that the audiences would continue to grow as the Black Hills became a more popular area for tourists.

While the increase in attendance was encouraging, a
discouraging problem developed. Not enough people volunteered to serve as extras. The committee from the Chamber of Commerce established to furnish extras for the play devised the first of several plans in an attempt to solve what became a perpetual problem. The committee approached the Board of Education about the possibility of letting students earn credit for participating in the Passion Play. The Board agreed and outlined a plan whereby any student in the ninth grade or higher could participate. If a student worked in fifty to sixty performances, he could earn one-fourth unit of credit with Meier's recommendation. If a student worked in sixty to seventy performances, with Meier's approval he could earn one-half unit of credit in dramatics. Board members hoped the plan would be attractive to many students who for some reason or other needed from one-quarter to one-half unit of credit in order to graduate. Apparently the plan was not very successful as it was dropped after the 1941 season.

Reflecting on the failure of both the educational and volunteer plans to get extras, the Chamber's committee went to work again in the fall of 1941 to discuss possible solutions. The committee decided a small fee or wage would perhaps offer more incentive for the necessary numbers of extras. They recommended that the supervision of the extras be the task of one individual, who would also receive a wage for his work. The committee further proposed that the cost
of paying the extras be borne by voluntary contributions from businessmen who profited most by the tourist trade attracted to the town by the play.\(^5^3\)

Before the plan was put into effect events occurred on the world scene prior to the 1942 season which greatly affected the tourist trade and the Passion Play. The United States was involved in World War II prior to the summer of 1942; Meier, however, remained optimistic the summer would be a good tourist season. He reasoned that blackouts on both the East and West coasts coupled with the increased activity of supplying war materials would prompt people to seek more restful and peaceful surroundings like the Black Hills to spend what might be their last vacation for a number of years. Indeed, he believed the Black Hills would get a goodly percentage of tourist trade. He noted that after the declaration of war, attendance had increased for the tour performances, partly because of the nature of the production. He believed because of the war people would seek more religious activities and would therefore be interested in attending the Passion Play. Publicity was tripled for the 1942 season in an effort to reach as many tourists as possible.\(^5^4\)

Along with the increased publicity, improvements were made on the amphitheatre in readiness for the summer season. Amplified chimes were installed during April and when tuned correctly they could be heard for a radius of five miles.
The chimes served two functions. First, they were used to publicize the play. Secondly, the chimes were used to provide free concerts for tourists and Black Hills residents. The concerts were scheduled to be given on days when the play did not have a performance.

Other work improving the grounds continued during the spring. A fence completely surrounding the amphitheatre grounds was built. Not only did the fence serve as a means to secure the amphitheatre property but it also prevented unauthorized persons from wandering backstage during performances. A large stock barn was constructed, several trees were planted, part of the tomb unit was rebuilt, and several of the stage buildings were repainted. The facilities were ready for the summer of 1942.

In spite of Meier's optimism that the summer season would be a good one, the 1942 run was all but a disaster. His prediction that the summer would bring tourists failed to materialize, and attendance dropped almost fifty per cent from the previous year. Coupled with the drop in attendance, other events transpired which caused Meier to become so discouraged he almost closed the production. He declared in a speech before the Chamber of Commerce that community assistance had to be forthcoming or he would have to discontinue the play in Spearfish. He further stated that local cooperation had not met his expectations either morally or financially. He noted three vital areas of concern: a lack
of community cooperation, a failure of the Chamber of Commerce to fulfill entirely its pledge of financial support, and the shortage of extras. 57

Meier believed he had but two possible solutions to the situation. First, he felt sufficient money had to be raised locally to assume control of the summer production and the management of the organization needed to be either by the City, the Black Hills, or the State. He had been forced to take control of the operation at an inopportune time in early 1941 when his personal finances were not secure. Also when he assumed control the amphitheatre needed costly repairs that depleted his financial reserves. He had been willing to absorb the losses the first few years and let the tours in the fall and winter keep the operation financially solvent, but the war made future touring unpredictable. Therefore, he believed he could not operate the amphitheatre at a loss for another season. The second choice Meier presented the group was to close the production altogether in Spearfish.

In light of the two alternatives, the Chamber had little choice. They realized the play was a financial boon to the city and it should be kept if possible. A special committee was named to investigate means to improve the play's situation. Without waiting for the committee to meet, some of the Chamber members began to propose solutions. The most agreeable plan was to ask area towns in the Black Hills for
Guy Bell, who remained one of the most loyal supporters of the play, went to several towns asking for help, but none was forthcoming. Bell then suggested that members of the Spearfish Chamber of Commerce should sign a petition to be sent to the governor asking for a large amount from the State's advertising budget to be used to keep the production in the Black Hills. Bell's rationale for the request hinged on the proposition that, while on tour, the production advertised the Black Hills and therefore the state, thereby qualifying for state aid. Furthermore, Meier had spent several thousand dollars to advertise the Black Hills as well as the Passion Play. Chamber members voted to sign the petition and also to circulate it among other Chambers of Commerce throughout the area and possibly the whole state asking for signatures.

Bell again took time from his work to travel throughout South Dakota making speeches on behalf of the Passion Play and getting signatures on the petition. He and a group of chamber members then traveled to the state capital and presented the petition to Governor Harland Bushfield and Governor-elect M. Q. Sharpe.

Prospects seemed favorable for forthcoming state aid, but before any decision was reached, Meier decided to cancel the 1943 summer season because gasoline and tire rationing made tourist travel all but impossible, and the lack of
tourist trade would reduce the chances for a successful summer season regardless of any financial aid obtained from the state. Meier concluded it was best to cancel the summer production for the duration of the war or until tourist trade warranted reopening the production. The play remained closed for five years. While the production was closed, Meier spent the majority of his time developing a large ranch that he had purchased. He commenced to tour the production again in 1946, but did not make any effort to revive the summer season in Spearfish.

The Development from 1947 to 1954

There was much discussion among Spearfish businessmen in the summer of 1947 expressing fear that the Passion Play would not reopen again in their town. They knew Meier was plagued by financial and other problems before the war, and he had not given them any indication he planned to reopen the production even though the war had ended and tourist trade was returning to normal. City leaders became anxious for the play to reopen since they realized the potential financial benefit for the city if the Passion Play resumed operation.

City officials and area businessmen entered into negotiations with Meier during the summer of 1947 in an effort to get him to resume operation by the summer of 1948. A new agreement was reached and a contract signed between Meier,
the Spearfish City Council, and the Chamber of Commerce on September 9, 1947. The contract contained ten provisions that the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce agreed to fulfill in exchange for Meier's resumption of the play.

1. The city officials agreed to put an adequate bridge across Spearfish Creek for a safe and attractive approach to the Passion Play grounds near the lower road. The amphitheatre grounds were within easy walking distance from the majority of hotels and motels in the town; however persons desiring to walk had to go some six to eight blocks out of the way in order to find a bridge across the creek which runs north and south separating the grounds from the town.

2. Officials agreed to dust-proof and maintain in proper condition both the upper and lower roads leading to the play grounds.

3. Officials agreed to make sewer lines available to all houses near the play grounds.

4. Officials agreed to supply ample water and police protection for the amphitheatre grounds in order to stop vandalism, particularly shooting.

5. Officials agreed to construct and maintain signs large enough to be effective stating that Spearfish was the home of the Passion Play.

6. Officials agreed to maintain during the tourist season, in a downtown section, an information bureau where travelers could secure information about the Passion Play and
other tourist attractions.

7. Officials agreed to insure no other attractions, such as carnivals or rodeos, would conflict with performance nights of the production.

8. Officials agreed to assist in procuring a sufficient number of extras for each performance.

9. Officials agreed to cooperate in advertising the production.

10. Officials agreed to exert continued pressure for the paving of Spearfish Canyon Road.66

Chamber leaders realized many of the stipulations in the contract could be accomplished, perhaps with greater ease, by their organization than by the City Council. James T. O'Neill signed the contract for the city, and O. B. Warmsley, president of the Chamber of Commerce, signed a rider to the contract stating the chamber would assume responsibility for the last five provisions listed above.

Five years without a summer season did not change the problem of getting extras for the play. The provision in the contract related to securing extras has been the most difficult provision to fulfill of the ten. Chamber members decided to contact the Black Hills and Badlands Association, an organization established to support tourist activities in the southwestern section of the State of South Dakota, seeking help in getting extras. An agreement was reached between the two groups whereby area towns would provide a set number
Satisfied his major problems were solved, Meier began to make preparations for the summer season. Little repair work had been accomplished on the amphitheatre since 1943. The stage buildings had been subject to several severe rain, hail, wind, and snow storms and vandalism; therefore extensive repair work was necessary. Jack Boos was hired to supervise work on a considerable amount of repairs, which had to be completed prior to the opening in 1948. The renovations, as specified, were:

1. The foundations on all the stage buildings were reinforced.

2. Extensive work was completed on the fourteen twenty feet tall columns on the three center stage buildings. When
the columns were originally constructed small wooden slats approximately one-quarter inch thick by two inches wide were utilized to make the columns. Even though they were painted, the slats could be seen in the columns. Workmen covered the columns with canvas to give them a more solid appearance.

3. The 150' x 12' bridge outside stage-left side of the amphitheatre, which comprised part of the road to Golgotha for the Crucifixion scene, was entirely rebuilt.

4. All of the buildings received a new coat of paint and many pieces of lumber had to be repaired or replaced.

5. All of the electrical system was rewired with permanent wiring.

6. Some of the wooden benches in the center section were replaced with individual theatre chairs. The replacement of the wooden benches with chairs was a project that extended over the next twenty years, by which time all of the original seats were replaced.

Other preparations had to be accomplished in addition to the repairs. The play had not been presented in Spearfish for five years; consequently a large publicity project was launched to attract an audience. News releases concerning the reopening of the production were sent to over seven hundred newspapers throughout the country. Window and billboard sheets publicizing the production were distributed by the Black Hills and Badlands Association throughout the Black Hills region. More than 100,000 pieces of literature
related to the production were sent to newspaper editors, ministers, educators, and others throughout the nation. The publicity seemed to get results as over 18,000 attended the production during the summer of 1948. The increase in attendance over the 1942 season made Meier optimistic about the future of the production in Spearfish.

Not all went well, however, in the 1948 season. The plan devised for supplying extras proved to be unsatisfactory. Several towns had agreed to supply extras but the number that participated varied greatly from one performance to another. Chamber of Commerce officials then devised yet another system for obtaining extras. The chamber decided to issue cards containing the date of each performance to the local businessmen. Each individual who agreed to participate in the program was issued a card which obligated him to appear in the play as an extra or make sure someone else took his place. The card was marked each time the holder participated in a performance. The marking, or checking, of the card served two purposes. First, a record of participation could be maintained. Secondly, and perhaps most important, the card served as a reminder to the holder that he had made a commitment to serve as an extra.

The Chamber of Commerce had to solicit help from civic clubs in neighboring towns in order to carry out the proposed plan. The card system seemed to have worked for the 1949 season, and it was used again in 1950. The problem of
securing extras was temporarily solved and did not create a major problem again until 1953.

A new and unique problem arose with the 1950 season. It was caused, oddly enough, by the growing success of the play. Attendance jumped from 18,000 in 1948 to over 35,000 in 1950. Tourist facilities had not been able to keep pace with the growth. Feeding and accommodating the growing number of tourists created a major problem for the small town. Meier wanted and needed help in solving the problem as the production's future was at stake. One can easily understand the reasons for the tourist facilities not keeping abreast with the Passion Play's growth. The Play is presented only three months a year, and hotel and motel owners were reluctant to build additional expensive facilities which would be idle nine months.

Meier met with members of the motel and hotel association, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, and other interested parties to seek a solution to the problem. Those who attended the meeting believed the town would not experience a great building boom. Possible solutions other than building new facilities were discussed. Meier suggested home owners might be able to prepare rooms which could be used by tourists. Pertinent information stating the number and types of rooms could be submitted to the Chamber's office which in turn could compile a list of available housing for visitors. The gathering agreed the plan was workable.
and could be instituted without too much effort. As a safeguard and to insure the maintenance of a minimum standard of housing, an inspection clause was added to the plan. An inspection team from the Chamber would check the accommodations in private homes. The problem of caring for the tourists then seemed to be solved.

Several new hotels and motels have been built since 1950, but the plan of using private homes for the overflow crowds remains in use. The Chamber publishes a list of homes listing the addresses, owners, number that can be accommodated, and type of accommodations. The burden on the Spearfish hotels and motels has also decreased somewhat since 1950 as an increased number of tourists stay in other towns, especially Rapid City, and either drive or ride special busses to the play.

Meier turned his attention from tourist accommodations to repairs on the amphitheatre. Three projects were on the drawing board to be completed prior to the 1951 summer season. First, a new $40,000 remote control lighting system and 116 new floodlights and floodlight instruments were installed. The new dimmer control system was designed so one individual could operate it. The old organ house which stood in front of the central stage house was removed, and in its place a new concrete building was constructed to house the light control system (see figure 14). Even though the light control room was close to the stage the light
Figure 14. View showing new light control house and terraced rows for seats

Figure 15. Workers adding new seats
operator had a full view of the stage with the exception of the tomb and the crucifixion scenes. Both scenes were to be controlled by given signals. A tunnel was dug between the center stage house and the control room which allowed amphitheatre personnel to move freely from backstage to the control room without being observed by the audience. 71

Extensive work was also completed in the seating section. The hillside was completely terraced to give full elevation without necessitating additional work in the future. The terracing allowed the addition of more seats without heavy moving and excavation each time new seats were installed in the amphitheatre. 72 The terracing project was the largest construction to be accomplished in the seating area since the facilities had been built in 1939. A much-needed safety feature was added to the steps on the main two aisles through the illumination of the aisles with electric safety lights. Slowly the amphitheatre was beginning to meet Meier's ideal.

Attendance continued to grow steadily even though the play remained on a three-night schedule of Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Many of the town's businessmen believed attendance was growing to the extent that another performance each week was justified. The chief backers of the additional performance per week were members of the Spearfish Motel and Hotel Association. 73 The tourist season lasted only from mid-June to the end of August, and, even during
the height of the season, the hotels and motels were filled to capacity just three times a week. The Association believed a fourth performance per week would be financially profitable for the whole town as well as for the motel and hotel owners.

The group asked for and received a conference with Meier who cordially met them, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, and others to discuss the issue. Meier stated he was willing to add the additional performance each week under certain conditions. The foremost condition centered on the extras. Meier told the assembled group the extras must want and agree to a fourth performance and guarantee the management that sufficient extras would be present to staff the four productions each week. Members of the conference were reminded of the problem of securing sufficient extras. Meier next explained that the extras were essential in order to have, in his estimation, a quality production. Furthermore, the play already consumed three nights a week for the extras who were serving without pay, and a fourth performance, he believed, would cut too deeply into their home life. He continued by stating he had tried to perfect the production more each year and would refuse to sacrifice the quality of the play for an additional performance if an insufficient number of extras participated. After hearing the arguments, the group voted to recommend that three performances a week be retained, but the vote elicited mixed
reactions from the businessmen.

A near catastrophe occurred in 1953. A rumor spread throughout the town during the summer that Meier was a millionaire and that he was not supporting local businesses with his trade but was placing most of it out of town. Whether the rumor started through envy because of the apparent success of the production or through honest belief that the town's businessmen were not getting a fair deal from the production, the rumor spread rapidly and split the town into two factions, the pro and con Passion Play groups.

Maybe a rumor of this nature would not hurt other productions, but for a production such as the Passion Play the rumor could ill be afforded. The problem of securing a sufficient number of extras has already been noted. Some believed Meier should pay the extras, but he insisted the production did not make sufficient revenue to pay the large numbers needed. If the rumor were true that Meier did have a large amount of money then the task of securing extras to work without pay would be even more difficult. Businessmen had cause to be concerned about the validity of the rumor. They had been asked to support the play both financially and morally, and several had devoted considerable amounts of time to promoting the production. Who, then, could blame the businessmen for withholding support if indeed Meier did trade out of town when they offered the same or similar services?
The issue came to a head in late summer. A large crowd gathered in City Hall on Friday, August 28, 1953, to hear Josef Meier defend his management. Meier started his defense by tracing a brief history of the production and explaining the purpose of the production. He presented additional arguments in an effort to refute the charges against him. First, he stated the majority of his trading was done in Spearfish. Further, he reminded the group that repair and construction work on the facilities had been done by Spearfish firms. He further stated he had paid $23,968.64 in salaries which in turn went into the Spearfish economy. In response to the charges of trading out of town and that he was a millionaire, Meier stated that during 1953 he had paid out $101,371.51 which was some $4,000 more than the gate receipts had been. Then he reminded his audience of the contract he had signed with the City and Chamber of Commerce. Many were surprised when he mentioned a contract since most of those present were unaware the document existed. He concluded by stating he realized the contract was only as good as the pledge of the signatures on the document.

Apparently Meier gave the impression the production might be discontinued in Spearfish should attitudes regarding his finances and business practices remain hostile. Commenting on the session, Mayor Sullivan stated he believed the city had fulfilled most of the contract and the Passion
Play deserved the backing of the community. He further added that Meier was, in his estimation, asking for the moral backing of the community rather than financial backing.77

After the atmosphere had cleared somewhat following the August 28th meeting, community leaders started the task of seeking solutions to the problems which confronted the town and the Passion Play. Regardless of the opinions of Meier or the play, business leaders realized the production was rapidly becoming the leading financial industry in Spearfish and the town could not afford to lose the production.

The town's leaders believed the major cause of friction that prompted the rumors was that of the extras. Guy Bell stepped forward again in support of the production. He conceived a plan and presented it to the Chamber of Commerce in mid-September, 1953. He suggested a twenty-man Passion Play committee or club composed of the most loyal supporters of the production be organized to work in close harmony with the Chamber of Commerce, the City Council, and Josef Meier. The committee or club was to work independently of any other organization and the sole purpose was to work to make the summer performances a success in every way. The new organization was to address itself particularly to the problem of extras.78

The club idea was considered and discussed by local businessmen for several weeks. Even though many questioned
what yet another organization could do to help relations, the idea solidified in late November of 1953, and an organization known as the Black Hills Passion Play Club was formed. The club was a loosely-structured organization serving largely in a public relations capacity for the Passion Play, striving to make relations run smoothly between the town and the production. The first officers included Guy Bell, President; Bert Matson, Vice President; W. E. Dickey, Dr. Lyle Hare, and Willis Lindekugel, Directors.

The first task the new club tackled was the extras issue. Investigation revealed a good plan for providing extras had been in operation, but the problem was to make the plan work. The plan that had quietly evolved was simple. Churches were asked to furnish a set number of extras. In return for their services, the churches that participated and furnished extras were given a small stipend at the end of the season. The Chamber of Commerce had been raising money to pay the stipends.

The Passion Play Club wanted to continue the plan, but the Chamber decided to drop the extras fund from its 1954 budget. This made the problem doubly hard for the new club because now the extras fund had to be raised in addition to getting sufficient people to play the extras. Officers decided to concentrate first on a fund-raising project and went to work immediately planning and conducting various activities. Special benefits such as dances and
bake sales were held to raise money. The club's fund drive received two additional boosts when the Chamber decided it could and would earmark some of its miscellaneous fund budget to assist in financing the extras. Also, the Spearfish Hotel and Motel Association agreed to contribute one dollar per bed to the extras fund.

After the money was assured for the extras fund, the Passion Play Club's officials again contacted the churches asking them to cooperate in furnishing extras. The Passion Play fund was to be divided among the cooperating churches in proportion to the number of extras each church furnished during the summer. A plan was devised to insure a just division of the fund. Production officials estimated an average of twenty extras per entrance per performance was needed for a quality production. For accounting purposes each of the six amphitheatre entrances was numbered and designated a gate, and cooperating churches were responsible for a specific number of gates. This meant each church had to furnish twenty extras for every gate it agreed to sponsor.

The plan remains in existence and is the method used to provide extras. The four most active churches in supplying extras have been the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ (Congregational), Saint Joseph Church (Catholic), and Our Savior Lutheran Church.

The Passion Play experienced steady growth since resuming operations in 1948. Attendance increased yearly, and
continued improvements were made to the facilities. A large percentage of the wooden benches were replaced with individual seats by the end of the 1953 season. Extensive lighting equipment also was added. Landscaping was completed to make the outdoor theatre more attractive.

Figure 16. The Amphitheatre about 1953

Not everything went well for the production, however, as the lack of sufficient numbers of extras continued to plague the play. This led to a major crisis in the summer of 1953 which threatened to destroy the whole production, but out of the crisis evolved the Passion Play Club. Coming when it did, the club proved to be one of the best attempts in stabilizing relations between the town and the production. The club, composed of some of the area's most respected bankers, doctors, and businessmen, served well to improve the production's image and to usher in a new era for the
Passion Play.

From 1954 to the Present

Whether it should be considered a good omen or just coincidence, an honor was awarded the Passion Play in early 1954 that has set the tone for the production in regard to community relationship and growth. An announcement was made in February, 1954, stating the Freedom Foundation of Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, had awarded the Passion Play the George Washington Honor Medal "for outstanding achievement in bringing about a better understanding of the American way of life." With the announcement the Passion Play was to receive the award came the statement,

A community turned its effort toward an annual re-enactment of the Passion Play as a community program of culture and deep significance among the nation's spiritual assets.

This announcement had a touch of irony since it came on the heels of seriously strained relationships between the town and the production. The award was accepted by Meier for the Passion Play and the community in a special opening day ceremony launching the 1954 season. As a gesture to indicate the importance of the extras to the production Meier had small souvenir replicas made and presented to the extras to commemorate the event.

