



# MILO HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2020

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Welcome to a new and exciting season at the Milo Historical Society. As we enter this season we find ourselves with some new rules in place due to the Corona Virus. We ask that you pay attention when visiting to our posted instructions at the entrance to the MHS and abide.

Please look to our website and Facebook for hours, activities and special meetings. We would love to have you become a member and support our efforts to preserve our towns historic past and to keep our stories and artifacts alive and available to all generations to come.

**To show your support and become a member today please fill out the form below.**

Stay well and thank you for your support. *Allen Monroe*

## DOWN MEMORY LANE

### The Milo Auditorium.... And THE "THEATER DROP" —

*By; Kathie Lee*

*Please enjoy this little trip "Down Memory Lane"... back to a time when Milo's entertainment was found at the CHIC Theater and the Milo Auditorium or in the parlor after church as the family sat together and told stories.*



*The "Theater Drop" curtain at the Winger Auditorium in Milo, Maine*

#### **Milo Town Hall —**

1923 – June, construction began

1924 – Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> Completed

1924 – March 4<sup>th</sup> Grand Opening



We find the Ed Winger Auditorium on the second floor of the Milo Town Hall dedicated in 1924. Named after Edward James "Ed" Winger..., long time custodian at the Milo Town Hall – *Custodian - 1924 to 1965*

*Ed was born on May 14, 1884 and passed Oct 2, 1978 at the age of 94. Ed and his wife Flora lived over 40 years in their home on Spring Street here in Milo. They loved their gardening and were very active members of the Milo community.*



**I remember when I first saw the Milo theater drop curtain;**

We had recently moved to Milo (1988), and were attending our daughter's daycare production under the guidance of "Miss Marie" (Marie Hayes). All the little children were a flutter getting ready for their big performance and Marie was running here and there corralling them all. The lights were down low as we found our seats. The auditorium was *abuzz* with excited friendly people all greeting one another. This surely was "A Friendly Town".

I soon became mesmerized by the stage curtain. It was grand..., and maybe had seen better days, but it was truly a work of art. I imagined how many years this curtain had been greeting those coming to the auditorium for any number of activities, shows, entertainment of all sorts, musicals, graduations, plays, dances, ball games, reunions and Christmas pageants. I was sure that this place held a lot of memories of pleasant times.... then... UP went the curtain as Miss Marie introduced her stage full of performers. How excited I was.

According to Allen Monroe, Secretary at the MHS... it is believed that the curtain was installed sometime during 1923 when the town hall was built; *Noting this to be one hundred years after the towns incorporation in January 1823.* After much discussion and review of its deterioration..., sadly the curtain was taken down in preparations for the town hall's renovation in the mid to late 1990's.

After a conversation with Allen last year..., I just had to find out more about the curtain..., so my search began. And, as always the information gathered is provided in the best efforts set forth with available research and we are always open to corrections along with added memories and information that anyone would like to provide.

Days of research and phone calls brought me to several companies that restored these works of art. I was able to confirm that Milo's theater drop curtain was sold by the O.L. Story Scenic Company. I found it interesting when I read an advertisement..., stating with pride the fact that the life expectancy of Story's drops to be 12-15 years with good care. I would say it was well cared for as it survived in use for some 70 years.

**Orville Lincoln Story (1861-1916)** learned his craft as an apprentice in his father's scenic company. He worked as a carpenter with the Boston Ideal Opera Company for a season, and in

1882 took over his father's business providing scenery to numerous opera houses and theaters in the Boston area.

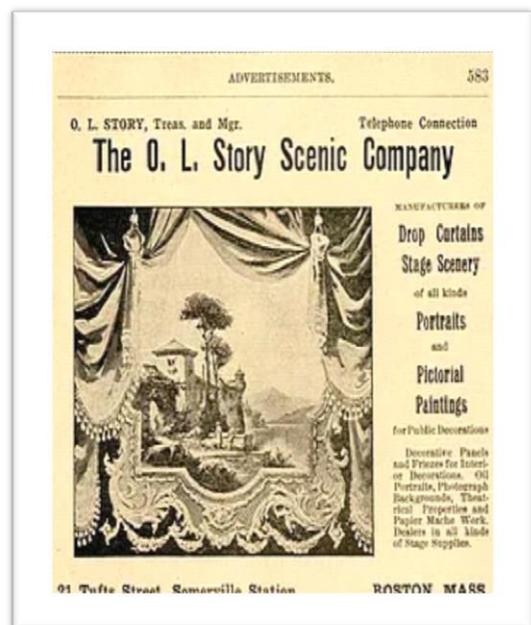
I always found it a bit odd that the painting seemed to depict maybe a scene from Italy rather than something more local in theme. I really wasn't sure..., a villa, a castle? But, when I thought more about it, I found it plain to think that people came here for entertainment, to "get-a-way" so to speak, travel the world and dream of faraway places. With that thought in mind, I wasn't at all surprised to find that our drop was Story's depiction of The Chateau de Chillon / Chillon Castle on Lake Geneva in Switzerland.



An oil painting c. 1880 of the Chillon Castle on Lake Geneva in Switzerland.

Advertisements for Story's business began to appear in New Hampshire business directories in 1884. As "Dealers in all kinds of Stage Supplies," O. L. Story offered "Decorative Panels and Friezes for Interior Decorations, Oil Portraits, Photograph Backgrounds, Theatrical Properties and Papier Mache Work." In 1897, Story moved the business to Somerville, where his shop was conveniently located near a railroad station; delivery by train was the only logical way to transport scenery on wooden rollers that were heavy and often more than twenty feet long. After his death, the business continued into the mid-1930s under the management of his younger brother.

I can imagine the day that the curtain arrived by rail in Milo. Was the train greeted with a wagon and men to bring this massive art work to the auditorium for its installation... did the company send their own crew to raise the curtain... were there detailed instructions...? Either way, I imagine it was quite the undertaking getting it raised and in working order ready for the grand opening March 4<sup>th</sup> 1924.



A couple side notes of interest - The curtain was painted with a fire retardant prior to painting, which was a big selling point at the time. Also, after the turn of the century, curtains that were used in theater houses gave cameos or border spacing to place local business advertisement – a new and huge selling point for bonus revenue.

When asking Allen about “what happened to the curtain”... he replied; *“The curtain was cut up before being disposed and sections were given to the Milo Historical Society. The sections we were given had the signatures of the cast members from the past performances of high school plays over the years. We offered some of the sections to the various classes at alumni time and others were given to individuals who requested them. We took one section that had a scene that was attractive and noteworthy and had it framed and is on display at the museum. We also took pictures of the intact curtain. We had a few sections hung up in storage for many years and then noticed that they were deteriorating badly, paint was flaking off and the material was rotting. Sadly, we finally ended up disposing of what was left.”*



Well, I do hope that you enjoyed this little trip “Down Memory Lane”. We look forward to hearing from anyone that would like to add information to this adventure.

*Best to all and Happy Trails, Kathie Lee*

Again, Thank you for considering membership and or a donation to our MHS  
Your time and support is valuable and much appreciated. Thank you!

**MHS - MEMBERSHIP FORM**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one - **Active Member: \$5**     **Patron Member: \$25**     **Student Member: \$2.50**

Other – Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Thank you.

Please Make Checks Payable To “Milo Historical Society” and Mail to - Allen Monroe, Secretary, 23 Park Street, Milo, ME 04463