

# VARIETY ARTS ENTERPRISES

EDITORIAL & DESIGN SERVICES, RESEARCH, & INTERPRETATION for MUSEUMS, HISTORICAL SOCIETIES, & CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

TALK IS CHEAP. SEE THE WORK.

## Presentation Graphics

### VAUDEVILLE

– 1880-1930 –

What was it? And how did it get so BIG?

Over 4000 venues across America

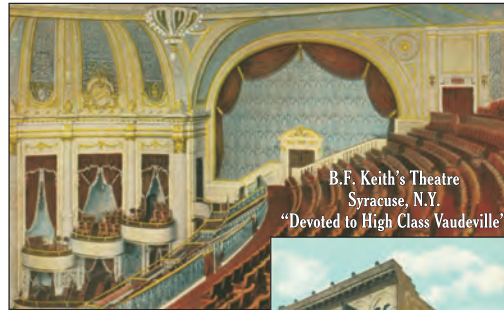


Photo by Hester Huber, New York City, 1900s

...up to six nights a week!

- **Vaudeville defined:**  
A theatrical presentation of variety acts, unconnected by plot, designed for a general audience
- **Misconceptions:** Confusion with minstrelsy & burlesque
- **Setting the scene:** Beginnings & the growth of an industry
- **Vaudeville expands,** through networks of theatres, to become a nationwide staple of leisure
- **The decline of Vaudeville:** Internal & external forces
- **The people of Vaudeville:** The famous & the forgotten
- **The flavor of Vaudeville:** Performance segments
- **Then what happened?:**  
- To the people? To the places?  
- To the ideas? To the influences?
- **21st century manifestations:**  
*The spirit remains!*

### THE THEATRE: Now for Middle Class Leisure



B.F. Keith's Theatre  
Syracuse, N.Y.  
"Devoted to High Class Vaudeville"



Empire Theatre, Lewiston, Maine



Vaudeville Stage  
Salisbury Beach, Mass.



- When the Vaudeville formula proved successful in New York & Boston theatres in the 1880s, entrepreneurs stepped forward to present shows in variety of venues:
  - Networks of "Big Time" & "Small Time" theatres
  - Independent theatres
  - End-of-the-line trolley parks
- Independent wagon shows & tent shows, Chautauqua meets, showboats, resorts, & fairs
- At the peak of Vaudeville's popularity in the early 1920s:
  - over 2000 theatres
  - 1000-2000 additional venues
  - 30,000-50,000 performers
  - thousands of support personnel in a multitude of roles

### SURVIVORS to the 1950s TV era



Bob Hope  
(1903-2003)



Milton Berle  
(1908-2002)



Jack Benny  
(1894-1974)



Jimmy Durante  
(1894-1980)



Sophie Tucker  
(1886-1966)



Groucho Marx  
(1890-1977)



Fred Allen  
(1894-1956)



George Burns  
(1896-1996)



Ed Wynn  
(1886-1966)

The TV stars above were talented survivors.  
But they don't fully define Vaudeville.