No major difficulties arose during 1954, and attendance jumped to 81,000 for the season, a record that stood until the 1959 season. Encouraged by improved community relations
and the increased attendance, Meier decided not to tour in the winter with the production but instead chose to remain in Spearfish after the summer season to supervise improvements and additions to the amphitheatre. The main project undertaken was the enlargement of the ticket office and information center. This proposal to triple the size of the ticket office and information center had been in the planning stages for some time. The new information center would contain pamphlets and brochures from other attractions across the nation in addition to souvenirs from the Passion Play. Meier was anxious to construct the information center because, in his estimation, one of the most effective ways of disseminating tourist information was to get tourist attractions to display each other's literature on an exchange basis.

Several additional seating repairs and additions were completed in 1954. New elevations were completed on Golgotha's mountain which raised the mountain ten feet and made three acting levels for a better pictorial placement of the large number of people in the crucifixion scene. The platform used for the High Priests' council room was enlarged and a roof constructed over the platform area. The scenes performed on the platform were interior scenes, and the addition of a roof over the acting area was intended to give a more realistic atmosphere. The Garden of Gethsemane unit had been located adjacent to the High Priests' platform
since the theatre was built, but Meier decided to rebuild the tomb unit, move it to the garden area near the High Priests' council platform, and move the garden nearer to the exit gate at the far stage left.88

The year 1954 seems to have been a turning point for the production. Better community relations developed. Even though the new relationships were not perfect (nor have they ever been between the town and the production), a better understanding developed as both parties realized their mutual dependency.

No major difficulties arose in the 1954 or 1955 seasons. In fact, besides the seemingly perpetual problem of not having enough extras, there have not been any major conflicts between the two groups even though one can sense a certain tension in the community which could erupt into trouble at any given time.

No major expenditures were made on the facilities in 1955. In the fall of 1956, Meier spent over $100,000 on several improvements. The largest construction project centered on the seating area. Originally when the amphitheatre was constructed the seats were long wooden benches extending from dirt aisles. Gradually the wooden benches had been replaced with individual seats, the theatre had been terraced to give a better rake or elevation to the seating area, and concrete had been poured in the aisles. In a few rows, however, there was no hard surfacing between the rows. The
1956 project replaced all of the old concrete in the seating area of the amphitheatre, and new concrete was poured to hard-surface all of the areas not previously treated. Other improvements included a new sound system, resurfacing of the parking lot and roads leading into the amphitheatre grounds, and the construction of several new barns to house the horses, camels, and sheep.\textsuperscript{89}

Another of Meier's plans began to materialize in 1957. In the fall a small building designated as a community hall was built in an area adjacent to the amphitheatre grounds. The building was to become a part of a small recreational park designed to be used by extras and youth groups, such as Boy and Girl Scouts, who attended the play and camped in a nearby park overnight. The new building contained a small

Figure 17. The park and community building as they are today
serving kitchen, a large recreational room, rest rooms, and office space. The Passion Play was attracting an ever-growing number of youth groups and, while there were some park facilities where the groups could camp, there were few convenience stations available at the park sites. The new building was also intended as a place where extras could organize parties and similar events. Needless to say, that part of the project plan was an effort to increase the morale of the extras and hopefully to keep a large number active throughout the entire summer. The area surrounding the new building was converted into a park in the spring of 1961. The improvement of the grounds area around the building made it more convenient for groups to camp while attending the play.

Adequate parking space has been an important consideration with the play's owner. There was a feeling that if people have to look too hard to find a parking space or thought they would have a difficult time finding a parking space they might not come to the Passion Play. Parking facilities kept pace with the development of the amphitheatre. Five lots were purchased from the city of Spearfish in 1958 and converted to parking areas to supplement existing areas. Vehicles with campers and other mobile recreational vehicles became more popular in the late 1960's and early 1970's, and most of these vehicles occupy more space than the average automobile. The play attracts tourists
using such vehicles; therefore Meier thought it wise to fur-
ther enlarge the parking lots and added another lot in
1971. The combined parking lots will presently handle
some 1,200 vehicles.

Most of the improvements to the facilities were pre-
determined. A few, however, came as a result of unforeseen
circumstances. One such repair concerned the concrete floor-
ing under the seats. The area had been completely covered
with cement in 1956 in the belief it would be the last time
the concrete needed reconstruction. The foundation of the
lower seating section then began to shift towards the stage
area in the summer of 1961. This necessitated rapid action
to keep the whole seating area foundation from cracking and
splitting. The lower section was torn out, and a new foun-
dation laid to correct the tendency to shift.

From time to time some repairs have been done to cor-
rect minor problems. While Spearfish does not get an abun-
dance of rain in the summer, sometimes small summer showers
swept down from the mountains just prior to a performance.
When they did, water from the seating sections and the sur-
rounding hillside flowed towards the stage area and formed
puddles in the acting area. To eliminate this problem the
stage level was raised one foot in 1963. The higher stage
level corrected the problem of water puddles and added a
bonus. The new height improved the sight lines for the
upper section of the theatre, allowing people sitting in
that area to see more of the actor's face and less of the top of his head.\textsuperscript{95}

Rain has been less a problem than might be expected. In fact, less than five percent of the performances have had to be cancelled because of rain during the some thirty summer seasons.\textsuperscript{96} Rain, however, has had a psychological affect on attendance. Many people fear they may get wet during the performance and cancel their reservations on the evenings the weather seems inclement. A rain shelter to protect the audience in case of bad weather was constructed in 1964.\textsuperscript{97} The shelter consisted of a steel frame covered with amber corrugated plastic. Initially the structure did not have any seats, but it was large enough to shelter some 1,500 to 2,000 people in the event of a sudden storm. Some

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{rain_shelter_cry_room.png}
\caption{The rain shelter and cry room}
\end{figure}
1,300 seats have been added under the rain shelter since 1964.

Luckily the shelter has had to be used but a few times. It was believed performances could continue during the rain, but the first time the shelter was used the sound of the rain pelting on the roof of the shelter made too much noise for the audience to hear the actors. Because of the difficulty, and knowing rainstorms in the summer are usually of short duration, the management usually halts the play for a few minutes until the storm passes over. 98

The Passion Play has followed the pattern of other outdoor drama productions in attracting more entire families on vacation. 99 Because families on vacation often bring their small children to the performances, a cry room was constructed in 1966, to provide a place where parents could take small children who get restless or start to cry during a performance. The cry room contains two large windows facing the stage (see figure 18) where parents can sit and view the action of the play. Qualified baby sitters are available upon request, free of charge, during the performance. A lounge, providing places for ill audience members has been added adjoining the cry room. 100

The last extensive construction or remodeling on the amphitheatre was completed in 1968. During that year the Bethany building, the city gate, and all other gates leading onto the acting area were rebuilt and painted a solid yellow
outlined in black rather than attempting to repaint the surfaces to resemble shapes of rock. An additional 1,248 stadium chairs were installed, providing individual seating for all 6,000 seats in the amphitheatre. The entire seating area was color-coded to correspond with the various ticket prices. For example, the four-dollar tickets are dark green, and the seats are also dark green. Black-topping of the backstage area completed the lists of improvements in 1968. Since then only required maintenance has been undertaken.

Figure 19. The Amphitheatre today

A new visitor's center was planned for construction in 1971, at an estimated cost of $250,000. The building would be one story and house the production's main box office, an informational center, light refreshment facilities, and rest
rooms. The work had to be postponed because of the lack of certain materials, and construction was rescheduled for the fall of 1972. Early in the summer of 1972 a disastrous flash flood swept across nearby Rapid City. The resulting publicity drastically reduced the number of tourists visiting the Black Hills area of South Dakota. This reduction naturally reduced attendance at the Passion Play, and this in turn caused the postponement of the visitor center construction yet another year or until the production could recover financially from the drop in attendance. To date, the visitor's center has not been constructed, and the energy crises in the summers of 1973 and 1974 will probably cause more delays.

The production has to utilize a large number of extras during each performance. Certainly many are inexperienced and cause concern over possible accidents. Surprisingly, relatively few serious accidents have occurred since the play opened in 1939. There has been, however, one major lawsuit brought against Meier resulting from injuries sustained during a performance.

Mrs. Grace M. Platt, a Spearfish resident, filed suit against Meier and the play in 1965. She asked $85,000 compensation for injuries received while she was taking part in one of the performances. Mrs. Platt claimed on July 11, 1963, she was pushed down by two boys in the scene where the mob follows Christ to Golgotha and fell down a steep, rocky
incline causing permanent injury to her right knee.

The case eventually went to the Supreme Court of South Dakota before it was resolved. The Lawrence County Circuit Court awarded $18,000 to Mrs. Platt, but the case was appealed to the State's Supreme Court. By a vote of three to two the South Dakota Supreme Court reversed the lower court's decision. The majority report pointed out that by her own admission, Mrs. Platt had taken part in the play over two hundred fifty performances spanning twenty-five years. The court decided that by voluntary participation after the first performance Mrs. Platt was aware of the dangerous parts of the stage and assumed all risks involved. Whether as a result of the trial or not, a pipe railing fence has been built on both sides of the path leading to the hillside representing Golgotha.

The last topic for discussion pertains to the future of the production. Several times it has been stated the Black Hills Passion Play is unique in the field of outdoor drama since Josef Meier owns and directs it and portrays the leading role in the production. Meier will be seventy years old in the fall of 1974. He has devoted the last forty years of his life to the production and alone holds some of the answers to the future of the production. Should he be forced to retire in the immediate future, the continuation of the play would then be in question.

Meier has contemplated retiring, and a long illness in
the summer of 1973 almost forced the decision. The question of who would assume the role of the Christus is the major issue at stake. Meier has desired a relative assume the role and eventually take over the responsibility for the whole production. Not having any sons, he has attempted to obtain the services of a nephew from Germany, but immigration problems have all but compelled him to abandon this hope and turn to another source of getting an actor from this country. He is seeking an actor who will devote his whole life to the role and who is sympathetic with the goals and nature of the production. Also the actor must have the ability to converse well with people of all faiths and have a good understanding and knowledge of various religious groups. The potential actor's personal habits would have to be such as not to detract from the role he would portray. The long-term future of the play depends upon Meier's success in obtaining such an actor to assume the Christus role.
CHAPTER II

NOTES

1Tom Bell, private interview held in his office, Spearfish, South Dakota, July, 1972.

2The rodeo attractions are "Days of '76 and Rodeo," "Trail of Jack McCall," both held in Deadwood, South Dakota and "The Roundup" held in Belle Fourche, South Dakota.


4Ibid., p. 129.


7Ibid.

8Brochure distributed by the Spearfish, South Dakota Chamber of Commerce, n.d.

9Josef Meier, private interview held at Amphitheatre in Lake Wales, Florida, April, 1972.


11Article, Queen City Mail, July 21, 1938, p. 1.

12Ibid.


14Article, Queen City Mail, July 21, 1938, p. 1.

15"Play May Start August 18--Meier Will Arrive This Weekend--Will Be Known as Passion Play of the Black Hills," Queen City Mail, August 4, 1938, p. 1.
CHAPTER II - NOTES

16Ibid. It should be pointed out that outdoor drama was in its infancy in the United States in 1938.

17Ibid.

18"Opening Date Set for August 28th--Josef Meier Arrives Saturday," Queen City Mail, August 11, 1938, p. 1.

19Walter Dickey, private interview held in his home, July, 1972.

20"Color Effects and Acting Highlights of Passion Play," Queen City Mail, September 1, 1938, p. 1.

21"Final Production Is Sunday," Queen City Mail, September 15, 1938, p. 1.

22Josef Meier, interview, April, 1972.

23Article, Queen City Mail, September 15, 1938, p. 1.

24"Begin Final Drive for Passion Play Funds," Queen City Mail, October 20, 1938, p. 1.

25Ibid.

26Tom Bell, interview, July, 1972.

27Article, Queen City Mail, August 24, 1939, p. 5.


32Ibid.

33Articles of Incorporation of THE BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY of AMERICA, State of South Dakota, office of Secretary of State, Record Domestic Corporations, vol. CXXIX, p. 571.
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34Walter Dickey, interview, July, 1972. Mr. Dickey left out Charles Ernst as Vice-President. Article, Queen City Mail, April 6, 1939, p. 1 lists Ernst as Vice-President.


38"Passion Play Is Praised by Many," Queen City Mail, June 22, 1939, p. 1.

39Almost all news stories report that 35,000 attended first season, but in a letter to author June 12, 1974, Josef Meier gives this figure.

40"Meier May Go on Lecture Tour," Queen City Mail, November 2, 1939, p. 1.

41"Meier to Begin Publicity Tour," Queen City Mail, November 9, 1939, p. 1.

42Article, Queen City Mail, November 2, 1939.

43As quoted in above article.

44Ibid.

45Letter, Josef Meier to author, June 12, 1974.

46"Budget Plan for Passion Play Is Outlined at Meeting of Chamber of Commerce," Queen City Mail, June 27, 1940, p. 1.

47"Passion Play May Be Given Thrice Weekly in 1941," Queen City Mail, September 12, 1940, p. 1.


49Ibid.

50"Josef Meier Returns to Open Passion Play June 15," Queen City Mail, May 15, 1941, p. 1.
CHAPTER II - NOTES

51"Black Hills Passion Play Opens Sunday for Summer Season," Queen City Mail, June 12, 1941, p. 1.

52"Students May Earn Grades by Taking Passion Play Roles," Queen City Mail, June 12, 1941, p. 1.


54"Meier Has Hopes for Good Tourist Season," Queen City Mail, April 16, 1942, p. 1.

55"Passion Play Amplified Chimes Tested Tuesday," Queen City Mail, April 30, 1942, p. 1.

56"Spearfish Looks Forward to Passion Play Opening," Queen City Mail, June 18, 1942, p. 1.

57"Must Have Help to Keep Passion Play in Hills," Queen City Mail, September 17, 1942, p. 1.

58Ibid.

59Ibid.

60"Will Petition State to Help Hills Passion Play," Queen City Mail, November 19, 1942, p. 1.

61Ibid.


64"Passion Play to Resume Summer Production Here," Queen City Mail, September 11, 1947, p. 1.

65There are two main feeder roads that lead into the amphitheatre grounds. The upper level is serviced by St. Joe Street and the lower level is serviced by 2nd Avenue now known as Meier Avenue.

66Contract reprinted in the Queen City Mail, September 3, 1953. Contract is also on file at office of Tom Bell, Spearfish.
CHAPTER II - NOTES

67"Hills Promotion Group to Discuss Passion Play," Queen City Mail, January 15, 1948, p. 1. Towns that furnished extras in addition to Spearfish were Belle Fourche, Custer, Deadwood, Hot Springs, Lead, Newell, Nisland, Rapid City, St. Onge, and Sturgis, South Dakota and Sundance, Wyoming.


69"Play Rehearsals Called Next Week," Queen City Mail, June 30, 1949, p. 1.

70"Chamber of Commerce Urged to Carry on Planning Work," Queen City Mail, October 12, 1950, p. 1.


74"Meier Traces Growth of Play Since 1939," Queen City Mail, September 18, 1958, p. 1. In this speech Meier restated the reasons for not having a fourth performance each week. He has continued to give the same conditions each time the question has been raised.

75"Meier Faces the People--Passion Play Defended," Queen City Mail, September 3, 1953, p. 1. From my personal observation there is little doubt that Mr. Meier is a shrewd and industrious businessman, but in fairness it should be pointed out that he was recycling a large percentage of the gate receipts back into the theatre. Also the total attendance from 1948 thru 1953 was almost 251,800. The average ticket at that time sold for $2.00 which would indicate a large sum of money but far from a million dollars. Most of Meier's profit at that time came from the winter tours rather than from the Spearfish operation.

76Ibid.
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77 "Mayor Sullivan Feels Passion Play Deserves Backing," Queen City Mail, September 10, 1953, p. 1. The charges leveled against Meier have remained somewhat of an issue and surface often.

78 "Club Individuals Back Production," Queen City Mail, September 17, 1953, p. 8.


81 Article, Queen City Mail, December 10, 1953, p. 1.

82 "Club Discusses Publicity, Supers; Schedules Benefit Dance," Queen City Mail, December 31, 1953, p. 1.


84 Information gleaned from several newspaper accounts.


86 Souvenir edition, Queen City Mail, ca., 1960.


89 "$100,000 Project Completed at Play Theatre," Queen City Mail, November 1, 1956, p. 1.

90 "Winter Season of Passion Play," Queen City Mail, January 2, 1958, p. 8.

91 "Passion Play Campsite Ready for Play Opening," Queen City Mail, June 1, 1961, p. 1.


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96Harold Rogers, interview, January, 1974.

97"Passion Play Rehearsals Set This Week," Queen City Mail, May 28, 1964, p. 1.

98Ibid.


100"Passion Play Rehearsals Set This Week," Queen City Mail, May 28, 1964, p. 1.


104Harold Rogers, interview, January, 1974.


106"Supreme Court Reverses Decision Against Meier," Queen City Mail, November 2, 1967, p. 1.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PASSION PLAY IN LAKE WALES, FLORIDA

Ground Work - 1951

The summer of 1951 found civic leaders in Lake Wales, Florida, discussing the possibilities of obtaining another attraction for their city to help keep tourists in the city overnight. The small Central Florida city, nestled among miles of orange groves, already had two important tourist attractions but both were daylight attractions; consequently, there was nothing to keep tourists in the city overnight.

Several ideas were tossed about until Morris Jones came forth with a suggestion about the Black Hills Passion Play in Spearfish, South Dakota. He had read an article on the play and wondered whether it might be a possibility. The idea of a biblical drama met with the approval of the civic leaders. They reasoned since the Great Masterpiece and Bok Tower, the two main tourist attractions, were religiously-oriented attractions, a Passion Play would complement them.

Correspondence was initiated with Josef Meier concerning the feasibility and possibility of bringing his
production to Lake Wales for a winter season. At first, Meier was not overly enthusiastic about the offer even though he had been seeking a permanent winter headquarters for the production.³ Not getting the desired response, the Chamber officials decided a personal conference with Meier would be more persuasive than written correspondence; subsequently the Chamber voted to send a delegation composed of Morris Jones, Wayne Norman, Mayor R. J. Haynsworth, and O. A. Brice to Spearfish to confer with Meier.⁴

Most of the Lake Wales businessmen were unfamiliar with the requirements necessary to secure and produce an outdoor drama. The delegation went to Spearfish with the understanding that a large stadium-type outdoor theatre would be required since the Passion Play was an outdoor drama. The group also knew that a season from December to March was desired since those were the biggest tourist months in their city. Meier cordially received the group but remained unenthusiastic about the proposed project during the initial conferences. The delegation saw a performance of the play, was convinced the production was the right attraction for their city, and became more determined to get a positive response. They did not give up their quest, and in subsequent conferences with Meier they were able to persuade him to bring his production to Lake Wales for a winter season. An agreement was reached and a contract signed on July 10, 1951.⁵ There were six major provisions of the contract:
1. The Lake Wales group was to form a corporation for the construction and maintenance of an amphitheatre suitable for the presentation of the Passion Play.

2. Josef Meier was to furnish the complete production which included actors (minus extras), livestock, and equipment as costumes, props, and portable electric dimmers.

3. The revenue from the sale of tickets would be divided on a commission basis with Meier receiving the first $6,000 weekly and the Lake Wales group the next $4,000. All revenue in excess of $10,000 weekly would be divided 60/40 with Meier receiving the larger portion.

4. The contract was for a ten-year period with performances commencing January, 1953, following a schedule of three performances weekly for an eight-week period. The remaining nine seasons were to have no less than thirty performances in any one season.

5. The Lake Wales group would maintain and regulate the use of the theatre and the surroundings in keeping with and on a level fitting for the presentation of the production.

6. All work and planning for the play would be directed towards making the Passion Play a permanent institution during the winter season.

With the contract in hand, the delegation returned home to confer with businessmen and to begin plans for carrying out the provisions of the agreement. The formation of a
corporation seemed to be the first logical step. Directors of the Chamber of Commerce met July 18, 1951, and voted to authorize a four-man committee to proceed with plans to form a corporation handling financial affairs and other matters pertaining to building an amphitheatre and presenting the drama. The Chamber's directors also decided the four men who had gone to Spearfish to confer with Meier would be the logical choices for the committee since they were already familiar with the ground work and other vital information related to the project. Thus Jones, Haynsworth, Brice, and Norman were appointed to form the corporation.

The four went to work immediately to draft a charter for the corporation, a project which took the whole month of August and most of September to complete. The first action the committee took was to name the proposed corporation the PASSION PLAY AMPHITHEATRE OF FLORIDA.

What type of corporation would best accomplish the aims of the Chamber? This and other questions faced the committee as it worked out the charter and bylaws. Should the corporation be profit-making or non-profit? Originally the committee planned a profit-sharing corporation financed through the sale of stock. In a speech before the Rotary Club in nearby Lakeland, Florida, on September 11, 1951, committee member Wayne Norman stated plans for the stockholders corporation were to be completed by mid-September; however between that date and September 24th the desirability
of a non-profit corporation became more apparent. Several matters influenced the committee's thinking about the nature of the corporation. The content of the Passion Play was religious in scope. A stockholding corporation making profits from a religious play in Lake Wales, a conservative town, could and probably would come under adverse criticism. A non-profit corporation would, consequently, prevent the criticism that a few individuals planned to make money from a play based on the life of Christ. The second argument for a non-profit corporation centered on the need for 100 to 200 extras for a given performance. Meier had learned in Spearfish and related his experience that, in order to generate enough interest in getting extras, the Passion Play had to have community support. Should the criticism become widespread that the Passion Play would be a money-making project for only a few people, chances of raising the necessary funds for construction of the amphitheatre and getting the necessary volunteer extras for each performance would be somewhat lessened. A non-profit corporation for the amphitheatre could become a community project, especially if profits were contributed to local charities.

