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The Theatrical Career of John E. Owens (1823-1886).

Thomas Arthur Bogar
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THE THEATRICAL CAREER OF JOHN E. OWENS
(1823-1886)

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech Communication,
Theatre, and Communication Disorders

by
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B.A., University of Maryland, 1970
M.A., University of Maryland, 1974
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DEDICATION

To all the friends who asked, "What are you doing your dissertation on?" and then actually listened to, and cared about, my answer.
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ABSTRACT

This study traces the theatrical career of John E. Owens (1823-1886), a career which reflects many of the changes which transformed nineteenth century American theatre. One of the most popular and financially successful comic actors in America at mid-century, Owens was also an innovative and successful manager who anticipated realistic trends in staging and acting.

Best known for the role of Solon Shingle in J.S. Jones' The People's Lawyer (later re-titled Solon Shingle), which he played over 2000 times, Owens refined the Yankee character established by Hill, Marble and Silsbee and won critical and popular acclaim for both his eccentric comic characters and his tender, evocative portrayals of garrulous old men. He was noted for a quiet, natural style of acting which utilized verisimilar details to create individualized characterizations. As a manager in Baltimore and New Orleans, Owens gained recognition as an astute, demanding overseer of uniformly excellent stock companies, well-cast plays, and accurately and lavishly mounted productions.

The study includes biographical data and anecdotes, a listing of all 447 roles which Owens performed, with dates and cities of first performances, all cities, companies and theaters in which Owens performed, contemporary and historical evaluations of his acting, an examination of his efforts at management, and a view of Owens the man. It is organized into six chapters: 1) Owens' early years and apprenticeship under William E. Burton in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and the various influences upon him (1823-48); 2) His early acting and management experiences (1848-56); 3) The development of his acting repertory and style, his
touring, and his later management (1856-64); 4) His later acting style and famous roles, established while touring widely and in occasional long runs (1864-72); 5) His final years of touring with his own combination company, his professional decline, and his personal losses (1872-86); 6) A summary evaluation of Owens' career and his place in theatre history.
INTRODUCTION

American theatrical activity underwent significant changes during the
nineteenth century, not only in terms of increasing managerial prerogative and the
rise and fall of the "star system" but also in terms of dramatic content, types of
roles played and styles of acting. Actors continuing the Hallam legacy of
American theatre opened the century; the Syndicate closed it. Within this
framework the study of the theatrical career of John E. Owens (1823-1886)
reveals a performer of consummate skill and tremendous popular following who
reflected many of all the changes and cross-currents transforming American
theatre during the century.

The purpose of this study is to examine the life and theatrical career of
Owens and place it in the context of his century. One of the most popular and
financially successful comic actors in America, he was also an innovative and
successful manager, but his career has been neglected by theatre historians. He
refined the Yankee character established by Marble, Hackett and Hill and served
as a prototype for many who followed in this genre, winning critical and popular
acclaim for both his eccentric comic characters and his tender, evocative
portrayals of garrulous old men.

As an actor Owens was truly sui generis. He was one of the first comedians
of the nineteenth century with a quiet natural style and highly individualized
characterizations. Filled with verisimilar details of local color, his
characterizations were gleaned from careful observation made while mingling
with all sorts of people in his extensive touring. He also shunned being treated as
a star in an era in which the star system flourished.
Owens gained deserved recognition as well for being an astute, demanding manager who took pride in assembling a uniformly excellent repertory company. A major concern of Owens was audience comfort and diversion, and he stopped at nothing in remodeling theaters and recruiting the best actors for his patrons. While he achieved his greatest successes artistically and financially in Baltimore, Boston and New Orleans, he maintained numerous other theatrical investments across the country. He also served as part of the vanguard of theatrical life in California and the entire West during the latter half of the century.

The role most often associated with Owens is that of Solon Shingle in J. S. Jones' The People's Lawyer. In 1865 he acquired the rights for the role, re-titling the play Solon Shingle; he played this role over 2000 times and earned over $250,000 from it alone. During the course of his career he played 447 widely divergent roles (see Appendix A), many of which he kept in his repertory until his later years.

Owens' very nature and joviality attracted countless figures in American theatre who regularly congregated at his baronial home in rural Towsontown, (now Towson, a suburb of Baltimore,) Maryland. Retiring to this substantial estate every summer, Owens gregariously swapped stories and pranks with his guests, and it is through the words of his contemporaries that the clearest picture of Owens, the man, emerges. Farmer Owens, like Yankee Owens, had no regard for station in life; he freely conversed with, and "acted out" for, both his servants and his guests.

Many anecdotes of Owens' farm life are mingled with those of his acting and managerial experiences in the only biographical book about him, Memories of John E. Owens, fondly written by his wife in 1892. This remains the best source on Owens, along with biographies of his contemporaries (e.g., Noah Ludlow, Joseph Jefferson, William E. Burton, Sol Smith) and newspaper accounts of the day. One
possible reason why Owens has been lost in history is that he so rapidly and repeatedly crisscrossed the country, developing his career outside of the theatrical center of the U.S., thus making the task of chronicling his whereabouts difficult. This study relies primarily on newspaper notices and reviews for this task, with the help of the weekly Spirit of the Times, a New York account of nationwide entertainment activity.

Other studies which contributed significantly to an understanding of Owens' career are Francis Hodge's Yankee Theatre, several contemporary accounts by critic William Winter, particularly The Wallet of Time and Shadows of the Stage, accounts of theatrical activity by Noah Ludlow and Sol Smith, and a number of doctoral dissertations: Joseph Roppolo's "History of the English Language Theatre in New Orleans 1845-1861," Claude Melebeck's "History of the First and Second Varieties Theatres of New Orleans," William Dobkin's "Theatrical Career of Danforth Marble: Stage Yankee," and Charles Neel's "The Stars' Golden Era: A Study of the Craft of Acting In America, 1850-1870." Of special importance in attributing roles, plays and playwrights was Hodge's bibliography, which includes a list of Yankee plays and summaries of their histories.

Repositories which proved helpful were various theatre library collections, particularly the Hoblzelle Collection of the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, the Billy Rose Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library's Lincoln Center Branch, and the Free Library of Philadelphia. These sources yielded many playbills and newspaper clippings, plus a number of primary sources such as letters by Owens and prompt books in his own hand.

This study attempts to trace the theatrical career of John E. Owens. It includes biographical data, all roles and plays performed (with dates and cities of first performance of each) all cities, companies and theatres in which he performed, contemporary and historical evaluations of his acting style, an examination of his efforts at management, and a clear picture of Owens the man.
The study is organized into six chapters: 1) An examination of Owens' early years and apprenticeship under William E. Burton in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and the various influences upon him (1823-48); 2) His early acting engagements and management experiences (1848-56); 3) His developing repertory and style, touring, and later management (1856-64); 4) His later acting style and famous roles, established while touring widely with combination companies and in occasional long runs (1864-72); 5) His final years of touring with his own company and his professional decline, and an account of his personal losses (1872-86); 6) A summary evaluation of Owens' career and his place in theatre history.

A perception of Owens by William Winter remains the most succinct statement of the value of a study of his career:

To think of John E. Owens is to recall one of the most comical men that have graced and cheered the stage. He was both humorist and comedian, . . . a close student of the drama and of the art of acting, [whose] impersonations were diversified, and each of them was brilliantly distinct and thoroughly and finely finished. . . . He comprehended character at a glance, and he completely merged himself in his ideal. . . . Owens was a great comedian—one of original genius and independent mind.
1. Early Life and Influences

(1823 - 1848)

Born in Liverpool, England, April 2, 1823, John Edmond Owens was the first born of Owen Griffith and Mary Anderton Owens. During the summer of 1828, the family relocated in America, joining relatives already comfortably established in Philadelphia. Well cared for in an Episcopalian household, John was firmly yet fairly disciplined. His mother's family had established useful connections in prominent Welsh societies in the city, and the young boy seldom wanted for material advantages. Given the opportunity to attend the best schools in Philadelphia, he demonstrated early his keen intelligence and scholastic aptitude. According to his wife, who in 1892 wrote a full-length biographical account of his life, Owens' favorite days were "recitation days," which afforded him an opportunity to perform for his fellow classmates. Rather than just recite, he would acquire cane and spectacles and "act out" the lesson. Teachers noted his fondness for "speaking pieces" and his quick memory.

John spent much of his boyhood reading and appeared to be gifted with a retentive mind. When about fourteen years old he first became acquainted with drama when he acquired two playbooks, Shakespeare's Richard the Third and The Spectre Bridegroom by W. T. Moncrieff, which he reportedly read and re-read and ardently discussed with his schoolmaster.

From adolescence John was strongly attracted to theatrical life, yet he regarded it as unattainable until he encountered another youth, James Woodhouse, who shared his passion. While both were apprenticed to Dr. Samuel Jackson, a pharmacist, Owens read and acted out countless plays. Young Woodhouse revealed that he had worked occasionally as a supernumerary, urging Owens to do likewise.
By 1840, at age seventeen, John had only been in a theatre twice: once with his father, an evening which he talked about for weeks, and once by himself. This latter visit, to Philadelphia's Arch St. theatre, was for a production of the spectacle *The Forty Thieves*, by R. B. Sheridan and George Colman. Owens' seat near the stage afforded him an all-too-realistic, frightening perception of the band of robbers. For years afterward he would recall the vivid power of suggestion which the theatre exerted over him on this early visit.

An event occurred in the late spring of 1840 which initiated his professional acting career: he saw a notice in the Philadelphia Public Ledger seeking 'supers' for a new spectacle to be staged by William E. Burton, the famous comedian, manager and author, at the new National Theatre. Burton, 38, a low comedian (one who specialized in playing people of low social station—broad, farcical roles more physical than verbal in their humor) had come to America from England in 1834, establishing himself as a popular favorite in Philadelphia. Known as a competitive manager who shunned the use of stars to build a capable repertory company, Burton stressed historical accuracy in his often lavishly mounted productions. His stock company was typical of those of 1840, with actors hired according to 'lines of business': light comedian (specializing in fine and prominent gentlemen); low comedian (playing people of low social station); walking gentlemen (youthful romantic players); leading ladies (which could be comic or serious and changed among members of the company more than did male categories); heavy lady and man (the villains); a walking lady or two (similar to walking gentlemen); juvenile lady and juvenile man; a *soubrette* (pert coquette who played maids or servants); and utility actors who appeared in any role for which the manager thought necessary (often apprentices). Supernumeraries needed outside of the company for a particular production were hired from those who responded to local advertisements.
Presenting himself to Burton without his parents' knowledge, Owens was hired as a "super" and thus, at age seventeen, began his stage career. Only when a newspaper listing revealed his name did he own up to acting; however, once they recovered from their initial surprise, the elder Owenses not only attended a performance, but encouraged his aspirations.  

During the summer of 1840 he joined a touring company organized on a commonwealth sharing plan (whereby all members of the company shared profits equally after expenses were deducted) to perform in small towns. However, their limited resources forced them to disband in Richmond, Virginia. One prominent doctor of Richmond, taking a liking to Owens, invited him to stay with him. Owens took advantage of the doctor's extensive library and used his help in writing a manuscript. Then, armed with green spectacles and magic lantern slides, he and an acquaintance toured adjacent villages lecturing on astronomy. "Professor Roberts" and his assistant, "Mr. Smith," managed to meet their expenses and enjoyed their brief touring among the villages.

In the following autumn Burton's New National Theatre in Philadelphia opened its 1840-41 season on September 1, and Owens once again signed on as a "super", and as an apprentice. At that time an actor was either born into the profession or sought apprenticeship and tutelage within an established company, usually training under one or two actors whose "line of business" he wished to learn. It is not known specifically under whom Owens trained, but it may well have been, at least by 1842, Burton himself.

During these early years of apprenticeship Owens experienced occasional on-stage embarrassments, such as that which occurred early in the season of 1840-41. He was given some few words to speak, but owing to excitement, spoke his third act lines in the first act. Striving to correct the error later in the performance with improvisation, he met with little success. Despairing, he
withdrew from the company. A few days later Burton accosted him on the street, reassuring him that one "must walk before you can run" and re-hired him, not as a supernumerary, but for speaking parts with a promise of advancement. This sort of encouragement Owens himself was to give to countless young actors in later years.

Throughout the 1840-41 season Owens played minor speaking roles in nearly all of the company's productions, many of which were grandly mounted (one included 200 supernumeraries). On May 13 Burton ended the season and closed the theatre for "new arrangements" prior to a summer tour.

Burton remained true to his word concerning advancement, for when he opened the National's 1841-42 season, he cast Owens in his first role of any importance. Ironically, it was that of a pharmacist's apprentice, young Peter Poultrie in *The Ocean Child*, by C. A. Somerset.

It was in this season that Owens had the opportunity to perform with one of the most famous actors of his day, Edwin Forrest. On October 19 he acted the role of "Goaler" [sic] in the premiere of J.H. Payne's domestic tragedy *Richelieu*, with Forrest in the leading role. He performed with him again on October 23 when Forrest played his famous role, Metamora, in the play of the same title by John Augustus Stone; Owens was "Goodenough, a Puritan Soldier." He performed a third time, in Forrest's appearance as Rolla in Sheridan's *Pizarro* playing "Gomez, a Spaniard." When Forrest performed *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, Owens acted with him yet again, as Second Gravedigger, and an unknown role. Forrest, whose "heroic" style combined great physical and vocal strength, was, at thirty-five, America's leading actor. An uninhibited performer who drew the adulation of multitudes of theatregoers, Forrest must certainly have impressed young Owens. Forrest's willingness to play a moment's emotion to its maximum was a trait reflected in Owens' later acting.
During this season Owens performed with a number of other major figures such as the famous tragedians J. W. Wallack and J. R. Scott, within the uniformly excellent stock company. But undoubtedly it was company manager William E. Burton who made the most significant impression upon the young actor. As a comic actor Burton exuded tremendous energy maintaining a wide repertory and performing in many different cities—practices Owens would later emulate. Owens was able to observe Burton performing many character roles which he himself would later make famous, comic roles that require precise, eccentric physical mannerisms and facial expression: Dr. Ollapod in George Colman's *The Poor Gentleman*; Dr. Pangloss in *Heir at Law*, also by Colman; Billy Lackaday in *Sweethearts and Wives*, by James Kenney; Tony Lumpkin in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*; Bob Acres in Sheridan's *The Rivals*; Timothy Toodles in his own version of *The Toodles*; Micawber in Brougham's adaptation of Dickens' *David Copperfield*; Henry Dove in J. B. Buckstone's *Married Life*; Mark Meddle in Dion Boucicault's *London Assurance* and the title role in Poole's in *Paul Pry*. Although these are all comic roles, they represent a widely diverse range of characters in age and type: from the young, likable Tony Lumpkin and Billy Lackaday to the garrulous old Ollapod and Paul Pry; from the erudite Dr. Pangloss to the obsequious Henry Dove; from the colloquial Toodles to the proper and articulate Micawber. Thus, Burton needed to utilize face, body, speech and intelligent line interpretation to portray successfully all of these roles, as would John Owens in later years. Perhaps his closest opportunity to observe Burton's acting that year came when he performed as Second Gravedigger to Burton's First, in the December production of *Hamlet* (with Forrest in the title role). In *Hamlet*, as in other productions, Burton interspersed his performances with comic songs—a type of embellishment Owens also used successfully later.
Burton's acting style was notable for its individuality, its peculiarly personal details, and its use of facial expression to elicit laughter. He invested "low comedy" roles, which were often little more than stereotypical buffoons or inept bumblerers not acceptable in polite society, with uniquely individualized characteristics. William Hazlitt said of his acting, "His farce is not caricature; his drollery oozes out of his features, and trickles down his face." And it was primarily for facial expression that Burton was noted. "We have seen Burton," says actor-manager Francis Wemyss, "keep an audience in roars of inextinguishable laughter, for minutes in succession, while an expression of ludicrous bewilderment, of blank confusion, or pompous inflation, settled upon his countenance." The drama critic for the New York Tribune observed that "His broad, fine, genial face is resplendent with joviality; upon its bland, smooth, inviting surface, all manner of playful folds and dancing dimples hold sweet communion, and across lips and chin and cheek beautiful little fancies lisp in and out."

Burton was a comedian of the old school—one who typically used his rotund figure, mobile features and genial grins to play directly to an audience and elicit laughter. The broad farce-comedies of Buckstone, Colman and Poole in which he performed were perfect vehicles for this style. Joseph Jefferson, who would achieve international renown later in the century as the epitome of the new comedians (leaner men who relied on comic timing and verbal dexterity,) recalls seeing Burton perform in his Autobiography:

Mr. Burton . . . had no equal in his day . . . [His performance] . . . was a comic picture so full of genius that it stamped itself indelibly on the mind . . . The great stupid face was blank. The heavy cheeks hung down stolidly on each side of a half-opened mouth; the large, expressionless eyes seemed to look hopelessly for some gleam of intelligence . . [as] . . the audience swayed with laughter.
Owens must have been impressed by Burton's widespread popularity and his constant efforts toward personal rapport with his following. If Burton starred in the closing farce on a bill, "every auditor would remain to the fall of the curtain, for the last glimpse of that face, the last word and action of that comedian who held such sway over the risibilities of mankind." In fact, it became "a matter of almost as much consequence to know what afterpiece was on the bill as what comedy. Often, indeed, the effect produced by Burton on some exceptionally droll part had become so widely known, that to see him in it was the prime object of a visit to the theatre."25

Burton's characters were not crudely drawn or haphazardly prepared. He studied his characters ceaselessly and was textually perfect in his lines. While many of his contemporaries relied on spur-of-the-moment improvising, Burton provided his audiences with meticulously crafted performances.26 He amplified his parts by introducing imaginative stage business and natural details of gesture and voice, such as a querulously raised eyebrow and ruralized twang as Paul Pry, which would render that character memorable, with a clearly marked difference. While, as his biographer, William Keese notes, Burton's native humor and physicalization were always more or less apparent, each role was "a distinct characterization. . . . Even in farcical abandon his delineations were shaped and governed by his artistic sense."27 Much of all of this would be said of Owens twenty years later.

As a manager Burton was highly competitive. Jefferson recalls that he never seemed "to understand the difference between competition and opposition . . . [He] must have had Irish blood in him."28 Yet his ambition and his relentless supervision of every detail of production must certainly have impressed young Owens.
Burton was noted for the excellence of his stock company and the handsome manner in which he mounted his plays, with "a beauty and minuteness of appointment unprecedented at the time." Both in Philadelphia and later in New York, Burton distinguished himself by relying upon, and developing public support for, an excellent stock company. When he did employ stars, they were true luminaries. William Wood, who successfully managed Philadelphia's Chestnut Street and Arch Street theatres, comments in his Recollections (1854) on the evils of the star system and notes, "To that intelligent manager, Mr. Burton, the first credit is due. . . . With talents of his own unequalled by few stars, he has preferred to ascertain whether the public could not be better attracted by a good stock company of combined talent."

Owens demonstrated a similar reliance upon good stock companies when he later managed theatres in Baltimore, New Orleans and Charleston, consistently refusing to import stars, or to be treated as a star himself, or any better than his supporting company, which he undertook great pains to have uniformly excellent. That Owens was privy to Burton's methods of management, and perhaps considered his protege, is revealed by Burton's taking Owens along and asking his opinion when purchasing the noted Chambers St. Theatre in New York in 1848.

Burton seemed to select Owens' roles with extraordinary care, seeking those which he knew would bring Owens the most success while also furthering his development as a comedian, and Owens proved a quick study. Given the script of The Heir at Law to practice dialect, Owens learned overnight the entire part of Zekiel Homespun, who appears in six scenes plus an epilogue, speaking a total of 128 lines. The part called for Owens to portray a poor-but-forthright young rustic who defends his sister's honor from a nouveau riche young lord, then re-appears in the final scene scampering excitedly over a lottery win of 20,000 pounds. In this robust role he earned "warm encomiums." When given the part
of Dr. Ollapod in _The Poor Gentleman_ on only twenty-four hours notice, Owens was letter perfect.\(^3^5\)

During the season of 1842–43, two years after he began his acting career, Owens received his first billing in newspapers. On October 28, the Philadelphia _Public Ledger_ carried the notice for Benjamin Thompson's adaptation of August Kotzebue's _The Stranger_, with Owens as Peter, the addled son of the steward to a count.\(^3^6\) Peter wanders through the court and a park, constantly forgetting his errands, yet babbling as he goes; it is he whom "the stranger" first meets, seeking directions and becoming only confused by Peter. Typical of the boy's prattling is his opening speech:

```
Pooh! pooh!—never tell me:--I'm a clever lad, for all father's crying out every minute, "Peter!" and "Stupid Peter!" But I say, Peter is not stupid, though father will always be so wise. First, I talk too much; then I talk too little; and, if I talk a bit to myself, he calls me a driveller. Now, I like best to talk to myself; and I don't laugh at myself, as other folks do . . . [and so on, for another twelve lines, before he is interrupted.]
```

Burton had shifted his company to "The People's Theatre, Arch St." under the management of C. S. Porter, where they performed a wide repertory. Owens continued to play supporting low comedy roles in farcical afterpieces and occasional comedies, most of which were repeated often during the season. At the end of winter, 1843, Burton provided Owens with his first real touring experience.\(^3^8\) The company traveled to Baltimore, Washington, and other southern cities, perhaps initiating the special regard in which Owens always held these cities, and touring in general. Returning to Philadelphia in March, 1843, Burton's company performed again at the The People's Theatre, Arch Street. On May 31 Owens received the first billing which can be considered noteworthy because of its position at the top of advertisements: "Mr. Owens, His First Appearance since his return from the South."\(^3^9\) He was featured as Triptolemus Middlewert, a Burgomaster, in the drama, _The Warrior King_ (author unknown).
Advertisements noted that Burton delayed his departure to New York to act the role of Adam Brock, a wealthy farmer, opposite Owens.\(^4^0\)

Having signed with Burton for another season, Owens began in August, 1843, touring with the company in northern cities after a two-night opening in Philadelphia (August 10 and 11).\(^4^1\) The company opened an engagement at Baltimore's Holliday St. Theatre on September 11; Owens continued to play second comedian (supporting) to Burton's lead comedian (the largest, featured comic role of a play) until mid-November, when the two quarreled and Burton returned to Philadelphia.\(^4^2\) During this period Owens played a variety of secondary comic roles, but is not listed for any featured role—perhaps a cause of the quarrel with Burton.

