

LIVING PICTURES

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

Just as the people of the Victorian era would be astonished at what this generation considers entertainment, we equally wonder at some of the events that were considered as providing interest and pleasure for those who lived in the late 1800s to early 1900s. An example of this would be 'living pictures'. Common in the Victorian era, this was a form of staged, silent scenes using costumes and props to recreate artwork or dramatic moments.

The Ladies' Aid Society of the Presbyterian church held such an event in 1917 with a theme which fits in as being appropriate today with the current celebrations of America 250 and the 165th anniversary of the incorporation of the Village of Richfield Springs. They combined their evening of entertainment with supper and music.

"The last of three suppers and entertainments arranged by the members of the Ladies' Aid Society of the Presbyterian church was given in the church parlors this evening and was highly successful, both as to the excellence of the supper and to the character and enjoyableness of the entertainment. This latter part of the biggest twenty-five cent bargain ever given in Richfield Springs, is deserving of much praise for the conception which was that of Mrs. John D. Cary and the manner in which the entertainment was staged.

'Living Pictures' or 'Tableaux Vivants', reached their peak of popularity between 1830- and 1920. They were a revised form of entertainment used in medieval times as a way for the upper and middle classes to display their cultural knowledge and artistic talents.

exceptionally realistic and true to the original. For this, the committee was indebted to Mr. Frederick Paulding, the well-known actor, who came unexpectedly and whose great talents were most graciously placed at the disposal of the committee.

John Alden and Priscilla were first shown, portrayed by Henry Lipps and Miss Lora Dagenkalb. For this the hymn 'O God Beneath Whose Guiding Hand' was played.

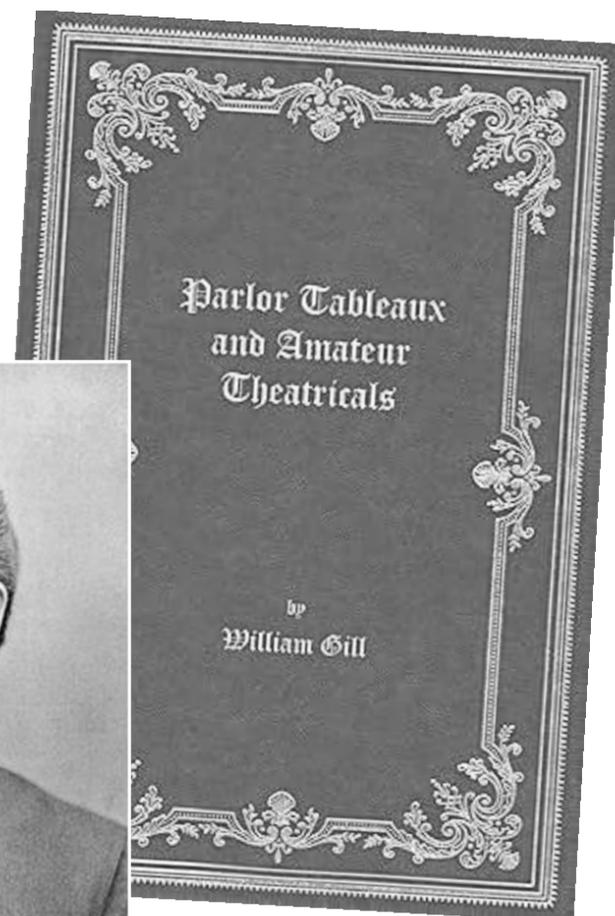
Next was Captain John Smith and his rescue from death by Pocahontas. The character of Captain Smith was portrayed by Durward Weaver; Pocahontas by Miss Isabel Martinez; Powhatan by Omar Southwell; the executioner by Richard Owen. A popular Indian melody was played while the curtain was raised.

In commemoration of the ride of Paul Revere, Miss Agnes Law then read the poem written about this famous ride. After this, Mrs. Herbert H. Getman was shown as Betsy Ross making the flag. George Washington (Reverend Albert L. Evans) and Robert Morris (James McKee) appeared, directing the manufacture of the emblem. The piano selection was 'Columbia the Gem of the Ocean'.

'The Spirit of '76' was pictured by John D. Cary with Howard Goes



Dr. Frederick Paulding



and Lucius Cary, showing three generations of patriots. The playing of 'Yankee Doodle' added the necessary thrill to make this picture the hit of the evening.

As the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' was sung, Mrs. Louis S. Raymond leaned far out of the window and waved the flag in the face of Thomas B. Roberts, as Barbara Fritchie did to General Stonewall Jackson.

Then came our own Spanish War and we saw the boys on the way to the front and the women in tears bidding them farewell. Three of the Boy Scouts, Clellan Curtis, Harry Tyler and John Pollock, were the heroes of '95 and Mrs. W. B. Rankin and Mrs. F. E. Mungor, with the Misses Marjorie Goodhines, Martha Terry and Winona Chapman, were mothers and sweethearts. Little Miss Marian Frink, holding tight to a big brother, added a touch of realism to this excellent picture. 'Goodbye My Bluebell' was played.

Mr. Paulding then added an unexpected treat to the program by reading 'The Spell of the Yukon' by Serviss and 'The Butterfly' by Charlotte Perkins Gillman.

'The Star Spangled Banner' portrayed by Mrs. James McKee and sung by Mrs. Willard Bullion made a pretty and stirring finale, concluding the program."

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The special guest of the evening, Dr. Frederick Paulding (1859-1937) was a notable American Shakespearean actor, playwright and lecturer on drama, credited with four Broadway shows.

The performance of living pictures eventually faded from popularity with the presentation of a different kind of living image - motion pictures and television.