The arguments for a non-profit corporation outweighed those for a stock corporation in the committee's thinking. The Chamber's directors agreed more community representation should be on the committee. In a move to broaden the base of community participation, six additional members were
added to the committee. The six were: James Roundtree, E. R. Jahna, F. M. O'Bryne, W. C. Pedersen, J. H. Whitfield, and Steve Keen. The six respected businessmen and community leaders helped to give a unified community picture for the final drafting of the corporation charter.

Most of the details involved in the formation of a corporation and the writing of a charter had been completed by the time the six new members were added; consequently, the full committee moved rapidly to draft a charter for the non-profit corporation. The committee met Monday night, September 24, and completed the drafting of the articles and by-laws for the proposed corporation. The committee wanted public reaction and support before completing the document. The best means of getting general reaction was to hold a public meeting. The townspeople were summoned September 28, 1951, but only thirty-five attended the meeting. The proposed charter was studied, however, and the articles of incorporation were unanimously accepted by the gathering.

The document now ready to be sent to the Circuit Court contained five general provisions:

1. The major purpose of the organization was to acquire property; construct, own, and operate an amphitheatre for the presentation of the Black Hills Passion Play.

2. The corporation was to be a non-profit organization with the net earnings going to religious, charitable, literary, scientific, or educational activities.
3. Membership was to be open to anyone who paid a fee of not less than $5.00; however to be qualified to vote, a member must contribute a minimum of $100.00 to the corporation.

4. The affairs of the corporation were to be managed and conducted by a board of directors to be composed of some fifteen to thirty members. From the board members, a president, first and second vice presidents, a treasurer, and a secretary were to be elected to head the organization.

5. The directors were to select and list representative religious, civic, and governmental organizations interested in the purposes of the corporation. Each organization selected was to nominate a representative for election to the board of directors.\[14\]

The charter was approved by Circuit Court Judge D. O. Rogers on October 10, 1951.\[15\] The approval of the charter brought the Passion Play Amphitheatre Corporation of Florida into legal existence. Launching a fund drive for the construction of the amphitheatre was the first task of the new organization. Temporary officers were elected to serve until the first annual business meeting. Those elected were President James C. Morton, First Vice President W. J. Casey, Second Vice President O. A. Brice, Secretary Wayne Norman, and Treasurer H. J. Comer, Jr.\[16\]

The officers of the young corporation rapidly discovered the difficulty for a large number of businessmen, who
were officers and directors, to find time in their busy schedules to meet and handle the affairs of the corporation. To conserve time and facilitate the handling of business, the board of directors voted to establish a steering committee.\textsuperscript{17} The new committee, whose membership included the officers and four additional members from the board, was designed to function more quickly than the full board on routine matters. The steering committee was given the task of guiding the corporation in raising funds and directing the construction of the amphitheatre.

The steering committee began meeting frequently to plan the financial drive. The first question naturally was the amount required to be raised to finance the project. This meant a preliminary architectural design of the amphitheatre was necessary. The committee engaged architects Pullara and Brown in early December, 1951, to survey one of the proposed sites and draft designs for an amphitheatre with a 6,000 seating capacity, a ticket office, and rest room facilities.\textsuperscript{18} The scenic units for the production were to be replicas of the ones used in Spearfish. They would not be designed by the architects, but had to be included in the overall cost. The architects' estimated cost for the project was computed at approximately $150,000.\textsuperscript{19}

James C. Morton, temporary President, announced in early December, 1951, that the Chamber of Commerce had agreed to lend Wayne Norman, the Chamber's secretary, to the
amphitheatre corporation to head the financial drive. Norman was an excellent choice since his background was related to promotional activities; therefore he had the knowledge to plan and organize the fund-raising campaign. Norman was also a member of the delegation that had gone to Spearfish to secure the contract for the Passion Play, and had also been one of the original members of the committee to draft a charter for the amphitheatre corporation. Morton believed with Norman's background and knowledge of the Passion Play, a successful financial campaign could be conducted.

The steering committee established several sub-committees to aid in the financial drive. The sub-committees included advisory, finance, gifts and publicity, and donations committees. Norman sought a broad base of community participation and support to supplement the work of the steering committee's sub-committees. He believed church and civic leaders would and should make logical choices for participation. At a luncheon December 14, 1951, Norman met all those interested to outline plans for the fund drive.20

Norman's next step was to open a campaign headquarters which served not only as an operation center but which also provided some tangible evidence of the amphitheatre corporation's existence.21
The Financial Drive - 1952

Norman's plans to launch the financial drive early in 1952 included the proposed enlistment of drive captains from the civic and church leaders who in turn would head teams of workers. He asked representatives from local church and civic organizations to submit the names of three or more prospective captains. He hoped the plan would get the whole community involved in the fund-raising campaign, attracting enough good people to work.

Capital was needed to launch a proper fund-raising campaign. The special gifts committee began soliciting pre-campaign contributions to get the necessary capital. The first gift to the amphitheatre fund was a check for $1,000 given by Gerdt A. Wagner, the general manager of the Great Masterpiece. The committee planned to contact some one hundred individuals, organizations, and companies in Lake Wales in an effort to raise $50,000 before the main fund-raising campaign was launched. The pre-campaign drive fell short of its target but did raise $30,000 in donations and pledges.

Josef Meier planned to make his first visit to Lake Wales on Thursday and Friday, January 3rd and 4th, to confer with amphitheatre officials. Norman wanted to use this occasion to launch the main fund drive; early in the week, however, Meier sent two telegrams stating he had difficulty getting airline tickets and had to cancel the visit.
a subsequent letter, Meier stated that his touring schedule would necessitate postponing his visit to Lake Wales until the first part of May, 1952.  

Norman then decided not to launch the campaign as planned. Meier's cancellation was a disappointment as he was having difficulty creating sufficient interest for the campaign. The steering committee met January 7, 1952 to decide what steps to take to help Norman launch the drive. They decided to postpone the campaign until the end of January. In the meantime, Norman planned to display the architect's drawing of the amphitheatre and scheduled a number of speeches to area business and civic clubs to show slides from the Passion Play and discuss the financial drive.

Plans began, however, to materialize rapidly for the financial drive. On Friday, January 23, 1952, area personalities and amphitheatre officials spoke at a "kick-off" meeting. Richard Pope, the developer of Cypress Gardens, Tom Moore, the star of the nationally broadcast radio program "Ladies Fair," and Ross Caldwell, builder of the Cherokee Bowl where UNTO THESE HILLS was presented, were the principal out-of-town speakers. Each one gave a brief speech emphasizing the potential of the project and the need for the community to work together. The theme of the program can be summarized in Pope's words:
Lake Wales was given the Bok Tower, but you will have to work to bring the Passion Play to Lake Wales. It is a great citizen's project and calls for the support of all.\[^{31}\]

The meeting concluded with the playing of a brief taped message from Josef Meier in which he gave a charge to the community, stating the Passion Play project would create "something of beauty useful to man."\[^{32}\]

The campaign began as captains and team members distributed 2,000 pamphlets answering eighteen of the most often asked questions about the amphitheatre project.\[^{33}\] The steering committee decided to rely on gifts and loans as the major source of revenue. Loans had to be five dollars or more, would draw five percent interest and would mature within ten years.\[^{34}\] In an effort to get as many donations as possible, a provision was made for an individual to pledge funds which would not have to be paid until July 1, 1952. The steering committee believed the loans would be attractive to the community as a whole and would receive widespread support.

The gifts committee had a complication arise concerning its offer to potential contributors of the possibility of a tax deductible donation; the Internal Revenue Service would not approve the amphitheatre corporation for tax deductible purposes until it had been in operation for a year. This meant contributions could not be tax deductible until after November, 1952. To avoid losing potential revenue and to
encourage contributions, the steering committee proposed a plan to circumvent legally the year-in-operation requirement. Officials urged those planning to donate money for tax purposes to loan the money to the corporation and at the end of the year to make the loan a donation to the amphitheatre corporation. 35

At the outset, Norman and amphitheatre officials were optimistic money would be raised for the project. Soon after the launching of the drive, however, it began to appear as if the campaign would rapidly become a dismal failure due to the lack of widespread community support. Officials tried to counter the trend by emphasizing the moral good the play would do and stressed what the money derived from the play would mean to the community. They argued that after repaying the loans, the profits would go to community charities which would eliminate the need for annual fund drives. 36

Norman worked hard to keep the drive going; however, by mid-February the drive was way behind schedule and contributions and loans were almost nil. From mid-February to the end of March interest and contributions varied greatly. The campaign received a boost in mid-February when Josef Meier was able to come to Lake Wales for a brief visit to confer with officials. 37 His visit spurred interest, and gifts and loans jumped in number and amount. Immediately after Meier's visit, Norman reported pledges and gifts had increased to
the extent that he believed $50,000 could be reached by the middle of March. He was so optimistic he sent a brief letter to campaign workers urging them to complete their jobs as soon as possible.

Mr. Josef Meier of the Black Hills Passion Play paid us a visit, and has approved the site for the amphitheatre. There remains only one thing to be done to bring the production to Lake Wales—the completing of the campaign. For this reason we ask that you complete your solicitations as soon as possible. As soon as our construction fund reaches $50,000, construction will be started. So please let us have your report.

Unfortunately, campaign contributions did not continue at a steady rate. In fact, the steering committee became so alarmed a special meeting was called for Tuesday, March 6, to discuss the matter. The steering committee believed the campaign should be cancelled if $50,000 was not raised by March 31st. The committee estimated $75,000 was needed to assure the minimum requirements needed for the presentation of the play; however, if $50,000 could be obtained through gifts and loans by the end of March, necessary bids could be awarded and construction commenced in order to be completed in time for the announced opening.

Josef Meier also became anxious over the lag in the financial drive. He wrote the steering committee suggesting that May 1st be the deadline to determine whether money could be raised or not. As indicated in the following excerpt, the letter explained Meier's problems and viewpoint
regarding the proposed production in Lake Wales.

The success of the play still depends upon unified and enthusiastic ability and cooperation. This enthusiasm and cooperation must come from the realization of the tremendous contribution a play of this nature will make to the moral and spiritual value of this community as well as for all those thousands of people who will come to witness the performances. For this very reason the community's attitudes and decision must predominate commercial free of influences of jealousy. . . . Once before I assumed the responsibility for bringing a successful conclusion of a similar project in the Black Hills which the very existence was in danger because of the lack of local confidence, lack of local enthusiasm, and lack of local finances. It was a task which twelve years ago I brought through successfully, and I did so single handedly, but a task which today I definitely reject because I doubt I would be able to regiment the amount of energy once again needed to do it and the willingness to sacrifice everything to the achievement of this goal. . . .

At this point I believe the entire project depends upon the clear understanding between all parties concerned, and before going much further, this clear understanding must be reached. In fairness to everyone concerned I am sure that you and the community will agree that we must clarify the entire situation in our own minds since otherwise it would foolishly endanger the possibility of success.

Our requirements are a definite assurance that the amphitheatre will be ready for the proposed opening January 11, 1953. That an effective campaign will have been conducted to insure the kind of attendance the play is accustomed to enjoy, an attendance which in turn will provide for the material needs of the company and the Passion Play corporation. I am responsible for a rather large group, of a heavy weekly overhead. Our bookings are made as much as two years ahead of the company's present engagements. The need of this particular arrangement arises out of the fact
that auditoriums and theatres the country over are in constant demand and engagement schedules have to be reserved well in advance. Therefore, if for one reason or the other the Lake Wales project would have to be abandoned, I would find myself already seriously handicapped in complete bookings for the eight week period set aside for the 1953 Lake Wales date.

If by May 1, 1952 the local campaign has made insufficient progress to insure completion of the proposed plan both parties should, by mutual agreement, release each other from the agreement entered into on July 10, 1951 without any other claim on or against the other.41

Meier had not been overly enthusiastic with the proposed project when the Lake Wales delegation first approached him. He had been persuaded the community could and would raise the necessary funds to construct an amphitheatre,42 but he was unwilling to undertake the whole project as he had in Spearfish even though he was seeking a winter home for his production.

Although Meier allowed one more month in his deadline to raise the necessary funds than the steering committee's date, the committee decided to keep its deadline of March 31st. A review of the drive revealed $35,000 had been pledged or donated which left $15,000 to be raised in just slightly over three weeks. Of the $35,000 pledged or on hand, $30,000 had been raised during the pre-campaign, which meant only $5,000 had been raised in the main drive. The task of raising $15,000 seemed very difficult.

The fund-raising committee proposed a new withholding-loan plan to help raise the necessary money. The provisions
of the plan stipulated employers could, at the request of an employee, withhold a certain amount ($10.00 or more) from the employee's paycheck over a given period to be loaned to the amphitheatre corporation. This meant every employed person in the city had an opportunity to loan some money without any significant financial inconvenience. The fund-raising committee further emphasized the contributions would be loans rather than gifts and as such would bear five percent interest until the loan was repaid.

The first task was to publicize the new plan in the area. The editors of both Lake Wales newspapers devoted front-page publicity and editorials to the campaign. The editorials emphasized the Passion Play was a religious play and as such, contributions were no different from church donations. Since churches needed money to operate, argued the editorials, so did the Passion Play. The editorials also stressed the monetary value of the production to the community. The editors argued extra income would be realized from additional visitors not only by the hotels and restaurants but also by the community as a whole. The increased publicity emphasized the urgency of the fund-raising situation.

Meier's letter helped the fund drive as it somewhat alarmed the community. The possibility of losing the project became real and seemed to be the needed catalyst to get more community support.
The withholding plan proved attractive and more employees began to loan money. Business establishments began to urge their employees to give, and the drive rapidly became a community project. A huge thermometer, much like the ones used in United Fund drives, was placed in one of the shopping centers. The message "Watch It Grow! Amphitheatre Fund" appeared in bold letters at the top of the chart. It was updated daily to keep the community informed of the amount pledged and the amount needed to reach the $50,000 mark.

Amphitheatre officials designated the week of March 24 - 29 as "Victory Week." Various activities designed to raise money for the drive were planned. Victory Week was launched with a parade through the downtown business section, which helped set the mood for the week. There were numerous activities, such as dances, bake sales, and rummage sales sponsored by several civic and church organizations.

The drive's intense activity resulted in the fact that, by Monday, March 24th, the first official day of Victory Week, funds had jumped to nearly $45,000. The two local newspapers and radio station WIBC gave large amounts of space and time to the fund drive to keep the public informed. The *Daily Highlander* printed daily rosters of contributors to the fund drive. By mid-week funds had increased to slightly over $48,000. The drive was an assured success by Friday, March the 28th as funds had jumped to $51,566.44.
By Monday, March 31st, the deadline set by the steering committee to either reach $50,000 or cancel the project, some $59,944.45 had been pledged or collected. Amphitheatre officials were delighted as they believed by reaching the $50,000 milestone contracts could be let and work begin on the construction.

The last minute push to reach the milestone was a success, but after the excitement of Victory Week diminished, the amphitheatre officials took a second look at finances. The investigation revealed the fund-drive was not going to reach anywhere near the estimated $150,000 cost to build the amphitheatre facilities. The question then became, just how much could be raised, and how much of the original design could be constructed?

Officials decided to investigate other sources of income. One proposed source was the State of Florida. The steering committee authorized F. M. O'Bryne and State Attorney Walter Woolfolk to go to the state capital in Tallahassee, meet with the Governor's Cabinet, and request an appropriation for the Passion Play project. The two men appeared before the Cabinet and asked for $25,000 which would be taken from the Governor's discretionary fund, a revenue source for conventions and other special promotions within the state.

Cabinet members, including the Governor, seemed amenable to the request but no further action developed.
waiting for some weeks, the amphitheatre officials decided aid was not forthcoming and appealed to State Senator Harry King for support. King took time from his reelection campaign and flew to Tallahassee Tuesday, April 22, 1952, to meet with the Governor's Cabinet. King pleaded for the money, and this time the request was granted subject to the availability of funds. The grant became definite when Nathan Mayo, Commissioner of Agriculture, pledged to take the $25,000 requested from his advertising funds. The funds were to be available after July 1, 1952.\textsuperscript{52} The grant from the state, coupled with approximately $60,000 in pledges or donations, pushed the total over $85,000. At best, the financial drive was only a modified success, but was successful enough for amphitheatre officials to authorize the beginning of construction.

Construction of the Amphitheatre

The fund drive had many anxious moments but the main crisis seemed to be past. The next order of business was the election of permanent officers and the awarding of contracts to allow construction to begin. F. M. O'Bryne was elected the first permanent President of the corporation. Other officers included O. A. Brice, First Vice President, Steve Keen, Second Vice President, Henry Bullard, Secretary, and E. L. Sherman, Treasurer.\textsuperscript{53} In addition several committees were formed, the four most active during the construc-
tion phase of the amphitheatre being the finance committee headed by Douglass Bullard, the building committee headed by E. R. Jahna, the grounds committee headed by Dallas Gum, and the publicity committee headed by Robert O. Lodmell.\textsuperscript{54}

A site committee had been appointed upon the approval of the corporation charter and had gone to work trying to locate a suitable site for the amphitheatre. Three or four areas were considered but no decision was reached until late November, 1951. A location approximately two miles south of town belonging to the Hunt Brothers Packing House was favored. The site was a large sinkhole surrounded by orange groves and provided a natural bowl. Members of the site committee believed the amphitheatre could be constructed without major excavation saving a large amount of time and money.\textsuperscript{55}

Early in December, 1951, negotiations came to a standstill when reaction developed against the proposed site. The then temporary president, James Morton, stated even though the committee had selected and was seeking to secure the "old Hunt Brothers Packing House site" the corporation was not obligated to build the amphitheatre there, and he invited people to come forth with other suggestions and discuss various sites with him.\textsuperscript{56} After much deliberation the site committee decided their original choice remained the best location and entered into negotiations once again for the site. The owners finally agreed to sell for $1,000 with
They later cancelled the unpaid balance as a donation to the amphitheatre.

Little was done to the site until after the financial drive. E. R. Jahna, a local contractor, did, however, have the site graded and a road entrance improved in early February, 1952.58

The steering committee had approved preliminary designs drawn for the proposed amphitheatre in December, 1951, but nothing solidified before May, 1952. The corporation gave Meier the right to approve or disapprove plans for the amphitheatre. None of the scenery plans were received before May, and officials were concerned that some of the units might have to be altered because of the difference of topography and space relationships in the two amphitheatres.

Meier had examined the proposed site during one of his visits to Lake Wales in the spring of 1952 and had expressed some concern regarding the staging. He wanted the scenic units and acting area to be a duplication of the Spearfish facility, but he and the corporation officials concluded some changes were necessary. The main staging difference was the crucifixion scene. In Spearfish the scene was played on a hillside some 300 feet from the amphitheatre. There was a small knoll in the proposed site that could perhaps be developed into a hill when time and finances permitted. The decision was reached to play the crucifixion scene on the center stage unit. In the event the small
knoll was developed into a hill for the crucifixion scene at a later date, Meier decided to rearrange the setting to allow for future expansion. He decided to move the tomb and garden area to stage right and move the City Gate and Bethany units to stage left, creating a ground plan which was the opposite of the Spearfish setting but which still allowed for a smooth flow of scenes (See Appendix J for a ground plan of both amphitheatres).

Meier was worried about potential sight-line difficulties when he investigated the proposed site. The site in Lake Wales was in essence a large sinkhole, a geological formation not uncommon in Central Florida. He believed the incline was so steep spectators seated near the top of the amphitheatre would see too much of the top of the actor's head. S. D. Gray showed Meier a side or sectional view of the site and explained the stage area itself could be raised without great difficulty which in turn would permit more ideal sight lines. Meier accepted Gray's solution to the sight-line problem.

Meier raised the subject of potential use of the amphitheatre for activities other than the Passion Play. From experience he believed the corporation would eventually decide to use the amphitheatre for other productions when the Passion Play was not being presented. He, therefore, suggested the central stage building be built as a regular proscenium stage with adequate fly space for drops and
Corporation officials agreed with his suggestion and the central stage unit in Lake Wales was designed to be twenty feet taller than its counterpart in Spearfish. This was the only major difference between the sizes and shapes of the stage units in both locations.

The board accepted Meier's suggestions about scenery, but measurements and other vital information about the scenic units were needed. Time was rapidly passing and construction had to begin if the amphitheatre were to be ready by January. To facilitate obtaining the information, the steering committee voted to send E. R. Jahna, chairman of the building committee, and Fred Teager, an engineer, to Spearfish to confer with Meier. The team was also instructed to obtain scenery measurements and a diagram of the electrical wiring system in order to duplicate the Spearfish light control system and light cues in Lake Wales.

Jahna returned to Lake Wales with measurements, diagrams, and estimated cost information. He computed the construction cost of the five scenic building units at $65,000. The central stage unit alone would take $25,000. Jahna estimated the electrical wiring would cost $20,000 and the seating area another $20,000. The board of directors also estimated $10,000 was needed for plumbing and water facilities and another $10,000 would be needed for an advertising campaign. This brought the estimated total cost to $125,000. The new estimates were considerably above
the $85,000 pledged towards the project.