However, Burton announced a benefit for Owens on November 11, and provided him with three good roles: Sawney McFile in the romantic drama *The Robbers*, by J. H. Payne, Jack Cabbage in *Sudden Thoughts*, by T. E. Wilks, and Diggory in Moncrieff's *The Spectre Bridegroom*, which he had read so avidly at fourteen.\(^4^3\) Diggory is the gullible servant in the two-act farce who mistakes the romantic lead, Mr. Nicodemus, for his departed identical cousin, thus causing all to believe that a ghost is walking among them.\(^4^4\) Numerous references to Diggory's fondness for drink, along with his belief in the supernatural, provide much of the humor in the play. While cowering under a table or scurrying back from witnessing the burial (which he mistakenly hopes will stop the "visitations,"\(^\) Diggory must convey to the audience his confusion and fear. Flexible features and quivering gestures and movement no doubt contributed to this effect, as did the character's numerous asides to the audience (e.g., Nicodemus: 'I have had a long journey;' Diggory: 'Yeas, it be a good way, I dare say, from the other world.'\(^\))\(^4^5\)

Burton and his company returned to Philadelphia, and Owens remained at the Holliday Street Theatre under the management of Mary Maywood and Peter
Richings. The week of November 13-18 brought James Hackett, the noted Yankee impersonator, to the Holliday St. to perform such roles as Falstaff in *Henry IV* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*. The following week, Edwin Forrest was engaged as Othello, Macbeth and Metamora. While Owens is not listed in the cast of these, he is listed in each night's opening farce, in roles which Burton had played previously.46

In the last two months of the year Owens had the opportunity to work with two more outstanding stars with different lines of business, Joshua Silsbee and William Charles Macready.47 Silsbee performed November 29-December 2 in a number of Yankee leads, notably his Jonathan Ploughboy in *The Yankee Farmer* and his Lot Sap Sago in *Yankee Land*. Macready, the renowned English tragedian whose refined, classical style contrasted with Forrest's robust style, appeared the last week of December and Owens performed in each night's farce. Macready enacted Macbeth, Hamlet and Richelieu, providing classical interpretations of the same roles Owens had seen Forrest play. Perhaps from Macready he learned the necessity for careful, studied control in a performance. Thus, in two months' time, Owens gained exposure to, and experience with, four internationally known stars; he could not help but notice the tremendous popularity of Yankees Hackett and Silsbee.

The stage Yankee had by this time become firmly entrenched in American drama. This rural yet astute figure had first appeared as Jonathan in Royall Tyler's play *The Contrast* (1787), enacted by Thomas Wignell. This character is the servant of the handsome, sincere, patriot Colonel Manly, and assists him in his pursuit of his beloved, Maria. He is instructed in the art of intrigue (being fundamentally naive) by Jessamy, the servant of the foppish Dimple. Throughout, Jonathan asserts loudly certain values symbolic of young America; he is plainspeaking, sincere, loyal, unsophisticated, capable and clever.
Hackett had provided the character with tremendous impetus toward wide popular acceptance when he played Jonathan, essentially the same character as in Tyler's play, in Samuel Woodworth's *The Forest Rose* at the Park Theatre in New York in October, 1825.48 After this initial success, he performed a nearly identical role, that of Solomon Swap in his own play, *Jonathan in England*. In the late 1820's the role was picked up by George Handel Hill and Danforth Marble, followed soon after by Joshua Silsbee. Marble called his Yankee Sam Patch, and achieved fame in his own versions of the *Vermont Wool Dealer* and *The Yankee Pedlar*.49

Whether he was called Jonathan, Sam Patch, Solomon Swap, Jakey, or Mose, the stage Yankee was uniquely, indigenously American, not drawn from the stock list of current dramatic types, but "reproduced fundamentally from the very substance of American civilization."^50 Francis Hodge notes in *Yankee Theatre* that, "Cut out and fashioned as it was from the coarse fabric of American life, then modified, stretched, and roughly sewn together by hands still crudely unskilled, . . . Yankee theatre created an American, sometimes localized but often generalized, that caught the imagination both at home and abroad."^51

This coarse, exaggerated character soon ceased to bear any resemblance to his forebears. The Yankee "tended to be any low-comedy, American type, often of the servant stripe. He, however, slowly grew to ridiculous proportions, moving through a series of ludicrous situations that carry him to far parts of the globe; in the end he emerges as a generic folk figure capably illustrating cheeky traits of the American temper."^52

It was this cheekiness that caught the fancy of the American audience; regardless of the severity of the situation, the stage Yankee could always be counted upon to supply wry commentary and a shrewd means of extricating a hero or heroine from dire straits. In *The Forest Rose*, for instance, Jonathan assists
the rustic William in keeping his betrothed, Harriet, safe from the clutches of an English city slicker, Bellamy. When Bellamy pays Jonathan five guineas to help him abduct Harriet, Jonathan plays along only long enough to substitute Rose, the Negro maid, for Harriet. Then, he debates whether to keep Bellamy's bribe: "I don't calculate I feel exactly right about keeping this purse; and yet I believe I should feel still worse to give it back." He finally decides to "put that question to our debating society" back home in Taunton, Massachusetts.53

The Yankee was "awkward acting and simple looking, but not without a certain lively shrewdness and promise of great strength." When he spoke, "he assaulted and entertained the ear with a distinctive rural New England dialect . . . [which sounded like] the droning of bagpipes."54 He exhibited "the traits of honesty, independence, boastfulness, insolence, impudence and an inquisitiveness bordering on rudeness."55 As played by Hackett, the Yankee was "the American common man of the 1830's raised to the artificial, caricatured level of farce comedy."56

Forced to depend on hack writers and their poorly delineated characters, Hackett incorporated eccentric mannerisms to build a featured character. His Yankees were more satirical than amusing, but their infectious demeanor made spectators laugh along with them at the pretensions of city speculators, military democrats and rustic country types.57 Owens, watching Hackett's success with these roles, may well have been influenced later to select roles such as his famous Solon Shingle, who mocked the pretensions of city lawyers and social climbers.

He must also have been impressed by Silsbee, an ambitious actor whose funny face and comic figure were used to control audience reaction. Silsbee's nasal twang, monotone delivery, peculiarly pronounced dialects and expressions, and his absurdly cut costumes were all traits copied by Owens in later years. Likewise, he appears to have copied Silsbee's "mixture of stolid stupidity and
wide-awake cunning.\textsuperscript{58} In fact, an adjective frequently applied by reviewers to Silsbee's work—"unctuous"—was often used in describing Owens' acting later. But most importantly, Silsbee was known as "a keen and close observer, and a man of great goodness of heart, and mildness, and amiability of disposition"—phrases often used in describing John Owens at the height of his career.\textsuperscript{59} And Owens was perhaps sufficiently awed by Silsbee's record consecutive run—123 performances at London's Adelphi Theatre in \textit{The Forest Rose}—to perform in London himself, and to break Silsbee's American record for a long run, feats that he would accomplish twenty-two years later.\textsuperscript{60}

Owens received three offers for the season of 1844-45 for a position as first (featured, top billing) low comedian, one which according to his wife he had always desired but could not obtain under Burton.\textsuperscript{61} Moses Kimball of the Boston Museum, Edmund Peale of the Baltimore Museum, and William Shires of Shires' Garden in Cincinnati all sought to sign the young comedian. For a time he deliberated, considering length of seasons, wages and benefits, finally choosing the Baltimore Museum as the most lucrative. He signed with Peale for fourteen dollars a week with two benefits.

Located on the corner of Calvert and Baltimore Streets, the Museum was the home primarily of exhibitions of freaks, monstrosities and such curiosities as stuffed birds and a live bear, with a lecture hall-cum-theatre appended. Owens was decidedly unenthusiastic about the environment.\textsuperscript{62} On that little stage, however, appeared some of the greatest talent of the mid-nineteenth century: J. B. Booth, E. L. Davenport, James Murdoch, J. W. Wallack, Charlotte Cushman, Fanny Wallack, Julia Dean, Eliza Logan, Kate Ludlow, whose father Noah would soon hire him, and Mrs. H. Hunt, later Mrs. John Drew, for whom he would also work.
Owens' contract at the Museum began in September 1844, but he had played occasional roles there as early as April 23. The roles he performed during that spring and summer were first low comedy roles, so he may have "jumped ship" earlier than the contracted start of the season in order to play them. He expanded his repertory greatly, playing twenty-one new roles, nearly all requiring broad, eccentric physicalization, facial expression and voice, along with precise comic timing (for roles, see Appendix A). During this spring, the Baltimore Sun observed that "Mr. Owens, a pupil of Burton, is equal, if not superior to his tutor."64

On June 14 Peale announced a benefit for Owens at the Museum, and he was featured in the role of Oliver Dobbs in the J. B. Buckstone drama Agnes DeVere.65 The amount of receipts is unknown. During the short 1844 summer season (a practice common at the time of adding a few weeks to the season if there appeared to be the potential for additional box office revenue) Owens played twelve different roles, most of them new.66 Several were roles in domestic dramas, a departure from his previous experience with comedy and farce.

August 26, 1844, was billed as the "First Night of Owens," indicating that he was sufficiently popular to warrant advertising value.67 While the summer season had for Owens consisted primarily of one farce afterpiece after another, he now began to play in full-length comedies and dramas. Throughout September and October, he played sixteen new roles.68 Between October 22 and November 3 Owens is not listed in any performance; he may have taken a brief rest period, since he had performed continually since April. From his return November 4 until mid-April, 1845, he continued to expand his repertory, drawing sizable audiences and favorable notices in thirty-two new comic and farcical roles.69 One of the most frequently performed of these roles was that of Billy Lackaday in James Kenney's two-act comedy Sweethearts and Wives.70 Billy is a waiter to a widow
whose husband had taken him in as a foundling. His nose is constantly buried in a book, usually love stories, and he rarely answers when called for, only attending "if they perseveres: but sometimes, after once or twice, they come down, and that saves a deal of trouble." Billy is in love with Fanny, who is actually Eugenia, the disguised wife of Charles, who has yet to break off an engagement to Laura, who is actually in love with Sandford, Charles' old school friend. Further complications arise when old Curtis, the butler, who is actually Billy's long-lost father, falls in love with Mrs. Bell, the maid of the household who is aiding "Fanny" by pretending the girl is her niece. In the end, Billy settles for Susan, a servant girl who loves him. His character moves the plot along, spying on or overhearing various couples' conversations; the only humor he provides in the script results from his occasional malapropisms (he calls himself a "fondling,"*) and references to taking a drop now and then. Physical, facial and vocal mannerisms would have had to be overlaid to extract a great deal of laughter in performing this role.

During late April and May Owens had the privilege of performing with T. D. "Daddy" Rice, the original "Jim Crow." Regarded by some critics as a buffoon and by others as singularly hilarious, Rice did more than any other nineteenth century comedian to engender the shuffling, grinning Negro stereotype of minstrel shows. In a burlesque opera, Otello, with Rice in the leading role, Owens played Iago for ten nights. During the spring and summer of 1845 he incorporated thirty-three different roles into his repertory, most of them new. Nearly all were farce and light comedy characters that did little to challenge his acting ability. In a period of one and a half years, Owens had added to his repertory 113 new roles, some of which he would maintain and play on one day's notice throughout his professional life.
Early in September 1845 Burton invited Owens to rejoin his company. He was about to open a season managing Philadelphia's renowned Chestnut Street theatre, with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, English guest stars known for attracting fashionable audiences and for insisting upon historical accuracy. Burton offered Owens a position playing second comedy (one step below himself as top-billed first comedian) in some pieces, and first comedy in those in which Burton chose not to appear. Since many writers were producing formula plays, with basically the same general types of characters according to actors' lines of business (see page 6 above) in a typical stock company, Owens would probably have been assured of playing constantly, despite the bill. Their differences apparently healed, the pair signed a bargain, and Owens commenced there on September 16. While many of the Chestnut Street Theatre's farces and comedies are listed in the Philadelphia Ledger, neither Burton nor Owens is billed individually; this may have been part of the agreement. From occasional mentions it is clear Owens appeared in ten roles, all in comedies or farces, and most of them new.

During this engagement Owens received generous support from the Keans. Mrs. Kean remarked that she had never seen the role of Peter in The Stranger played as well, "it being ludicrously comic, yet neat, and withal artistically rendered." Encouraged by the Keans' praise, Owens undertook the first star engagement of his career in December at the Baltimore Museum for one week only, at a salary of $15 per week. The Baltimore Sun recorded on December 9 that "Mr. Owens, the popular comedian will of course attract crowded audiences," and on December 10 that he was "drawing fine houses." He played two of his best-known characters each night: William Thompson in Caroline Boaden's farce The Two Thompsons and Toby Tramp in W. B. Bernard's farce The Mummy. Toby Tramp is an actor whose success is questionable; his debut "was tremendous—before I reached the great scenes my acting was so affecting, half the people were
obliged to go out. A friend talks him into enacting a mummy in order to win the heart of a girl whose father collects curiosities. At the father's museum, Toby is afforded recurring but brief moments, while others are out of the room, to peek out of his coffin and issue asides to the audience. Perhaps his funniest moment occurs after his own father, Old Tramp, shows up with a real mummy (having answered the collector's newspaper notice,) and brandy is administered to both mummies to try and bring them to life. Toby "comes alive" by first lifting one leg slowly, then the other, then rising "in an attitude of great dignity," intoning, "Homage to Pharaoh!" Certainly a quick sense of timing was required for his darting in and out of his confinement, as well as flexible features as he peered over the edge before emerging. He also had to be able to convey the bombast of a middling actor, who struts and frets his hour upon the stage (his thespian ambition even motivates him, on one of his forays from his coffin, to grab a servant girl and play the Lady Anne-Richard coffin scene from Richard III in front of it.) The role must have been a popular one, for on December 8 he drew a $70.50 house and for his benefit on December 13 he received $124.62. These figures compare quite favorably to benefits in the same house and the same year of $30 for Mr. and Mrs. Wallack and J. B. Booth combined, and of $70 for John Brougham.

In January, 1846, the company, under Burton's management, traveled to Baltimore's Front Street Theatre, performing for one month, rather unprofitably. Owens' roles were once again those he had perfected during the previous season. His only new roles were the Gravedigger in Hamlet and Flutter in Hannah Cowley's The Belle's Stratagem. His benefit on the closing night, February 14, was marred by his unsuccessful attempt to perform the title role in the fifth act of Richard III. The audience reacted to his serious portrayal with roars of laughter, interpreting his mannerisms of deformity as ludicrous caricature. ('We thought the roof of the house would come off during the dying scene,' said the
Called before the curtain afterward, Owens acknowledged his failure and promised never to do the scene again. Although he later did, and often, it was always billed as a burlesque of Richard, and never failed to bring laughter.84

On February 18 Owens left Burton, apparently with his assent, and opened to good reviews at the Baltimore Museum, playing there steadily until July 18.85 He continued in roles acquired during the previous two years, adding new ones, all leading roles in comedies and farces. These ranged from hunch-backs and brewers in lesser-known plays to such classic roles as Dromio of Syracuse in The Comedy of Errors and Tony Lumpkin in Goldsmith’s She Stoops to Conquer. Nearly all of these roles, like those he played the previous few seasons, were comic characters requiring some dialect, flexible features, agile physicalization and a dextrous tongue to deliver witticisms or rustic philosophy. Few, however, approached realistic figures or differed from a general type.

During this season Owens attracted a sizable popular following, which the Baltimore Sun notes periodically. The Golden Farmer, a melodrama by Benjamin Webster, was “the most successful of all pieces played at the Museum. It is to be acted in consequence of the great disappointment of hundreds who were crowded out of the Museum when last played.”86 As Jemmy Twitcher in that play Owens created a rustic Yankee modeled after Hackett’s Jonathan and Solomon Swap. The piece proved extremely popular, as did a sequel, Jemmy Twitcher in France. Owens received a successful benefit on July 18, appearing in three roles, including his burlesque of the fifth act of Richard III.87

In the fall of 1846 Owens’ career took a new turn when he accepted the challenge of facing new audiences in another part of the country. Perhaps recalling his earlier tour of the South, or feeling he needed the challenge of different roles and new audiences, he accepted a contract with Noah Ludlow and
appear in New Orleans at the St. Charles Theatre as first low comedian, with a "moderate salary" and two benefits. 88

New Orleans was in 1846 a thriving theatrical center with numerous successful houses, foremost among which were Ludlow and Smith's St. Charles and Thomas Placide's Varieties. In fact, these three men determined theatrical policy in general in the city, gleaned from practical experience and strict economy. Competition was keen among the city's theatres, and audiences maintained a reputation for elegance and intelligence. While critics were more often kind than unkind, they were quick to denounce (sometimes savagely) shoddiness and clearly flawed performances. Seasons at the St. Charles and the Varieties prior to the Civil War were generally financially successful, but neither theatre received unstinting critical acclaim. 89

Ludlow and Smith managed a stock company of moderate talent, headed by a few actors and actresses of merit, with the usual lines of business portrayed. 90 They were known for getting their money's worth from each actor; Joseph Jefferson in 1842, for instance, was expected to perform as a super, for what he called a "charity salary" of $6 a week, the following: dance, sing, grind colors in the paint room, and make himself "generally useful." 91 Salaries paid to stock company members were small, although top members were rumored to make as high as $175 a week. 92

Ludlow and Smith did provide ample benefits, however, and a $1000 house was not uncommon; Macready in 1848 drew $1,304.75 at the St. Charles. 93 Company members who had achieved clear public popularity during the season were accorded benefits during the last several weeks of performances. But popularity was not automatically assured. On many occasions a house was all but empty. Perhaps the best test of a good house was the application by newspapers of the terms "fashionable" or "elegant." This meant that ladies—whose husbands
had attended opening night to preview the suitability of a play—were attending in large numbers, a sure sign of success on the part of both management and performers.\textsuperscript{94} One factor in John Owens' favor was the marked preference by New Orleans audiences for short, light pieces; three or four light farces or comedies, interspersed with dancing and music (olio acts), were preferred over sitting through one five-act play.\textsuperscript{95}

After a brief tour of Mississippi River towns Owens made his debut in New Orleans on November 21, 1846, as Sampson Low in the farce The Windmill (author unknown). Ludlow and Smith remember him as showing exceptional promise and audiences greeted him with 'hearty approbation;' he was "successful from the start."	extsuperscript{96} Mrs. Owens recalls that, "From that time until his last appearance in the dear old city, he was their favorite and beloved comedian."\textsuperscript{97} In fact, New Orleans came to lionize him as did no other city; he always regarded the Crescent City as his second home, after Baltimore.

Not only were the productions of the St. Charles regarded as excellent, but also those of its amateur associate, The Louisiana Histrionic Association, which combined amateurs and professionals for summer productions. It was with this latter group that Owens began his long association and friendship with Fred N. Thayer, later to become, along with Owens, a member of playwright-manager Dion Boucicault's company at the Gaiety (New Orleans).\textsuperscript{98}

During the 1846-47 season, as Owens continued to expand his repertory at the St. Charles, he once again had exposure to a number of the major theatrical figures of his day. James Wallack, a comedian who would gain fame in the 1850's and 60's as an astute manager of New York theaters, performed there from November through January;\textsuperscript{99} Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean appeared in March;\textsuperscript{100} James Murdoch, a tragedian ranked by Ludlow at mid-century as fourth among major actors (after Booth, Forrest and Cushman) played in April.\textsuperscript{101} In addition,
Owens observed the acting of Ludlow and Smith, the latter acting far more frequently that the former.

But Owens was perhaps most affected by the success in December of Yankee Dan Marble. By 1846, Marble had at age 36 attracted large crowds throughout the United States and in Great Britain. More western than New England, his Yankee was a frontier version of Jonathan (see above); yet Marble endowed him with characteristics readily recognizable anywhere. Famous for his Jonathan Ploughboy (The Forest Rose), Solomon Swap (Jonathan in England) and Sam Patch (in various works by his own hand), Marble was able to adapt his characters' traits to suit any locale in which he was performing; he was a "facile and clever manipulator of regional dialects and eccentricities," an ability later emulated by Owens. As literary works the plays Marble selected were empty frameworks for his own brilliant portraits. Perhaps Owens noticed the way in which a strong performer could single-handedly salvage a weak script—something he often did himself later. He must also have admired Marble's ability to elicit tremendous audience response with exaggerated comic business, such as pulling a fowl to pieces with his teeth, limb by limb, without flinching.

Marble's acting could also be controlled when necessary. Hodge believes that "His speech and action were characterized by a lazy drawl whose coolness and deliberate quality projected the cunning, conceited, selfish characters of his Yankees. . . . A liking for serious parts . . . urged Marble to examine his characters in depth, with the results that scenes of pathos and emotion stood in sharp contrast to those of his usual sure-fire comedy." Owens must have observed Marble's skills closely, for this same control and ability to convey pathos became essential elements of his later acting style.

And certainly Owens must have been impressed by Marble's financial success. Sol Smith alone had paid him $40,000 over a ten-year period (and Marble's
estate when he died in 1849 totaled $25,000). Perhaps his observation of Marble's economic situation made Owens aware of the potential of his own abilities to reap similar rewards.

Owens performed leading comic roles this season, again balancing farcical low comedy with classic comic characters such as Launcelot in The Merchant of Venice and Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing. Both of these roles presented Owens with a challenge: to provide low comic relief in well-known classic comedies. Dogberry, for example, must blunder about with hiccups and lantern in stubborn "vigilance" [vigilance], mingling disjointed directions to his deputies with garrulous philosophizing. While no reviews exist for these specific performances, Owens' undertaking of Shakespeare's Fools demonstrates skills beyond those needed to portray the broadly-sketched bumpkins in the farces of the day. For the majority of the season, he repeated previous roles, but also added eighteen new ones, almost all of which were in farces.

On January 24, 1847, an Owens benefit promised "an attractive bill": Catherine and Petruchio [a cutting from Taming of the Shrew], he as Grumio, and the farces, Did You Ever Send Your Wife to Lafayette?, Sea Fright, and Crimson Crimes. The New Orleans Times-Picayune noted prophetically that "Mr. Owens is a very talented actor, possessing a great deal of humor, and he bids fair, with study and attention to his business, to rise to an enviable position." Mrs. Owens recalls a second benefit held for Owens on April 1 as being a "bumper benefit." By spring, however, a yellow fever epidemic swept the city, curtailing theatre attendance significantly. It was primarily for this reason that Owens ended the season early. On May 3 he sailed for England to visit relatives and "recall childhood remembrances."

According to Sol Smith, the season of 1846-47 in New Orleans "witnessed a continuation of the prosperity which had now become an assured fact. Business
not only came up to paying point, but went considerably beyond it. This season was so prosperous . . . that it was decided to refit and remodel the St. Charles at [a cost of] $16,000.\textsuperscript{110} Owens, having added eighteen roles to his repertory, two successful benefits to his career, and hundreds of theatregoers to his popular following, must certainly have considered this New Orleans season a prosperous one as well.

Returning to Baltimore from England in September, Owens accepted a well-paying starring engagement at the Museum under new managers Hamm [first name unknown] and Joshua Silsbee.\textsuperscript{111} The Museum had been thoroughly renovated and enlarged, including cushioned seats, private boxes, full parquette and gallery, and new scenery by the noted scenic artist Charles S. Getz (upon whom Owens would later rely when managing). Markedly increased Baltimore audiences crowded into the new theatre.\textsuperscript{112}

Audiences warmly greeted Owens' return when he opened on September 15, 1847, in the appropriately titled drama, Home Again, in which he received top billing in the role of Ben Bradshaw.\textsuperscript{113} On October 5, 1847, Owens played his first major role in a full-length comedy, that of Paul Pry, the title role in John Poole's comedy.\textsuperscript{114} The play itself is a chronicle of complications complete with confused identities, men hidden in ladies' closets, and secret love letters. Pry is the play's chief device for moving the plot along, as he has made a profession of eavesdropping, lurking, and intruding into everyone's lives. As the play's tavernkeeper observes,

He is one of those idle, meddling fellows, who, having no employment themselves, are perpetually interfering in other people's affairs. . . . He makes no scruple to question you respecting your most private concerns. Then he will weary you to death with a long story about a cramp in his leg, or the loss of a sleeve button, or some such idle matter. . . . to the annoyance of every family in the village.\textsuperscript{115}
Among his accomplishments are the following: the observation and pursuit of a young lady's paramour, much to her chagrin; the questioning of a mysterious houseguest until he reveals who the man actually is; and--the climactic moment of the play--spending a half-hour retrieving a packet of incriminating letters which an odious aunt had thrown down a dry well.