Jahna had encountered a problem connected with the electrical system. After seeing the Spearfish system, he decided he did not possess the necessary technical electrical background to make a complete diagram of the wiring scheme and recommended the corporation send someone else with more experience with electrical equipment to Spearfish to obtain the information. The board voted to send S. D. Gray, a Florida Power Company engineer, to get the information. Gray borrowed an airplane, flew to Spearfish, and in one week made a wiring diagram and lighting plot for the Lake Wales amphitheatre.63

The board finally had all the information necessary to build the amphitheatre; unfortunately, the persistent financial problem had not been solved. The new estimated cost for the project was $40,000 over the amount pledged. To make matters worse, Treasurer E. L. Sherman reported he was having difficulty collecting $29,000 of the $85,000 in pledges.64 The board issued an appeal through the news media asking those who had not paid their pledges to do so.

The board was, nevertheless, optimistic funds would be forthcoming and decided to start construction. Of course they realized any more extensive delay would probably postpone or perhaps even cancel the planned 1953 season. Bids were opened July 1, 1952, for the ticket office, rest rooms, and plumbing. Builder L. F. Martin, with a bid of $9,600
to construct the ticket office and rest rooms, and Lake Wales Plumbing, with a bid of $3,100 for the plumbing, were awarded the first contracts.65

The long awaited ground breaking ceremonies were set for July 14, 1952. The main speaker for the event was Governor Fuller Warren, who called the play a great and outstanding contribution to the cultural development of the state ... and the play, coupled with nearby Bok Tower and the Great Masterpiece constitute the greatest single group of attractions in the State.66

Little activity occurred on the project except for construction of the box office during the remainder of July. In early August problems developed concerning the State's $25,000 pledge. At a Governor's Cabinet meeting, Attorney General Richard Ervin disclosed he had received protests about the Cabinet's grant to the Lake Wales Amphitheatre Corporation. The Attorney General believed the protests were not too significant since the Passion Play had the potential of being a tremendous tourist attraction which would aid the state's general economy. The issue involved was not giving the grant to the Lake Wales group but rather whether state money could and should be given to help non-profit attractions. The Cabinet agreed the question was a problem for the State Legislature. It also agreed to fulfill its $25,000 pledge to the Lake Wales Corporation but the money was given, not as a grant, but as a loan without interest to be repaid within five years.67
Construction was almost completed on the box office by mid-August, at which time amphitheatre officials received some good news. A vein of clay was discovered on the property which was an adequate supply to hard-surface the road leading to the grounds and the parking lot, and which could be used to build up a portion of the acting area. The discovery meant money was saved which could be used elsewhere in the construction.

The second phase of the construction was the erection of five buildings comprising the majority of the scenery. On August 20, 1952, L. F. Martin was awarded a $45,000 contract to complete the building units by December 24th. Martin's bid was considerably under the original estimate of $65,000 for the units. Martin also agreed to take a note
for $6,750 of the $45,000 which helped ease the strain on the corporation's bank account. Martin had to hurry with the project because the contract date of completion allowed only a two and one-half week latitude before the winter season was scheduled to start.

Martin's bid, $20,000 under the original estimate, revised the cost of the amphitheatre to approximately $105,000. Early in the summer, Treasurer E. L. Sherman again reported difficulty in collecting some of the pledges. During the summer months $17,000 was collected but $12,000 remained uncollected, which meant the corporation still needed $30,000 of the total $105,000, and the amount had to be raised rapidly in order for the amphitheatre to be ready by January, 1953. The board met September 25th to discuss the bleak financial picture and decided not to authorize any additional spending until more money was available. The next day the Daily Highlander described the situation to the public, urging those who had pledged but had not yet given money to do so as the $12,000 was needed to purchase the remaining items.

Money came in slowly, but in two weeks enough had been collected to persuade the board to reconsider the decision not to buy additional items. On October 8th the board approved several contracts. L. F. Martin was awarded a contract of $2,454 for an electrical control building, $1,647 for a housing for the footlights, and $950 to build the
Figure 21. Amphitheatre construction (from left to right, foundation of the center stage unit, the Temple unit, the High Priest council room, the Bethany unit)

Figure 22. Amphitheatre before any grading in seating area. Note tomb unit in right of photo
tomb. One week later the board awarded a contract to J. M. Wynn and Sons to build molds and pour cement to build the seats. The company built molds and poured cement in what is now the parking lot area of the amphitheatre grounds. When the concrete hardened, seats were lowered into the amphitheatre with a crane. During the meeting on October 15, 1952, the board awarded the Haines City Electric and Plumbing Company a contract for the installation of lighting facilities. With that contract the last important orders for materials and construction had been submitted. The only thing left for the board to do was to spearhead a drive to raise the money necessary to complete the project.

Fall 1952 - Opening 1953

Several fund-raising plans were attempted during the
fall months. One idea was to obtain a mortgage loan against the physical properties; however, finance chairman, Douglas Bullard believed the plan would be grossly unfair to those who had already contributed. The board agreed with Bullard, and on November 17th appointed J. E. Griffin to map out a "last-second" campaign. Griffin proposed a four-point program to raise funds.

1. Griffin asked members of the corporation to call on individuals who had already contributed to solicit additional loans and to seek loans from individuals who had not contributed.

2. Griffin appointed a committee headed by Mrs. C. M. Hunt to approach hotel and restaurant owners and other retailers who would benefit most from the Passion Play for additional loans and gifts.

3. Griffin proposed that a group contact neighboring towns to seek loans. F. M. O'Bryne, president of the amphitheatre corporation, agreed to head the committee.

4. Griffin appointed a committee headed by Walter W. Woolfolk to sell memberships at $10.00 each for a type of booster club known as the Pioneer Club.74

The Pioneer Club was the latest of the four ideas to develop and perhaps needs some explanation. Early in September, 1952, the board of directors authorized the securing of a publicity director to handle promotion and the daily operations of the amphitheatre. A three-member committee headed
by O. A. Brice recommended the corporation hire E. Carl Sink at a salary of $6,000 a year plus $2,000 for travel expenses. The board voted to hire Sink on September 10th. Sink had been in the public relations field for twenty-six years and had served as publicity director for both THE LOST COLONY and UNTO THESE HILLS.

Sink fostered the idea of the booster club in late October because he saw the need of promoting the amphitheatre year round for other attractions in addition to the Passion Play. The plan met with approval of the board which in turn approved the booster group known as the Pioneer Club. The organization was independent from the amphitheatre corporation. Sink set a target of 3,000 charter members to pay the $10.00 membership fee which would eventually go into the corporation's coffer.

The Pioneer Club members were to promote the amphitheatre in four important ways:

1. The Pioneer Club members would try to uncover material for amphitheatre presentation.

2. Club members would then present the discovered material to the governing bodies of the club which in turn would present it to the amphitheatre corporation.

3. Club members would seek to persuade the general public by every means possible to view amphitheatre presentations.

4. The club members would preview all presentations
scheduled for the amphitheatre. 78

Officials believed the Pioneer Club plan would appeal to many contributors who had already loaned and given donations to the amphitheatre: they would pay a modest membership fee whereas they might not make additional donations. Should 3,000 charter members be enlisted, $30,000 would be realized.

The "last-second" fund drive did not net the amount needed but did realize nearly $11,000 by December 4th. Earlier the board had decided that final construction costs would exhaust available funds, depleting all publicity funds. The board also decided opening and operating funds had to come from ticket revenue. 79

E. Carl Sink had to operate on a shoestring budget during the fall in his attempts to publicize the production. In addition to implementing the Pioneer Club plan, he managed to secure enough funds to pay for and distribute 50,000 folders containing information about the amphitheatre and the Passion Play. 80 He also issued a series of press releases to most newspapers in the Southeast and was instrumental in convincing Dick Pope, the developer of Cypress Gardens, to include a picture and some vital information about the Passion Play in his promotional folder. Pope's folder known as the "little folder" described attractions in Central Florida and was an excellent publicity boost since nearly two and one-half million folders were printed for
Josef Meier was also making plans for the Lake Wales season. He hired Harold Rogers to be his personal representative for the Lake Wales operation. Rogers had been with the Passion Play company when it settled in the Black Hills but had left the company in the early 1940's and moved to Seattle. He and Meier remained in contact, and when the Lake Wales contract was signed, apparently furnishing a permanent winter home for the production, Meier persuaded Rogers to rejoin the organization. Rogers moved to Lake Wales in the early fall of 1952, to keep abreast of the activities and development of the amphitheatre and to be a liaison between Meier and the Lake Wales group.

After Rogers appeared on the scene, amphitheatre officials began to devote more attention to the mechanics of the actual production. The officials decided a general manager was needed to supervise the secretaries, box office personnel, ground attendants, and ushers, and to handle money received from the sale of tickets. F. M. O'Bryne was named temporary general manager and was employed on a weekly basis. A committee was authorized to seek a permanent general manager who, if he could be found before the end of the first season, would work more or less as an understudy to O'Bryne.

Early in December the amphitheatre officials began a campaign to seek extras for the production. Meier had
stipulated that he wanted nearly two hundred people in the following job categories:

1. Men required

- 6 Roman Guards, young, athletic, and must be able to ride
- 6 Temple Guards, young, athletic
- 9 Disciples, older men
- 8 Priests, both young and older men
- 11 March outs, any age
- 30 Citizens, any age
- **70 Total Men**

2. Women required

- 9 Temple dancers, high school age, near same height
- 8 Water girls, any age
- 4 Mary women, any age
- 4 Magdalene women, any age
- **75 Citizens, any age**
- **100 Total Women**

3. Children

- 6 Boys and Girls, 4-6 years of age
- 1 Girl, 3 years of age
- **7 Total Children**

The total minimum jobs for extras numbered 177, but more people could be used. Officials realized the extras would be required three nights per week for an eight week period; consequently they wanted to obtain enough volunteers so no one individual would have to serve more than one night per
week. More than 600 people would be necessary to put the plan into operation. Volunteers were slow in registering. Only thirty individuals attended the first meeting called for extras, but by the time Josef Meier met with the group for the first time the number had swelled to 150. Meier was pleased with the number even though it was far below what officials had wanted.

The amphitheatre was ready for use by mid-December, and the tempo of activities increased as the preview and formal opening dates drew near. Unfortunately there were some disappointments. First, E. Carl Sink resigned early in January, 1953, as publicity director which meant the public relations position was vacant at a crucial time. Second, and perhaps more important, the weather became cold and rainy early in January which threatened to postpone the January 9 preview performance and the first public performance on January 11th.

A special performance, billed as a "gold plated" preview performance for the members of the Pioneer Club, state political personalities, and press members from across the Southeast, was scheduled for January 9, 1953. The cold weather worried corporation officials. On the morning of January 9th officials checked with the weather bureau and decided to proceed with the preview performance. A group of 2300 braved the cold weather to see a brief dedication service and the first performance cap eighteen months of hard work and anxious moments in the effort to raise funds to
construct the amphitheatre. The Passion Play was well received by the community and, at long last, Lake Wales could proclaim itself as the winter home of the Black Hills Passion Play.

Problems Incurred 1953 - 1974

Many difficulties had been met and solved by the play's

backers who hoped they could now settle back and enjoy the benefits to be derived from the production, but such was not to be the case. The operation has had numerous difficulties since 1953. The corporation has been continually plagued by financial worries which have been attributed to several factors, notably inclement weather and lack of adequate publicity. A lesser difficulty has been the securing of extras.

The weather. Ironically the weather has been one of

Figure 24. The Amphitheatre in the early 1950's
the most significant problems faced by the corporation in battling financial woes. Cold weather greeted the opening of the production, and was a surprise to Meier who, influenced by literature about the state, had envisioned the central part of Florida as not having a winter season. Harold Rogers, business manager for the production, states the weather has been a much greater factor in Lake Wales than in Spearfish because people go to Florida for the warm weather and do not venture out in the evenings to watch an outdoor play if the weather is cold.

The cold, rainy weather moved across Florida and lasted throughout January, 1953. The amphitheatre corporation had been forced to open the season without sufficient operating capital and had planned to meet expenses from the ticket revenue. The terms of the contract between Meier and the corporation stipulated Meier would receive the first $6,000 weekly and the corporation would receive the next $4,000 weekly: all receipts over the first $10,000 would be split on a 60/40 basis. The attendance was so low because of the cold weather in January, 1953, the sale of tickets did not reach $6,000 per week, causing the corporation to run rapidly into desperate straits.

The board of directors met January 21, 1953, to decide what could be done to reduce some of the operating expenses. After a heated discussion, the board decided in a close vote to abolish the general manager's position held by F. M.
O'Bryne. The operating committee headed by J. E. Griffin and Steve Keen reported the amphitheatre was nearly $8,000 in debt and recommended the general manager's position be abolished to diminish expenses. They felt this was a logical step since O'Bryne was in essence holding a temporary position on a week to week basis while the personnel committee had been seeking a permanent general manager. The committee believed the person in charge of the box office could manage the financial accounting. Further, the committee recommended the amphitheatre corporation approach the Chamber of Commerce to borrow the chamber's secretary, P. J. Rasor, for one-half day per week to work on public relations for the amphitheatre.  

The weather became warmer by the end of January, and attendance began to increase. It grew from under 900 each performance to over 1,200 but remained under the average of 2,000 needed at each performance to break even. Meier, realizing the corporation needed money for publicity, offered to donate $1,000 and loan another $1,000 if the money would be utilized for advertising. The board members accepted the offer and themselves donated another $1,000, bringing the total to $3,000 for more publicity.  

The additional publicity and the warmer weather helped to boost attendance, and the play began to draw near-capacity audiences by the end of February. An overflow crowd of nearly 3,800 gathered in the amphitheatre for the March
1st performance. The amphitheatre seats 3,500; consequently several hundred, mostly children and young people, sat on the grass or on orange crates which had been brought in to accommodate the overflow crowd. The March 1st attendance was the largest for a single performance during the initial season. The final tally for the first season totaled 38,551 paid attendance, an encouraging figure considering the low attendance in January and early February.

Almost every year during the first ten seasons was plagued by weather problems. In some years the problem was more serious than others; the worst winter was in the 1958 season. That year Florida had one of the coldest winter seasons in over a half century during late January and early February. Attendance at the outset was seldom over 150 for any one night. Operating capital was completely exhausted and the situation became so serious that Meier wanted to close the season before further indebtedness was incurred.

A special meeting of the board of directors was called to confront the issue. The board pointed out that attendance was usually less in January and February than in March and April, and if the performances could continue, the attendance would increase. Meier finally agreed to finish and extend the season if attendance increased.

As has been the case in almost every instance when the Passion Play has financial problems, the community became alarmed and a special financial drive ensued. In 1958,
businessmen and members of the community rallied to support the amphitheatre corporation in an emergency fund drive netting almost $10,000. With warmer weather, the attendance increased. The Passion Play was extended one week, and the permanent closing of the amphitheatre was narrowly averted.

There have been several attempts to lessen the effects of the weather on the production. One of the first was to move up the opening date for the winter season. Originally the amphitheatre corporation wanted a December to March schedule, but the experience in 1953 convinced the officials the season should begin in late January or early February rather than December or early January. By starting later in January the corporation hoped to avoid the coldest winter weather. This practice has been followed ever since.

Other experiments were attempted in an effort to overcome the affects of the weather. One experiment was the addition of matinee performances. Meier agreed to try some matinees in 1955 in an effort to get older people to attend the production. A large percentage of the Lake Wales tourist trade was comprised of retired people who would not attend an evening performance because of the damp, cold weather and other related problems.

Even though he agreed to a matinee performance, Meier had some reservations. First, he was anxious to know how the special lighting would be affected. He knew some of
the lighting effects would have to be eliminated and he feared this would destroy the overall atmosphere or mood of the play. He was also worried about a more tangible problem. The audience would be looking into the late afternoon sun and the glare might be too distracting; however, the answer to the sun was paper sun visor caps which were distributed to the audience.

To get feedback about the matinees, the amphitheatre officials distributed a questionnaire for the first matinee. The questionnaire contained two questions, 1. Have you seen an outdoor night performance of the play? 2. How did you like this afternoon's performance? The questionnaire brought many favorable responses prompting amphitheatre officials and Meier to add several daylight performances in the 1956 season. Matinee performances are still scheduled each year.

Other plans to combat the weather were devised in 1955. An electrical heating cable was installed along one row of seats to determine whether sufficient warmth could be generated to heat the whole seating section. The amphitheatre officials decided to investigate special grove heaters similar to the ones used in the orange groves during freezing weather as a possible source of heat. Neither the cable nor grove heating systems fulfilled expectations and other means to combat the weather had to be investigated.

Many believed the best solution to the weather problem
would be to roof the entire amphitheatre.\textsuperscript{99} The first of four attempts to roof part or all of the amphitheatre was tried in 1955. A company was authorized to furnish a cost estimate for roofing, but the cost was prohibitive and the idea was temporarily postponed. The idea was suggested again in 1960\textsuperscript{100} after Meier had insisted some rain protection was necessary as a condition for his returning another year, but, as in the case of 1955, nothing constructive was accomplished.

The roof question was raised for a third time in 1962. Meier and the amphitheatre corporation had signed a ten-year contract to run through the 1962 season. Meier continued his requests for a rain shelter and finally stipulated in 1962 that he would absolutely not return to Lake Wales for another winter season unless a rain shelter were built.\textsuperscript{101}

A three-member committee composed of Q. J. Whitmire, Clyde Parlier, and Ben F. O'Neal was appointed to investigate a partial cover for the amphitheatre. The committee sought an economical cover which would maintain the atmosphere of the outdoor theatre, cost under $5,000, and provide protection for 1,000 people seated or 2,500 people standing. A roof made of steel cables covered with plastic sheets was investigated. A series of steel cables anchored on steel beams would stretch across the amphitheatre. A type of transparent plastic would then be stretched over the steel cables. The cables would be permanent but the plastic would
need to be replaced annually. The initial cost would be $5,000 with a subsequent estimated annual cost of $1,000 to replace the plastic.¹⁰²

After hearing the committee's report, the board decided the plastic covering would be more costly over a period of years than the corporation could afford. The committee then began investigating other solutions. Finally in November, 1962, the committee and later the board of directors came to the conclusion the best solution for the problem would be a rectangular covering comprised of a steel frame covered with corrugated steel roofing. Dan B. Kelly was authorized to construct a shelter, which resembles a covered walkway, 203' x 16' to be located between the ticket office and the rear row of seats. The shelter could protect some 1,000 people in the event of rain.¹⁰³ (See figure 25)

Figure 25. The rain shelter behind the light booth
The presence of a rain shelter helped alleviate some psychological fears a potential audience might have about coming to the play in threatening weather. Another attempt to cover or enclose the amphitheatre was studied in 1970-71, but the project entailed the complete redesign of the amphitheatre for year-long use: the plan will be discussed later.

Publicity problems. The lack of adequate publicity and the fear of inclement weather have been double causes for the corporation's financial worries. The lack of attendance has often been blamed on the lack of publicity. Money to finance a first-rate publicity program has always been scarce from the very beginning of the operation. E. Carl Sink, the first and only full-time publicity director, was hired in the fall of 1952. He had to rely mainly on press releases or whatever publicity could be gained at little cost.

Publicity for the first three years consisted primarily of news releases, billboards, and posters. O. A. Brice, realizing the need for an expanded publicity program, made a recommendation in May, 1955, proposing the City of Lake Wales establish a $20,000 advertising budget for the city's attractions. Brice's recommendation was only one portion of a three-part proposal to help financial needs. The recommendations were: (1) the addition of television as an advertising medium; (2) establishment of a $20,000 advertising budget for all Lake Wales attractions including the
consideration of a city tax levy to help raise money; (3) a request to note holders to cancel the interest due them as a contribution to the production. The recommendation came after a season in which both Meier and the corporation had suffered financial losses. City officials agreed local attractions needed promotion, but the City Council was unable to develop a plan to raise the $20,000.

The 1956 season operated on a minimal publicity budget. To help cope with the situation and get the best results out of the meager budget, Meier loaned his publicity agent, Victor Spouse, to the amphitheatre corporation for the 1957 season. The board of directors responded to the offer by adopting a $10,000 advertising budget, the largest in the five-year history of the corporation. Attendance increased twenty per cent over the previous season and was attributed primarily to the larger publicity budget.

Attendance for the 1957 season was an indication of what could be accomplished with more publicity and a full-time public relations director to supervise the program. Meier had loaned his publicity director to the corporation without charge in 1957, but was reluctant to do so again for another season. In fact, he was contemplating not returning for another season to Lake Wales. He expressed a willingness to return provided the amphitheatre corporation was willing to underwrite its portion of the advertising and operational expenses. Meier and amphitheatre officials were
able to come to a mutual understanding for 1958; however publicity has never had the budget Meier believed necessary. Special fund drives to support the amphitheatre have been a common occurrence. One drive held for a number of years was designed to provide operating expenses for the play's opening and publicity funds. The drive was known as "Operation Snowball" and brought several thousand dollars into the corporation's bank account.107

The corporation has repeatedly asked the City of Lake Wales for financial aid to help with publicity. Depending upon the composition of the membership of the City Council, the amphitheatre group has not always experienced an eagerness to help. The latest proposal was in 1964 when the amphitheatre corporation requested $5,000 from the city for the promotion of the play. Some question was in the minds of City Council members regarding the use of the money. They believed the city, in any case, had to justify any appropriation to the Passion Play on the grounds that the money be used to advertise the City of Lake Wales and was not a grant used exclusively for the Passion Play. The commission finally approved $1,500 of the $5,000 requested "to advertise the City of Lake Wales as part of the corporation's publicity program for the Black Hills Passion Play."108

Time has been a significant promotional asset to the production. As winter season after winter season passed,
the production became more established and better known among tourist and church groups throughout Florida and the Southeast. The corporation presently contracts a local publicity agency to handle public relations on a part-time basis, but the majority of the publicity is supervised by Harold Rogers, who has been on loan from Meier to the corporation since 1954 functioning as business manager for the amphitheatre. Meier has gradually absorbed the cost of printing 600,000 publicity folders or flyers constituting the bulk of the advertising.\textsuperscript{109}

**The "extras" situation.** Obtaining sufficient people to serve as extras has not been the problem in Lake Wales that it was in Spearfish. The first call for extras in December, 1952, did not get a good response from the community, but by the time Meier arrived in early January, 1953, the number of volunteers had increased. Through the years a core of nearly two hundred volunteers has developed.\textsuperscript{110}

Several reasons can be given for the larger number of extras. First, Lake Wales has a larger population than Spearfish, so the available pool of extras is larger. During the winter, the population increases in Lake Wales. Most of the newcomers do not hold permanent jobs within the community and many take the opportunity to participate as extras in order to occupy themselves. Third, the permanent residents do not go on vacation, as they do in Spearfish, which in turn permits a larger pool of extras throughout
the entire season.

Some difficulties have arisen in connection with the extras. First, since the mid-1950's the Passion Play has averaged nearly five performances each week which include the four regular performances on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday plus several Wednesday matinees each season. This means a much larger pool of extras is needed than in Spearfish. Two performances each week are given on school nights, and many parents do not wish their children to be out late at night. At times, however, the school night performances have had the opposite effect. Many parents have left their children at the Passion Play so they would not have to get baby sitters for the evening. At one time small children became so unruly backstage officials had to request an adult accompany each child.

A new and unique problem occurred recently. In April, 1970, Meier appeared before the Chamber of Commerce to request help in soliciting men and women in the twenty-five to thirty-five year age bracket to serve as extras. He reported he had plenty of old and young people, but a generation gap had developed and he needed people in the twenty-five to thirty-five age group to play soldiers, priests, and guards.

H. E. Rogers, general manager of the Passion Play, states as long as sufficient numbers of volunteers continue to serve as extras, the present number of performances can
continue. Should the supply of extras begin to dwindle, then a system similar to Spearfish might be needed.\textsuperscript{112} At any rate, securing extras has not been the major problem to face the amphitheatre corporation.

**Use of Amphitheatre Facilities**

The original idea in the conception of the fund raisers working to construct an amphitheatre was that the presentation of the Passion Play be the sole production at the amphitheatre. Josef Meier had been influential in the design of the structure, and the scenic units were duplications of those at Spearfish. They were permanent structures and actually could be used only by the Passion Play. Meier was, however, instrumental in persuading the Lake Wales organization to include fly space in the center stage building to make it more flexible for other types of programs. But the fact remained, the amphitheatre was built primarily for the presentation of the Passion Play.

Soon after the corporation was formed and the fund-raising drive launched, several civic leaders realized there might be more potential use for the facilities other than just during the short winter season. Indeed, many believed in order to solicit money, the amphitheatre had to be sold as a year-round operation which would draw more tourists into the city. F. M. O'Bryne, one of the leaders, took the initiative in the midst of the fund drive and made several
inquiries regarding a possible summer pageant based on the life of Napoleon B. Broward, a colorful Jacksonville tugboat captain who was governor of Florida in the early 1900's. A second possibility was a pageant based on the Seminole Indians, the only tribe which at that time had not signed a formal treaty of peace with the United States. O'Bryne corresponded with Samuel Proctor, the author of a biography about Broward, and wrote to Kermit Hunter, author of the script for UNTO THESE HILLS. Both were interested, but, since the financial drive and the actual construction consumed the time and energy of civic leaders in 1952, the discussion of a summer pageant was delayed until the spring of 1953.

After the play opened in 1953, civic leaders began to see more potential for the facilities than previously thought. Led by the Chamber of Commerce, amphitheatre directors became interested in a summer historical drama similar to THE LOST COLONY or UNTO THESE HILLS. Playwrights Kermit Hunter and Paul Green were invited to appear before the board of directors to discuss the possibilities of writing a play about the Seminole Indians based on the life of the Seminole Chief Osceola. The board decided to solicit ideas from other writers before making a definite commitment. The directors seemed to be more interested in securing a complete company rather than in forming a company. In other words, the directors seemed to prefer being a landlord
FLORIDA AFLAME. In the first part of March, 1953, J. W. Caldwell, technical director of the Nashville Community Playhouse, contacted the board of directors about a play he had written based on the life of Osceola. The board was interested in Caldwell's play and asked him to meet with them March 25, 1953. Caldwell came to the meeting with a proposal to form a company to present his play entitled FLORIDA AFLAME for the summer of 1953. The production became the first and, to this date, the last actual production to utilize the amphitheatre other than the Passion Play.

Caldwell's play was the story of Indian Chief Osceola and his people as they struggled to return to their native land and independence in the early 1800's. The play opens in a Seminole village in Northern Florida in the early 1800's as the army comes searching through Florida's swamps and highlands with a plan to move the Seminoles to Oklahoma. A massacre follows what the Indians thought was a betrayal, and several small incidents lead to larger retaliations. Out of these conflicts come tales, now legend, which describe the heroic deeds of Osceola. The fifteen-scene symphonic drama closes with a scene in Fort Marion at Saint Augustine in 1836, when Osceola declines an opportunity to escape from the prison because he was captured under a flag of truce.

Caldwell proposed to present his drama from June 27 to
September 7, 1953, every night except Monday. He suggested a 70/30 split of the gross receipts with his company getting the larger share. His company would handle all details including publicity except the ticket offices. Operating expenses such as utilities and the advertising cost would be split on a 70/30 basis. Caldwell stated his company would need 850 people per performance to operate in the black.

Amphitheatre directors estimated the corporation would need $10,000 as its share of the expenses for the summer. The corporation's treasurer reported the organization had $18,000 in the bank, but that figure would be reduced to about $10,000 when all the bills were paid for the winter season. The directors decided the $10,000 should be kept for the 1954 winter season.

The discussion extended past midnight before the directors came to a consensus that an agreement could be worked out with Caldwell if a citizen's group other than the amphitheatre corporation could raise the money to back Caldwell's drama. This decision set a precedent regarding other groups' use of the facilities. The amphitheatre corporation would be primarily a landlord.

A committee composed of P. J. Rasor, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, Mrs. Charles Hunt, Robert Wilburn, and Robert Lodmell went to work raising the necessary funds to back Caldwell's production, and a contract was subsequently signed between the committee and Caldwell to use the
amphitheatre for a summer production.

FLORIDA AFLAME was presented in the summer of 1953 amidst a multitude of problems which caused the group to abandon the amphitheatre for another site the 1954 season. Thus, the history of that production became separate from that of the Passion Play.

Other productions. Several other productions have been proposed to utilize the amphitheatre facilities but they have remained unrealized. Josef Meier wanted to present a play he had written as a companion piece to the Passion Play. The play, entitled JOHN THE BAPTIST, covered the period of Jesus' life prior to His stepping into public life through His baptism. ¹¹⁸

Meier hoped to extend the winter season with the play, and planned to present JOHN THE BAPTIST from early December to late January, following with the Passion Play until Easter. The new play had a smaller cast, eliminating some of the problems encountered with the Passion Play. Meier also believed the play could be presented in early evening, between five to eight o'clock when the weather would still be comfortable even during the cold spells.¹¹⁹ The affairs of the Passion Play consumed so much of Meier's time, however, that he has never been able to develop JOHN THE BAPTIST into an actual production.¹²⁰

F. M. O'Bryne has been active in trying to secure other productions for the amphitheatre. He headed a group in 1956
and 1957 that wanted to lease the amphitheatre for a summer production of DANCING WATERS. The production was basically a light show which projected colored lights on water fountains with musical accompaniment. Though approved, the group failed to get the necessary backing.

O'Bryne outlined another plan in 1964, whereby the use of the amphitheatre could be expanded for other productions. He suggested that a separate corporation be formed to bring in attractions both in summer and in winter when the amphitheatre was not in use for the Passion Play. He again proposed DANCING WATERS, stating he believed the attraction would be economical and popular. Several performances could be given each evening, every evening in the summer, and on non-performance nights of the Passion Play during the winter. The performance would be so short people would not get chilled even on cold nights in the winter. He further explained tourists wanted something to do before retiring and generally they had seen the movies being shown at the local theatre.

To date, no other specific production has been proposed for the amphitheatre. The only use the amphitheatre has besides the Passion Play has been for high school graduations and band concerts.

New Amphitheatre Design

R. W. Hunt was named chairman of a committee in late
1970 to investigate the possibility of erecting a roof over the amphitheatre to make it a year-round facility. There had been some other attempts to erect a partial roof, but they had culminated in the rain shelter in 1962. The new plan to enclose the amphitheatre grew out of a series of meetings with the Federal Economic Development Authority, which indicated money might be available on a 50/50 percentage matching basis to turn the amphitheatre into a year-round facility. The ability to operate all year would increase the number of functions and thereby increase employment possibilities in the area.

Hunt solicited the aid of Donald E. Dougland, an architectural engineer consultant, and Manuel Sollis, a civil and structural engineer consultant, to design the roof. He also asked the advice of Russell G. Whaley for advice relating to staging, lighting, and sound.

The architects visited the amphitheatre site and decided the sight lines, seating arrangement, and the permanent Passion Play setting made the facility useless for many other productions or purposes. Consequently they decided to approach the design concept as if the site were bare acreage with a sinkhole. The architects then proceeded to design a modern structure which included facilities for conventions, housing for actors in long run productions, a museum, and exhibition facilities in addition to the stage area.

Hunt and his committee presented the new design to the
board of directors of the amphitheatre corporation in early March, 1971. After it became apparent the concept would replace the entire amphitheatre, including the permanent setting, with a multi-purpose staging facility, objections began to rise.

When Meier was told of the prospect of roofing the amphitheatre in the fall of 1970, he had accepted the proposal enthusiastically stating he could advertise his production as being presented rain or shine. He also had voiced the opinion the permanent Passion Play setting would not have to be made portable, but instead, flats could be superimposed in front of the Passion Play setting to permit other uses of the amphitheatre.126

Meier saw the new design for the first time at the 1971 meeting and warned, if the new design were approved, he doubted whether the Passion Play would be presented in the new facility. Several board members interpreted the statement to mean Meier would terminate the Passion Play in Lake Wales. Rather than lose the Passion Play, board members suggested a new corporation be formed and a new location be found to build the proposed structure. In an almost unanimous vote the board voted against the new theatre design.127

The idea of enclosing the amphitheatre was tabled. The question of turning the amphitheatre into a multi-purpose facility will probably be delayed until such time as the amphitheatre corporation can become financially secure and
the future of the Passion Play in Lake Wales determined.

The Future

The Passion Play has never been completely financially successful for the amphitheatre corporation. Several times special fund drives have had to be conducted to keep the operation solvent and to keep it from closing. Funds were raised for the construction of the amphitheatre through donations and loans. The corporation has never been able to repay all of the loans and has seldom been able to pay interest on them. Many people have, however, cancelled the loans as donations to the corporation. One of the original purposes of the Passion Play was to raise funds to support community projects; instead, the play has become a community project.

The future of the corporation and the production in Lake Wales rests with Josef Meier. He has announced that he is retiring and is currently seeking someone to take his place in the cast. Should he be successful, the production may go on uninterrupted; should he fail, the production could cease or be confined to Spearfish. Should this happen, the Lake Wales organization would terminate.
CHAPTER III

NOTES


2. The Bok Tower was built by Edward W. Bok who received the Pulitzer Prize for his book, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*. The tower contains a fifty-three bell carillon and recitals are played hourly during daylight hours. The Great Masterpiece is a type of nature tourist attraction. The first, and main, attraction is the presentation of a large mosaic of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper."


4. Ibid.


7. Ibid.


11. Ibid.


13. Ibid.
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14See copy of charter and by-laws of Passion Play Amphitheatre, Inc., Appendix G.


16See Appendix G.


19Ibid.


22Ibid.


29Ibid.
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32 Ibid.

33 See Appendix H for list of questions and answers concerning the Passion Play.


35 Ibid.

36 The profit from the Passion Play was to go to organizations such as Boy or Girl Scouts, March of Dimes, etc.


39 "Play Workers Asked to Complete Solicitations Following Letter from Wayne Norman to Campaign Workers," Daily Highlander, February 26, 1952, p. 1. The selection of the site mentioned in the letter will be discussed later in this chapter.


42 O. A. Brice, interview, June, 1972.


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51 "Passion Play Amphitheatre Fund Passed $60,000 Mark This Week," Lake Wales News, April 3, 1952, p. 1.


57 O. A. Brice, interview, June, 1972.


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74 "Amphitheatre to Stop Unless $25,000 Is Received Immediately," Daily Highlander, November 18, 1952, p. 1.


76 Ibid.

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78E. Carl Sink special publicity release sent to newspapers throughout the Southeastern United States. Article appeared in the Daily Highlander, November 18, 1952.


82Harold Rogers, private interview, Spearfish, South Dakota, July, 1972.


87"$6,000 More Raised for Amphitheatre in Last Minute Drive," Daily Highlander, February 2, 1953, p. 1.

88"39,000 See Passion Play This Year," Daily Highlander, April 22, 1954, p. 1.

89"Director's Abolish Passion Play Manager's Position," Daily Highlander, January 22, 1953.


92"Last Performance of Season Played Here by Passion Play," Daily Highlander, March 6, 1953, p. 1. Free admission and other related attendance such as Pioneer Club, press, etc. pushed total to 41,569.
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99Ibid.
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110 Ibid.


112 Harold Rogers, interview, January, 1974.


115 "Proposal for Use of Amphitheatre for Indian Drama to be Given to the Board of Directors Tonight," Daily Highlander, March 25, 1953, p. 1.


119 "Josef Meier Hopes to Extend Season Here with Another Religious Drama," Daily Highlander, March 5, 1953, p. 1.


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CHAPTER IV

MANAGEMENT OPERATION

The Black Hills Passion Play has been presented as an outdoor summer production since 1939, and as an outdoor winter production since 1953. Many of the managerial aspects are, no doubt, similar to other outdoor presentations; however the production has some peculiar facets of management that distinguish it from other productions. This chapter will discuss some of the common aspects with other outdoor dramas and the Passion Play's distinctive managerial aspects.

Production Management

One of the first and foremost differences of the Black Hills Passion Play from other outdoor productions is ownership. Most summer historical dramas are sponsored by an organization and several have state support, but the Black Hills Passion Play is owned entirely by Josef Meier who is the producer, director, and portrayer of the leading role. While serving in this multiple capacity, he single-handedly, as opposed to a board of directors, controls the destiny of the production. During the forty years he has presented the production in the United States, he has formed an efficient
and loyal business organization to present and manage the production.

**Selection of Personnel.** The cast is divided into two groups of actors: the professionals, who portray the speaking roles, and the extras or non-professionals, who take the non-speaking roles. Meier personally selects the thirty to thirty-five professional actors used in the cast. However, in recent years he has relegated most of the initial auditions to his business manager, Harold Rogers. This arrangement has evolved from the replacement pattern developed over the past several seasons. Most of the replacements in the cast occur between the summer and winter seasons; and, since Rogers moves to Florida soon after the summer season closes to make the final arrangements for the winter season, Meier believes it is more convenient for potential actors to audition for Rogers in Lake Wales than to read for him in Spearfish. Rogers selects those who meet the qualifications for the roles and presents them to Meier, when he goes to Florida, for his consideration.¹

The major requisite for potential actors is voice projection. Lack of voice projection has been the biggest complaint about those who audition. Meier believes the majority of actors are trained to perform in small indoor theatres; therefore, they have not developed the ability to project their voices to the rear of the large outdoor amphitheatres his production uses. Air currents and low voice
projection have made it necessary to install an amplification system in Spearfish; however, to this date, no amplification has been installed in the Lake Wales amphitheatre.

**Stage Management.** A stage manager is listed on the program, but specific duties of the position are somewhat vague due to the overall backstage operational organization for a given performance. Additional assignments performed by the professional actors as standard operating procedures relieve the stage manager of many traditional duties. This, in turn, makes the stage manager's job seem somewhat nebulous.

An enumeration of some of the duties of the professional actors will help explain the backstage operation. For example, the captain of the Roman guard is responsible for securing an adequate number of Roman soldiers, briefing them on their duties, and getting them on stage at the proper time. Other actors fulfill similar responsibilities for the disciples, temple guards, the mob, and so on.

There are also certain pre-determined procedures in the event of an interruption during a performance. The most frequent interruption is rain: inclement weather, therefore, will be used as an example. The light control operator has the authority to hold a performance when rainfall distracts the audience's concentration from the play. The frequency of scenes and the slow fades from one scene to another allow ample time to instruct the backstage personnel to hold a
performance without much difficulty. Usually a scene will be finished before the order to stop the performance is executed.

Since there are relatively few cast replacements in any given year, each company member is familiar with his assigned task. To the outsider, the backstage area may seem to be operated in a nonchalant manner.

Directing Problems. Meier strives for a certain magnitude in his production. This directorial effort, in part, stems from his desire to make the outdoor presentation as realistic as possible. The main acting space encompasses a 30' x 300' space in front of the permanent setting. This mammoth stage space creates some major directing difficulties. In order to get the desired effect of verisimilitude in several scenes, a large number of people are required, creating a placement problem in blocking the cast to achieve the appropriate dramatic effect. An even greater problem is created by the scenes requiring only a handful of actors. In an effort to balance the stage picture or place emphasis on an upstage unit, the actors down stage at times seem to be forced into rather stilted positions.

The large number of extras presents another directing problem. The extras are volunteers from the community, and most represent some church or civic organization; consequently, they tend to have more loyalty to the church or civic organization than to the performance. Many are
interested in the production only to the extent they are helping their organization meet a quota. Others consider the Passion Play as a social outlet or as a means to occupy time. These attitudes prevent the achievement of consistent performances; yet as long as Meier believes he cannot afford the additional expense of paying the extras, the volunteer extras will continue to constitute a directing problem.

Directing the production for two different locations is another consideration; however, according to Harold Rogers, there is no more difficulty encountered in directing the play in Lake Wales than in Spearfish. The stage units are almost identical in both locales with the exception that the physical order of the tomb, garden, Bethany, and city gate mansions in Spearfish is in the reverse order in Lake Wales. This does not, however, hinder the flow of the action of the play. The only scene staged differently from one amphitheatre to the other is Scene Nineteen, the Crucifixion. The scene is staged on a small hill outside the amphitheatre in Spearfish. The audience views the entire procession to Golgotha and witnesses the Christus and two thieves being placed on the crosses. In Lake Wales the scene is staged on the center unit. The audience views an abridged procession, and the center stage curtain then opens to reveal the Christus and two thieves already on the crosses. While this shortens the production, it has led to some friendly
arguments between the supporters of the Spearfish staging and the supporters of the Lake Wales staging. The Lake Wales group argues the crucial scene should be portrayed on center stage closer to the audience. The Spearfish group counters by stating that when the audience sees the entire march and the complete portrayal of the crucifixion, the scene is more dramatic.

Meier and the Lake Wales corporation have discussed the possibility of staging the Crucifixion scene on a small hill stage right of the amphitheatre; some of the Lake Wales scenic units were built in reverse order from the Spearfish plan to accomplish this effect. Two main factors have delayed moving the scene from center stage to a new location. The first, and most important obstacle is the sometimes cold Lake Wales weather late in the evenings during January and February. Since the Christus and the thieves are clothed only in loin cloths for the Crucifixion, the central stage offers some protection from the weather. Second, the Lake Wales amphitheatre does not have an amplification system like the Spearfish production. Lake Wales officials fear staging the scene farther away from the audience would create the need to install a sound system, which would be another expense for the corporation.

Meier has been able to keep his professional troupe intact with only a few replacements between the summer and winter seasons. The continuity of his cast precludes
numerous major rehearsals for his professional cast; therefore the majority of rehearsal time is devoted to the extras. Few rehearsals, however, are held after the season commences.

Live Animals. Many animals are utilized in the Passion Play. The type and number of animals has varied through the years, but presently the production uses a donkey for the Christus, several horses for the Roman guards, and camels and sheep for the opening scene of the play. Other animals, such as dogs for the Herod scene, have also been used. At one time a number of doves were turned loose at the beginning of the play.

Transportation costs are the major factors considered in using the same animals for both locations. Twenty-five hundred miles separate Spearfish and Lake Wales. Because of the great distance, the management decided it was more economical to have duplicate sets of animals whenever possible. The donkey for the Christus and some camels are the only animals presently transported from Spearfish to Lake Wales. The use of two sets of animals does necessitate additional animal training since long periods of time lapse between their use.

Weather. As expected, the weather is always a major factor for an outdoor production. The weather has been a more difficult problem in Lake Wales than in Spearfish. Even though the nights may actually get colder in Spearfish
in the summer than in Lake Wales in the winter, more people will attend a performance in Spearfish despite cold weather. Amphitheatre officials in Lake Wales contend tourists go to Florida for warm weather and will not attend an evening performance in unsatisfactory weather.\textsuperscript{6}

Both amphitheatres provide some protection in the event of rain during a performance. A rain shelter projects over 1,300 seats in Spearfish, while a covered breezeway 203' x 16' protects nearly 1,000 standing patrons in Lake Wales. In both instances the light operator has automatic instructions to stop the performance when he sees rainfall forcing people to scurry for protection, diverting their attention from the performance.