Pry, while detested by the other characters, speaks constantly in asides to the audience, letting them in on his machinations. As with many of Owens' roles, he utilized a device of repetition of a comic bit or phrase already in the script to elicit laughter; in this case the frequent blurt ing out of "I hope I don't intrude" after he has already blundered into someone's home. At the end of the play, it is Pry who addresses the audience directly to deliver the play's moral and ask them to "overlook the many faults of Paul Pry." 116

The physicalization of the role required Owens to contort himself into awkward positions, such as peering through an extremely tiny keyhole, often resulting in his being surprised and then having to cover for his awkward position. He also expounds at length to anyone who will listen about his ailments, demonstrating various positions (e.g., rheumatism that attacked his knees and elbows: "I was in this position for three weeks, . . . looking exactly like a goose, ready trussed for roasting."). 117 The characterization called for him to be constantly in motion, coming and going to retrieve objects he has left in people's houses; one can imagine the laughter resulting from his final ejection from one home, only to re-appear a moment later to get an umbrella he had left behind. Comic timing must have been crucial in these lengthy exits, to endear Pry, and Owens, to audiences.

During the next several weeks Owens repeated Paul Pry, along with roles from farces and comedies already in his repertory, drawing excellent notices. The Baltimore Sun reports that "Mr. John Owens is playing with great success . . .
and is said to have improved by his visit to Europe. The Museum continues to be well-attended, and Mr. Owens, with the excellent company are nightly greeted by crowded audiences. But with a good stock company and the laughter-provoking Owens, it could not be otherwise. Even though these audiences were simultaneously being courted by the nearby Holliday Street Theatre featuring Edwin Forrest, public attendance and response proved so favorable that Hamm and Silsbee offered Owens inducements to remain longer than his initial contract stipulated. Consequently, he signed a season-long agreement and moved his parents to Baltimore from Philadelphia.

By the time the Baltimore Museum season ended on April 29, 1848, Owens had added forty-six new roles to his ever-growing repertory. Nearly all were farcical characters which afforded him a chance to try out comic business and experiment with mannerisms, facial expressions and voices. Many were rustics (of all ages) whose lack of formal education was coupled with practical folk knowledge, and who poked fun at the affectations of high society.

An examination of several of these roles reveals the demands they made upon Owens. Representative of the farces in which he was currently playing are State Secrets (author unknown), My Fellow Clerk, by John Oxenford, and How to Settle Accounts with Your Washerwoman, by J.S. Coyne. In the first, his role of Gregory Thimblewell, the tailor of Tamworth Town, required him to drunkenly spout philosophy in the local tavern while three different men bargained with him for various articles of clothing he wore; ostensibly they contained secret papers in the lining. From his practical wisdom he offered such aphorisms as: 'Try honest dealings and open-heartedness and sincerity—be quick to serve a friend and slow to injure him—and then, if that doesn't keep the heart light, depend upon it nothing in this world will;' 'Being envious of others wouldn't make me any happier—but only give me a chance of bettering myself.' In the end, he sells
the clothing to the three, but proves shrewder than they, having found the papers and sent them off to the authorities via his son (whose marriage he arranges in the meanwhile with the daughter of the tavernkeeper). Thus, the character had to be drunken and yet clear-headed, compliant and yet capable of thwarting the ambition of others. His frequently-delivered homilies were no doubt aimed directly at the audience, who were laughing at his drunken attempts to walk and to avoid his wife's efforts at dragging him home.

My Fellow Clerk presents the conflicts between two young law clerks, Victim, whom Owens first played in 1843, is the scapegoat for the intrigues and lies of the other, Tactic, the role he played steadily after 1847. Tactic, arrested for public disorderliness, gives Victim's name as his own to the magistrate; even though both men arrive late for work, Tactic talks the boss into a loan while Victim is chastised. The role of Tactic required a certain slyness, but could not lapse into cunning that would alienate the audience. He tells them (and Victim): 'You see, . . . there are two sorts of excuses. One merely helps you out of a scrape; the other puts you in a better situation than if said scrape had never happened. . . . It requires quick and brilliant imagination, a ready flow of eloquence, a prepossessing ease of address.' The character must be likable enough that when, in the final scene, he is exposed for all his duplicity, the audience still chuckles with him instead of deriding him.

In How to Settle Accounts Owens played Mr. Whittington Widgetts, a tailor who pretends to be more fashionable than he is by wearing his customers' clothes. He constantly shares his thoughts with the audience, as when a much sought-after ballet dancer, "the adorable Ma'am Cheri Bounce," accepts his dinner invitation: "Ohl Widgetts, you lucky rascal to have the happiness of a private and confidential supper with that magnificent girl, whose image has never left my mind since the evening I danced with her at the Casino." When Mary
White, his laundress who is in love with him, counters his rejection by faking her suicide in his shop by using a dressmaker's dummy, he frantically runs about the shop, wild-eyed and waving his arms, in fear of being found responsible (his clerk mistakenly destroyed the "suicide note.") Further complications result from Mary's dressing up as a male detective: Widgetts disguises himself as a waiter, who is then forced to serve dinner to his beloved Cheri and the "detective." The role required quick timing, the ability to convey love's rapture as well as frantic fear, and an engaging, likable manner that would endear him to the audience.

For these roles, and for others which he repeated, one must take Mrs. Owens' word that they were well-received; newspapers of the season were too full of news about the Mexican War to include reviews of dramatic productions. However, the Baltimore Sun notes Silsbee's portrayal at the Museum in November, 1847, of a number of Yankee roles. Owens must certainly have admired the way in which Silsbee enacted Deuteronomy Dutiful in The Wool Pedlar [sic], Solomon Swap in Hackett's Jonathan in England (with Owens as Andrew Bang), and Solon Shingle in J. S. Jones' The People's Lawyer, the role for which Owens would become most noted.126

Owens' own career as a Yankee performer gained momentum at the close of the 1847-48 Museum season. Having played two very successful benefits (December 18 and March 25), and having begun to attract a personal following of crowded houses--"Owens houses," as reviewers began to call them—he was now in a position to return any favors he owed to William Burton. Burton, on the verge of bankruptcy, approached him about putting together in Philadelphia a cast which would enact local color sketches and star Owens as Jakey, a rural bumpkin turned city firemen—a role which served as the foundation for the later, more famous Mose the fireman.127
Opening on April 25, Burton's *A Glance at Philadelphia*, with Owens as the Jonathan-like Jakey, played for thirty-three performances at the Arch Street Theatre, creating "such a furore that the theatre was packed nightly—the sidewalks impassable long before the doors were open." After a six-week run in Philadelphia, Burton took the piece to the Front Street Theatre in Baltimore, where it met with the same enthusiastic reception and crowded houses. Returning to Philadelphia, the company presented a variation of the so-successful original, called *Jakey's Marriage with Lize*, which ran for two weeks in July.

Mrs. Owens recalls that "The prosperous result of this production (bringing thousands of dollars into Burton's treasury) not only placed Mr. Owens favorably before the public as a stellar attraction, but it supplied to Mr. Burton . . . the means to establish himself at the afterward highly successful and historic Chambers Street Theatre, in New York." In fact, Burton recognized this debt by the presentation to Owens of a massive silver vase inscribed: "Presented by William E. Burton to John E. Owens: As a memorial of his unprecedented popularity in the character of Jakey, in the local drama of 'A Glance at Philadelphia,' at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, 1848."

A notable aspect of Owens' performance as Jakey was its verisimilitude, "so exactly like the 'fire boy,' seen then, in everyday life, that it did not seem at all like acting. It was perfect as a type of the volunteer fireman of that period; and as artistically true to nature in every detail, as the most elaborated Shakespearean part he ever played," notes his wife. This realism proved to be a consistent attribute of Owens' acting style throughout his career. He painstakingly observed details of eccentric characters in real life and practiced them arduously. His hilarity lay in refined selection of a few quirks of character or physical mannerisms, and their repetition; he shunned the broad, overdone caricatures for which even his mentor was criticized. Burton, James Murdoch
recalled, *winked his eye at the audience without reserve, and wriggled and
grimaced in order to give full force to an objectionable expression, rolling the
precious morsel under his tongue, and actually smacking his lips, as it were, with
unction at a questionable joke, until what the author may have barely touched
with the pencil of conceit the coarseness of the actor painted with a copious
daubing of unmistakable grossness.* From such extremes Owens seems to have
studiously refrained.

By age 25, Owens was thus an established actor with a developing popular
following. He had played 254 different roles, many of them repeatedly. Like
Burton, he performed incessantly, often acting six evenings a week (with one or
two matinees) in the main play and a farce afterpiece. He had apprenticed with,
witnessed, and acted alongside many of the great comedians, tragedians and
managers of his time. He had received star billing in Baltimore and Philadelphia,
and in the process (with his tremendously successful Jakey,) had salvaged the
fortunes of the man under whose aegis he had begun his career. What remained
now for Owens was a decision faced by any successful figure of his day: whether
to remain in one city in which he was popular and manage, or to widen his
experience and popular following by touring widely in uncertain territory. Given
the zeal with which Owens seemed to enter any theatrical enterprise, it is not
surprising that he chose in the next phase of his career to do both.
2. Early Acting and Management Experiences

(1848 - 1856)

The second phase of John Owens' Career began in 1848 after a summer vacation in New England (which included a brief engagement in Philadelphia in July.) He then returned to Baltimore and re-signed with Hamm and Silsbee for a star engagement at his same $15 per week, which included, however, four benefits. Three were scheduled in the first month (September 16, 18 and 30), and all were well-attended. For two months, he played almost entirely roles he had repeated in previous seasons (in fact, he added only five new roles). Perhaps seeking an opportunity to continue widening his repertory, or perhaps after having observed Silsbee's success, Owens decided that fall to try his hand at management. In November he 'retired from' his contract and rented the small Howard Athenaeum on the corner of Charles and Baltimore Streets, announcing that he would shortly open it with "a strong and efficient company."^2

When the Howard Athenaeum, "Proprietor-Mr. J. E. Owens," opened on November 22, the Sun noted that "he has quite a good stock company," headed by himself. Mrs. Owens states that an important motivation in this initial departure by her future husband into the field of management was the desire to assemble a strong company, perhaps one that could rival that of his mentor, Burton. Wise choice of roles for everyone (he of course continued acting the leading comic roles) and good word-of-mouth advertising paid off, for "the public responded to the undertaking by cramming the house nightly."^4

Owens interspersed established roles with a good number of new ones, many of which were broadly comic caricatures that relied heavily on his ability to use his somewhat squat body and flexible features to elicit laughter, since the scripts
themselves were weak. Typical was his portrayal this season of Dr. Ollapod in Colman's *The Poor Gentleman*. The play itself is a moralistic treatment of true love thwarted by arranged marriages, and the obligations of daughters to their fathers. The title character is that of an honorable but penniless war hero who, along with his beautiful daughter, is staying at a rural boardinghouse. The play's meagre humor results from the attempts of young Stephen Harrowby, son of the boardinghouse owner, to practice military drills (he dynamites pigsties, employs farm implements for mock-battles, etc.) and from the pompous didacticism of Dr. Ollapod, an apothecary-turned-militiaman who meddles in everyone's lives and loves, while he pursues a spinster aunt in the process. (Owens had played young Stephen in 1845 to Burton's Ollapod.)

Ollapod only appears five times in the play, once in each act, but he monopolizes the action while he is on. Like Paul Pry, the character must be chased off by irritated people, and Colman provided similar lengthy exits. At one point Sir Charles, the romantic hero, is pushing a babbling Ollapod out the door:

`Ollapod. Galen forbid! 'Tis enough to kill every customer I have in the parish. Then we'll throw in the bark. By the bye, talking of bark, Sir Charles, that Juno of yours is the prettiest pointer bitch—(Alternately going and returning) I do [fly], Sir Charles. A double-barrelled gun!—I fly!—The bark—I'm going!—Juno, the bitch!—A narcotic—`

Like Paul Pry, Ollapod also repeats specific phrases for humor; in this case it is 'Thank you, good sir—I owe you one' whenever he has been told a joke, and 'Hel hel! hel!—Do you take?' after he has told one himself. Ollapod relates occasionally to the audience, but not with the frequency of Owens' other roles, and it must have been only the engaging force of Owens' personality, physicalization, and expressions that caused laughter. Evidence perhaps of Owens' initial dissatisfaction with this role is the fact that he alternated it with ten new parts in five weeks. However, he played these newer roles only during this season and kept Ollapod in his repertory for the rest of his career, apparently pleasing audiences with it consistently.
At the Athenaeum, Owens provided audiences with the same sort of fare they had been used to: farces and light comedies performed by a strong stock company. He added occasional extravaganzas and "thrilling dramas" with periodical special attractions, such as the Grand Ethiopian Concert and the Moravian Singers "in a Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concert." In fact, throughout his career as a manager he would often integrate musical performers with his dramatic offerings. Admission at the Athenaeum was 25$, with parquette seats 12 1/2$ extra. Doors opened at 6:00 P.M. and the curtain rose at "7 1/2 o'clock." Frequent mentions in the *Sun* were favorable, such as that of December 27, 1848: "A good bill is presented at this popular establishment tonight." Although the *Sun* did not provide formal reviews of theatrical events, numerous favorable comments appeared, unsolicited and separate from advertising billings.

The bright but brief season at the Athenaeum closed on January 6, 1849, with a successful Owens benefit. On the same day Joshua Silsbee indicated a desire to relinquish his share of the Museum, an important turning point for Owens, since Hamm's interest was monetary only, "he being without expertise in theatrical affairs." As manager and half owner of the Museum, Owens would have total control over the acting and mounting of all productions. He did not act for nearly two months, investing all his energies instead in production elements.

His activities included re-decorating the saloon (lobby and bar area downstairs) and ordering new scenery created by the Museum's capable artist, Charles Getz. Owens engaged for the Museum a number of well-known figures who were not yet stars but would become so in the following decade: Mrs. D. P. Bowers, Julia Dean, James Murdoch, and Mr. and Mrs. George C. Howard and their daughter "Little Cordelia" Howard. Owens acted with these performers occasionally, choosing to feature them in the main pieces and perform
himself in either supporting roles in these, or in the farce afterpieces. He recalled that 'prosperity smiled on this enterprise;' full houses greeted his 'brilliant' performers and stock company.¹¹

Owens' methods of management were probably typical of those in practice at the time. Rehearsal periods were of short duration; if the leading players and most members of the stock company were at least relatively familiar with the play, a single run-through prior to performance was conducted. Revivals had two to three rehearsals at the beginning of each season (Owens kept many pieces alive for all of his Museum seasons, 1849-52). Rehearsals averaged two hours for a typical four-hour performance (including, usually, two main pieces, a farce afterpiece, and olio performers between acts.) Bills were changed nightly, although short runs of three to four nights of a particularly popular play were not uncommon.¹²

While the star system was not yet the menace it became later in the century, Owens still preferred to avoid contracting 'one-horse' players—those who had a limited range and who depended upon a few roles for which they had achieved renown. Ironically, Owens would in the latter part of his career fit this description. As manager, he would often encourage members of his company to step into new challenging roles. Except for rare special occasions requiring the hiring of extra actors for a show, he used only his repertory company members, in fairly even rotation—a casting dilemma for a manager who presented approximately 150 different plays in a single season. His companies consisted of performers with lines of business standard for that period.¹³

Owens strongly encouraged to company members to expand their range of roles and often provided opportunities for fledgling actors, just as Burton had encouraged his early efforts. Once while Owens was managing in Baltimore, a stagestruck apprentice silversmith named A. D. Hoyt came to him, wanting to try
his hand at acting. He was given a chance to play in *The Dead Shot* but, nearly petrified by stage fright, he missed his entrance cue. The unfortunate novice was too frightened to move, and even failed to heed the whispered promptings of the company's soubrette, 'until she stealthily stuck a pin in him, and thereby caused a reaction.' Still, Owens encouraged the young man to continue as an actor and, under his guidance, in three months' time Hoyt (under the stage name Dolly Davenport) was playing juvenile leads quite passably.

However, if Owens discerned that an applicant was merely awed by the glitter of stage lights, he forced him into a situation which would quickly rid him of his theatrical aspirations. One such aspirant persistently sought a debut on the Museum stage. He plied Owens with sycophantic praise, then asserted, "I am a private play-actor myself, and I want you to hire me, so as I can ketch on to your ways, and astonish the folks when I go back home." Repeated attempts by Owens to dissuade the budding star failed, so he rehearsed the man and thrust him on stage (disregarding his sudden "wait!") "Not a syllable did he utter;" Owens had to speak the man's lines for him. His thespian ambitions thus tried by fire, the man never returned.

Would-be playwrights also frequently besieged Owens at the Museum, hoping to see their works come to life. One young Baltimore lawyer brought a "wretched" piece of work to him entitled *Gammon and Backgammon*. Patiently Owens read the manuscript and realized that alterations were indispensable, but in his generosity and desire to encourage new talent, he worked at them himself to try and make the play come off:

A strong cast, through rehearsals, and the concentrated efforts of the dramatis personae resulted in *Gammon and Backgammon* being worked up into a success so far beyond its merits that everyone thought the author would be delighted. On the contrary, when called before the curtain, ... he denounced Mr. Owens and the company for mutilation of, and general injustice to, his play. The audience received these remarks in silence, but the moment he concluded called loudly for "Owens!!"
who immediately appeared and quietly stated, that "the piece had received far better treatment from himself and the company than it deserved. He had omitted the marriage scene, and expurgated much coarse dialogue, thereby rendering the play admissible for representation. Those who desired to satisfy themselves on these points could do so by inspecting the original manuscript at the Box Office on the morrow." Owens was interrupted throughout by applause, and some patrons compared the two scripts later, commending him for his revisions and his treatment of the playwright.

Owens was also quick to praise a job well done or a role well performed. He took pains to seek out company members, especially younger ones, and commend them for the support which they had given him as manager and as actor. Mrs. Owens recalls that, "They valued his praise, for he was equally quick to detect incompetence or carelessness, and did not hesitate to speak forcibly of these shortcomings." Owens' only acting during the first two months of his tenure at the Museum took place in Philadelphia, in two brief star engagements at the Athenaeum and National Museum. On February 26 he returned to the stage of his Baltimore Museum and performed steadily for three weeks in old and new roles. One new play was a further Jakey adventure, Jakey's Visit to California, ("written expressly for Mr. Owens," by W. Chapman,) which proved as popular as its forebears. He closed this engagement with what the Baltimore Sun calls a "successful" benefit on March 10.

While Owens occasionally introduced serious roles into his repertory that spring, he repeated his comic roles far more frequently, and performed them almost exclusively when touring for short periods outside of Baltimore. For example, when he performed for William Burton at his Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia in March, he performed in Crimson Crimes, A Glance at Philadelphia, The New Footman, and Jakey's Visit to California, all farces or local color comedies.
In March and April Owens brought to the Museum Mrs. D. P. Bowers and Julia Dean, two popular leading ladies who had established reputations in New York and Philadelphia. He acted with them in a number of pieces, usually in standard farcical roles. Perhaps recalling his earlier experiences with James Murdoch, he contracted the tragedian to perform Shakespearean roles in late April during which he himself performed First Gravedigger to Murdoch's Hamlet, and First Witch to Murdoch's Macbeth. On April 30, 1849, he hired the popular stars of emerging melodrama, Mr. and Mrs. George C. Howard, for an engagement which lasted through May 24. During this time Owens enacted a number of new roles and satirized the raging popularity of P. T. Barnum's latest discovery, Jenny Lind, by creating Baron Swigitoff Beery in an "operatic bagatelle" entitled Jenny Lind; or, The Sweedish Nightingale [sic], with the Howards.

Somehow during this time of acting and managing Owens found time to get married. On April 19, 1849, after a three-year engagement, Owens married Mary C. Stevens, the daughter of an established Baltimore merchant, John G. Stevens. The ceremony at Mount Calvary Church by Rev. Alfred Miller was performed without the knowledge of her disapproving father—he being "a member of the primitive Methodist church, and holding prejudices against a profession of which he really knew nothing." It was only through the intervention of an intimate friend, Col. George P. Kane, in whom Mr. Stevens placed great trust, that the couple was reconciled to her father. Kane congratulated the elder Stevens, assuring him that "had I daughters, I would be proud if they were so fortunate in the selection of a husband. I know Owens and his reputation, well; he is a man who combines talent with a noble nature and moral integrity." So persuaded, Stevens grew to accept, then like, then become attached to his son-in-law. In fact, his dying words were "a loving call for my son, John E. Owens."
Mary Stevens Owens, a smallish and rather formal woman, had chosen the Quaker faith, a sect which shunned the theatre. However, her love for John and her faith in him allowed her to overcome her reservations (although she remained a Quaker until her death) and accompany him on most of his later tours. She encouraged him, hosted his acquaintances, and treasured his comic antics; her Memories abounds with cheerful anecdotes and profuse praise for his developing talent as an actor and manager. Her austere faith had no apparent ill-effect on his acting style or his selection of low-comedy roles. Rather, it may have encouraged him to try all the harder to bring a smile to the face of this little woman who, always dressed in grays or blacks, so clearly loved him.

In May 1849, Owens ventured into another phase of management when he leased the National Theatre in Washington for the production of Italian opera on a grand scale. He had heard and admired a troupe which he installed there in May both as an artistic and a commercial venture. However, the troupe drew only meagre—although appreciative, he notes—audiences. Heavy expenses were hardly offset by disastrous receipts and, after two weeks of ruinous business, he brought the company to the Baltimore Museum at cheaper prices. There, "dire bad business ensued," Mrs. Owens reports, compounded by the poor houses attending the elder Booth at Washington's National, where Owens had yet to complete his lease. Although this period was financially disastrous, Owens called it "buying experience," and even found a humorous side to it. His frequent harrangues over salaries with Rossi Crossi, director of the opera company, afforded him a chance to mimic and perfect his impersonation of the director's feisty dialect and manner. Each week, as he suavely folded and pocketed his check, Crossi would remark: "I am mooch desolate, to be oblige' to receive dis monish, when ze people do not attendez ze opera. I can recognize no reason why we not draw; for I do assure you, Monsieur Owens, we are mooch talented."
Owens never failed to gain laughter with his impersonation of the little director of this "mooch talented" company, but resolved never again to invest in operatic ventures when finally (after five weeks) "relieved of this incubus." The experience also reminded him of a lesson he had heard from Burton: "Don't endeavor to control more than one theatre at a time." Burton, however, did not practice what he preached and, like Owens in 1849, invariably regretted it.

Owens recalled his company from the National, where it had been supporting Booth, and ended the season on July 5, 1849. His two benefits at the close of the season were well heralded by the critic of the Baltimore Sun. Owens had prepared a new version of his profitable Jakey sketches, A Glance at Baltimore, which he had played 167 nights previously, and for good measure added the farce Does Your Mother Know You're Out? and sang a comic ditty entitled "My Grandfather was a Most Wonderful Man."

The Baltimore Museum which Owens re-opened September 5, 1849, was no longer the confining space in which he had begun his career in that city. Under Peale's tenure, the house had seated no more than 500 and had been poorly maintained. In 1846 P. T. Barnum had bought the house and invested his uncle, Alonso Taylor, as manager. Taylor had died six months later and was succeeded as manager by Charles Getz, the scenic artist. His successors, Hamm and Silsbee, remodeled and enlarged the theatre and brought it one story lower. Owens continued the remodeling process, even re-cushioning the seats. The Sun reported on September 3 a "variety of improvements made in all parts of the house, affording . . . more comfortable and pleasant accommodations for the audience. The new drop curtain is most beautiful, being of itself well worth a visit." Owens attempted to provide amenities which few theaters outside of New York then possessed, apparently aiming to keep the social level and behavior of his audiences unimpeachable. Countless reviewers over the years referred to
*fashionable* houses as well as large ones, in Owens' theaters, so his efforts were apparently well aimed. Most theaters were not as successful; critics of the day described the *typical* audience at mid-century (which Owens sought to avoid):

> [It] . . . consisted of patrons who indulged in chewing tobacco and spitting the juice on the floor of the house, of patrons who appeared fashionably late disturbing the audience that had arrived on time, of patrons who used vulgar and profane language, or of patrons who bolted for the exit at the effective parts of the performance, and of patrons, who, finding the polite expression of clapping their hands an inadequate expression of approval, stamped their applause, thus raising a choking dust from the floor. At times houses seemed to be in a continual state of animation caused by the restless patrons running in and out of the theatre. . . . Between acts, nine-tenths of the gentlemen made for the saloons, stumbled over the legs of other members of the audience, and returned as the opening lines of the act were spoken, missing and causing others to miss some important expository dialogue or action.29

The 1849-50 season at the Museum was much the same as the previous one. Owens selected primarily light comedies and farces, and continued his policy of maintaining a strong stock company, supplementing it occasionally with Murdoch, Kate Ludlow, Fanny Wallack, Charlotte Cushman, and Julia Dean. He experimented with introducing more novelty acts than previously and found they drew well. A Dr. Fisk, who gave lectures and experiments in psychology, appeared briefly and Owens even allowed himself to be the subject for the doctor's attempts at *psychologizing* him—perhaps something akin to hypnosis. When Fisk failed at this, Owens reversed the roles and the doctor *succumbed to his* magnetic power, and after sundry satisfactory experiments, was fast asleep.30 He also engaged a Signor Cavito who performed *The Dumb Savoyard and His Monkey,* and a Chinese clairvoyant, the *celebrated Chinese Lady, Aifong, Moy, Nanchoy, the only celestial who has ever appeared without the walls of China. She possesses all the peculiar characteristics of her nation, Diminutive Feet, Almond Shaped Eyes, etc. Her guardian will interpret the questions and wishes of her visitors* (so read his handbill).31 Apparently manager Owens had discovered the appeal of the
In October Owens invested in another theatre, 'Chanfrau and Owens' National Theatre' in Philadelphia. His partner in the venture was Frank S. Chanfrau, well-known for his portrayal of "Mose," a New York, citified rube fireman. The two acted together in Mose and Jakey in Philadelphia (a variation of his A Glance at . . . series) and Mysteries and Miseries of New York. No further mention exists of this partnership or lease, after their farewell benefit on October 12. At the same time Burton provided competition for them by having a Mr. Gravets playing Jakey in A Glance at Philadelphia at his Arch Street Theatre, although neither Mrs. Owens nor Burton make any mention of a falling-out over this.32

When he returned to the Baltimore Museum, October 20 was billed as the "First Night of the Celebrated Comedian, Mr. John E. Owens." He re-enacted Paul Pry that night, and for nearly a month repeated standard low comedy roles from his repertory, such as Dr. Ollapod, and Diggory. On November 13 Owens appeared as Capt. Cuttle in a dramatization by John Brougham of Dickens' Dombey and Son; which ran successfully through November 28.33 Owens' role was light, but did not particularly allow him free rein of his comic ability.

On November 19, he acted for the first time a role which would become one (actually three-in-one) of his most famous. W. H. Thompson, a Baltimorean, had submitted The Live Indian to Owens earlier, but he had found little use for it, believing that it lacked originality. He asked Thompson to make alterations in story and dialogue, but preferring an immediate sale, the author declined to make changes. Thus, Owens paid him his price and became owner of the piece, laying it aside for some time. Coming across the dust-covered manuscript now, Owens rewrote it, altering the dialogue and adding another character, Miss Crinoline, a dress-maker, which he enacted in addition to two others, Corporal Tim, and The
Live Indian (these names varied substantially through later years). While this
was not the first time he had played broad farce, it was the greatest success he
had achieved yet in that vein. Mrs. Owens describes the roles and his
performance:

Miss Crinoline made the farce a success. The quick change
(three minutes), from the dress of a gay young man to that of a
fashionably costumed lady, was startling; and (at that time) a
novelty. With blonde wig, and stylish dress of handsome
material, he came on the stage so soon after Corporal Tim’s exit,
that the audience were dazed; and, until they became familiar
with the piece, doubted the identity of the two. The dress-
maker’s scene, with Old Brown and his niece, was full of telling
points, which evoked roars of laughter. From this to the Indian
made another striking contrast, enlivened by Owens’ inimitable
acting. But Miss Crinoline made the farce a hit; without that
introduction it would have failed. At its best, Mr. Owens never
considered that it possessed merit, otherwise than a funny
absurdity to contrast with legitimate pieces. In this light it was
immensely attractive and prominent.

The Baltimore Sun notes that The Live Indian was "received with great favor." Perhaps this, and continued successes with The Live Indian reinforced Owens’
decision to remain a comedian, contentedly playing low comedy.

During the winter Owens continued to present comic roles, introducing a
number of new, but similar ones. Particularly popular at this time were the farces
of authors J. Madison Morton (e.g., Slasher and Crasher, Betsey Baker, Poor
Pillicoddy) and J. B. Buckstone (Married Life, The Rough Diamond), which were
perfectly suited to Owens’ style of acting as they allowed much direct relating to
the audience. Typical of Morton’s farces is Poor Pillicoddy, in which Owens first
played the title role this season. John Peter Pillicoddy is a newly-married
nursery owner whose young bride was widowed earlier when her husband, Captain
O'Scuttle's, ship was wrecked. He is so enraptured that his greenhouses and
accounts are poorly tended; he also lies awake nights fretting that his new wife's
husband will miraculously return. His wife's best friend, who had married
O'Scuttle's brother in a double ceremony, arrives to relate that she and her
husband have quarreled, and he has left her, to go to sea. When this brother appears, asking Pillicoddy for "his wife," amorously seeking forgiveness, in the dark, from Pillicoddy's wife, whom he believes to be his own, multiple hilarious complications arise. As must be the case, all misunderstandings are explained in the final moments and all are happily re-united. Pillicoddy is especially joyous, having accidentally taken a poppy-potion which he intended to use as an ingredient in a poison for the "returned" O'Scuttle. In the final scene, as complications are being explained, he keeps dozing euphorically off, saying to his hired girl, "Sarah, rouse me!," whereupon she runs a pin into his arm and he starts awake, saying "Thank ye!" This business is repeated six times in the scene, presumably larger and more comical each time.

Mrs. Owens recalls "how mirth-provoking was the language, plot and wit which [Morton] combined. Owens reveled in the subtlety and unctuousness of their humor, and every farce went off uproariously. One night, during a momentary lull in the laughter, a tall countryman arose in the parquette, and with his hands pressed to his sides, called out, 'Stranger, don't make such good fun; I'm weak; for I've laughed all over.' The audience gave the rustic a round of applause." Typical of the farces of J.B. Buckstone is Married Life which Owens also began performing this season. He played Henry Dove, a retired footman who has just married a former boarding school mistress. The main plot revolves around Mr. and Mrs. Lynx and Mr. and Mrs. Coddle, whose constant bickering, mutual accusations and supposed (but not real) infidelities shatter the myth of blissful married life. The Doves enlist the help of these two couples in tracking down a young, attractive lady who has run away from the boarding school; Lynx had secretly enrolled her. Dove, however, is not an active agent in the plot or the eventual reconciliations (Lynx had enrolled the girl secretly because he was sheltering Coddle, whom the unscrupulous girl was blackmailing, although even
that was unfounded.) The humor which Owens' character provided resulted from his inability to forget that he was no longer a footman: every time a bell rings or someone knocks, Dove runs to answer it, only to be soundly rebuked by his wife. In addition, she constantly corrects his inelegant grammar (e.g., Dove recalls that the girl 'played the harp divinely,' to which his wife retorts, 'Divinely, dear; think of your v's.' Dove's reply: 'Hang them we's; I shall never get over 'em.')

He also emits continual malapropisms, such as his intention to visit the 'Jewological Gardens.' An excerpt readily reveals the role's demand for a facile tongue:

Dove. I've something to say—and something that I mean, too; I won't be taken up, as I always am, before people.
Mrs. Dove. What do you mean, Henry, by being taken up?
Dove. Why--altering my pronunciation every minute, as you do.
Mrs. Dove. How can I calmly sit and hear my husband commit himself in every syllable that he utters? Respect for you and for myself, renders it necessary that I should correct you.
Dove. Well, I don't like it—and I warn you not to result me again.
Mrs. Dove. Insult you.
Dove. Well, insult me again—you know how violent I am when I'm exaggerated.
Mrs. Dove. When you're exasperated.
Dove. Well, what's it matter?

On January 7, 1850, Owens became sole owner of the Museum by buying out Hamm's share. Perhaps to assure continued box office receipts, he spent much of January and February repeating two of his most popular roles: Jakey in A Glance at Baltimore and the three-in-one in The Live Indian. He presented many of the same comedies and performers as before to Baltimore audiences on the stage of what he now renamed the "Baltimore Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts." With the right-hand support of Charles Getz in his absence, he even played engagements elsewhere. During the season, he had added nineteen new roles to his repertory, most of which were farcical or low comedy roles; few were repeated after the season closed on July 6.
The next two Museum seasons, 1850-52, were essentially repetitions of previous ones. Owens acted occasionally, while producing light comedies and farces with successful box office receipts. Both Mrs. Owens and the Sun report that audiences filled the Museum every night, providing an "even run of prosperity." Owens now exercised total financial and artistic control. Along with occasional stars, such as Fanny Wallack, he appeared in a number of popular comedies such as The Poor Gentleman, Paul Pry, Poor Pillicoddy, The Live Indian, and The Two Thompsons, only adding a handful of new farces.

Once, while Owens was playing First Gravedigger to visiting tragedian J. R. Scott's Hamlet, he demonstrated a penchant for improvisation and practical joking. Scott had reached the grave-digging scene, and

... being out of sorts and anxious to get through with the performance, was anxious that the skull of Yorick be handed him instanter—a dozen or so speeches before it was time for it, in fact. "Give me the skull!" he growled under his breath [to Owens]. ... "Give me the skull or I'll break your own in," he continued, as Owens hesitated. Owens handed him the skull and fearing the results of Scott's wrath, dived down into Ophelia's open grave and made his exit through the cellar. The surprise of the audience at seeing an actor vanish in this way may well be imagined.

Having acted with Scott intermittently since 1845 under Burton, Owens was more likely having some fun with this fellow actor than reacting out of any real sense of fear.

During November, 1850, Owens received an offer from John Brougham, whom he had known from his earlier Museum days, to appear in New York at Brougham's new theatre, then under construction. Brougham, 40, was a jovial Irishman famed for his personal magnetism. A prolific playwright, especially of witty burlesques, and a risk-taking manager, he had parlayed a number of minor successes into the construction, ownership and management of this new theatre at the corner of Broadway and Broome. "Brougham's Lyceum" was to be managed entirely as a stock theatre, with a uniformly excellent company (indeed, most
were already established stars) and with no one person being billed as the star. This policy must have accorded perfectly with Owens' philosophy, for he immediately signed with Brougham and scheduled a farewell benefit at the Museum for December 5, departing the following week for New York.48

Thus, John Owens made his first appearance on the New York stage on December 23, 1850, on the inaugural night of Brougham's Lyceum. Brougham opened the program by introducing his company to the audience with a comic skit, "a so-called occasional rigmarole, entitled 'Brougham and Co.'," followed by the farce of Crimson Crimes in which Owens, "the since popular comedian and unrivaled Solon Shingle, made his first appearance in New York as Mr. Fright."49

Owens' debut in New York also marked his first appearance in a stock company since becoming a recognized star. Mrs. Owens notes with pride that, "Ail through his brilliant career he, afterwards, at times, made these restful breaks from the fatigue of travelling, or tedious rehearsals with new companies; but it was always when surrounded with prominent artists, never on any occasion to support a star."50

Critical response to the opening was exceedingly favorable. The New York Herald reported an "overwhelming audience [and] unbounded applause," and the theatre critic of the prestigious Spirit of the Times singled out Owens for praise: "Owens, the young comedian, (the best in his line, after Burton, who is in that line inimitable,) made a hit, and will, we predict ere long become exceedingly popular."51

Among the roles Owens performed during a two-month engagement at the Lyceum were Aminidab Sleek in The Serious Family, and (with Brougham) Tim in The Live Indian, which ran for eleven nights.52 The Herald praised his Tim as "a most glorious bit of fun, admirably rendered."53 Aminidab Sleek is a Tartuffe-like character who sanctimoniously affects attitudes of piety and magnanimity while
ingratiating himself with Lady Creamly and her fortune.\textsuperscript{54} He has established a charitable society which doles out her money to obscure groups. During their meetings, he deplores, in frequent asides to the audience, the immoral conduct of various members of Lady Creamly's household. Like other Owens characters, he spouts essentially meaningless philosophy, telling the family at one point that

\begin{quote}
... all depends on circumstances. We make a great distinction between saying what is not, and not saying what is, according to the object and intentions—this is high morality.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

When, after considerable melodrama, the hypocritical Sleek is unmasked, he lightens the moment with comic business:

\begin{quote}
Sleek. (returns much mortified and puts on his hat). I will go for Lady Creamly! (his hat falls off, he picks it up and puts it on again) Yes, for Lady Creamly—(going, his hat falls off again; returns . . . ) I will make you responsible for everything! (his hat falls off a third time; as he is going out he picks it up, and exits foaming with rage.)\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

As before, these comic roles allowed Owens to utilize flexible facial expression, eccentric physical mannerisms, and whimsical voices to keep his audiences (even these supposedly more sophisticated New Yorkers) in constant laughter.

Owen's most significant acting achievement of the season, however, came when he performed the part of Uriah Heep in the new Lyceum production of Brougham's adaptation of Dickens' \textit{David Copperfield}, with Brougham as Wilkins Micawber. Affording critics and audience an opportune chance to draw comparisons, Burton's New York Chamber Street Theatre was simultaneously presenting the play, with Burton himself as Micawber. The role of Uriah Heep, a particularly calculating, unfeeling villain, was an unusual departure for Owens. But he determined that \textit{Uriah Heep} should strengthen instead of weaken his hold upon the public. Close study of the 'umble' clerk, resulted in a wonderful creation. The make-up was perfect, and so was his manner and gait. In every detail, he gave the artistic rendition of this obnoxious character, which surprised even his warmest admirers.\textsuperscript{57} This role represents for Owens his first real success with a villainous
(although still humorous) character. He continued to repeat it, and the Micawber role, throughout his career.

The Lyceum production of *David Copperfield* opened on January 6, 1851, to generally good reviews. Throughout the month, remarks appeared almost daily in the newspapers attesting to the high calibre of the company's acting and the enthusiastic response of well-filled houses. Critics commended the entire production as "completely successful, and received with the most enthusiastic cheering. The cast is excellent." Critics singled out Owens for special commendation: "Owens is one of the best low comedians. ... Night after night Heep [grows] more subtle"; "Owens' embodiment of the part of Uriah Heep is ... the truest representation of any character in the novel."; "The slimy, squirming nature of the 'umble clerk was powerfully shown. The stage cannot boast of anything more truthful and effective."; "We will say, without exception, Owens' representation of Heep is the *ne plus ultra* of sterling comic ability. He keeps the house in roars of laughter."58

The verisimilitude of Owens' performance, which impressed the critics, can be gauged by the following anecdote:

During the run of *David Copperfield*, a friend met Owens on the street, and said: "John, I don't like you at all in that part of Uriah Heep; not at all!" "I am sorry for that, E—-," replied the comedian; "I value your opinion highly. What do you object to?" "Every bit of it; but principally to the scene where you make love to Agnes Wickfield. When you attempt to take the girl's hand, I hate you so, that I'd like to kill you. Sneaking hypocrite!" "My dear friend," laughingly said Owens, "the entire press of New York has not paid a higher compliment to my acting than you have; by thus identifying me with the character I assume. Thank you very much, for your unconsciously encouraging criticism."59

In fact, Thomas Hamblin, manager of the Bowery Theatre, pressed Owens to give up comedy for serious roles, offering him starring roles such as Shylock and Sir Giles Overreach. Repeatedly, Owens demurred, stating that he would not forsake comedy. Perhaps he recalled, and relished, the 'unctuous' good will audiences
readily exchanged with him when he played likable eccentrics.

The only critic to single out Owens for criticism was the reviewer for the *Spirit of the Times*, who did not find Brougham's production "as pleasing and satisfying as that at Burton's." He states that "The performance of Mr. Owen [sic], as Uriah Heep, is excellent, but as it resembles that of Mr. Johnston [Burton's Heep], who first appeared, we did not derive much pleasure from witnessing it. It is said that Mr. Owens has not seen Mr. Johnston in the part, a fact which we mention in justice to the gentleman first named." The vast majority of audience members, however, agreed with the critic of the *New York Herald*: "To see Mr. Owens as Heep is worth the price of admission."65

On January 18, the *Herald* announced, "This evening, the capital low comedian, Mr. Owens, makes his last appearance, on the occasion of his benefit. We never saw a young man make such an impression upon the public as he has done during his brief stay."67 With such praise from the press, it is not surprising that Brougham induced him to stay on another month, and he continued to perform Uriah Heep well into February, alternating and accompanying it with other standard roles from his repertory.68

One night in January when Owens was playing Jakey and his three roles in *The Live Indian*, the respected theatre critic of *Atlantic Monthly* witnessed his performance. The characters demanded believable, realistic details of character, the critic believed, or they would have been merely crude, shallow caricatures. In addition, the scripts were

... very bad drama, not elevating even to the audiences of that neighborhood ... ; yet there was something in Mr. Owens's portraiture of the New York Rough, so excellent, natural and marked, that there was no reason for astonishment in the crowds he drew to witness it. It might be a very bad specimen of a man, yet it was as true to its order as one brick from a Philadelphia house is to the entire building. As he played it, Mose [sic: Jakey] was a jolly butcher-boy, generous,
impulsive, chivalric, somewhat addicted to waving the American flag, slang, running "wid de machine," and 'going' with Elizer . . . Another thing to which he was addicted, and which slightly conflicted with his general nobility of character, was "free fights," in which he "put in big licks," and which, to use an expression of his own, not elegant but terse, he "gassed" about rather more than befitted a modest gentleman. He also affected a red flannel shirt, a black beaver hat—about which was a band of crape—jauntily perched over his left ear, and black pantaloons tucked into frightful boots. The fashion in which Mose wore his hair, very short behind the ears and very long before, was unknown to the barbers on the west side of this town. These forward locks were soaped, and he used them with peculiar emphasis, by twisting them around his fingers, whenever he desired to give weight to his utterances. In short, the Mose of real life was an unmitigated nuisance, whom it was well to abate, and in the drama he was never an agreeable character to us; yet for a number of years the announcement that Mr. Owens would appear in that part at the Bowery, or any other theatre in the country, would attract audiences for months altogether.  

This recognition of Owens' ability to create detailed, believable characterizations would be reiterated by critics throughout his career.

Owens returned to the Baltimore Museum undoubtedly well satisfied with his debut in New York, and during the spring of 1851 presented David Copperfield to his audiences there. He first played his usual role of Uriah Heep and then that of Wilkins Micawber, a role which better allowed him to exercise his talent for humorous acting. The play ran for ten nights during March and April.

The major hit of the season, however, was the Sheridan and Colman extravaganza entitled The Forty Thieves (which had frightened him as a boy), with Owens as the pasha Ali Baba. Opening on March 10, the spectacle ran for twenty-four nights, a run previously unmatched at the Museum. Unfortunately, the small size of the Museum stage did not easily lend itself to such an extravagant production. However,

That able scenic artist, Charles S. Getz, did his best in the way of scenery and effects; but a difficulty arose, which appeared formidable. There was no space for forty thieves on that stage! Not foothold for half the number. To overcome this dilemma, an additional speech was given to Abdallah, captain of the robbers. Upon his entrance, closely followed by five robbers, he cries, 'halt!' and impressively adds, 'The rest of the band will remain in
the wood." Happy thought! which quite reconciled the audience to the absence of thirty-five thieves. Owens was intensely amused at the absurdity of the expression "the rest of the band will remain in the wood." Ever afterwards, it was used apropos of any incompleteness that occurred, either at the theatre, home, or elsewhere. 71

Another new production, called The World's Fair, drew favorable critical response, with particular acclaim going to the "brilliant displays of taste and skill" by Getz, to whom Owens lavishly granted funds for new scenery. Owens appears to have relied heavily on the talents of Getz, as well as his own instinct for what would be successful box office material. As no box receipts or tax records exist for the Museum for this time, one must take Mrs. Owens' word that the season was financially successful.72 Perhaps recalling the ability of the exotic to draw receipts, Owens engaged at various times a "Gipsey King," "celebrated Necromancer," "Wire volant and Equilibrist," and a comic singer.73 These diversions were typical items on an evening's bill, usually played as "olio acts" in front of the curtain while scenery was being changed (either after an opening farce for the main play or after the main play for a closing farce).

During the seasons of 1850-52, Owens continued to act at the Museum, with brief engagements in Washington and Philadelphia. In addition to repeating established roles in his repertory, he added during these years twenty-eight new roles. All were leading comic roles that allowed him to improvise upon weakly drawn characters to create lively, detailed performances. Some he would retain and repeat often, such as Mr. Gilman in Buckstone's Happiest Day of My Life, Timothy Toodles in Burton's The Toodles, and Jim Bags in Henry Mayhew's The Wandering Minstrel, but many he abandoned after one or two performances.74 The Wandering Minstrel became a particular favorite with Owens' audiences. In the role of Bags, Owens pretended to be a famous wandering minstrel while actually only an itinerant "ballad-crier" and tavern frequenter. He cozens a wealthy family out of hospitality, sympathy and money in the process, and one can
imagine the laughter resulting from the farce's final scene, as Bags, painfully accompanying himself on a clarinet, belts out the song of "Villikins and His Dinah" in front of assembled guests and musicians. Even though he is unmasked, the family's pretensions have been so ostentatious that the audience must have revelled in Bags' flippant rejoinders to their judgments upon his music. In fact, the song proved so popular that Owens continued to perform it even after he ceased performing the whole farce.

In the summer of 1852 Owens' career took a marked turn while he was traveling for pleasure in Europe. In Switzerland his sense of adventure led him to ascend Mont Blanc, a feat which led the *The Times* (London) to observe: "Mr. John E. Owens is the first American who has accomplished that undertaking for upwards of twenty years." It was a feat markedly more hazardous than a simple recreational jaunt. At the top he entertained his entourage,

... some Alpine guides, who, gathering about him, beheld the amiable comedian once more waving the American flag, after the fashion of the old Bowery days, but now from the highest attainable point of Mont Blanc. Having thus asserted his nationality, he came down again and in concert halls showed us some well-painted pictures illustrative of his ascent, and, in a pleasant, gossiping way, told us how it was done.

Mrs. Owens reports that "he met with so much that was amusing and characteristic, that he determined to combine these experiences with the greater and grander ones of his tour, and so, form an entertainment, on his return to America, which would prove attractive." On this basis he originated his *Alpine Rambles* (or "Mr. John Owens' Ascent of Mont Blanc").