Should a performance be halted by rain prior to Scene Seven, The Last Supper, and if the rain continues to fall preventing the continuation of the performance, rain checks or ticket refunds are issued to the audience. If a performance is cancelled in Spearfish, a special performance is scheduled the following evening. The full weekly schedule does not allow special performances to be given in Lake Wales. No refund is given if the play is cancelled after Scene Seven. While many precautionary measures for inclement weather are available, Meier does not like to cancel the play after the start of a performance: he has continued performances in the rain on several occasions. Actually, however, less than five per cent of the performances have
ever been cancelled because of the weather or any other reason.

**Business Management**

**Duties of the Business Manager.** The production's business manager is in charge of the box office, promotion, house and parking lot ushers and maintenance. Harold Rogers has been Meier's business manager since the 1950's. He was with the company when it settled in Spearfish in 1939, but moved to Seattle in the early 1940's because he did not like touring with his family. After Meier signed the contract with the Lake Wales group, he persuaded Rogers to rejoin the company as his representative in Lake Wales.

Eventually Rogers became the business manager for both operations. The Lake Wales corporation initially hired a business manager in the fall of 1952, but abolished the position for economic reasons in January, 1953, and has never been financially capable of hiring a business manager. Meier, realizing the need for a business manager for the Lake Wales operation, has loaned the services of Rogers free of charge to the Florida group since 1954. After Rogers helps file the yearly report for the annual business meeting of the Lake Wales corporation, he returns to Spearfish and assumes his regular duties for the summer months.

**Tickets.** One of the major tasks of the business manager is to supervise ticket sales and accounting. The Spearfish
operation has six ticket prices ranging from two dollars for unreserved seats to five-dollar reserved seats. As an aid in finding seats and to reduce the number of ushers needed for a performance, the tickets are color-coded to match the color of the seats in each ticket price range. The amphitheatre seats approximately 6,000 patrons. There are 4,390 reserved seats and 1,600 unreserved seats.\(^8\)

Tickets range from three to five dollars in the Lake Wales amphitheatre, which accommodates approximately 3,500 patrons in 800 individual folding chairs and on concrete benches seating 2,700. On nights when there is an overflow (e.g., a special Good Friday performance and the Easter Sunday performance) some of the audience, usually members of youth groups who do not mind the inconvenience, is allowed to sit on the grassy slopes adjacent the seating area.

**Promotion.** Certainly one of the most important tasks of any theatre group is promotion. Meier has always had a keen interest in publicizing his production in the United States and portions of Canada and has utilized various means of advertising, ranging from word of mouth, letters, billboards, flyers, pamphlets, and news releases to radio and television.

Meier and his organization have analyzed and concentrated on a specific potential market for the Passion Play. The religious nature of the play limits its appeal,\(^9\) and Spearfish is located in a sparsely populated area.
Publicity, then, is aimed largely at potential tourists who might like to see a religious play.

The most effective promotion techniques in both Spearfish and Lake Wales seem to have been word of mouth and the distribution of publicity folders or flyers (see figures 26 and 27). Over one and a half million folders are printed each season for the two operations, nine hundred thousand for Spearfish and six hundred thousand for Lake Wales.10 Except for the color of the ink, the flyers printed for both locations have basically the same format. The Spearfish folders are printed with purple ink on white paper: folders for Lake Wales are printed with deep red ink on white paper.

Flyers are distributed to tourist organizations, churches, hotels, restaurants, and Chambers of Commerce in each production's respective section of the country. In Spearfish members of the cast distribute folders as part of their company duties. During the summer, performances in Spearfish are given on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Various cast members leave Spearfish on the morning after a performance to resupply folders in South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa. The Lake Wales operation hires a publicity firm to distribute folders.

The Spearfish operation relies almost totally on the tourist trade for its audience. Ironically, in Florida, a state where tourism is the leading industry, the Passion
SUMMER SEASON-1972

Black Hills Passion Play

Featuring

JOSEF MEIER
World Famous Christus Portrayer

SPEARFISH, SOUTH DAKOTA
OPENING PERFORMANCE, SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 1972
EVERY SUNDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY AT 8:15 P.M.
FINAL PERFORMANCE, SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 1972

For Information and Reservation, write to
BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY OFFICE
Spearfish, South Dakota 57783, or Telephone 642-2646
Black Hills Passion Play

LAKE WALES, FLORIDA
OPENING PERFORMANCE  Sunday, February 13
CLOSING PERFORMANCE  Sunday, April 16

NOTE: (Dates and Time Schedule of Performances and Admission Prices on Reverse Side)
For Information and Reservation Write to:
PASSION PLAY AMPHITHEATER
Box 71, Lake Wales or Telephone 676-1495. Information also Greater Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce Office.

Figure 27. The Lake Wales Promotional Flyer
Play depends on a different type of audience for its livelihood.

Until recently the basic tourist market in the winter in Lake Wales was a group known as "snow birds," a name given to older people or retirees trying to escape the frigid northern winters. One of the handicaps in attracting an older audience in Lake Wales involved elderly people's reluctance to venture out in the sometimes cool, damp Florida winter evenings. Consequently the Lake Wales operation has had to rely on developing a different type of audience other than tourists.

The main type of audience the Passion Play attracts is groups, particularly church organizations. Eighty percent of the 1974 audience was composed of groups, making the 1974 winter season attendance the second largest in the twenty-one year history of the production in Lake Wales. Officials had expected low attendance because of the energy shortage and were surprised when audience members compensated for the shortage of gas by coming in groups on busses rather than in cars.

Rogers encourages group attendance in Lake Wales by offering reduced rates. Early in the year he sends nearly 5,000 letters of invitation explaining the group rate to the majority of the churches in Florida and Southern Georgia. To remind his patrons of the play's schedule, he includes a small desk calendar indicating the dates and performance
times for the four-month winter season (see figure 28).

The Lake Wales amphitheatre corporation engages the John Dillin Publicity Firm to coordinate the production's publicity, which is composed largely of the folders, paid for by Meier, and the five thousand letters to area churches.

Other Managerial Facets. The business manager is responsible for all other routine managerial facets of the production including parking attendants, ushers, and routine house maintenance. The parking attendants used in both locations are paid personnel. The ushers are paid in Spearfish, but in Lake Wales the ushers are members of local high school civic organizations ushering to raise funds for their clubs.

All other managerial aspects, especially the bookkeeping tasks of payroll and ticket accounting, are handled similarly in both cities to satisfy the auditors.
CHAPTER IV

NOTES

1Harold Rogers, private interview held in his office, Lake Wales Amphitheatre, January, 1974.

2Ibid.


4Harold Rogers, interview, January, 1974.

5Josef Meier, private interview held in his dressing room in the Lake Wales Amphitheatre, April 16, 1974.

6Mrs. Paul Whitaker, secretary of the Lake Wales Amphitheatre Corporation, interview, June 9, 1974.

7Harold Rogers, interview, January, 1974. The information concerning the business management was supplied by Rogers.

8Letter, Josef Meier to author, June 12, 1974.

9Letter, the Reverend Arthur Westwood, Pastor of the United Church of Christ, Spearfish, May 5, 1974, to author.

10O. A. Brice, interview held in his office, Lake Wales, June, 1972.

11Letter, R. H. Stowe, Executive Vice President of the Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce, May 7, 1974, to author.

12Letter, the Reverend L. Randall Stout, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Lake Wales, May 3, 1974, to author.

13Letter, R. H. Stowe, May 7, 1974, to author.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The small towns of Spearfish and Lake Wales are located half a continent apart; therefore, few residents in one city had ever heard of the other until the Black Hills Passion Play began to be produced in each location. Now, because of the presence of the Passion Play, the name of one town is familiar to residents of the other. This study has traced the development of the production in both locations and will conclude by comparing several aspects related to the Passion Play in each location.

Comparison of the Two Cities

The amphitheatres in both cities were initially built by non-profit corporations. Neither corporation was state supported; however, the corporation in Lake Wales received a loan from the State of Florida to assist in the drive to raise the money for construction. The Spearfish corporation never achieved financial stability, primarily because of the lack of coordination within the organization and insufficient tourist revenue. The Black Hills tourist industry had not fully recovered from the depression by the early 1940's, and
consequently large amounts of money were difficult to find to support the corporation. As a result, the corporation turned the whole operation over to Meier in late 1940 and early 1941.

Perhaps because of the bitter experience he encountered by assuming the full responsibility of the Spearfish operation, Meier was somewhat hesitant to agree to present a winter season in Florida. He made it clear to the corporation early in 1952 that he refused to shoulder the sole responsibility of constructing and maintaining an amphitheatre in Lake Wales. Even though the original Lake Wales amphitheatre corporation remains in existence and has remained solvent, not enough revenue has been earned to repay all of the loans which were made to the corporation in 1952. The Lake Wales corporation has been plagued with financial problems at the box office. Somehow, though, the community has been willing to support the amphitheatre in Lake Wales. Each time a new financial crisis has confronted the organization for operating expenses, a special community fund drive has been launched and sufficient revenue raised to keep the corporation solvent. In fact, the Lake Wales story almost becomes one of special fund drives.

Meier now owns and controls the amphitheatre in Spearfish while the non-profit corporation owns and controls the amphitheatre in Lake Wales. The differences in ownership become evident in scanning the physical facilities. Meier
has developed the facilities in Spearfish from a very primitive state to a modern amphitheatre in regard to seating, audience comfort, landscaping, and stage areas while the Lake Wales amphitheatre has changed very little since its construction. Seating in Spearfish consists of individual chairs while there are relatively few separate seats in Lake Wales. The only major change in the seating area in Lake Wales has been the addition of back rests on the concrete benches that comprise the majority of the seating area.

An example of another major difference between the two facilities is the backstage area (see Appendix J). This area, in Lake Wales, remains in the original state, whereas, the corresponding area in Spearfish is paved, well lit, and contains a recreational hall where the extras can be served refreshments, rest, or play games. Meier has been able to use money from his tours to make improvements, almost as an investment, in the Spearfish operation, while the Lake Wales corporation has had to rely primarily on its part of the revenue from ticket sales to maintain the operation. There have been numerous fund drives for publicity and operating expenses, but there seems to be an unwillingness to launch a fund drive to remodel and renovate the amphitheatre.

There does, however, seem to be more community pride directed at the Lake Wales amphitheatre than at the Spearfish facility. The production draws upon the efforts of the citizens of the community of Lake Wales in many ways, such
as in the preliminary preparation for the company's arrival, in the planning and preparations for the season's presentations, in the up-keep of the amphitheatre grounds, and participation in the play itself. Dr. L. Randall Stout, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lake Wales, states,

This is the one activity in which the entire community, all churches, are involved. The Unity and sense of oneness provided by such an endeavor has been, I feel, an extremely positive benefit.¹

The Spearfish citizens are not as involved in planning for their production since the amphitheatre in Spearfish is owned and operated by Meier. Many townspeople, however, experience a bond of fellowship and a sense of accomplishment through being in the play, and consider they are a part of something important.² But the community spirit and pride in the production seems to be more evident in Lake Wales than in Spearfish.

Publicity

Advertising the production has been a shared task in both locations. Apparently the production budget has always been lower than the management would desire; however, time has been in the production's favor. Gradually the play has become well known in both localities; consequently a less intense publicity operation is needed. Lake Wales continues to utilize a wider variety of publicity tools than Spearfish, but the major form of publicity in both cities is a
small flyer which is widely distributed in the respective areas. Over 900,000 flyers advertising the Spearfish operation are distributed in late spring and summer. Field men resupply the flyers throughout the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, Iowa and Minnesota during the summer. Over 600,000 flyers advertising the Lake Wales operation are distributed each year in the fall and winter. Also, the Lake Wales operation continues to engage a public relations firm to handle a portion of the publicity; actually, however, Harold Rogers, the production's general manager, handles the majority of the publicity in both locations.

Comparison of the "Extras" Problem

The Black Hills Passion Play is billed as having a cast of over two hundred, but two-thirds are non-paid volunteer actors. The extras, as the volunteers are known, are usually members of the local community. Getting an adequate number of extras has been a problem through the years in both locations even though the difficulty has been much more acute in Spearfish.

Meier realized early in his operation that community involvement was necessary if the production was to be a success. This involvement meant not only financial backing but actual participation in the play. He also believed that, should he have to pay the large number of extras, the cost of the production would become too high; consequently, one
of the terms in the agreements between Meier and the two locations was that extras were to be furnished by the local communities.

The extras issue has created some tense relationships between the Black Hills citizens and Meier. Initially obtaining an adequate number of extras was the responsibility of the newly-formed corporation; but, when the corporation disbanded, the Spearfish Chamber of Commerce agreed to assume the responsibility. The Chamber re-committed itself to supply the extras in a contract between the City of Spearfish and Meier in 1947.

A conflict arose in 1953 over the lack of extras participating in the production. Out of the conflict emerged the Passion Play Club which was formed generally to promote the production, but specifically to recruit extras. The club, which now is primarily a Chamber of Commerce committee, has tried several plans in recruiting. The most successful plan has been to get local churches to furnish a specific number of extras for each performance. The churches in turn receive a designated amount of money which has been designated the "extras fund."

Obtaining a sufficient number of extras for each performance has not been as difficult in Lake Wales as in Spearfish. The corporation formed to build the amphitheatre continues to be responsible for extras. The continuance of the corporation as a group of local citizens makes the
production seem more of a community project rather than a one-man enterprise; enlisting help from people in the community, therefore, has been somewhat easier.

The availability of extras in each community has influenced the number of performances presented each week. Meier started with two performances in Spearfish and increased to three in 1941. Several times since 1950 the Spearfish Hotel and Motel Association has prevailed upon him to increase the number of performances each week, but he has repeatedly refused to do so until he can be assured that an adequate number of extras will be available to maintain the quality of the production. In Lake Wales, on the other hand, four performances are given each week in addition to several matinees presented during the season. This has been possible because a larger pool of extras resulting from better community cooperation manifest in Lake Wales than in Spearfish, and in Meier's belief that the quality of the production has remained consistent.

**Spiritual Impact**

Business leaders in both locations became interested in the Black Hills Passion Play as a potential tourist attraction rather than a biblical play. This has created a kind of paradox because in promoting the play in the communities, backers stressed the production's potential to uplift the moral fiber of the communities.
What has been the spiritual impact of the production on the towns of Spearfish and Lake Wales? Ministers of representative churches in both locations were asked this question. The term "spiritual impact" is somewhat elusive due to the difficulty of determining how the play has affected the communities, but several conclusions can be drawn.

Most ministers agreed the production provides a wholesome family-oriented type of entertainment in two of America's vacationlands. Generally the response has been one of acceptance by the public; but as one minister stated, "Those who attend are religiously inclined in the first place."³

Ministers' reactions varied from negative to very positive in the assessment of the impact of the production on the communities. Most ministers generally concurred the production has not had a primarily spiritual impact on the towns, but has had secondary influences. Most of the negative comments centered on the production's being a commercial enterprise.

Although his remarks are confined to Spearfish, one minister summarized what seems to be the consensus of opinion regarding the relationship between the production and the towns.

It is true that life or living in Spearfish [or Lake Wales] is a little different than it obviously is in the nearby towns. It is a quieter town, a well churched town, and the people here seem to really be interested in those who visit and show a warmth not easily apparent in other towns. But whether this is
due to the Passion Play . . . would be difficult to say. There are people, many of them, who do seem to feel that the town should show more of a religious atmosphere because the opposite would be so incongruous.4

The Passion Play does not dominate the religious life in the respective communities, but does provide a visual aid in teaching some of the biblical lessons. Through working with the production, many have expressed a deeper understanding of what was actually involved in the story presented.5

The Reverend E. W. Szalay of St. Joseph Church in Spearfish wrote,

We have a fine group of various churches in the city and the people do not look upon the play as 'another church,' drawing the people away from regular church attendance. Rather, the Play tends to confirm the message and work and mission of the institutional groups. In this I would say that the Play has a supporting role in the teaching program of the various churches. It is an excellent visual aid.6

Other values are believed to be gained from the play by young people.

Spiritually I think our young people have benefited greatly by participation in the presentation of the play. As actors in various scenes and crowd scenes of the play, they not only become familiar with the mechanics and behind the scenes activities, but also gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the impact of the message itself.7

Several ministers, especially from Lake Wales, commented that the production offers an outlet for community pride and fellowship. If these qualities can be considered a portion of the spiritual realm, then the production has had a
broader impact on the towns.

In a real sense the Passion Play is a community effort. To this end the community has benefited very positively in working together both in the promotional and the production end of it.  

The major negative reaction regarding the production's spiritual impact centers on economics. The Reverend Rodney Gist wrote,

There are those who feel that Joseph [sic] Meier ought not to be getting rich at the expense of playing the role of the humble Galilean who gave his all for people, without charge.  

Another minister wrote, "the presentation for the purpose of money, somehow cheapens the spiritual message of the Passion."  

The production's management has been sensitive to these reactions and has tried to counteract by de-emphasizing economic factors and stressing the production's spiritual service to the communities. Since the production is not just a biblical play but a play in which the character of Jesus Christ is portrayed by its owner, the spiritual versus the economic will remain a delicate issue.

**Economic Impact**

There are many varying viewpoints regarding the spiritual impact of the production, but there is almost unanimous belief that the major impact of the production on both cities is economic.
The economic impact has been greater on Spearfish than Lake Wales. The production has attracted some 100,000 people annually the past few years. Most of the audience members are tourists who come to Spearfish specifically to see the Passion Play. Bernard Boehm, Manager of the Spearfish Chamber of Commerce, states the evidence of the economic impact as,

Particularly as indicated by full motels on Passion Play nights and partially empty motels on off nights.11

A party of two or three tourists spends an estimated forty to fifty dollars in restaurants, hotels, service stations, curio shops, and the like in Spearfish while there to see the Passion Play.12 Some simple arithmetic reveals that between $1,000,000 and $1,500,000 has been channeled into the Spearfish economy because of the Passion Play.

The production has had a lesser economic impact on Lake Wales because of a smaller annual attendance, but the production does contribute from $300,000 to $500,000 to the Lake Wales economy.

Unlike Spearfish, where the primary audience is the traveling summer tourist, Lake Wales has had three types of visitors. According to R. H. Stowe, Executive Vice-President of the Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce, the three types can be described as follows:

1. Those who visit Florida for more than a period of two months, sometimes known as the "snow birds."
2. The traveling tourist that visits Cypress Gardens, Singing Tower, Masterpiece Gardens, etc. The Passion Play holds these people overnight when the play is in season, otherwise this category of tourist is hard to hold in the area.

3. People living in or visiting other areas of Florida who come to Lake Wales to see the Play.13

Traditionally the first category or, "snow birds," comprised the largest number of tourists. The production has had difficulty in attracting this group because the older people tended not to go out in the damp winter weather.

Within recent years, a number of tourist attractions, including Disney World, have been built within a short drive of Lake Wales. The production's backers had hoped these new attractions would substantially increase the overnight tourist trade, but the hope has failed to materialize.

The production has had to rely on the third type for the larger portion of the audience. Lately a large number of groups have come by bus rather than in individual cars, and very few busloads have stayed overnight. Therefore, the restaurant and motel business has suffered financially while the production has enjoyed a better attendance.

Without a doubt the Passion Play has had a major economic impact on both Spearfish and Lake Wales, much more so than a religious or spiritual impact. While many in Spearfish criticise the production for making money from a biblical story, the community as a whole seems to tolerate the
production--realizing it is the major financial industry in the city. This, in essence, has been the story of the production in Spearfish.

The production has had a lesser financial impact on Lake Wales, and the city would not suffer as much financially should the production cease operation as the town of Spearfish would. The production was brought to Lake Wales as a tourist attraction and was sold to the community as a means to provide income for charitable work and civic projects. It has accomplished the first goal, but, instead of being a means to raise funds for charitable and civic work, it has become a civic project itself.

The Future

The vision Meier had for the Passion Play's development has almost been completed. He wanted to develop a stage setting and an amphitheatre that would, in his estimation, be very impressive for the presentation of his play. The last major addition he contemplates in Spearfish is a tourist information center.

Now the question of the future must be raised. Meier will be seventy years old in October, 1974, and, should his health fail, the long range future of the production would be in doubt. He has only one child, a daughter, and for several years he has been attempting to get a nephew, Heinrich Meier III, into the United States to assume the
role of the Christus. To date, immigration difficulties have been encountered, and a permanent visa for his nephew has been impossible to obtain.

Meier explains he feels hesitant to approach his Representative any more because of the political situation and hates to ask for an exception to allow his nephew to enter the country. He further adds there are probably more capable American actors who could play the role, but the tradition of keeping the Christus role in the Meier family would be lost should the nephew not obtain a permanent visa.14

For over forty years, Meier has almost single-handedly created the destiny of the production. Without his efforts, there would not be a Black Hills Passion Play. Now, however, the future must be considered, and the major problem centers on finding a replacement for the Christus role.