That fall, Owens took his time preparing the narrative and returned to his duties as manager of the Baltimore Museum. The season opened in September under the delegated supervision of Getz. But needing time to write and rehearse the *Mont Blanc* lectures, Owens formally announced his intent to withdraw from the stage and the manager's office for one year. In December Henry C. Jarrett,
who managed a number of theaters elsewhere in the country, expressed an interest in acquiring the Museum. Even though Owens' tenure with the Museum had been "profitable and pleasant," after a series of interviews and discussions with Jarrett he sold the theater in January, 1853, and publicly wished Jarrett well. The *Baltimore Sun* spent two weeks in December chronicling the final days of his engagement, bestowing effusive praise on his characterizations. The paper stressed the wide popular following he had attained, with crowded houses nightly convulsed with laughter. While no specific traits of his acting style are mentioned, a strong genuine and intimate rapport between Owens and his audiences seems to have existed. It must have been gratifying to him to receive many curtain calls at the conclusion of his final performance on December 30, and to have his farewell remarks frequently interrupted by applause.

One of the last roles he played that season was that of Spruggins in Burton's *Forty Winks*, a character which represents the kind of role particularly suited to his abilities and which brought him fame. It is his earliest role for which his own promptbook is still in existence, and the margins are filled with penciled-in notations for comic business. While Spruggins is not the lead role, he is the featured character role, whose eccentricity and humor stem from his penuriousness. A grand-uncle on a journey, he attempts to find overnight lodgings for the cheapest possible price (e.g., he asks a girl at the hotel desk the price of a bed for one night. When she replies "six pence, sir" he retorts, "I said to let, not to buy it!") While all sorts of complications go on around him, he attempts to take his "forty winks" in the most inconvenient perches in the lobby, hallway, etc.

As the miserly old Spruggins, Owens drew out comic business to a ludicrous extent. Clara Morris, a young actress who would later achieve stardom under Augustin Daly, recalled acting in *Forty Winks* with Owens. In one scene, she hid from pursuing officers while Spruggins ate his dinner. Supposedly being ravenously
hungry, yet not wanting to part with an extra penny, he picked at crumbs, slanting his dinner plate against the light to look for more, then scooping up those which had fallen into his handkerchief and licking them one by one. He next sorted his pennies, broke off the excess candle's wax ("to grease his boots next winter"—a line he introduced especially for her.) Then,

Having gone up-stage and taken off his shoes, he suddenly bethought him that there might be a few crumbs on the floor, and taking the candle, down he came for a look, and turning his back to the audience, they screamed with sudden laughter, for two shining bare heels were plainly showing through his ragged black woolen socks. He paid no heed, but sought diligently, and when he found a crumb, he put his finger to his lip to moisten it, and pouncing upon the particle, conveyed it to his mouth, mumbling so luxuriously that one almost envied him. Then remarking it was too cold to undress, he undressed, . . . saying querulously he "couldn't abide a man that wasn't neat and careful about his clothes," and down he pitched the coat in a heap upon the floor. . . . And so he went up and down and about, until that stage was one litter of old clothes. Blowing out his candle he got into bed, and, shivering with cold, tried frantically to pull the clothes over his poor shoulders, but all in vain. At last a tremendous jerk brought the quilt and sheet about his shoulders, only to leave his ancient black feet facing the audience—all uncovered. And so went the struggle between feet and shoulders, until, worn out, the old man finally "spooned" himself with knees on chest . . . only to be aroused by officers, and turned into drivelling idiocy by a demand "for the girl."82

Morris describes the effect of this business on her:

It was at the point when, sitting up in bed, trying with agonizing modesty to keep covered up, his eyes whitely and widely rolling, he pleadingly asked: "N-n-now I leave it to you—do I look like a seducer?" that my knees abandoned me to my fate, and sat me down with a vicious thud. [Seeing her convulsed with laughter, Owens sat up in bed and stopped the show, exclaiming:] . . . "Blast my cats! Look at the girl! There now, that's something like laughing. I'd take off my hair and run around bald-headed for her!"

This intense attention to details of comic business and character, coupled with an apparently infectious love for performing, must have helped to endear Owens to his audiences.

By January, 1853, Owens had completed the text for his Mont Blanc lectures [see Appendix B] and all backdrops for it had been painted, some by James
Hamilton, then celebrated for his marine views, some by the landscape artist "Hillyard," and the majority by Charles S. Getz, scenic artist at the Museum. These, combined with optical illusions, incidental music and songs, rendered the effect entrancingly realistic—not at all like the usual panoramic representation," Mrs. Owens recalls. Actually, the idea was not originally Owens'. While in Europe he had observed Albert Smith's popular entertainment entitled "Mont Blanc," which was attracting sizable audiences in London. That series of lectures was comprised of background panoramic art (then in vogue in England, but much less so in the United States) with the lecturer describing points of interest as they passed before the spectators. During the lecture, the speaker was ostensibly traveling in a "diligence," or stagecoach. Owens purchased a smaller copy of Smith's text, and upon returning to the U.S., worked up his own variation, minimizing the scholarly aspects and playing up anecdotal humor of the trip. He included detailed descriptions of his guides and companions to make his audience feel that they knew these interesting characters—further exemplifying Owens' eye for character detail and its realistic re-creation.

The Mont Blanc lectures, sub-titled "Alpine Rambles," opened in Baltimore in January, 1853, and played successfully through March. As Mrs. Owens notes, 'Peculiar gifts are requisite to hold an audience entranced by one's individual efforts through an entire evening; and this was achieved by Owens . . . as attested by the laudations of the daily press . . . and the crowded houses which nightly applauded him.' In April he opened with this entertainment in New York, at the Chinese Assembly Rooms, west of Broadway a little above Spring Street (later to be Barnum's Museum.) Except for a brief interval while enlargements were made to the Rooms, Mont Blanc played in New York through the summer months into the second week of September. Encouraged by good press, Owens indulged in hyperbole by June, when he billed his performance as:
Unanimously pronounced by all the most original and magnificent production of the nineteenth century.*88

The fifty-cent admission from every patron of Mont Blanc was added to what had by now become a substantial income for Owens. He had behind him several years of steady salary, a string of successful benefits, and had just sold his Baltimore Museum. Although no tax records exist for Baltimore prior to 1899, two indications suggest that Owens was by now fairly affluent. First, he was able to tour Europe recreationally and then risk a year away from steady income, and secondly, he bought, in February, 1853, a 198-acre farm in Towsontown, six and a half miles from Baltimore City. [For description, see Appendix C.]

Owens changed the name of this estate to "Aigburth Vale," after his ancestral town in England; he had always vowed he would so name his first estate. Over the years he added more acreage to the original purchase, instituting the newest of agricultural improvements; in fact, elaborate farm machinery became both his hobby and his nemesis. This farm soon became one of the most magnificent estates in Baltimore County. While the land is now minutely subdivided, the house still stands and is an impressive structure both inside and out. Owens spared no funds in its furnishing: "Every man must have his hobby, and mine is harmless. Spending money on my country residence entertains me, and the improvements I make gives [sic] work to people who need it."89 By 1877 Owens had expanded the estate to nearly three hundred acres, and used it yearly for the summer entertaining of fellow actors and managers.

A plethora of anecdotes exist about Owens' encounters with rural hired help and the inconstancy of farm gadgetry. In his first years as a country squire, for instance, he questioned his farm manager's expenditure of thirty dollars for fertilizer. Looking over his books, Owens demanded an inventory of all farm equipment, including the fertilizer, and was told it was "out in the field, yonder."
'Out sauntered the bucolic Shingle to inspect the new farm implement. Finding nothing that met his views of a fertilizer, he came back at a quick pace, wondering whether the faithless servant should be shot or hung. 'James, you want to show me that fertilizer now p-d-q.' 'Lord, Mr. Owens, how can you see it when it's all been harrowed into the ground.' The crushed comedian whistled his way back to the house with his thumbs digging into his ribs.'

Mrs. Owens' Memories reveals that her husband had mixed feelings about his estate:

He liked to have his friends sally forth with him, and inspect stock fields of growing grain, vineyard and orchards; and would wax eloquently in praise of country life. I have known guests to catch the enthusiasm, and express desire to buy a farm. Then Mr. Owens would look solemn, and warn them against such a step; invoking the amazed query: 'Why not? You find everything delightful here, and such stock, such crops must bring you in a good return for the investment!' 'Delightful? yes; but revenue? no. Honestly I tell you that if it were not for John Owens the actor, John Owens the farmer would starve. I don't want it on my conscience that I have led another man to assume the responsibility (though enjoyable in some respects) of supporting a farm.'

Perhaps it was this financial need, or perhaps it was the desire to resume the acting of comedy, that prompted Owens to return, in December, 1853, to the stage of the Baltimore Museum. As the Atlantic Monthly reports, "One night Mont Blanc, . . . failing to attract, Mr. Owens gracefully closed his remarks, and rolled up his pictures and buried them in a long, coffin-like pine box among the useless properties and rusty traps that fill the cellar of the old Front Street Theatre [sic]."

During the 1853-54 season Owens limited his acting; he spent most of the season on his estate, supervising improvements, and his only engagement was at the Baltimore Museum December 12-31. He performed, except for one new farce, entirely repertory material. The appearance of comedian Ben Rogers prompted Owens to contrive the new farce, in which he played the unique role of "John E.
Owens’s—its title: Owens Worried by Rogers. This was prepared for one of three Owens benefits (Dec. 17, 23, and 30) for which the Baltimore Sun reported "crowded houses on each night . . . Mr. Owens' great popularity . . . is well deserved, as he has few, if any superiors in his line."^93

Nearly one full year passed before Owens returned to the stage, and then he played only a brief engagement in November, 1854, at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia in familiar roles.^94 He returned to his favorite city, Baltimore, on December 5, 1854, opening at the Holliday Street Theatre. The Sun heralded his re-appearance: "Mr. Owens' abilities as a comedian are so well known and appreciated by our citizens, that it is unnecessary to speak of them here. It is sufficient to say that the assistance he will receive from the talented company of the establishment, combined with his own comic humor, will insure a most excellent performance."^95 Owens "was greeted . . . by a full and fashionable house, and performed with much spirit and effect. He is undoubtedly one of the best living comedians."^96 For one week he played roles in plays from his established repertory: Poor Gentleman, Serious Family, Forty Winks, Toodles, and David Copperfield.

Then he chanced to see a notice in the Sun announcing the availability of the Charles Street Theatre, in an excellent location: the corner of Baltimore and Charles Streets. Seizing what he must have viewed as a good investment, he leased that house and personally recruited an excellent stock company, actor by actor, seeking out little known performers who would only later be well-known names: Mrs. D. P. Bowers (again), Charles Walcot, Sr., Edwin Adams, Caroline Richings and her father, "Yankee" Locke.^97 He traveled to New York to sign some better-known stars, the Howards and Miss Agnes Robertson. He planned and mounted many new productions, but strong box office receipts did not materialize. The reviewer for the Sun was strongly supportive of his
proprietorship of this elegant little theatre . . . Mr. Owens is eminently calculated [sic] for his present position . . . and there cannot be a doubt that those who are fond of fun and can appreciate a hearty laugh will occasionally visit, . . . [since] the intention of Owens is to make the Charles Street Theatre a resort where the public can 'drop in' at any time for an hour or two, with the certainty of being amused. But by March, 1855, the box office had not improved in the slightest, even though the Sun still urged patrons to join the 'appreciating audiences,' and added, 'For a good hearty laugh, and an agreeable and excellent entertainment, Owens' Charles St. Theatre cannot be excelled.'

In an apparent effort to bolster the box office, he purchased the exclusive rights to Nature's Nobleman, a sentimental comedy by Henry Oake Pardey which had done well in New York, and mounted it in elegant style. The box office still sagged. The few theatregoers who did attend were kept in roars of laughter as Owens continued to play his usual low comedy roles. He also dredged up a number of roles which he had not performed for nearly a decade, but which had proven successful then. His staunchest ally in this effort was always the Baltimore Sun, who weekly injected such commentary as 'At no place can an evening be spent more agreeably than in this elegant little theatre;' and, 'With Owens' untiring efforts to please, and the performance of such capital pieces, the elegant little Charles Street Theatre must win its way to public favor.'

On February 8, 1855, Owens resurrected a piece which helped to ensure full houses. 'Villikins and His Dinah' (see p. 56) was a lengthy ditty which he himself sang and acted out as an afterpiece. His playbill for the piece announces 'That most Ridiculous, Serio, Comico, Tragico Legend, called VILLIKINS AND HIS DINAH: In which he will dole forth the Dismally Dreary, Peculiarly Pathetic, and Werry Uncomfortable History of 'Ye True Lovyers,' and relate also therein, the Terrible Fate of 'Ye Stern Parient,' received on every representation with perfect
SCREAMS OF LAUGHTER. Mrs. Owens recalls that, "The song itself amounted to nothing, but was made irresistibly funny by the quaint manner of rendering it. The mock gravity attached to the importance of remembering that there was a front garden and a back garden, and the tragic injunction to the audience not to become confused in these localities as the action of the song progressed, together with the comic solemnity of pauses to explain matters clearly, was ludicrous beyond description." "Villikins" ran for twenty-two nights, greatly improving business.

On February 16, 1855, Owens first played the role of Dr. Pangloss in Colman's comedy, The Heir at Law, which would become one of his most often repeated roles. A decade before, he had played the role of Zekiel Homespun (see p. 12). Pangloss obsequiously curries favor with a nouveau riche lord, his son whom he is to tutor (but who doubles his salary not to), and his wife (who doubles it again to teach him dancing and French). The entire time, Pangloss hurls gleefully avaricious asides to the audience and spouts Shakespeare, Greek, Latin, and countless other sources of "learned phrases." However, these are not malapropisms; even though they go over the heads of the other characters, they are pithy remarks that are quoted in proper context. The role provided Owens with an ideal vehicle for speaking directly to the audience and exaggerating the mannerisms of a loquacious pedant (in reeling off the letters of his degrees, he concludes with "L.L.D. and A.S.S.—Artium Societatis Socius"). The audience at Baltimore's Charles Street Theatre must have enjoyed Pangloss' constant correcting of the new lord's grammar, as well as his machinations in conspiring to keep as high a salary as possible for doing as little as he could.

The major hit of the season, however, was the first production of Uncle Tom's Cabin south of the Mason-Dixon line. Owens prevailed upon the George C. Howard family, then touring with the show, to play an engagement at his Charles
Street Theatre. This family was currently acquiring a sizable following for its "Uncle Tomming" in the George L. Aiken dramatization of the Stowe novel, particularly Little Cordelia Howard as Little Eva. Owens decided to risk possible alienation of his southern audience (Baltimore at that time exhibiting such inclinations) and bring the production to his theatre. On March 10 he wrote to Howard:

My dear Howard

Just received—Can the "Uncle Tom" you play be so adapted and softened in its style without losing much of its interest as to be made not only acceptable, but telling to a Baltimore audience, if it is susceptible of being so altered that the very objectionable speeches and situations could be modified in their tone and spirit without materially weakening the plot and character of the play. [sic] I would not hesitate if you conclude to play here to announce the piece as The Great New York Uncle Tom etc. and I feel confident it would create as favorable a sensation here as it has done elsewhere whenever properly put on the stage.

Our expenses at the present time are one hundred dollars a night, but if we produce Uncle Tom they will necessarily be somewhat increased perhaps to 120 per night as it is my desire to have the piece gotten up with more than ordinary care, entire new scenery panorama etc.

Let me know your views at once; if they are favorable, I must set the painter to work immediately as I should like you to commence at the time you mention viz Monday 26 inst to play for as long a time as might be mutually deemed profitable and satisfactory.

Very truly yours

John E. Owens

[on outside of folded and sealed letter:]

Telegraph me your reply at once for I have just learned from our painter who has gotten up the piece before that there are no less than nine new scenes (not counting the panorama) to be prepared, so there is no time to spare. Our theatre albeit called the "Little Charles St" will hold within a fraction of Four Hundred Dollars.

Owens knew that Uncle Tom's Cabin had captured and held the imagination of large appreciative audiences since 1853, in New York and elsewhere. Fully one-third of the houses for the play had been made up of a new class of theatre-
goers—church members and pastors of many denominations. To them the final tableaux of each scene composed religious paintings of a sort and the play itself was a kind of Biblical education. This marked a sharp departure for a class of people who previously would venture nowhere near a theatre lobby. Such figures as Henry Ward Beecher and Horace Greeley attended the play, the latter having reversed his ultra-conservative stand against the theatre as a result of it.  

The Howards opened their engagement at the Charles Street on March 26 in a light comedy, Fashion and Famine and, while the piece was well cast and well mounted, it proved a failure, drawing only dismally small houses. Two other comedies, Hot Corn and The Lamplighter, followed, with no improvement. Mrs. Owens reveals that Mr. and Mrs. Howard said little Cordelia was sick: "No wonder, so was the manager (with depression)."  

While the Howards took a brief respite, Owens filled in as his own featured performer, to no avail: "A cloud of ill-luck seemed to have settled over the theatre, and the manager was losing money hand over hand." Thus Owens was considerably distraught on the eve of the opening of Uncle Tom's Cabin. His lawyer and intimate friend, William Preston, was concerned about the hazardous undertaking and urgently implored him to forego the production of it, saying, "You will ruin yourself with the 'South,' and get into all sorts of trouble; the people will tear the theatre down or do you personal injury."  

Owens remained undaunted: "Desperate cases require desperate remedies; and with the consciousness of empty coffers the emergency was a case of 'make or break'."

The expurgated version opened on April 16, 1855 with Owens as Uncle Tom (with top billing), Mr. and Mrs. Howard as St. Clair and Topsy, Cordelia in her celebrated role of Eva, and comedian John Sleeper Clarke as Marks. The play drew large and enthusiastic houses. Mrs. Owens reports that the town went "wild with delight and admiration; this success retrieved the heavy losses of the
season. [Demonstrating] no sectional feeling in regard to the play, ... Baltimoreans accepted it as given, packed the house, and thus filled the hitherto attenuated treasury.\textsuperscript{115} By April 25 over eight thousand people in the city had seen the production, most of whom were ladies. At that time men would ordinarily attend a play first, appraise it, then bring their wives and sweethearts on a return trip if were acceptable—hence a ‘fashionable’ audience, with many ladies present, was a true commendation.\textsuperscript{116} Owens even distributed a Special Card as a public billing, proclaiming that, ‘It is impossible for any one to be present at its performance without feeling both wiser and better from it. The touching pathos of Little Cordelia in the character of the Angelic Eva, is beyond the power of pen to describe—indeed its INFLUENCE UPON THE HEART, as those who have heard her will testify, is without a parallel in the annals of the stage.’\textsuperscript{117} The five-week run of \textit{Uncle Tom's Cabin} must have gone a long way toward redeeming the manager’s estimation of his own capabilities.

But not only as a manager had he gained success; for his performance as Uncle Tom he had received excellent notices. Little Cordelia Howard had drawn most of the raves as Eva, but Owens had garnered a fair share: ‘The part of Uncle Tom by Owens is deserving of especial commendation. This favorite comedian adapts himself to this serious part with his usual versatility. ... [He] looks and acts the character to perfection.’\textsuperscript{118}

After a short summer season, perhaps contented with having salvaged his season with the risk taken with \textit{Uncle Tom's Cabin}, Owens placed a notice in the \textit{Sun} stating that his Charles St. Theater was available to rent. The rest of the summer was spent at Aigburth Vale and at Greenbrier White Sulphur Springs, Virginia.\textsuperscript{119}

Owens’ years of managing in Baltimore between 1848 and 1855 had brought him partial success financially and generally satisfied critics and audiences.
Considering that these years represented his first attempt at managing—an apprenticeship of sorts—they must be viewed as auspicious. The final season having been tenuous at the box office, and apparently not deriving the same satisfaction from managing as he had from acting, Owens allowed nearly five years to go by before he again undertook the responsibilities of management.

In fact, for the entire next season (1855-56), he did not appear in Baltimore. Rather, he spent most of the season in the city which would come to be second nearest his heart: New Orleans. Under Dion Boucicault at the Gaiety, he began an engagement in New Orleans in December that would influence his career. Boucicault had already established a reputation nationwide for his ability of adapting scripts, and for his skill as a manager in New Orleans. He conducted his company at the Gaiety solely as a stock company under his own guidance of himself, with Owens' old friend Fred N. Thayer as 'acting manager.'

Even though nearly ten years had passed since Owens had performed in New Orleans, he now felt quite at home, so cordial was the welcome extended to him. His old friends had kept themselves posted as to his steady advance in histrionic fame, and rejoiced at the position he had attained. At once he achieved general popularity with the public, both in legitimate comedy and lighter drama. Owens may well have chosen to widen his repertory and to work with Boucicault, since he could easily have pulled star salary elsewhere. Mrs. Owens claims that at this time Owens was regarded as 'the highest salaried actor ever known in this country.' A contemporary critic, Robert Grau, substantiates this claim, asserting that Owens had amassed 'a fair-sized fortune.'

As a member of Boucicault's company Owens drew the largest salary, but eschewed any treatment as a star. At this time, the star system was largely deplored by managers for several reasons:

1. Stars relied heavily upon physical display and literalness in their visual characterizations. They placed an almost equal
stress upon elocution and, encouraged by their audiences, they used an intense emotionality.

2. Stars relied upon their personal judgment for the control of the craft. They organized and merchandised theatre art to augment their own importance, encouraged rivalry for business reasons and they shifted the interest from artistic to business matters.

3. Stars absorbed the legitimate "lines-of-business" of supporting actors [putting them out of work] and they ruled other theatre personnel with an almost absolute control.

4. Stars distorted the playwright's intent. Boucicault believed instead in a "star company"--one in which every member was a star in his own right and all were nearly equal. He shrewdly monitored public demand. His company at the Gaiety devoted its energies to the performance of light pieces, a policy decidedly in keeping with the spirit of the times. The New Orleans Daily Picayune noted the opening of several theaters exclusively for the presentation of popular comic material, excluding tragedy and even "genteel comedy." It noted that, "People in these days are always readier to laugh at comedy or farce than to weep at a tragedy" and that light entertainment "enters more fully ... into the spirit of the contemporary age, than the literary drama." Boucicault's primary concern in managing and directing was always the effect upon his audience. To this end, he shortened the typical theatre evening, offering one long and important drama instead of two or more slighter ones, and insisted on finish and realism in all aspects of staging.

A perfectionist with strong prejudices, Boucicault was unstable, opinionated, and headstrong. Not known for personal warmth, he would brook no opposition and often changed production details and stage business daily. While acquaintances admired him, no one except his wife was ever close to him.

Boucicault had strong principles concerning the art of acting, which his company adhered to. In an article in the Daily Picayune he stated the following:

I differ, on principle, fundamentally with the present school of acting. It is in fact acting and not nature. In comedy there is extravagance of gesture, facial distortion, and affected utterance, instead of those natural intonations of voice, easy
carriage, and play of the eye, which should betray rather than expose the character assumed.  

Consistent with this belief, Boucicault, the actor, was an excellent model for John Owens and the other members of the company. As a performer Boucicault was a clever technician who carefully constructed each role. Anticipating "method acting," he first analyzed, then determined the techniques for conveying, subtle emotions of the characters he played: "His long and intimate knowledge of the stage had taught him all the tricks and artifices of the actor's profession; his canny sense of public taste enabled him to utilize his technique at the right times with the desired effects." Boucicault drew his characters from life and attempted to act them accordingly. While he described himself as "only a backward actor in my own school" the public consistently accepted his portraits and always liked him. He encouraged his actors to rewrite lines, business, characterizations and even entire scenes in rehearsal, shaping the play to their abilities. Thus, the finished product, with a style suited perfectly to both the mood and situation of the story, and the talents of the performers, displayed everyone involved to best advantage. His plays and performances always provided original, inventive touches which perfectly suited public taste and thus ensured continued popularity for Boucicault and his company.