Meier is stubbornly trying to influence the future of the production by personally selecting his successor with the hope the production will continue indefinitely. Yet, he realizes a new era will be ushered in because of his retirement from the Christus role. Exactly when that will be, not even Meier cares to guess, but he declares,

When I cannot do it well any more, and I cannot do it convincingly any more, I must not— for the sake of what we are doing.15
CHAPTER V

NOTES

1 Letter, Dr. L. Randall Stout, to author, May 3, 1974.
4 Ibid.
5 Letter, Dr. L. Randall Stout.
7 Letter, Dr. L. Randall Stout.
8 Letter, the Reverend David Rockness, to author, May 10, 1974.
9 Letter, the Reverend Rodney Gist.
12 Letter, Josef Meier, June 12, 1974.
14 Josef Meier, private interview, April, 1974, Lake Wales, Florida.
15 Ibid.
APPENDIX A

Important Dates in Josef Meier's Life

Born, Luenen, Westphalia, Germany, October, 1904.
Brought troupe and production to the United States, 1932.
Married Claire Hume, 1937.
Agreement to base the production in Spearfish, summer, 1938.
Became a United States Citizen, fall, 1938.
Signed contract for winter season in Lake Wales, July, 1951.
Received the George Washington Medal presented by the Freedom Foundation, 1954.
APPENDIX A (continued)


Received an honorary doctorate degree from Black Hills State College, June, 1972.
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF THE
The Black Hills Passion Play of America

Main Office _______________________
Capital Stock, $ ____________________

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA, ss.
Office of Secretary of State

I hereby certify that the within instrument was filed for record on the 25th day of March, A.D., 1939 at 10 o'clock A. M., and recorded in Vol. 129 on Page 571 Record Domestic Corporations of this office.

/s/ Olive A. Ringsrud
Secretary of State

By
Assistant Secretary of State

Fee Received $10.00
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

of

The Black Hills Passion Play of America

Know All Men By These Presents:

That we, the undersigned Guy Bell, Martin Thompson and Walter Dickey for ourselves, our associates and successors, have associated ourselves together for the purpose of forming a corporation under and by virtue of the statutes and laws of the State of South Dakota, and we do hereby, certify and declare as follows, viz:

FIRST

The name of this corporation shall be THE BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY OF AMERICA.

SECOND

The purpose for which this organization is formed is to acquire by purchase, lease or otherwise, hold, maintain and operate opera houses, theatres, moving picture shows, grounds and other places for the presentation of theatrical plays, operas, concerts, moving picture shows of other amusements or entertainments of moral and educational value, especially the Life and Passion of Christ; and to produce and present, and to license or to permit others to produce and present therein or thereon, theatrical plays, operas, concerts, moving picture shows or other forms of entertainment or
amusement.

To do all and everything necessary, suitable and proper for the accomplishment of any of the purposes or the attainment of any of the objects or the furtherance of any of the powers hereinbefore set forth, either alone or in association with other corporations, firms or individuals, and to do everything, act or acts incidental or appertaining to or growing out of, or connected with the aforesaid business or powers, or any part thereof, provided the same be not inconsistent with the laws under which this corporation is organized.

THIRD

The place where the principal business of this Corporation shall be transacted is Spearfish in the County of Lawrence State of South Dakota, but a business office may be located at Spearfish, South Dakota where meetings of the Directors and Stockholders may be held for the transaction of business.

FOURTH

The term for which this Corporation shall exist shall be twenty-five (25) years.

FIFTH

The number of directors of this Corporation shall be eleven and the names and residences of such who are to
serve until the election of their successors are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAMES</th>
<th>RESIDENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martin Thompson</td>
<td>Spearfish, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy Bell</td>
<td>Spearfish, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Dickey</td>
<td>Spearfish, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Ernest</td>
<td>Sundance, Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James L. Curran</td>
<td>Lead, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Blake</td>
<td>Spearfish, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John T. Milek</td>
<td>Sturgis, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin Rounds</td>
<td>Sundance, Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest Behrens</td>
<td>Spearfish, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josef M. Fassbender</td>
<td>Spearfish, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. O. Gorder</td>
<td>Deadwood, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SIXTH

This is a non-profit corporation.

SEVENTH

No Stockholder shall be liable for the debts of the Corporation in any amount greater than his unpaid subscription.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, We have hereunto set our hands this twentieth day of March, 1939.

/s/Martin Thompson
/s/Guy Bell
/s/Walter Dickey
STATE OF South Dakota ss.
County of Meade

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on this twentieth day of March A.D., 1939, before the undersigned personally appeared the above named Martin Thompson, Guy Bell, Walter Dickey well and personally known to me to be the same persons described in and who executed the foregoing instrument and severally acknowledged to me that they executed the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at said County the day and year last above written.

Notarial Seal. /s/ John T. Milek
Notary Public

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA ss.
County of Mead

Guy Bell and Martin Thompson BEING DULY SWORN, each for himself deposes and says: That he is one of the persons described in and who signed the foregoing Articles of Incorporation as an incorporator therein; that he has read said Articles and knows the contents thereof; that the incorporators intend in good faith to form a corporation for the purpose of the promotion of a lawful business as set forth in said articles and not for the purpose of enabling any corporation or corporations to avoid the provisions of
Sections 4352 to 4364, inclusive, Revised Code of 1919, of the State of South Dakota, relating to unlawful trusts and combinations, and laws amendatory thereto.

/s/ Guy Bell

/s/ Martin Thompson

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 20th day of March, A.D. 1939.

/s/ John T. Milek

Notary Public

Notarial Seal
APPENDIX C

Contract Signed 1947 Between Josef Meier and the City of Spearfish, S.D.

AGREEMENT

This agreement made and entered to this 9th day of September, 1947 by and between Josef Meier, party of the first part, and the City of Spearfish, a municipal corporation, party of the second part witnessed:

"That for an in consideration of the covenant here and after mentioned to be performed on the part of Josef Meier, as party of the first part, and the City of Spearfish, as party of the second part, agrees as follows:

"1. To put an adequate bridge across Spearfish Creek for a safe and attractive approach to the Passion Play grounds near the lower road.

"2. To dustproof and maintain in proper condition at all times both the upper and lower roads leading to the Passion Play grounds.

"3. To make sewer lines available to all houses West of the Creek on the Second or Meier Ave.

"4. To supply at all times ample water for the Passion Play grounds, and to give proper police protection to Passion Play property in order to stop vandalism and particularly shooting.

"5. To construct and maintain proper signs, large
enough to notify effectively people entering the city from either direction (including Spearfish Canyon entrance) that this is the home of the Black Hills Passion Play, further to construct proper signs within the city to direct visitors to the Passion Play grounds.

"6. To maintain for the duration of the tourist season a properly staffed information bureau at a downtown Spearfish location where visitors can receive proper information courageously presented to them.

"7. To ensure that there will be no carnival, or any other attraction of similar nature, which will interfere with the performances on Passion Play nights.

"8. To assist in procuring sufficient supers for each performance.

"9. To carry approved Passion Play information on all city publicity and advertising.

"10. To exert continued pressure for the early black-topping of the Spearfish Canyon Road.

For and in consideration of the performances of the above mentioned covenants on the part of the said City of Spearfish, party of the second part, Josef Meier, party of the first part, agrees to the following:

"1. To resume the performance of the Black Hills Passion Play at Spearfish, building the same into a well
publicized, permanent institution for the Black Hills.

"This agreement will remain in effect irrespective of any changes of duly elected city authorities and witness thereof the parties two have subscribed their names, the day and year above written.

Signed:

/s/ Josef Meier

/s/ James T. O'Neill

The contract notarized by Mary C. Blake.

Witness: Albert Clark, Earl Schultz, Dr. J. Gordon Betts, and James May, who were serving on the City Council at that time.

Rider taped and signed by O. B. Wamsley, President of the Spearfish Chamber of Commerce.

"The Spearfish Chamber of Commerce hereby agree with the City of Spearfish, the second party herein, to perform the covenants agreed to in paragraphs 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 within the foregoing contract."
APPENDIX D

Basic Publicity Releases

HISTORY OF THE PASSION PLAY

Through the Ages, dramatization of events making up world history has been the most effective method to further the spiritual and cultural development of a people. As early as the tenth and eleventh centuries are found, in the history of religion, accounts of living pantomimes, accompanied by songs telling stories of the Bible.

The first episode to be dramatized was the re-enactment of the Resurrection, staged on Easter Sunday morning by members of the clergy in churches throughout central Europe. This simple tableau was the beginning and foundation of all known Passion Plays up to and including the 17th century in almost every large Christian community. The Lenten Season was the customary time when, with sincere zeal, preparations were made for its staging. The increasing technical achievements necessary for a successful production, and demanded by an audience ever growing in intelligence, eliminated the greater number of these plays. Only a few have survived the test of time and are presented to this day--some yearly and others at greater intervals. The oldest of these plays is the one known as the Luenen Passion Play, which was presented as early as 1242 by the Monks of the Cappenberg Monastery. Yearly they presented, during Holy Week, in its
simplicity and with the deepest of reverence the world's greatest dramatic event, the story of the Man of Nazareth.

During the early years, the scenes were presented within the Chapel with localities or stations designated to represent the temple, home of Pilate, court of King Herod, etc. All characters were interpreted by the Monks themselves, and the dialogue spoken in Latin. During the 17th century, due to lack of space, the production was moved outside, and the task of interpretation turned over to the laity of the village. The dialogue was changed into the then customary low German, and the interpretation assigned to capable individuals. These first players, elected from the ranks of the common people, were anxious and eager to not only preserve the play as an expression of the community, but prepare their offspring, if possible, for the time when they would assume the task of carrying on. The tradition of inheriting a part in the Passion Play was started in this manner. As the training of the individuals started with their earliest childhood, the Play grew yearly in beauty and effectiveness. Only when war and plague or other great calamities prevents its staging, was the production temporarily discontinued, but always, as soon as possible, the presentation was faithfully resumed. Throughout the centuries, great love, reverence, and spiritual dignity characterized the interpreta-
tion and the men and women who participated in the Play. The resultant contribution to cultural and spiritual development has been immeasurable.

As civilization advanced, so advanced the technical manner of staging the Passion Play, keeping ever abreast with present day by incorporating technique and improvements of the modern stage. The development of speech and language is clearly marked by the various changes made in the dialogue as it evolved from the low German into the present day high German.

In 1932, the play was first presented to an American audience. The task of adapting this powerful story to the American stage had been carried out with the greatest of care. Particularly difficult was the task of mastering the English language to the extent that a flawless interpretation could be given. Through persistent effort, long and determined study, this difficulty was overcome. Inspired by the American Public's reception of the Passion Play and by the beauty of the country, the plan for making the Passion Play a permanent institution in the American life became a definite goal in the mind of Josef Meier.

Because the American Public has received the Play so enthusiastically and because of its very nature and character, it is safe to say that the Passion Play is now well
established and accepted as an American institution. It offers to the American people a place of pilgrimage, a place where racial and denominational differences are without meaning, a place where beauty and power are revealed - in the simple story of the lowly Man of Nazareth.

* * * * *

BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY

at Lakes Wales, Florida

In the heart of Florida's scenic highlands on the Orange Blossom Trail is found the home of one of the world's oldest dramatic presentations. Here in a natural bowl, surrounded by orange groves, each year thousands of winter visitors and native Floridians witness the re-telling of a story nearly 2,000 years old - an experience that most of them will never forget.

For 2 1/2 hours, one beautiful scene blends into another, unfolding the story of Christ's last 7 days on earth. Camel caravans, shepherds with their flocks, Roman guards on prancing white horses are all here. As Jesus enters the City on His donkey in this re-enactment of the age-old story, approximately 200 people in colorful and authentic costumes make the streets of ancient Jerusalem come to life. From
the touching scene at Bethany in which Jesus takes leave of His mother, through the somber beauty of the Last Supper and the excitement of the betrayal and trial scenes, Josef Meier's portrayal of the Man of Nazareth is one of great simplicity and sincerity. The characterization reaches its climax in the powerful scene depicting His tragic suffering and death on the cross. The triumphant resurrection, followed by the beautiful tableau of the Ascension with its glorious burst of colored lights and the swelling chords of the Hallelujah Chorus, fittingly conclude the stirring presentation.

Judas, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, are presented by actors chosen for their ability and experience in the theatre. Most of them have been with Mr. Meier for many years and have absorbed the traditions brought to this country when the production moved here. The role of Mary is interpreted by Clare Hume Meier, wife of the Christus. She brings to the part a physical beauty and vocal warmth that enhances her dramatic ability. As she meets the Christus on His way to Golgotha, her soul-stirring cry, "My Son, My Jesus," is one of the most poignant moments in the Play.

From beginning to end, the Passion Play presented at Lake Wales is a beautifully staged production in an impressive setting.
The BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY OF AMERICA was brought to this country in 1932 by Josef Meier, world-famous Christus portrayer. Mr. Meier's family had for 7 generations participated in the presentation of the Play in Westphalia, Germany, where it was known as the Luenen Passion Play, Luenen being the name of the town where it had been presented for hundreds of years.

The greatest difficulty encountered by the group of players was that of mastering the English language. A few members of the group became discouraged and homesick and were replaced by American actors. Others, by diligent work, were able to overcome their language difficulties and with Mr. Meier traveled America from coast to coast during the next five years. These were depression years in America and the trouping of a large production such as the Passion Play about the country was a tremendous undertaking. The actors not only assumed two or three roles each, but also handled all of the duties connected with staging the production. The group was unknown and at times there was very little money. Salaries were paid only when finances permitted and there were times when it seemed probable that there would be no money to pay for the transportation to the next town. However, little by little the Luenen Passion Play began to be recognized and Josef Meier started to look for a permanent
home in this country.

In 1938 Mr. Meier chose the Black Hills of South Dakota where an amphitheatre was built at Spearfish, a tiny western town not far from the gold-rush city of Deadwood, the Homestake gold mine at Lead, and the famous Mount Rushmore Memorial. The Play was renamed the BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY OF AMERICA and was presented in its new home in the summer of 1939 for the first time. It has been produced there each summer since, with the exception of the war years when gas and tire rationing prevented tourist travel.

In 1951 the BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY was invited to Florida to establish a winter home for the Production. The people of Lake Wales and Polk County, with the assistance of the State, raised $150,000 to build an Amphitheatre for this purpose. It is located in the heart of the great citrus groves of Central Florida just two miles south of Lake Wales. On a stage area 350 feet long, the setting of the Play is an exact reproduction of that used in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Here against a background of orange groves and palm trees, the Passion Play was enacted for the first time in January, 1953.

* * * * *
APPENDIX E

Comparison of Unofficial Attendance Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Spearfish</th>
<th>Lake Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>14,852</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>6,878</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>18,800</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>10,000 (estimated)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-1947 Closed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>18,367</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>27,913</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>35,000 (estimated)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>47,507</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>52,762</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>69,802</td>
<td>38,551</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>81,115</td>
<td>40,199</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>76,161</td>
<td>32,684</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>72,231</td>
<td>28,507</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>73,787</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>26,634</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>92,737</td>
<td>40,112</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>85,670</td>
<td>35,550</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>80,971</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>84,846</td>
<td>47,362</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>96,105</td>
<td>38,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>36,522</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>105,665</td>
<td>39,239</td>
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<td>1966</td>
<td>101,947</td>
<td>36,896</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>93,785</td>
<td>39,644</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>100,822</td>
<td>40,955</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>40,869</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>112,560</td>
<td>37,169</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>118,005</td>
<td>53,170</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>82,284</td>
<td>46,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>96,950</td>
<td>63,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>in progress</td>
<td>54,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,137,522</td>
<td>887,270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

Contract Between Josef Meier and the
City of Lake Wales (copy)

AGREEMENT

This agreement made and entered into this 10th day of
July, 1951 by and between O. A. Brice, Morris Jones, R. J.
Haynsworth and Wayne Norman, residents of Lake Wales,
Florida, heretofore appointed and authorized by the Greater
Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce, Lake Wales, Florida to enter
into the following contract and hereinafter known as the
parties of the first part, and Josef Meier of Spearfish,
South Dakota, doing business as the Black Hills Passion Play
of America, hereinafter known as party of the second part,
agree as follows to-wit:

1. Parties of the first part hereby agree to form a
corporation for the construction and maintenance of an Amphi-
theater to be located in or near Lake Wales, Polk County,
Florida. Said Amphitheater shall be a structure suitable
for the presentation of the Black Hills Passion Play of
America, including all parking facilities, public facili-
ties, box offices, adequate dressing rooms and housing for
live stock. Said parties of the first part shall furnish an
adequate number of supers, ushers and ticket sellers for the
presentation of said Passion Play.

2. In consideration thereof, party of the second part
agrees to furnish the complete production, consisting of the cast of players, live stock, all essential portable equipment for electrical illumination, and the necessary costumes, wigs, trappings for the cast of players and for all supers. Party of the second part shall provide an organ, required amplification equipment, and also furnish mats and cuts for advertising publicity material in connection with the production, including such advertising materials as 1-sheets, 3-sheets, 24-sheets, and window cards. All costs of transportation and operating expenses incurred by party of the second part in carrying out this contract shall be borne by said party.

Party of the first part shall furnish all necessary permanent outdoor advertising and shall distribute advantageously all advertising materials furnished by party of the second part.

3. All revenue derived from the sale of tickets for the presentation of the Black Hills Passion Play at Lake Wales, Florida shall be divided as follows:

Party of the second part shall receive the first $6,000 weekly and party of the first part shall receive the next $4,000 weekly. All revenue in excess thereof shall be divided 60 per cent to party of the second part and 40 per cent to party of the first part.
APPENDIX F (continued)

The above division shall be made on a week to week basis, after all Federal and State admission taxes have been deducted and settlement shall be made on the net admission price only.

4. The tenure of this contract shall be for a period of 10 (ten) years, with option to party of the second part to renew.

The first performance hereunder by party of the second part shall be presented on January 11, 1953 and shall follow a schedule of 3 (three) performances weekly for a period of 8 (eight) consecutive weeks.

For all subsequent seasons, the playing time shall be extended and shall have not less than 30 (thirty) performances during any one season and shall be molded into the requirements as dictated by the tourist season or attendance or as shall be mutually agreed upon.

5. Party of the first part shall at all times maintain and regulate the use of the theater and surroundings in keeping with and on a level fitting for the presentation of this sacred story.

6. All work and planning on the part of both parties to this agreement shall be directed toward making the Passion Play a permanent institution of Lake Wales, Florida.
IN WITNESS whereof the parties hereunto affix their hands and seals, the day and year first above written.

/s/ O. A. Brice (SEAL)
/s/ Morris Jones (SEAL)
/s/ Alexina Gordinier /s/ R. J. Haynsworth (SEAL)
/s/ Wayne Norman (SEAL)
/s/ Richard A. Lauderback /s/ Josef Meier (SEAL)
APPENDIX G

Charter and By-Laws of the Lake Wales Amphitheatre Corporation (copy)

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT
OF THE TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA

IN RE: THE PASSION PLAY
AMPHITHEATER OF FLORIDA;
a non-profit corporation,
under Chapter 617 Florida
Statutes 1941 as amended.

ORDER

This matter coming on to be heard this day upon the application for approval of a proposed Charter for the Passion Play Amphitheater of Florida, and the Court having read and examined the said Charter and finding the same to be in proper form and for an object authorized by Chapter 617 Florida Statutes, 1941; and being so informed in the premises, the Court herewith approves the said Charter.

The Said Charter, with all its endorsements, and this Order shall be recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Court, and from thenceforth the subscribers to said Charter and their associates and successors shall be a corporation not for profit by the name "THE PASSION PLAY AMPHITHEATER OF FLORIDA".

DONE AND ORDERED in Bartow, Florida, this 10th day of October, 1951.

/s/ D. O. Rogers
CIRCUIT JUDGE.

CHARTER FOR
THE PASSION PLAY AMPHITHEATER
OF FLORIDA
APPENDIX G (continued)

A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION
UNDER
CHAPTER 617 - FLORIDA STATUTES, 1941,
AS AMENDED

We, the undersigned, desiring to form a Corporation pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 617, Florida Statutes 1941, all being of full age, and citizens of Polk County, Florida, do hereby certify and state:

ARTICLE I.

The name of this Corporation is:

"THE PASSION PLAY AMPHITHEATER OF FLORIDA"

and it shall be located in Lake Wales, Polk County, Florida.

ARTICLE II.

PURPOSES

The general natures of the objects of the Corporation are these:

(a) to acquire property and construct and own and operate an amphitheater, not for profit, for the presentation of the Passion Play.

(b) To acquire, construct, own, operate and maintain, not for profit, theaters, amphitheaters, places of attraction, amusement and entertainment; to provide and arrange, not for profit, for the production, presentation and performance of pageants, plays, dramas, concerts and dramatic performances and attractions and entertainments; to conduct and carry on, not for profit, the business of theatrical proprietors and to produce and present to the public plays, shows, exhibitions and amusements.

(c) The expression "not for profit" shall not deny the Corporation the right to charge for the use of its properties, but any net earnings derived therefrom shall be employed exclusively for religious, or charitable, or scientific, or literary or educational purposes, or for the United States, or for any state or political subdivision thereof for exclusively public purposes.
APPENDIX G (continued)

(d) All of the net earnings of the Corporation or, on
dissolution, all of the assets distributable on dissolution,
shall be given to, or distributed among, charities or or-
ganizations which have been found and declared by the U. S.
Treasury Department, Bureau of Internal Revenue, to be or-
ganizations contributions to which are deductible from the
taxable incomes of the contributors.

(e) No part of the Corporation's assets, no part of
its capital nor of its net earnings, may be used directly or
indirectly for the benefit of any of the Corporation's Mem-
bers, or its Directors, or any member of its Committees.

(f) No part of the Corporation's activities may en-
tail or consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise at-
tempts to influence legislation.

ARTICLE III.