Mrs. Owens provides a picture of what life was like as a member of that Gaiety stock company in 1855:

Mr. Boucicault's aim was to give the theatre a brilliant position; the plays were always thoroughly rehearsed and faultlessly produced; he was a strict disciplinarian, and his system produced satisfactory results. Infringement of the rules of the theatre seldom occurred; although the company, among themselves, were much given to having "a bit of fun," which sometimes verged on practical joking. They were a merry set, and derived amusement from slight causes, as is evinced by the following incident: Mr. Thayer, while rehearsing for "John Dobbs," in the farce of that name, remarked: "The business of this part calls for piano playing; I am not a musician." "Only a few bars needed," said the
Stage Manager. "Stoepel can indicate the keys by having figures pasted on them; strike in rotation as numbered, and there you are, all right!"

The plan worked admirably at first, but on the third night, when Mr. Thayer took his seat at the piano, with self-confident manner, he discovered to his horror that the keys were quite free from numbers. It broke him up, momentarily; but rallying, he picked out "Days of Absence," in faltering tones, and retired ingloriously. For awhile he was uncertain as to the perpetrator of the joke; but reflecting that Owens and himself were wont to play pranks upon each other, he taxed the comedian, who freely confessed, and made the amende honorable; so they adjudged it, "give and take," and cried quits.  

Opening at the Gaiety on December 1 with Forty Winks and The Wandering Minstrel, "the eminent comedian, John Owens" and "Mr. Boucicault's carefully selected company" garnered favorable press and full houses. The Daily Picayune reports that "a brilliantly numerous, and fashionable auditory assisted at the dedication of the Gaiety. . . . All seats were occupied [with] . . . the house . . . animating beyond the power of description. . . . [Mr. Owens] has already confirmed here the highly favorable opinion with which in other cities he is regarded as a comedian of great excellence." During the first two weeks of the run Owens portrayed some of his most successful past roles and received effusive praise. As Timothy Toodle, Owens acted

". . . with great ability. We have heard Owen's [sic] Toodle preferred even to Burton's, who may be said to have literally created the character . . .

"Mr. Owens is fast vindicating before the New Orleans audience the high reputation as a comedian which he has gained and maintained for years past at the North. His Mr. Toodle is immense. Differing in his notion of the character from every other personator of it we have ever seen, he makes it equally humorous and effective with the best of them; while in some ways it is even more funny."

Performing with a new stock company, Owens understandably played a number of new roles--eleven in the first three months. Most of these were light comedies and farces that made few demands on him. Many were examinations of social values. The foresighted Log Hut Life, for instance, contained a plot
which "turns upon the agreement between man and wife to 'change works' and see how they like it; John assuming the household duties of his good wife, and she the field labors of her husband, the moral being very striking." 138

By the time the season closed on March 12, 1856, Owens had developed a large, loyal popular following, and had repeatedly been singled out by critics for praise, particularly for the individuality of his characters and the degree to which they mirrored realistic character eccentricities. 139 And while not every member of the company was allowed a benefit, Owens had had two. Boucicault accorded benefits to those major members of his company who had clearly achieved public popularity, and Owens' (Jan. 16 and Mar. 8) were both well attended; the Daily Picayune was glad "to see his merits as an actor and a gentleman acknowledged as they should be." 140

Owens spent part of the summer of 1856 in Europe, mainly in Paris. While his primary intent was recreational, he effectively utilized much of the time in studying the inhabitants of that city, perfecting their mannerisms, gait, and dialect for future use in characterizations. One incident which reflects Owens' eye for mimicry as well as his penchant for chicanery occurred upon their return to New York. Disembarking, he was approached by a carriage driver who scanned his clothes and whiskers and evidently thought him to be a Frenchman. In perfect dialect, Owens exclaimed, "Carriazhel Vat ees ze carriazhe? You shall make me come to ze hotel Metropolitang, eh?" The driver, however, took the Owenses well out of their way and charged them three dollars. At the hotel Owens bantered with him awhile in "French" over the fare, then abruptly resumed his natural voice: "I'll tell you what. . . . I'll give you fifty cents." The driver was dumbfounded. 141
By 1856, John Owens was well on his way toward becoming a nationally known, critically respected figure, with a sizable popular following. He capitalized on what seems to have been an innate sense of audience tastes and the chances for success of a prudent risk. Already something of a driven man, he apparently enjoyed performing and people immensely.

As an actor, he had progressed to leading roles and had experimented with frequent new roles, refining his repertory. He had by 1855 already played 391 of the 447 roles of his entire career. Yet he had not yet settled upon one major role upon which he could build a reputation. From Burton, Boucicault, and the many other stars with whom he had acted, he learned the need to carefully prepare a part, invest it with detailed, individualizing character traits, use facial expressions and physical mannerisms to bring humor to the character, and to relate directly to the audience whenever possible.

As a manager, Owens continued Burton and Boucicault's policies of maintaining a quality stock company rather than depending upon stars. Like them, he insisted upon lavish, realistic scenery and took audience taste and comfort into consideration when planning his season and furnishing his theaters. He experienced fluctuating box office receipts but generally good reviews from critics.

His acting and managing had brought him, at 33, a fair amount of financial success; his estate was an impressive indication of that. Audiences generally attended in large number his well-mounted productions and applauded his excellent stock company. As a manager as well as an actor, he seems to have been immensely popular, serving as an inspiration to many young comedians at mid-century. When Joseph Jefferson first witnessed him perform in New Orleans, he "felt a burning desire that a time should come" when he himself might achieve the same success: "It stirred up the first great ambition that I remember ever to
have felt, and from that night of pleasure and excitement I resolved to equal Owens some day, if I could.  

From an apprenticeship on a tiny stage in Baltimore, Owens had carried his career to New York and New Orleans, with tremendous success, in only sixteen years. There seemed to be nothing in the way of his carrying it even further.
3. Developing Repertory and Style, Touring, and Later Management (1856-1864)

The third phase of John Owens' career, which spanned the years 1856-1864, would witness his creation of his greatest characters and set him on the road to dozens of new cities and thousands of new, enthusiastic theatregoers. His career gained tremendous impetus at the outset of his next season, which he opened October 13, 1856, at the Baltimore Museum, always a secure base to display his talent to a responsive audience. In spite of the challenge of Edwin Booth's appearance at the nearby Front Street Theatre, he drew extremely well. More importantly, however, he played for the first time on October 22 the role for which he would eventually become most famous—the role which would become synonymous with "John Owens"—that of Solon Shingle in J. S. Jones' The People's Lawyer.

The story of The People's Lawyer concerns the attempt by Hugh Winslow, a wealthy and respected merchant, to conceal a forgery. He attempts to force his clerk, Otis, to lie, but Otis refuses and is fired. Winslow then contrives to frame Otis and induces a weak-willed gadabout employee, John Ellsley, to plant his watch on Otis and cry theft. When the watch is discovered on Otis and he is arrested, all seems lost until the brilliant-but-humble people's lawyer, Robert Howard, forces Ellsley to confess, clears Otis, and incidentally marries Otis' sister Grace. Solon Shingle is called upon as a witness, having been hanging around the legal offices in search of his runaway team and a "stolen" barrel of applesauce, which had fallen off of his tailgate. Shingle delights the audience with rustic bewilderment at all these legal goings-on, yet manages to outsmart the prosecutor, a genuine city-slicker named Tripper. To all questions and situations
Shingle replies "Jest so," and rambles in unadulterated digression. When he is ordered to appear in court, for example, he replies [sic]:

Jest so, thank you; tell the judge I'll be there. Whenever I hear that bell, I always consate there is trouble brewing. Whenever I du go tu court, I'm sure tu make some alfired mistake or other; once I drove right straight intu the prisoner's stall; they told me tu stand up, and I did; they asked me if I had anything tu say; says I, no; and while they were trying me, the real rogue got off. But if this Otis boy stole the watch he might have stole my apple-sarse. I'll go in, and if there's any barin on the case, I'll speak. I don't like tu make a speech among these law chaps. They work a feller up so he don't know his head from his heels; I shall have law enough, I s'pose; for that John Ellseley won't marry my Nabby [his daughter]. I considered her as good as married, and now her markit's spoiled; my darter and the apple-sarse may work for the lawyers yet--"jest so."3

A medical doctor and Boston playwright, stage manager and actor, Jones wrote over 150 farce-comedies, but The People's Lawyer proved to be the only one for which he received any real recognition, and that was due more to Owens' talent than his own. The People's Lawyer was first acted by Hill in 1839. Shortly afterward, Charles Burke, Jefferson's half-brother, performed it at the Arch Street Theatre. For nearly a decade it reposed unperformed, until Chanfrau revived it at the Howard Athenaeum in Boston. While Hill had performed it as a young, generalized Yankee, Burke uniquely interpreted the role as an old and simple-minded Massachusetts farmer, intent on "his bar'l o' applesass."4

When Owens first read the play, he found Solon Shingle to be only an incidental character; he did not re-write the play to enhance his role until later. Mrs. Owens defends Owens' interpretation: "It has been said that Owens imitated Charles Burke in this part. Such an assertion is utterly untrue. Mr. Owens never saw Burke, or anyone else play Solon Shingle."5 In fact, the Owens interpretation was based entirely and exactingly upon his Aigburth Vale overseer, a man named Perker. A reviewer who knew the overseer was astounded at the degree of fidelity to nature of the performance:
Perker was the name by which we knew him in the days of the Baltimore farm, but in the Broadway Theatre [1864] he was known as Solon Shingle. No matter what his name, however, it was Perker we saw,—Perker from broad-brimmed felt hat to the somewhat too large cowhide boots. Ox-team, old white coat, tobacco, impertinent curiosity, queer speech, and all the rest of that old fellow's physical and mental fibre, were there reproduced before us. . . . He had crept into the very nature of the man, catching the trick of moving each spring and lever of his thought, habit and feeling. In the same degree, and just as Mr. Owens's Mose was a living photograph of the noble fireman, . . . was Solon Shingle a literal translation into comedy of Perker . . . ; both were strong, fibrous developments of common nature, and characters such as no living American player but Owens could elaborate.

Critics described Owens' Solon Shingle as the type whom

... everyone who has been in that vague place, 'the country', must remember. He dresses shabbily, but carries fifty-dollar bills in his pocket; he makes absurd and ridiculous remarks, but yet has a fund of shrewd sense; he seems very simple and yet is not to be easily outwitted. [He appears] ... newly arrived from the country, and the aura of the country grocery-store and the cattle market [hangs] about him, ... evident in the quid of tobacco in his mouth, the big spectacles upon a nose glowing with toddy, and a habit of spitting, all exaggerated by peculiar dress, walk, and inevitable green umbrella.

The role of Solon Shingle as played by Owens represents a mid-point in the evolution of the stage Yankee, between the broad strokes of Marble and Hill and the later realistic delineations by such figures as Denman Thompson in The Old Homestead; by the time Owens began to play Shingle, the broad, farcical Yankee was beginning to disappear as a popular favorite. Solon Shingle represents a new development of the Yankee character as described by American theatre historian Francis Hodge:

Solon Shingle in The People's Lawyer was an ingenious variation of the accepted stage Yankee. Instead of the vitality and exuberance of the country boy, Solon offered the simplicity and wisdom of age. His name spoke his character: "Solon," the wise, and "Shingle," the unfinished rustic. . . . And it is his adventure in the city that Jones weaves skillfully into the main plot, melodramatic and sentimental to the core, yet accurately reflective of the life of its time. Solon is a fully drawn character, amusing in the drollest manner, often clever, and sometimes apparently stupid. Under his outer shell, however, is the same basic-type character present in all the Yankee plays. He is no fool; yet by contrast to city people, he appears to be
The play is more solid comedy than the usual Yankee fare, and this may account for its long life in the hands of such successful comedians as Hill, Burke, Locke, and Owens. In his initial performance of The People's Lawyer, Owens drew only moderate audiences and critical praise, yet he continued to include it in his repertory, apparently intending to revise and refine the character of Solon later.

Perhaps seeking the same sort of adulation he had received in New Orleans and New York, Owens took the opportunity in November, 1856, for his first extensive touring. He signed with manager H. L. Bateman to star in a touring production of Mrs. Sidney Bateman's Self, as John Unit, an eccentric, supporting role similar to Shingle. Self had originally been produced in New York, with Burton as Unit, and in St. Louis, with Mark Smith; both productions failed, and Owens was hesitant to undertake the part. However, he saw possibilities of developing the role.

The play itself parallels Anna Cora Mowatt's Fashion. It is a moralistic treatment of Mr. Apex, an established merchant, his spendthrift wife, and their even more profligate son, Charles. The family becomes ever more deeply entrenched in debt until Charles conspires to forge the signature on a half-sister's checking account. When John Unit, Apex's former partner and now a retired and highly opinionated banker, visits, Apex reveals the dire financial straits of his family. When the forgery becomes known, and all implore Unit to save the family from bankruptcy, the old god-father responds by providing $15,000, extracting ardent vows of future frugality from all. Comic relief is provided by the black nurse, Chloe, rather than by Unit, who is an eccentric moralistic figure rather than a comic one. For Owens, this role represented a slight departure from the broadly comic, toward more realistic characterizations. Of her husband's performance, Mrs. Owens writes that his portrayal...

... was in fidelity of conception, unsurpassed by anything on the stage. His grasp of character was perfect, and every light
and shade stood forth intensely life-like. Prominent in perfection, the library scene may be considered the gem of the part [in which Owens' soliloquy], after having made his will, was like the unfolding of the inner nature of the old banker, giving glimpses of its asperity and of its tenderness. The ingenuous retrospection of his life—realization that his methods had brought him to a lonely old age, recollections of boyhood and home, yearnings for family ties, were delineated with such depth of sentiment and rugged pathos as to invoke sympathetic response.

The Bateman production of Self opened at Baltimore's Holliday Street Theatre on January 5, 1857, for one week. The production drew "immense" houses and reviews which praised Owens' skill at developing a multi-dimensional character, rather than a stereotype. By the end of the week, the management turned away crowds unable to gain admission.

From Baltimore, the Bateman company went in January to Washington's new National Theatre, then to Richmond where both Owens and Melinda Jones (Mrs. Apex) drew favorable notices and good houses. The entire company, which also included Owens' brother Tom, Mary Devlin (later to become Mrs. Edwin Booth), and the young Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Jefferson, received "the GREATEST APPLAUSE." Reviewers admired the intellect of the playwright for her "exceedingly instructive moral on extravagance" and Owens for his "faithful personification of character." 

In Cincinnati, February 23-May 6, Self "made the greatest hit ever known in this city," playing to full houses. Again, critics praised Owens' realistic portrayal; he was "every inch the practical, unostentatious old time man of business, with a hard exterior, but like a diamond of the first water, there was the hidden gem underneath the rough shell." On the occasion of Owens' benefit on April 24, the Cincinnati Daily Commercial asserted that, "We know of no other artist that has so firmly engrafted himself upon a Cincinnati audience as Mr. Owens, and there certainly has never visited us one who, in his role, may be classed his superior . . . [He] came here a star, . . . and a profitable star
he has proven to the establishment . . . His capacity to draw has kept equal pace with his popularity. The remainder of the 1857 season saw the company perform briefly in St. Louis and Pittsburgh, to similar reviews and good houses.

The 1857-58 season opened for Owens with an individual engagement at Baltimore's Holliday Street Theatre, September 14-29, followed by appearances at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia in December, and at Wood's Theater in Cincinnati in January, 1858. During these engagements he played for the first time the role of Joshua Butterby in Tom Taylor's new comedy, The Victims, which is no longer extant. Favorably received by audiences and critics, the play became one of the most frequently and consistently played roles of Owens' career throughout tours in the 1860's and '70's. According to contemporary reviews, Butterby is an agile, graceful character which gave him an opportunity to be constantly in motion, with gestures, facial expressions and wry verbal interjections. An important aspect of this performance was Owens' lack of exaggeration and overacting which had marked some earlier performances:

\[\text{Owens] never makes a motion of any kind without a good and sufficient reason . . . [He demonstrates] a fund of genuine humor that always impresses one with the effect of spontaneity, so . . . that the spectator never pauses to analyze his feelings, or to question whether it is really a reproduction of nature or not.\]

Reviews of Owens' performances of Shingle, Unit and Butterby represent the increasingly exacting standard of criticism which emerged at mid-century. Anticipating the trend toward realism that would emerge later in the century, many theatrical critics were beginning to cast a more critical eye at over-emoting, line-spewing 'passion-tearers.' The use of details of local color and regional mannerisms and dialects in characterizations was a trend most evident with comedians, and one tailor-made for John Owens. Whereas the earlier comedians, such as Burton and William Warren, gave broader, more exaggerated
performances, the rising younger comedians, such as Henry Placide, John Sleeper Clarke, Joseph Jefferson, and John Owens, provided more refined, individualized eccentrics. They were character comedians who painstakingly crafted their roles, utilizing masterful by-play, facial expression and flexible voice to add their own dimension to the playwright's conception rather than distorting it. They were considered by some theatre historians to be the greatest comic performers in the history of the American stage.²²

Certain influential critics, including T. Allston Brown (later a personal friend of Owens), Stephen Fiske (drama editor of the Spirit of the Times), and especially William Winter (managing editor of the Albion and later drama critic of the New York Tribune), began by mid-century to demand "naturalness," or fidelity to detail.²³ Only if an actor's naturalness outweighed his faults of over-acting was he recommended for public attention.²⁴ Probably no other aspect of performance was more reported between 1850 and 1880 than "truth to nature," which relied upon the actors' "exacting imitation of certain actions of people." Actors who pursued this verisimilitude worked from "within outward," striving for a simplicity which belied previous preparation. They did not "appear to act at all," but instead allowed a "most truthful picture, . . . easy, natural and never overdrawn," to emerge.²⁵ Comedians played to the house less than previously, attempting instead to create a character which would in its believability draw the audience's attention to the stage. Specific means of doing this were unusual peculiarities of face, voice, gait and gesture, and "making points"—pieces of stage business such as Owens' Horatio Spruggins' licking crumbs or his Solon Shingle's "Jesso," that could be counted on to make the character (rather than just the actor) popular with the audience.²⁶ Owens' ability to do this was certainly a factor in his wide popular following and repeated approval from critics.
The acclaim continued when he played for the first time in Boston on March 2, 1858, at the Howard Athenaeum, an engagement which lasted until July 23. In Boston he experienced an overwhelming favorable response from audiences as well as from critics. The Boston Post observed that "we have not for years been favored with a more brilliant series of representations;" by mid-May the paper proposed six straight nights of Owens benefits, headlined as "Carnival Week" in six-inch letters.27

Boston in the 1850's rivalled New York as a thriving theatrical center, with five well-furnished, well-attended theaters. Foremost among these was the Boston Museum, followed closely by John McCullough's Howard Athenaeum, where overflowing houses witnessed Owens' performances in both his standard repertory and a number of new roles.28 A major factor in Owens' success in Boston must have been the support of an excellent stock company at the Athenaeum. Manager McCullough had expended considerable effort to assemble a uniformly strong company. William Winter observes that, "He had the sense to know that an accomplished player [such as Owens] never appears to such good advantage as when surrounded with professional associates of kindred ability."29 It was during this engagement at the Athenaeum that Winter "first enjoyed ... the rich and rosy humor of John E. Owens."30 Winter lauded, then championed the comedian consistently for the rest of his acting career.

While some of the new roles Owens played in Boston were inconsequential farces, three of them were in established classics--an indication of his attempts to stretch his acting capabilities. On March 24 he played the first of these, Bob Acres in Sheridan's The Rivals.31 Like Tony Lumpkin in Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer, which Owens had been playing since 1846, Bob Acres is a country oaf who furthers complications in a plot of misunderstandings and mistaken identities. He challenges Captain Absolute, masquerading as "Beverley" in pursuit
of Lydia, to a duel; Sheridan uses Acres, his good friend Jack, and his servant David, to present anti-duel sentiment. Acres' best scene perhaps occurs in Act II when he presents his challenge to Absolute; this scene proved to be the most popular with Boston audiences, who cheered it enthusiastically, possibly because Acres is a foil to Absolute's deception. In forthrightly challenging Absolute, Acres is not unlike Jonathan in earlier Yankee plays (see chapter one). The *Spirit of the Times* praised Owens' "exceedingly fine performance," notable for its originality and idiosyncrasies, the "spirit and zest" with which he played the part, and his ability to "give point to every line spoken." The critic further praises his thoroughness, observing that he is "evidently a student, and forms his own conceptions of character, rather than adopt those of other people."32

Critics also commended his originality and naturalness in his portrayals of Crabtree in Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, which he first played on April 6, and of Silky in Thomas Holcroft's *Road to Ruin*, on April 21. Crabtree, along with his nephew Backbite, advances the Lady Sneerwell-Joseph Surface and the Lady and Sir Peter Teazle plots by frequently delivering timely bits of gossip and caustic words on the morality of all that is occurring. He does not engage in verbal duelling so much as speak out loud, within the audience's hearing. The wittiest lines, however, are delivered by the leading characters and Crabtree is primarily a device for advancing the plot complications. In *The Road to Ruin* the character of Silky is a foil to the gentleman dandy who is the rival suitor to the protagonist, Harry Dornton, in the hand of the widow Warren. The dandy, Goldfinch, is a bristling, pompous character which Holcroft created to satirize "fashionable" life; Silky is his ruralized racetrack confidante. The role allowed Owens once again to speak his thoughts to the audience, thoughts concerning both the pretenses of Goldfinch and his lifestyle, and the valiant character of Harry; it is not so much comic as it is observant and wry. The *Spirit of the Times* praised Owens' Silky as
being "as natural and as exquisitely beautiful a piece of acting as I have seen in a long time; nature and art were so charmingly mingled that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other." All three roles demanded a great deal of energy, precise comic timing of business and line delivery, and verbal dexterity; these scripts were superior to the crudely-written farces he had relied upon in earlier years.

In Boston, according to the Spirit of the Times, "no other actor that has ever been on our boards, has in so short a time become such a universal and unqualified favorite." As tangible support for this statement, well over two hundred patrons were turned away from the Athenaeum doors for his May 15 benefit. Clearly, he had made a hit in Boston, and must have gained considerable personal satisfaction from his critical and financial success there. He must have particularly savored the comments of one reviewer, who simultaneously praised his "artistic, careful and judicious" acting while condemning the earlier deplorable "caricatures" and excesses of Burton's performances. Yet while helping to sell six straight weeks of full houses, Owens continued to insist on being listed as one of the company.

After a brief return engagement in Boston in October, he traveled to New Orleans for the entirety of the 1858-59 season, opening December 6 at Thomas Placide's Varieties Theatre. The company there was another of whom it could be said that each member was worthy of star billing—the type of "star company" with which Owens clearly preferred to be associated. It was hailed as "the strongest that has ever visited New Orleans," "the best theatre in the union," and "a company of such rare excellence . . . as has never before appeared before a New Orleans audience." Critics anticipated that revenues would be more than those of any theater in the city.
The second Varieties Theatre was in 1859 under the firm managerial control of Placide, who had overseen six seasons of the first Varieties before it burned in 1854. During his tenures Placide faced a typical dilemma of his time: whether to spend money on stars and weaken the supporting cast, or risk poor attendance by not using stars. He chose the latter path, unlike the highly successful James Caldwell at the St. Charles Theater. In fact, it became Placide's major contribution to theatrical policy in New Orleans to attempt to eliminate the star system entirely. While he was only partially successful, he did demonstrate the strengths of casting all parts of a play well, even the smallest ones. Also, he began the tradition of longer runs for plays that were handsomely produced. In pursuing these policies, Placide faced the possibility that the public would become weary of the same faces, even in varied roles, and the certainty that, at the end of each season, his carefully assembled company would disperse. Thus, each season at the Varieties brought New Orleans audiences an almost entirely different company, with only a nucleus of older members.

Placide's 1858-59 season was a successful one; the Spirit of the Times reports that *everything connected with Placide's betokens prosperity; fine houses, nothing wanting in the wardrobe and costumes . . . Placide's company is indeed first class . . . I am pleased with them all, and so is everyone that sees them perform.* He had begun what was perhaps the most brilliant epoch in the history of the Varieties theater. The three years from 1858 to 1861 were characterized by the production of plays in which many of the most eminent American actors then living took part.

During this season Owens continued to be favorably reviewed by critics, who praised the way in which he assumed completely the identity of his characters, and the degree to which they were individualized. At his two benefits the house was crammed from pit to ceiling; at his first, on February 11, he drew the largest audience of the season.
Throughout this season reviewers praised the company and Placide's policies, particularly his preference for stock and his exclusion of tragedy. However, Placide himself did not consider the season profitable enough to renew his lease, and the stockholders, incorporated as 'La Variété Association,' decided to engage Owens as artistic director, stipulating that his contract would run for four years; he was not accredited as manager, as the association itself preferred to retain that title collectively.\textsuperscript{45}

While Owens had been performing under Boucicault, and now under Placide, he must have realized the potential in New Orleans for an astute manager to take in considerable revenue. He also was in a position to observe the considerable managerial skills of these two men, particularly the former, in assembling uniformly excellent stock companies. It may well have been these two men, coupled with his success in Boston, that led him to pursue the path of stock excellence rather than stars when he returned to management duties.

In preparation for the 1859-60 season Owens spent the summer performing and recruiting his company man by man and woman by woman. By November 10, most of the company had assembled in New Orleans, in a newly-decorated theatre. Included in this "star company" were the following: H. J. Wallack, from London and New York theatres (his first appearance in New Orleans); W. W. Couldock and E. A. Sothern, from Laura Keene's theatre in New York; Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Chapman (first time in New Orleans); and Polly Marshall, from Burton's theatre in New York. The orchestra conductor was Carlo Patti, H. G. Wallack the stage manager, and John R. Smith the scenic artist; Olio performers were the Gale sisters, Adeona and Hannah. Prices of admission for the season included four to eight dollars for private boxes, seventy-five cents for upper and lower dress circles and parquet, and fifty cents for third tier boxes. White and colored galleries were identified and set at twenty-five cents. Private boxes
could be secured two days in advance, along with chairs; galleries were open
standing.46

Owens opened his season on November 12 with the comedy Old Heads and
Young Hearts and the farce, The Eton Boy, reflecting his decision to continue
Placide's policy of avoiding serious drama. Audiences responded to the bill
enthusiastically and reviewers lauded the productions for being admirably cast and
well performed.47 During the next two months the company continued to perform
to large houses and good notices in a variety of comedies and farces. Known for
paying his actors well, however, Owens must have known that he would have to
have at least one major hit. Also, the longer run was becoming more prevalent
and his competition was intense.48 The amount of competition which he
encountered in New Orleans was significantly greater than any he had faced in
Baltimore, and was of a wider variety. Along with competing theaters presenting
English-speaking drama, chief among them Caldwell's St. Charles, was the
consistently popular French opera at the Orleans Theatre and the famed French
Opera House. In addition, there were seasons of Italian opera, Italian-Mexican
opera, and English opera. To compete with this taste for opera Owens encouraged
Patti to play operatic music in his pre-show and olio numbers. Competition from
ballet, pantomime and singer-minstrels was to be offset by olio performers such as
the Gale sisters. Owens was further burdened by taxation, which by 1859 was so
high in New Orleans that many theaters placed at the head of bills a request that
patrons petition the Louisiana legislature for relief.49

In addition, Owens must have discerned that New Orleans audiences would
not be as easily pleased as those in Baltimore. Despite occasional exhibitions of
bad manners, the Crescent City's audiences believed they had acquired a
reputation for elegance and intelligence.50 They demanded, and in some cases
obtained, close to the best that the theatre world could offer. While New Orleans
critics made it a policy of refraining from criticizing any flaws in the first night of a production, most were more astute, articulate and demanding than their counterparts in other cities, outside of New York.51

This season at the Varieties allowed Owens to play a number of new roles, supported by a fine stock company of his own selection. Several of these roles were in plays which ran for extended periods, and he kept them in his repertory long after discarding others. His first performance of the season came on November 21, the thirteenth anniversary of his debut in New Orleans, as Solon Shingle. As he might have expected, tumultuous applause greeted him in this role. The orchestra seemed to be equally delighted with his return, for the musicians paraded at midnight to Mr. and Mrs. Owens' hotel room and serenaded them.52

For much of the season Owens allowed young W.A. Chapman to play first low comedian and acted much less frequently than in previous seasons, averaging only two to three nights per week. Houses were good and notices favorable, with words such as "excellence" and "perfection" recurring frequently.53

Owens' general good fortune was compounded by his production of a major hit, Dot; or The Cricket on the Hearth, which premiered on Christmas Day. An adaptation by Boucicault of Dickens' Cricket on the Hearth, Dot is a story within the framework of a fairy vision prologue and conclusion, the link with the real characters being the cricket on their hearth.54 John and Dot Perrybingle's happy home includes their baby and a servant-girl, Tilly, who provides the play's comic relief by confusing objects repeatedly (e.g., the baby and a tea-cake.) Their dear friend, May Fielding, whose sweetheart, Ned, has been lost at sea, is being forced to marry wealthy old Mr. Tackleton. Ned's father, the old toy-maker Caleb Plummer (the role taken by Owens), works for Tackleton, who keeps him in abject poverty with his blind daughter, Bertha. However, in order to keep Bertha's heart
joyous, he has manufactured a world that is a lie for her: he tells her their home is warm and well-furnished, that he is healthy and well-dressed, when actually starving and ill-clothed, and that Tackleton, whose nasty brusqueness offends all who hear him, is actually winking in jest when he sneers and shouts. On the day before Christmas (a device which nicely provides a love-and-toy metaphor throughout) everyone is at Caleb's humble home for dinner, when Ned, in disguise as a deaf old man, secretly appears to Dot outside. They embrace, and he makes her promise to keep his return a secret until he finds out if May still loves him. However, Tackleton oversees them and shows John his wife embracing this "other man." John is heartsick, and their home is plunged into accusing gloom.

In the final scene, Bertha discovers that Caleb has been deceiving her, but their reconciliation turns to greater love than ever before. Soon Ned rushes in and reveals himself to all, having married May only moments before Tackleton could do so. Ned, Caleb and Bertha embrace amid staggering and fainting. The play ends with an ecstatic Caleb calling for a dance which all energetically begin (in addition to dancing, the role called for him to sing two songs at the earlier dinner scene).

The role of Caleb calls for tenderness in his deception to Bertha, a determined opposition to the May-Tackleton marriage, and tearful contrition when his fabrication is revealed. Throughout, his lines indicate a stoic acceptance of his impoverished fate that is both inspiring and warmly human. The pathos called for in the role presented a greater demand on Owens' range of emotion than any previous part. In addition, the actions and dialogue as a toy-maker and humble home-maker afforded a wealth of opportunities for detailed stage business.

Crowded houses and effusive critical praise greeted the opening of Dot. The Picayune lauded the play's appeal to people of all ages and its portrayal of meaningful values of home and hearth. While some of the incidents (e.g., Tilly's
incessant subjection of Dot's baby to unheard-of perils of collision and demolition) were implausible, the script overall received praise for being an accurate adaptation of Dickens. Critics also found impressive the lavish staging which Owens had given the play. They admired not only the beautiful scenery, but also the smooth and rapid changes of scenes. In one scene, for instance, Owens provided simultaneously the interior and the exterior of the cottage, allowing the audience to witness two different dramatic moments at the same time.

The entire company of Dot received plaudits for its uniform excellence, but Owens earned special commendation for his portrayal of the old toymaker, a role which would become one of his most famous throughout his remaining career. The role stretched his abilities as an actor in that he was a sympathetic figure whose theatrical success depended upon total audience identification with him; he could not rely on the mannerisms and eccentric facial and vocal variations which convulsed audiences with laughter. The critics appreciated particularly the realistic detail of his character and the degree to which it was faithful to Dickens' intent. The Picayune reported that "Mr. Owens... portrayal of simple senility is wonderfully true to nature," yet he was, at 36, playing a character in his sixties. Mrs. Owens recalls that no play ever had such a hold on the enthusiasm of New Orleans audiences. She describes his performance:

There was no attempt at heroism in depicting this affectionate-hearted old man who had suffered so long with cheerful resignation; it was simple nature in all its purity and goodness, and the illusion perfect in delicate blending of pathos and quaint humor. . . .

It was a poem, a comedy and a sermon. No description can do justice to his bits of by-play—the quick transition from distress to cheerfulness, for the blind daughter's sake, caused the auditor to break into laughter while yet the eyes were moist.

When depicting tender emotion Mr. Owens had what the French term "tears in the voice" (as well as in his heart), and the effect was magnetic. It has been said of Owens' personation of Caleb Plummer, that "it compares with Solon Shingle as an oil painting does with a crayon sketch."
Mrs. Owens states that the role was one of her husband's personal favorites, and that he—well before the influence of Stanislavsky—actually merged his identity into the part. When he performed it, "he was for the time being guileless-hearted Caleb . . . He remarked to me, on our way to the theatre: 'I am still Farmer Owens, but perhaps I shall find Owens the Comedian in the dressing room.' When partly dressed, and beginning to make up his face, he turned to me, humorously saying: 'Farmer Owens is receding.' He afterwards said that as soon as he stepped on the stage, even before the applause of his reception had ceased, all feeling of uncertainty had vanished, farm and country life were forgotten, and he became absorbed in dear old Caleb."58

This transformation may have been the essential factor which enabled Owens to achieve success in this role—about which Jefferson expressed trepidation to Boucicault. Jefferson's greatest fear was that he would not be able to convey the pathos necessary to make the role effective.59 Yet it was for precisely this ability that Owens received the greatest critical acclaim. A Philadelphia reviewer twenty years later summarized Owens' effectiveness in the role:

So complex is the character, so rich in its possibilities of pathetic expression, that no mere mechanical aptitude for stage business will serve for its embodiment. . . . However skillful an actor may be in the elaboration of theatrical details, he had best not attempt the impersonation of the old toy-maker unless he have the heart to feel the pathos and the intuition to apprehend the subtleties. . . . As played last night by Mr. Owens it was as though the audience saw before them the man himself. There he was with his shabby old clothes, and his kindly face, and his loving unselfishness, and his deprecating humbleness. The man is so cowed and broken down by adversity, his self-abnegation is so complete and unquestioning, that it needs a fine artistic discrimination to save him from the good-natured contempt of the spectators."60
And critic after critic asserted that Owens captured just that precise combination of meekness, tenderness, and pathos, without becoming maudlin, which resulted in a vivid, lifelike Caleb. Critic Robert Grau remembered Owens' portrayal of Caleb a half-century later, calling it "a revelation--spontaneous and the perfecting of humor, yet with a touch of tenderness that impelled tears where smiles were already half-way on view." He recalled that Owens' greatest gift was his genius for investing one potent line or piece of business with meaning enough for an entire scene.

Immensely popular with New Orleans audiences, Dot played to sold-out houses for two months--an unprecedented long run both for the Varieties and for the city. Repeated performances of it throughout the spring of 1860 proved equally popular, and Owens capitalized upon the success by purchasing the rights from Boucicault and making the piece a regular part of his repertory.

A hallmark of Owens' management was his unerring ability to cast his plays well, evident in an incident that took place with Dot. Polly Marshall, the soubrette, was so dissatisfied with her casting as Tilly Slowboy that she implored the manager to substitute someone else. She believed the role to be completely outside of her range of acting, but Owens remained firm, and Miss Marshall withdrew in tears from the meeting. Ironically, Tilly became her first major hit of the season, and the role for which she became a favorite of New Orleans audiences.

As the success of Dot continued, Owens added special matinees to capitalize upon its success as well as to encourage the attendance of children. He also placed copies of the play on sale in the lobby, and planned special free performances, such as the one for veterans of the Battle of New Orleans on January 8. With funds from this show he was able to install furnaces at various points in the theatre for the greater comfort of the audience.
Throughout the spring of 1860 Owens continued to present light comedies, including the very successful *Everybody's Friend*, which played for the first time in New Orleans on February 13, simultaneously with its production in New York. He received critical approval once again for casting each part exactly, even to the point that it seemed each cast member had had his role written expressly for him. Under Owens' guidance the company had become a very tight ensemble.

As the vainglorious, boisterous Major Wellington DeBoots in *Everybody's Friend*, Owens returned to an exaggerated, almost farcical role. The comedy, by J.B. Buckstone, deals with the crudely amorous advances of DeBoots toward various eligible matrons and widows, while constantly bragging about his past military (and social) exploits. When Buckstone had written the play several years earlier, he had tailored the pompous DeBoots to his own abilities and had played the part to good notices in New York.

Owens' conception of the role reflects an attempt to avoid caricature; instead, he attempted to portray him as "a man of excessive vanity, weak character and infirm purpose." He individualized the portrait with a distinctive self-satisfied chuckle, along with eccentric mannerisms, such as a series of stiff poses with Napoleonic hand inserted into a uniform coat. The overall effect was aimed at making the bombastic Major more life-like.

Owens successfully filled out the season with light comedies and farces. The only dramas were sentimental pieces like *Dot* or the omnipresent *People's Lawyer*. By the end of the season, the stockholders had given him carte blanche to choose and mount productions as he saw fit, and were ultimately very satisfied with his artistic direction. As Mrs. Owens recalls, "The splendor of the season was unparalleled. The wealth, beauty and fashion congregated in New Orleans, this winter, was never exceeded in that notably gay city; the Varieties nightly thronged with pleasure seekers." In fact, nearly a decade later, the *Picayune*
looked back nostalgically: "We all have the liveliest recollections of the balmy
days of the Varieties under the Owens management, when the house was always
full and the treasurer always in good humor."72

An unfortunate incident marred the ending of the regular season on April 1.
Harry Copland, juvenile man of the company, died as a result of a shooting with
John W. Overall, dramatic critic of the True Delta.73 Depressed by this sad
occurrence, a number of the actors left the company; the few who remained, with
the featured performance of Mrs. John Wood, conducted a short "summer season"
from April 2 to May 6. Her musical abilities were highlighted by a production of
Pocahontas, for which Owens hired forty young women, who sang and danced to
great applause. Reviews note full attendance along with favorable comments for
Mrs. Wood and for Susan Denin, recruited to New Orleans by Owens.74 Again, the
Picayune praises manager Owens for having "the right people in the right places"
and notes that, "The introduction of the 'Dixie' chorus and dance, in the last scene,
is a happy thought. The culmination of the plot is greatly improved thereby."75
Mrs. Owens best tells the birth of this southern legend:

Requiring appropriate music, ... [Mr. Owens] was difficult
to please, as he wanted something spirited and yet not too
martial. Carlo Patti ... was called upon for suggestions.
He ran over various airs, all of which were rejected, and was
growing hopeless, when he struck the chords of Dixie, then a
minstrel song but little sung. 'That suits,' said Owens, "it is
exactly what I want. We will have a song and chorus with the
drill and march." It was thoroughly rehearsed, and the Zouave
drill with Dixie chorus took the town by storm. Soon the air was
whistled in the streets, played by the bands, hummed by
everyone; in fine, became the sensation of the times. And thus
originated the popularity of "Dixie's land," which resulted in its
adoption as a southern war song.76

The remainder of the short summer season was spent in the presentation of
comedy and farce, to the satisfaction of press and populace. Introducing a number
of shows for the first time, but not repeating them, Owens was apparently trying
out some pieces for possible future use. Benefits were well-attended, especially
those for Mrs. Wood, Miss Denin and Owens; his was crowded to excess on May 5 and he came out afterward to thank his patrons for their help in assuring a prosperous season, and promised to prepare a good company for the next season.77

From almost any standpoint the 1859-60 season had proven to be Owens' most satisfactory venture in managing. He had featured musical performers more than previously, particularly incidental music and dances by the Gale sisters. He had relied, successfully, on a strong stock company instead of stars. He produced a major success with Dot. It is not surprising that he had pleased the stockholders of the Varieties with his administration, both financially and artistically.78 Still incorporated as the Variete Association, they even decided at the close of this season to make Owens a full stockholder. A senior member, Henry W. Conner, observed that Owens' period of management was a move of genius, with spectacular results. His company had been "the best ever assembled for a season," and the long run of Dot was "something usually out of the question."79

Owens spent the summer of 1860 at Aigburth Vale, venturing to New York occasionally to recruit and to make preparations for the coming Varieties season. According to his wife, he determined that exactitude of realism would be a major effort of his new season; critics in New Orleans during the 1850's had begun to attack anything which tended to destroy a production's illusion of reality, along with the performance of any stock player who failed to support the leads believably, memorize lines precisely, or incorrectly interpret a script.80 Inadequate costumes and scenery were cause for complaint; players were all too often not dressing in character, expecting the audience, in its good nature or ignorance, to overlook "the negligence of actors and the stinginess of managers."81 "We cannot understand," the Picayune critic observes, "what pleasure any audience is expected to receive from the performance of a piece, where the costumes of a half dozen countries and epochs are crowded on the stage
without the slightest regard to appropriateness. More and more audiences were demanding realism, both from stock companies and from stars, both in the interpretation of lines and character, and in method of physical delivery.

Manager Owens took great pride in his theatre and determined that the 1860-61 season would surpass any previous reputation for elegance, realism and quality of acting. He did not limit himself to funds appropriated by the board of directors, but also spent his own money for costly furniture, carpeting of the house, and other amenities. He made certain that all plays would be produced with close attention to correct costume and scenery; he considered this indispensable to the presentation of a play: "From the paint room to the stage he was present and directed the veriest minutiae."

The 1860-61 company which he assembled at the Varieties was larger and even stronger than that of the previous season. The Picayune's New York correspondent complained that "if your managers pick off any more of our best actors, we shall have to run down to New Orleans next winter just to go to the theatre." And as a final touch of elegance, Owens had the ceiling of the Varieties re-painted, then added a new drop curtain, painted the interior of the house and ordered new scenery.

When the season opened on November 19, the company presented a "Grand Overture" by the orchestra, a comedy, School for Scandal, and the farce, An Object of Interest, with olio dances performed by The Brilliants, (Mr. Paul and Mrs. Francis). A "full and fashionable audience" attended, and the reviews were favorable. The Picayune observes, "Judging from what we saw, . . . we should say that the elegant comedy of Sheridan has rarely had a better, or, at all events, a more satisfactory interpretation."
For the next three months Owens presented a series of comedies and farces, but with a higher percentage of new pieces and classic works. Owens' first appearance came on November 26 in *London Assurance*, a production noted by critics as being less than consistently acted throughout. While Owens and several others received praise, reviewers criticized a number of cast members for overacting and incorrect interpretation. In general, however, 'The comedy was finely put upon the stage, all the appointments being of the most elaborate and showy kind. The audience was large and fashionable, the applause continuous, and on the whole the performance appeared to give general satisfaction.'

Other works that met with favorable response were *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Married Life*, *The People's Lawyer*, *The Windmill*, and *Dot* (which, revived, ran from January 7 through the 23rd).

A new comedy from New York, Brougham's *Playing with Fire*, opened on December 10, featuring entirely new scenery, carpeting, furniture and other appointments, and the entire strength of the company. The reviewer for the *Picayune* believes it was better cast than that of Wallack's Theatre in New York, where it had been playing for nine weeks previously. Another new piece that met with considerable success was *The Romance of a Poor Young Man* by Pierrepont Edwards, which played in New Orleans for the first time on December 24, for two weeks. Again, Owens provided entirely new scenery, correct costumes, and appropriate furniture and appointments. A playbill for the show emphasizes 'A Matchless Representation; you recognize the local color; the language is truthful; the incidents not too improbable; the motives well analyzed; the actions consecutive and consistent.' Clearly, Owens intended to maintain an illusion of reality.

The hit of the season, however, was the Scottish drama *Jeanie Deans; or, The Heart of Midlothian*, a Boucicault adaptation of the Sir Walter Scott novel.
Owens kept the Varieties dark on February 17 to allow an extra day to install elaborate scenery and rehearse thoroughly. The opening the following night, the first time the play was produced in New Orleans, provided audiences with twelve full new sets, costumes and furnishings "correct in every detail," and music composed for the occasion. When the Picayune described it as "the most successful drama ever presented to a New Orleans public," the writer was undoubtedly recalling the most impressive scene called "The Storming of the Tolbooth," which used one hundred "auxiliaries." Pictures simulating real events upon which the novel and play were based provided strikingly lifelike tableaux, and were cheered nightly. Mrs. Owens recalls that "the entire resources of the theatre... were brought into requisition" for Jeanie Deans, attracting crowded houses for nine consecutive weeks.

Late in the season Owens was pleased to introduce to his New Orleans audience a new member of the company, one "T. Edwin." In Turning the Tables, reviewers noted the striking "fraternal" similarity between this new actor and the manager, playing opposite him—understandable when it became known that T. Edwin was indeed Edwin Tom Owens, John's younger brother. Under several variations of his name this brother subsequently appeared in stock companies throughout the U.S. for several decades (causing inaccuracies in some theatre histories when confused with John). He stayed with his brother's company until the close of the season.

As with the previous season, Owens chose to relegate many farce roles to his low comedian, a Mr. Holland, although they were often roles he had in his repertory from before. Nevertheless, Owens performed in twenty-seven plays from his existing repertory, but played only three new roles in the entire season. These all came late in the year and all were minor Shakespearean roles. On March 25 he first played Sir Andrew Aguecheek, the parasitic devotee
of food and drink, in Twelfth Night. While reviewers praised all performers, they thought that Owens' realism was deserving of special commendation; he was "the foolish knight to life."99 On March 30 he first played Shallow's cousin, Slender, in Merry Wives of Windsor, to a good house. Reviewers praised his choice of Shakespeare, but did not mention his performance, as was the case on April 10 when he played the First Carrier in Henry IV, Part I.100 The Picayune praises the Shakespearean plays, produced "with such eclat, ... a fact highly creditable to the management, the company and the public. We know of no corps dramatique in the country which can play these comedies so adequately as that now at the Varieties."101 However, Owens rarely played these minor roles again.

At his closing benefit on April 6, performing a major Shakespearean role, that of Dromio of Syracuse in Comedy of Errors, Owens had the largest receipts since the Varieties was built.102 He was repeatedly called before the curtain, and thanked his patrons profusely.103 However, events had been set in motion that would rob him of much of the satisfaction of the season.