MEMBERSHIP

There shall be no capital stock of this Corporation.

The Corporation shall be composed of Members.

Any reputable person interested in the objects of the
Corporation shall be eligible for membership subject to the
approval of the Board of Directors.

A membership fee of not less than $5.00 shall be paid
by each member at the time of admission to membership.

No member shall be qualified to vote at any meeting of
members unless he shall have contributed to the Corporation
a minimum of $100.

Each voting member shall be allowed to cast one vote
at any meeting of members for each $100.00 contributed by
him to the Corporation.

ARTICLE IV.

TERM OF EXISTENCE

This Corporation shall have perpetual existence.
APPENDIX G (continued)

ARTICLE V.

NAMES AND RESIDENCES OF SUBSCRIBERS

The names and residences of the subscribing members of this Corporation are as follows:

A. V. Benson, Lake Wales, Florida
O. A. Brice, Lake Wales, Florida
Douglass B. Bullard, Lake Wales, Fla.
Henry Bullard, Lake Wales, Florida
Norman H. Bunting, Lake Wales, Fla.
F. C. Buchanan, Lake Wales, Florida
Robert Combs, Lake Wales, Florida
H. J. Comer, Jr., Lake Wales, Fla.
Lee Draper, Lake Wales, Florida
R. J. Haynesworth, Lake Wales, Fla.
R. D. Hogan, Lake Wales, Florida
R. L. Johnson, Lake Wales, Florida
E. R. Jahna, Lake Wales, Florida
Charles H. Jenkins, Lake Wales, Fla.
Morris Jones, Lake Wales, Fla.
L. H. Kramer, Lake Wales, Fla.
S. W. Keen, Lake Wales, Florida
L. F. Martin, Lake Wales, Fla.
Robert W. Murray, Lake Wales, Fla.
Harold S. Norman, Lake Wales, Fla.
Wayne Norman, Lake Wales, Fla.
F. M. O'Byrne, Lake Wales, Fla.
W. C. Pedersen, Waverly, Fla.
James Rountree, Lake Wales, Fla.
John Stafford, Lake Wales, Fla.
Rollie Tillman, Lake Wales, Fla.
J. F. Townsend, Sr., Lake Wales, Fla.
J. H. Whitfield, Lake Wales, Fla.

ARTICLE VI.

DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

The affairs of this Corporation are to be managed and conducted by a Board of Directors, the number of whom shall never be less than fifteen (15) nor more than thirty (30).

The temporary, interim, Directors, who shall conduct the Corporation's affairs until the first meeting of Members, shall be the incorporators of this Corporation, and
are named in Article VII.

To insure that the Directorate be representative of the religious, charitable, civic and governmental organizations interested in the purposes and objects of this Corporation, the Directors shall, from time to time, select and list organizations so interested. Each organization so selected and listed shall be requested to nominate a representative for election to the Board of Directors as provided in the By Laws.

At the first meeting of members, and at the annual meeting of members thereafter, the Voting Members shall elect Directors from the nominees of the so selected and listed organizations, and an equal number of Directors, plus two, from the membership at large, so that a majority of the Directorate shall always be from the membership at large.

The Directors, so elected, shall meet immediately after the meeting of Members and shall at that first meeting after each election, elect from their number the following officers:

President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary

and at that same meeting the Directors shall elect an Executive Committee, to consist of the said five officers and two Directors without office, and to the said Executive Committee shall be delegated the control and management of the affairs of the Corporation, subject to the Directorate in its entirety.

ARTICLE VII.
OFFICERS TO MANAGE CORPORATION AFFAIRS
UNTIL FIRST ELECTION UNDER CHARTER

The names of the officers who are to manage all the affairs of the Corporation until the first election or appointment under the Charter are these:

President - James C. Morton Second Vice President -
First Vice President - W. J. Casey O. A. Brice
Secretary - Wayne Norman
Treasurer - H. J. Comer, Jr.
APPENDIX G (continued)

And the following Directors without office:

A. V. Benson  L. H. Kramer
Douglass B. Bullard  S. W. Keen
Henry Bullard  L. F. Martin
Norman H. Bunting  Robert W. Murray
F. C. Buchanan  Harold S. Norman
Robert Combs  F. M. O'Byrne
Lee Draper  W. C. Pedersen
R. J. Haynsworth  James Rountree
R. D. Hogan  John Stafford
R. L. Johnson  Rollie Tillman
E. R. Jahna  J. F. Townsend, Sr.
Charles H. Jenkins  J. H. Whitfield
Morris Jones  Josef Meier

ARTICLE VIII.

BY LAWS

The By Laws of the Corporation are to be made, altered, or rescinded by majority vote of the Directors.

ARTICLE IX.

INDEBTEDNESS

The highest amount of indebtedness or liability to which the Corporation may at any time subject itself, and which shall never be greater than two-thirds of the value of the property of the Corporation, is $300,000.00.

ARTICLE X.

REAL PROPERTY

The amount in value of the real estate which the Corporation may hold, subject always to the approval of the Circuit Judge, is $500,000.00.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said incorporators have subscribed their names and affixed their seals hereto at Lake Wales, Florida, on this 27th day of September, A. D., 1951.
APPENDIX G (continued)

/s/ W. C. Pedersen ______(SEAL) /s/ R. W. Murray ______(SEAL)
/s/ Morris Jones ______(SEAL) /s/ Harold S. Norman ______(SEAL)
/s/ O. A. Brice ______(SEAL) /s/ James B. Rountree ______(SEAL)
/s/ F. M. O'Byrne ______(SEAL) /s/ Robert D. Hogan ______(SEAL)
/s/ R. J. Haynsworth ______(SEAL) /s/ Rollie Tillman ______(SEAL)
/s/ Wayne Norman ______(SEAL) /s/ R. L. Johnson ______(SEAL)
/s/ Charles H. Jenkins ______(SEAL) /s/ S. W. Keen ______(SEAL)
/s/ Douglas B. Bullard ______(SEAL) /s/ L. H. Kramer ______(SEAL)
/s/ Henry F. Bullard ______(SEAL) /s/ F. C. Buchanan ______(SEAL)
/s/ R. W. Combs ______(SEAL) /s/ Lee Draper ______(SEAL)
/s/ J. W. Whitfield ______(SEAL) /s/ L. F. Martin ______(SEAL)
/s/ H. J. Comer, Jr. ______(SEAL) /s/ E. R. Jahna ______(SEAL)
/s/ N. H. Bunting ______(SEAL) /s/ A. V. Benson ______(SEAL)
/s/ J. F. Townsend ______(SEAL) /s/ John Stafford ______(SEAL)

STATE OF FLORIDA,
COUNTY OF POLK.

Before me, the undersigned Notary Public, personally appeared Wayne Norman, one of the subscribers to the foregoing proposed Charter of the Passion Play Amphitheater of Florida, and known to me to be one of said subscribing incorporators, who having been first duly sworn deposed and stated that it is intended by him, and the other incorporators of said corporation, in good faith, to carry out the purposes and objects set forth therein.

/s/ Wayne Norman
Wayne Norman

Sworn to and subscribed before me at Lake Wales,
Florida, this 10th day of October, A.D. 1951

/s/ R. J. Haynsworth__________
NOTARY PUBLIC
My Commission Expires June 29, 1954
(SEAL)

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY

Attest /s/ D. H. Sloan, Jr. (SEAL)
Clerk Circuit Court
APPENDIX G (continued)

BY-LAWS OF THE PASSION PLAY AMPHITHEATER
OF FLORIDA, a non-profit corporation

ARTICLE I
Name

The name of this non-profit corporation shall be the
Passion Play Amphitheater of Florida.

ARTICLE II
Membership

(a) Qualifications: This corporation shall be com­
prised of members. Any reputable person interested in the
objectives of the corporation shall be eligible for member­
ship. Before any eligible person shall be elected to mem­
bership, his name shall be approved by two-thirds of all the
directors present at any regular directors' meeting.

(b) Type of members: (1) A non-voting member: A non­
voting member shall be a member who shall have contributed
not less than $5.00 nor more than $99.00. (2) Voting mem­
ber: A voting member shall be any member who shall have
contributed to the corporation a minimum of $100.00. No
member shall be allowed more than one vote regardless of the
amount of his contribution.

(c) Voluntary transfer of membership: The transfer of
membership to some other person or corporation not already a
member of this corporation shall be authorized and recog­
nized only when said transfer shall have first been approved
by two-thirds of all directors of said corporation present
at any regular directors' meeting.

(d) Transfer by operation of law shall be recognized.
However, the transferee shall become a voting member only
upon approval by two-thirds of all the directors present at
any regular directors' meeting.

ARTICLE III
Meetings

All meetings of this corporation shall be held at the
Chamber of Commerce building in Lake Wales, Florida, or at
any other place in Polk County, Florida, designated by the
directors.
ARTICLE IV
Annual Meetings

The annual meetings of members of this corporation shall be in the Passion Play office on the First Tuesday after the First Sunday in May of each year. The first meeting to be held in 1953. In the event that such annual meeting is omitted, by oversight or otherwise on the date herein provided for, the directors shall call a meeting to be held in lieu thereof as soon thereafter as conveniently may be and any business transacted or elections held at such meeting shall be as valid as if said transactions or elections were held at the annual meeting.

ARTICLE V
Special Meetings

Special meetings of the members of this corporation shall be held whenever called by the president, vice-president, or the treasurer, or whenever 25 per cent of the voting members shall make written application thereof to the secretary stating the time, place and purpose of the meeting called.

ARTICLE VI
Notice of Members' Meeting

Notice of all members' meetings, stating the time, place and objectives for which such meetings are called, shall be given by an officer of the corporation to all members of the corporation by mail not less than 5 days nor more than 20 days prior to the date of such meeting. Waiver of call of meeting shall be recognized provided waiver is signed by all voting members.

ARTICLE VII
Quorum of Members

Twenty percent of all voting members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but a smaller number may adjourn any meeting.

ARTICLE VIII
Voting Members

Members shall be present to vote and proxies shall not be recognized. At all elections of directors of the
corporation, each member shall be entitled to as many votes as is equal to the number of directors to be elected and he may cast all of such votes for a single director, or may distribute them among the number to be voted for, or any two or more of them as he may see fit.

ARTICLE IX
Board of Directors

The Board of Directors shall be chosen in the following manner:

(a) Representatives from Clubs: The following clubs and/or organizations shall be allowed to appoint from their membership, in such manner as said club or organization shall deem proper, one member of the Board of Directors. The clubs so designated are as follows, to-wit: Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Board of Realtors, American Legion, First Methodist Church, and Citrus Workers Local 24217 American Federation of Labor.

Thus, there shall be eight directors representing the above mentioned clubs. The term of office of each of these directors shall be for one year.

(b) Directors chosen from Membership at Large: At the annual meeting of the membership, five directors shall be chosen as is hereinafter provided each year from the membership at large of this non-profit corporation.

A director does not have to be a voting member as defined above in Article II. The term of office of each director shall be for two years.

At the first annual election, 10 directors shall be elected and from these, 5 shall be chosen by lot to serve two years and 5 shall be chosen to serve one year.

ARTICLE X
Board of Directors

The Board of Directors shall have the entire business management of the corporation. A majority of the directors at any general or special meeting shall be sufficient in all matters of management, except that no gift shall be made to any charity unless and until two-thirds of all directors present at any meeting either general or special, called
APPENDIX G (continued)

for the express purpose of making contributions to charity
shall approve said contribution.

ARTICLE XI
Finances

No money shall be given to any charitable organization
or otherwise used than for the expense of operation or the
expansion of the facilities for the conducting of the Pas-
sion Play until all of the debts of this corporation have
been paid in full.

ARTICLE XII
Meetings

Regular meetings of the board of directors shall be
held at such places in the city of Lake Wales and State of
Florida and at such times as the board may determine. Spe-
cial meetings may be held whenever called by any officer of
this corporation and whenever two directors desire a special
meeting. Notice of all general meetings shall be given to
all directors at least two days before the meeting.

ARTICLE XIII
Quorum of Directors

A minimum of 50 per cent of the members of the board of
directors shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of
business, but a lesser number may adjourn any meeting.

ARTICLE XIV
Officers

The officers of the corporation shall be a president,
first vice-president, second vice-president, secretary and
treasurer. The officers shall be chosen from the directors
of the corporation and by the directors of the corporation.
The duties and obligations of the officers shall be those du-
ties and obligations usual and normal of said officers. The
term of the officers shall be for one year. In the case of
vacancy by resignation or otherwise, the board of directors
may elect a new officer to fill out the unexpired term.

ARTICLE XV
Amendment to By-Laws

The by-laws of this corporation may be amended at any
regular or special meeting of the membership of the corporation provided two-thirds of all members present shall consent to said amendment and provided further that a copy of the proposed amendment be first given to all voting members at least five days before the meeting.

ARTICLE XVI
Vacancies in Board of Directors

In case of vacancy by resignation or otherwise in the board of directors of a member serving as a representative from a club or organization then the said club or organization may choose a new director.

In case of a vacancy in the Board of Directors of a member chosen by the voting membership at large, then this vacancy shall be filled by the existing Board of Directors until the next regular election of directors, at which time, a new director shall be elected.

April 10, 1952

AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT #1: ARTICLE XI shall be amended to read as follows:
5/5/53

"No money shall be given to any charitable organization or otherwise used than for the expenses of operation or the expansion of the facilities for the conducting of the Passion Play until all of the debts of this corporation have been paid in full. No money shall be distributed to charity during the same calendar year in which it is earned. The Corporation shall at all times maintain a cash reserve of $20,000 before any money is contributed to charity. Only charities recognized by the Government as being tax deductible shall receive grants from this Corporation."

AMENDMENT #2: ARTICLE XVI shall be amended to read as follows:
5/5/53

"In case of vacancy by resignation or other-
wise in the board of directors of a member serving as a representative from a club or organization then the said club or organization may choose a new director.

"In case of a vacancy in the Board of Directors of a member chosen by the voting membership at large, then this vacancy shall be filled by the existing Board of Directors until the next regular election of directors, at which time, a new director shall be elected.

"In case a Director has four unexcused absences from regularly called meetings of the Board of Directors, he or she shall be automatically dropped as a Director and the vacancy filled as prescribed in the by-laws."

AMENDMENT #3:  
5/5/53
ARTICLE XVII to be added to the By-Laws:

"The President shall appoint the following Standing Committees, subject to approval of the Board of Directors: Building Committee, Grounds Committee, Publicity Committee, Finance Committee, Personnel Committee, Operating Committee, and Usage Committee."

AMENDMENT #4:  
5/15/56
Paragraph (b) (2) entitled "Voting member" of ARTICLE II entitled "Membership" shall be amended to read as follows:

(2) Voting member: A voting member shall be any member who shall have contributed to the corporation a minimum of $100; and those holders of debenture notes in the amount of $100 or more, only when interest is in arrears on such notes. No member shall be allowed more than one vote regardless of the amount of his contribution or debenture note.

AMENDMENT #5:  
5/15/56
The first sentence of ARTICLE IV entitled "Annual Meetings" shall be amended to read as follows:

The annual meetings of members of this corporation shall be held on the first Tuesday
APPENDIX G (continued)

after the second Sunday in May of each year at a place to be designated by the Board of Directors.

AMENDMENT #6: Paragraph (a) entitled "Representatives from Clubs" of ARTICLE IX entitled "Board of Directors" shall be amended to read:

(a) Representatives from Clubs: The following clubs and/or organizations shall be allowed to appoint from their membership, in such manner as said club or organization shall deem proper, one member of the Board of Directors. The clubs so designated are as follows, to-wit: Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Board of Realtors, American Legion, First Methodist Church, Citrus Workers Local 24217 American Federation of Labor, Greater Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce and Lake Wales Schools.

Thus, there shall be ten directors representing the above mentioned clubs. The term of office of each of these directors shall be for one year.

AMENDMENT #7: Article XIII entitled "Quorum of Directors" shall be amended to read:

A minimum of 8 members of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but a lesser number may adjourn any meeting.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT
to
BYLAWS OF PASSION PLAY AMPHITHEATRE OF FLORIDA, INC.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT #8:

ARTICLE IX entitled "Board of Directors", as amended, shall be further amended to read as follows:

(a) Representatives from Clubs: The following clubs
and/or organizations shall be allowed to nominate from their membership, in such manner as said club or organization shall deem proper, one member of the Board of Directors. The clubs so designated are as follows, to-wit: Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Board of Realtors, American Legion, First Methodist Church, Citrus Workers Local 24217 American Federation of Labor, Greater Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce, Lake Wales Schools, and the Business and Professional women's Club.

Thus, there shall be eleven directors representing the above mentioned clubs. The term of office of each of these directors shall be for one year.

(b) Directors chosen from Membership at Large: At the annual meeting of the membership, directors shall be chosen as is hereinafter provided each year from the membership at large of this non-profit corporation:

Seven directors to be chosen in even years.
Six directors to be chosen in odd years.

A director does not have to be a voting member as defined above in Article II. The term of office of each director shall be for two years.

At the annual meeting at which this amendment is passed, eight directors shall be elected, seven to serve for two years and one to serve for one year.

May 13, 1958

(underscoring indicates changes being made)
APPENDIX H

Fund Raising Questions

Questions About Passion Play Project Answered.

1. Where will it be constructed?
   A specially selected plot of ground less than two miles south of Lake Wales. Twenty acres under option and ten more will be added later.

2. When will it be completed?
   Present plan for seats, stage, and certain facilities to be constructed in time for opening performance in January of 1953.

3. How will it be financed?
   Through gifts and loans from general public. Amounts of $5.00 or more will be accepted by the incorporator - all loans will draw interest at the rate of 5%.

4. When will interest be paid?
   Interest on all loans will be paid from profits beginning May, 1953.

5. When will notes mature?
   Notes will mature within 10 years.

6. Are outright gifts deductible from income taxes?
   The IRS will not approve deduction until the organization has been in operation for a year. May loan and then make a donation at the end of the year.
APPENDIX H (continued)

7. Is the campaign a community effort?
Yes - all monies to bring the Passion Play from Lake Wales. All workers are volunteers except one. Wayne Norman, the campaign chairman is on loan from the Chamber of Commerce.

8. How long does the contract run?
Present contract with Mr. Meier is for 10 years, i.e. 1953-1962 inclusive.

9. Are there provisions for extending the contract?
Yes - mutual agreement.

10. How will officers be elected?
Officers will be elected by duly named directors. All persons who make outright gifts of $100.00 or more will be given one vote for each $100.00.

11. How will the amphitheatre be managed?
By present Board of Directors and a manager to be named by the board.

12. What security is provided to loan to organization?
The standard form promissory note will be executed for all loans and signed by the President, Mr. James C. Morton, and the Secretary, Mr. Wayne Norman.

13. What is the campaign goal?
A goal of $150,000 has been set by the Board of Directors.
14. How will future additions and improvements be financed?
   From revenue.

15. Is Mr. Meier guaranteed a fixed sum?
   No - share of gross receipts.

16. How will accrued profits be used?
   After all notes and interest have been paid, all profits will be used in aiding charitable institutions, improving educational facilities, assisting churches, furthering the beautification of the city and similar projects which qualify under provisions set forth by the IRS for non-profit organizations.

17. Can pledges be made now and paid later?
   Yes - anytime to July 1, 1952.

18. Will the amphitheatre be available to other groups?
   Yes – To all groups whose activities do not conflict with the tenor of the Passion Play presentation, during time when it is not being used for scheduled presentations.
APPENDIX I

President of the Lake Wales Amphitheatre Corporation

1951-1952 - (Temporary) James Morton
1952-1953 - F. M. O'Bryne
1953-1954 - O. A. Brice
1954-1955 - O. A. Brice
1955-1956 - A. V. Benson
1956-1957 - Harry Wear
1957-1958 - S. D. Gray
1958-1959 - Lee Draper
1959-1960 - Lee Draper
1961-1962 - Walter Zilahy
1962-1963 - Walter Zilahy
1963-1964 - James E. Baldauf
1965-1966 - Morris Jones
1966-1967 - Morris Jones
1967-1968 - Sam Gray
1970-1971 - Sam Robinson
1971-1972 - Morris Jones
1972-1973 - Morris Jones
1973-1974 - W. J. Howell
APPENDIX J

Pictorial survey of the scenic units and physical facilities of the two amphitheatres. Measurements taken from blue prints of the scenic units.
PLAN OF THE SEATING AND SETTING
SPEARFISH AMPHITHEATRE
PLAN OF THE SEATING AREA AND SETTING
LAKE WALES AMPHITHEATRE
1. CITY GATE

2. BETHANY

3. PILATE'S PALACE

4. CENTER STAGE UNIT

5. THE TEMPLE

6. THE HIGH PRIEST COUNCIL

7. THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

8. THE TOMB

SETTING ARRANGEMENT IN SPEARFISH
1. THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE
2. THE TOMB
3. PILATE'S PALACE
4. CENTER STAGE UNIT
5. THE TEMPLE
6. THE HIGH PRIEST COUNCIL
7. BETHANY
8. THE CITY GATE

SETTING ARRANGEMENTS IN LAKE WALES
VIEW -- PILATE'S PALACE

PLAN -- PILATE'S PALACE
VIEW -- CENTER STAGE

PLAN -- CENTER STAGE
VIEW -- THE TEMPLE

PLAN -- THE TEMPLE
VIEW -- THE TOMB

VIEW -- GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE
VIEW -- ROAD TO GOLGOTHA

VIEW -- MOUNT CALVARY
BOX OFFICE  LAKE WALES AMPHITHEATRE
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