Towards the close of winter, considerable political foment developed in New Orleans over the states' rights issue.104 At first, even with the outbreak of war a constant threat, New Orleans theatregoers gave little indication of awareness of the impending conflict. Mrs. Owens remembers that, "Opinions, at first quietly expressed, developed until the 'cloud no bigger than a man's hand,' grew ominously threatening. The gay crowd in New Orleans, hitherto on pleasure bent, became thoughtful, and gave less time to amusement and more to the impending crisis; and the topic oftenest discussed was 'Seccession.'105 As early as January 24, 1861, the members of the Varieties company and the Variete Association formed a para-military organization for defense, with pro-southern loyalties, and elected Owens as captain.106 In March some New Orleans theatres began to close, and the city was rocked by news from Charleston in April. Mrs. Owens maintains
adamantly that while her husband was a Southern sympathizer, he never took up arms against the United States; he only resisted the sacrifice of his prosperity. New Orleans fell early and he was forced to forfeit the remaining years of his lease on the Varieties, which "proved an El Dorado to the Northern manager who used the theatre and its expensive appointments." He moved back to Baltimore, abandoning the scenery, costumes and furnishings, many of which he had paid for out of his own pocket.

Discounting these events, the season must be considered a successful one, both artistically and financially. He had furthered respect for realism in staging and acting, furnished the theater and its sets lavishly, and gained a reputation for managing an elegant house that attracted fashionable audiences. The gaiety of his season of light comedies would stand in stark contrast to the next (1861-62), during which the Varieties remained dark.

Although he was southern sympathizer, Owens' feelings were not deep enough to run counter to good box-office potential. In October and November of 1861 he took a brief lease on Washington's National Theatre. During this engagement he received his draft notice one night just as he was coming off the stage, remarking to fellow actors, "There is a very disagreeable draft here." One literal young man called to stage hands to shut the door, whereupon Owens "laughed heartily and explained the misapprehension." He purchased a substitute (a practice allowable by the War Office), but on the way to Baltimore to be inducted, the man vanished with Owens' $300 bounty. John W. Blaisdell, who acted with Owens during that engagement, recalls that he brought his second substitute to the dressing room at the National with him until the man could be sworn in the following morning. After the show, he and Blaisdell took the man out for a late supper and a walk down Pennsylvania Avenue, then to a friend's (an undertaker) for the night. As the actors enjoyed the warm fall weather on the
porch, the substitute fell asleep. They carried him into the back room and guarded him all night. Just after daybreak they heard "terrific screams" and found he had escaped through a back window, having awakened to find himself between two dead men. Fortunately for Owens, President Lincoln proclaimed a few days later that no more men were needed.

Owens' brief management of the National's company was unremarkable in that the plays were carry-overs from the previous season. One incident, however, provides an insight to the stern regard with which Owens controlled his actors. During the run of The French Spy, several cast members went on a jaunt to Mount Vernon, where they were detained, searched, and held as prisoners until well after the evening curtain. The manager replaced and fired all but Blaisdell, who recalls that Owens was very angry at him, but paid him his full salary (even though the theatre closed for good the following night). Blaisdell believed, however, "that the seeming severity with me was through good-natured regard for me on the part of Mr. Owens."

Perhaps lured by the proximity of Baltimore and the memory of his past successes, Owens returned to the Front Street Theater in November, 1861, to an enthusiastic welcome. The Baltimore Sun reports that the "talented company .. . enjoyed a liberal and hearty demonstration of public favor last night, and the old favorite, John E. Owens, was greeted with such a welcome as made the house echo again." Under the management of Susan Denin he repeated such standard pieces as The Toodles, Forty Winks, The Poor Gentleman, Paul Pry, and The People's Lawyer, and announced that this would be Baltimoreans' last opportunity "for a long time" to see him, prior to his "departure for California," which he actually postponed until 1869.

Owens next traveled to Pittsburgh, where he intended to perform the same plays. However, antagonism there against him was so strong for his "alleged
Southern sentiments, that threats of personal violence were rife, and Mr. Owens' friends prevailed upon him to quietly leave town without making any attempt to fulfill his engagement.  

By not becoming actively involved in the war issue, Owens acted atypically for his profession. James Murdoch, for instance, like a number of other actors, immediately closed an engagement in Pittsburgh when the war broke out and went to Washington to lend his name to the recruitment effort by giving patriotic readings. He dedicated himself tirelessly to the war effort, appearing in countless northern cities, soldiers' hospitals, and army camps, sometimes within the range of gunfire. Lawrence Barrett actually enlisted, serving with some distinction as a captain in a Massachusetts regiment. John Brougham went on record against the war, deploring "the madness of the projected dismemberment . . . of the union." On both sides, many actors helped army regiments perform dramatic productions in the field, or in cities to celebrate victories; two of these were future managers of renown: young Augustin Daly and Steele MacKaye. Since most theatrical centers were in the North, actors like Owens, whose sympathies lay with the South, had to keep silent or face a decreased number of bookings.

Returning to Aigburth Vale for the winter, Owens' next engagement came in March, 1862, when he went to Boston to succeed Thomas Placide as leading comedian in the Davenport-Wallack Combination, a company which had come into being the previous January. After a western tour they had returned to New York, then Boston, where Wallack and Placide withdrew. As this was the farewell performance (March 3), Owens got to perform only one night; however, he received top star billing, as Boston's "Favorite Comedian." He performed *The Poor Gentleman* and *The People's Lawyer* in a benefit for the manager, Henry Jarrett, which was well attended.
From Boston the combination traveled to Philadelphia and a number of smaller New England towns, then returned in April to Boston's Academy of Music. In 1862 nearly all newspapers, north and south alike, were jammed with war news and long casualty lists, and shortened in an effort to save paper; consequently, many have little or no theatre notices. Although the company's exact itinerary is not known, playbills indicate that the company performed in Portland, Maine; Providence, Rhode Island; and Worcester, Massachusetts, where it closed its season. Owens did not rejoin the combination in the fall, and it disbanded the following spring.121

Owens began the 1862-63 season late, playing Wood's Theater in Cincinnati December 1-13, where he was hailed as a favorite.122 His roles were essentially the same as he had played the previous season, choosing only to add Dot and a couple of farces. The Cincinnati Daily Commercial proclaims, "On and off the stage there is not a more genial actor and gentleman... There was a jam last night to welcome [him], and he could not have asked for a heartier greeting. He is the same delightful comedian of years past; and his comedy is as different from the low, buffoonery on the stage as Washington Irving's humor is different from the wit of a comic almanac."123 The paper was perhaps referring to the type of comedian no longer popular in large eastern cities, who had drifted to cities such as Cincinnati, on the western fringes of settled America, to gain a following. These men depended upon physical exaggeration, usually obesity, and flagrant playing to the audience at the expense of characterization, for their laughs. One example of such questionable hilarity was achieved by comedian Charles Bishop (300 lbs., 6'2", and "a pouch that would do credit to the most corpulent Falstaff") who would dance between tiny Ellen and Blanche Chapman.124

Owens then toured St. Louis, Nashville and Memphis.125 By February he
was in Boston again, where the Post chronicles his opening at the Howard Athenaeum, calling him "The most popular comedian of the day." He played almost exactly the same leading comedian roles which had sustained him in the previous year and a half. When he returned to Cincinnati in April, again at Wood's Theater, excellent, hearty audiences attended despite frequent heavy rains. For his benefit on April 24, an immense audience crowded into the theater, and many were turned away from the box office. One review from the Daily Commercial reflects the high regard in which citizens and reviewers of smaller cities such as Cincinnati held Owens:

His conceptions are peculiarly his own, and while a certain individuality is to be found in them all, they are, singly, so nearly perfect that they seem to be match pictures on widely isolated subjects. His claim as the first of living American comedians... becomes plainer with each engagement. He has reached that happy pitch of reputation as humorist where even his serious and monosyllabic remarks are considered funny flashes, his audiences reasonably supposing that there must be a subtlety of wit in what he says, when no humor is evident on the surface. ... That he is our best living comedian is becoming an acknowledged fact.

As the engagement closed, and hundreds of people were compelled to stand nightly or be turned away, Owens agreed to do one more performance, a benefit for a friend on May 8. Remaining for a few days of rehearsals, Mrs. Owens was surprised when he came home one day and ordered her to pack up so they could leave that night. Noting her look of amazement, he continued, "I can't tell you why, but on my way to the theatre an overwhelming impression possessed me to start for home; I could not shake it off." He gave the friend a check for the inconvenience and rushed home by train. Back in Baltimore, their arrival was a joyous surprise, and nothing at all was amiss as they and his parents chatted enthusiastically all afternoon and evening. They both mocked the absurdity of his premonition. The next morning Owens' mother died suddenly of heart failure (attack). She literally died in his arms, gazing at her son. The death shattered
him; he had loved his mother with extreme devotion and tenderness. For months he was unable to return to his profession, but passed the time quietly at his farm, in intense grief.  

He spent much of the following season in the same manner—quietly resting at, and supervising, his beloved Aigburth Vale. His first engagement of fall, 1863, came in November when he traveled to Boston to perform at the Howard Atheneum, receiving star billing. Supported by a strong company, he received good notices and enthusiastic houses (some called him before the curtain three times and applauded after certain effective scenes). After this he toured New England towns, then returned to Boston briefly. Throughout, he performed roles from his standard repertory: *Heir at Law; People's Lawyer; Poor Gentleman; She Stoops to Conquer; Paul Pry; Forty Winks; Live Indian; Toodles; Self; and Everybody's Friend*. Playing major roles in comedy, he relinquished acting in farces to the low comedian of whatever company supported him. He had now fully graduated from low comedian to lead comedian. The only time he did farce was for a benefit, and these were dredged up from seasons well past.

Boston had come to be one of his favorite cities, and its citizens reciprocated with a love which claimed him much as did Baltimore and New Orleans (and, more recently, Cincinnati). Among his many close friends there, with whom he often socialized, were prominent literary figures such as Henry W. Longfellow, Oliver W. Holmes, and Swiss zoologist and author Louis Agassiz. While Owens himself did not write, he devoted a great deal of time to reading, particularly Shakespeare, while traveling and resting on his farm. A close student of the Bard, he constantly re-read favorite speeches looking for new insights into characters he portrayed. One of his favorite quotations, by Samuel Johnson, which he had inscribed on the fly-leaf of his Shakespeare edition was: "Time which is continually washing away the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes..."
without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare. In his *Autobiography*, Joseph Jefferson refers to Owens admiringly as a "legitimate" comedian, qualified to act in classic English and Shakespearean comedies creditably.

Returning to Washington in December 1863, Owens appeared for the first time at Ford's Theater, sustained by a good company under manager John T. Ford. He followed an engagement by Hackett, yet still filled the theater every night. Additional competition was provided by the revived Davenport-Wallack Combination at Grover's Theatre, but he continued to draw well. The *Washington Star* reports a "bumper" benefit on December 26, and praises him in general terms while avoiding comparing him and Hackett. With such successes now occurring regularly, he was able to take periods of rest he would never have considered previously. The rest of that winter and the entire spring of 1864 he spent as Farmer Owens, tending to Algurth Vale.

During nearly all of his touring, his wife accompanied Owens and supported his efforts with tremendous pride, although she looked with contempt upon theatrical life and people in general. Clara Morris recalls that "His marriage seemed an expression of eccentricity, and one felt as if one had received a dash of cold water in the face, when the . . . decidedly worldly Mr. Owens presented the little Quakeress—with a countenance of gentle severity—as his wife. She . . . watched him above her knitting needles with closed, folded lips and condemning eyes, as he strutted and fumed and convulsed his audience." Yet she was a devoted wife and a tender gentle nurse when her husband occasionally fell ill.

The years 1856 to 1864 had proven to be a watershed period for Owens' career. As an actor, he had matured from a low comedian playing broadly comical roles in farces to a respected lead comedian noted for his individualized, natural performances in classic comedies and occasional serious plays requiring pathos as
well as humor. In an age which demanded an increased faithfulness to nature, he met its demands and earned widespread critical acclaim in the process. He toured more widely, and in cities such as New Orleans and Boston, where audiences expected consistently believable performances, he elicited the same wide popular following he had enjoyed in smaller, less-sophisticated cities such as Cincinnati.

Moving with the trend toward realism in characterization which closed the century, Owens assumed the identity of the characters he played during this period, incorporating idiosyncrasies and seeking to convey subtle emotional qualities which the playwright may have glossed over. In this vein, he was able to create brilliant portraits out of two minor roles, both of which he first played during these years, Solon Shingle and Caleb Plummer, which would remain his two greatest characterizations. The widely different demands of the two, one a comic role that addressed the audience directly and the other a serious role that called for audience belief in a realistic, subtle characterization, indicate the range of his acting ability at this stage of his career.

Critics had praised Solon Shingle and Caleb Plummer, as well as many other roles for their subtlety and realistic details of age, even though Owens was only in his thirties. His wife summarizes his mastery of unique, eccentric older characters:

The angularity of limbs, the stooping shoulders, the semi-palsied appearance of hands, and the wizen face were all marvelous personalities. . . . The shrewd avaricious glance which gave way to servile obsequiousness, in change of situation, the piping voice and cackling laugh were each and all masterly points. Owens simulated age with extraordinary accuracy, but he was not unmindful that age has many phases and personal distinctive traits; hence, of the numerous old men he played, no one resembled the other. In Solon Shingle his voice ruralized into eccentricity, and in Caleb Plummer it sobered into pathos. His versatility was wonderful; he could be a young man, a romping lad, or a centenarian with equal fidelity to nature.

As a manager during this period, Owens anticipated trends of realism in
acting, scenery and costuming, and he consistently and accurately read audience
tastes in play selection and performers. Catering to his audiences' comfort and
desire for elegance, he furnished his theaters comfortably and tastefully. He
carefully supervised all details of casting, staging and rehearsing, which yielded
memorable productions. Following the policies of Boucicault and Placide, he
eschewed the star system in favor of a uniformly excellent stock company—a "star
company" in its own right. The successes of such productions as Dot
and Jeanie Deans were some of the earliest long runs in American theatre.

Yet some unanswered questions remained for Owens. He must have
wondered whether or not he could repeat his critical and popular successes in the
most important theatrical center: New York. Would the regional Yankee Solon
Shingle or the quaintly pathetic Caleb Plummer play as well in this most
sophisticated of American cities, much less play for any length of time?
Conversely, he must have also wondered if he might expand his popular following
into areas of the emerging West, where audience tastes were far less
sophisticated. Furthermore, the Civil War had totally disrupted his career in New
Orleans, yet he had continued successfully elsewhere; he must have wondered
whether he could continue to successfully skirt the war as a theatrically disruptive
force. Thus, in 1864 he was at perhaps the most critical juncture of his career.
4. The First Long Runs and Final Repertory

(1864-1872)

The years 1864 to 1872 represent the zenith of John Owens' career. Entering this period, he was riding upon a crest of popular and critical acclaim unsurpassed by any other comedian of the time. Performing at a time when the popularity of comedians such as Burton had waned, after the deaths of Yankees Marble and Silsbee, Owens was encountering only minimal competition from Joseph Jefferson and John Sleeper Clarke, who would become nationally known in the 1870's. However, having achieved clear successes in Baltimore, Washington, Boston and New Orleans, he had yet to establish his name in New York. The summer of 1864 provided him with perhaps the most important opportunity of his career. In the middle of June he received a letter from George Wood (formerly manager in Cincinnati) informing him that he (Wood) would be taking over Wallack's theater in New York, previously known as Brougham's. He intended to make it a house exclusively for comedy and asked Owens to inaugurate it as his first star. Concerned that the theater had deteriorated somewhat from a first class position, Owens hesitated, even under Wood's reassurance that "the reputation of John Owens would elevate any theatre, and stamp its position as equal to the best." Finally, after receiving assurance that he would be supported by a "company capable of playing the old comedies in a manner acceptable to a New York audience," he signed a six-week contract, renewable if mutually satisfactory. Owens was aware of, and concerned about, both the lowly regard in which many people held the theatre, and the demanding tastes and standards of those who did attend. New York represented a performance standard unmatched by the cities in which he had spent so much of his time, and he had not appeared in
New York for over thirteen years, and at that time he had not been featured as a star engaged to inaugurate and elevate a particular theater.

Owens opened at Wood's re-named Broadway Theatre (the same house in which he had last performed in New York) on August 29, 1864 as Solon Shingle. From opening night he established himself as a major attraction, in a hit that packed the Broadway each night with not even standing room available by curtain time. His eccentric old farmer instantly became a leading attraction in New York and people in the streets greeted each other with old Solon's familiar "Jesso, Jesso," and "Why, Mr. -------, how do you do.?"

New York critics recalled Owens from before as being a "good, sound, honest and reliable comedian, without great force, or that electric impulse that sways the multitude, but [whose] . . . genuine talent . . . conveys the idea that he is in earnest and . . . carries you with him." Now, they recognized his excellence; the New York Times had nothing but praise for his Solon:

Mr. Owens is a remarkable quiet actor. He does not rely upon those broad comedy "splurges" which bring down the cheers of "the groundlings," but bases his claims for public support rather on the legitimacy of his acting, than the broad grin, which any buffoon can excite. We have rarely seen more legitimate good acting than that which he exhibited.

By September 8 the New York Times called the performance "truly great;" by December 8 it was "the greatest eccentric characterization on the American stage." The New York Herald announced, "We consider his acting in Solon Shingle [sic: the proper title was still The People's Lawyer, but becoming more interchanged daily] the best seen upon the New York stage for many a long day . . . His success is entirely deserved. [This is] . . . one of the finest specimens of character acting ever seen." Other critics concurred: "We have never seen a more perfect piece of acting of the kind;" "Decidedly one of the best, if not the best, positive characterization ever presented in this city;" "One of the most magnificent pieces of character acting ever seen." In late
September Edwin Forrest attended and pronounced it "one of the most brilliant and complete triumphs of genius" he had ever seen.  

On October 17 Wood announced an extension from six to eight weeks; on November 21 he announced an indefinite extension--this opposite the powerful competition nearby of both Edwin Forrest and Edwin Booth. On December 22, the 100th consecutive performance of the play, Wood took out a special advertisement to thank the public for its generosity and appreciation; photographs of Owens as Solon were handed out to all patrons. One newspaper noted the event in this way:

In one hundred days France passed through the throes of two revolutions--lost a king, gained an emperor and again bowed to a king. In one hundred days Napoleon left Elba, marched to the throne of France, fought Waterloo, and was conquered. In one hundred nights, John Owens fought a fight for popularity single-handed against the hordes of New York theatre-goers, and conquered them. In one hundred nights the Broadway theatre passed from the position of a concert hall to the height of fashion. We take pleasure in chronicling such great victories. Solon Shingle will run additional hundreds of nights if this great artist so chooses.

Brander Matthews, drama critic for *Scribner's Monthly*, recalled in 1879 that 'the little old-fashioned play was one of the greatest successes of the season. . . . His acting of Solon Shingle is always seen with pleasure. He gives us a direct and simple picture of a homely New England farmer, loquacious, inquisitive, shrewd in a measure, full of his own importance,--a picture not sufficiently ideal to call out the finest qualities of the actor, but real and distinct to an extraordinary degree.' This personification was so real in fact, that for many New Yorkers, reported the *Atlantic Monthly*, "Solon Shingle' became a tangible reality, whose personal identity was gravely discussed by old and young, from the Points to the Avenues." The *Atlantic* critic, like many others, particularly admired Owens' realistic portrayal:

As a copy, it was as exact as a photograph. . . . There was perfection alike in the dress, the awkward, rolling gait, suggestive of following the plough and straddling furrows, the
shrewd, inquisitive habit, and the quaint patois, as true to the
original in the pronunciation of each syllable as in the whole. ..
.. Not only each word, but all its parts, became a matter of
individual study, into which the entire performance resolved
itself,—a profound study for the reproduction of the personal
identity of one man standing as a type for many. 16

Much of the humor of Owens’ Solon derived from his peculiar, ever-recurring
references to his "bar'l of apple-sars," his frequent utterances of "Jess so," and his
drawn-out process of standing up or sitting down:

The slow drawing up of the draggling coat-tails, his feeble
gropings for the arm of the chair, his letting himself down to
within an inch of the seat, then when the bent old legs would
bend no more, his suddenly dropping into it like overripe fruit
from a tree,—this action and the scene in the witness box were
the finest points he made. 19

At the same time most critics were quick to point out that The People’s Lawyer
was poorly written and overly maudlin, and that Owens’ performance was its
saving grace. Nearly every reviewer believed that his performance triumphed
over a very poor vehicle. 18

Owens’ fame as Solon was so extensive that a number of artists sought to
paint portraits of him in this role. 19 A full-length oil by Constant Meyer, after
exhibition in New York, was purchased for a private collection in Paris, and a
three-quarter size oil by A. Cross was retained by Owens for his library at
Aigburth Vale. As a result of his popularity as Solon, Owens was often invited to
perform at various public functions, such as a benefit he gave in Brooklyn at the
Orphans’ Asylum, where a crowded public audience donated a large admission to
join the excited children there. 20

Along with Solon Shingle each night, Owens continued to enact other plays
from his repertory at the Broadway. He began with Tom Taylor’s The Victims,
which drew crowded and enthusiastic audiences (who came, though, primarily for
The People’s Lawyer). In The Victims, Owens received critical praise for
triumphing over a less-than-admirable supporting company, although that
company, which Wood had promised would strengthen the production, contained a number of well-known figures: E.L. Davenport and J. W. Wallack, Jr. (from their dissolved combination); Sol Smith, Jr.; and William Wheatley. The New York Times deplored the quality of these supporting players:

The general cast of the piece left everything to be desired. Far better than the buffoonery of the "Victims" is the quiet naturalness and sly humor of Solon Shingle. Mr. Owens' representation ... is truly great. Overweighed as he is with shocking bad actors, he is by no means borne down ... We have no recollection of a better bit of truly artistic personation. It is amazing that the heavily-mustachioed gentlemen who compose the company at the Broadway do not learn something of stage-effectiveness from the excellent specimen here presented.22

In The Poor Gentleman, Owens was also singled out for praise: "By far the best Ollapod seen in New York for many years. ... Equal in skill and ability to his Solon Shingle."23 Sweethearts and Wives, however, was castigated by the New York Times: "The piece has no redeeming point. The dialogue is commonplace; the characters conventional; the situations silly. Mr. Owens is too great an artist to waste himself on such old-fashioned crudities. It is surely within the scope of modern drama to find a better foil for Solon Shingle than this rickety bit of buffoonery."24

As Owens played Solon, he gradually enlarged the part, adding improvised lines and business, while simultaneously reducing the broadly farcical elements to more realistic (although no less humorous) mannerisms. Eventually, during this long run, he changed the name of The People's Lawyer to Solon Shingle, and rewrote portions to lessen other roles. After six months as Solon Shingle, Owens asked for a change. He implored Wood to allow him to play a different role, and after some discussion, agreed with him to start a run as Caleb Plummer in Dot. This play opened March 13, 1865, and continued to play to full houses, generating reviews as enthusiastic as those won by The People's Lawyer. The Spirit of the Times' critic denounces Boucicault's version as inferior to the original, yet raves about the realism of Owens' Caleb:
... His personification of Caleb is one of the most perfect artistic studies I have seen for many a year, every look, gesture and word is perfect. I am not given to the melting mood, and least of all inclined to allow Mr. Owens to sway me; but I own that in his rendition of Caleb he caused my vision to be obscured by something that had a remarkable resemblance to a tear. I cannot award him greater praise for this finished piece of acting.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean lavished additional tribute upon Owens' Caleb while touring the U.S. After seeing Owens' performance several times, Mrs. Kean wrote to him:

Accept the best thanks of Mr. Kean and myself for the great pleasure you gave us... We laughed and wept like children, over the amusing and touching simplicity of old Caleb; and we both agreed that we had not for a long time seen such admirable acting.

The Keans and he established such a strong friendship, (and they encouraged him in his plans to perform in England,) that Owens gave up eleven nights at the Broadway so that they could perform while in New York. Their engagement, which was to have begun April 17, after Owens' thirty-third week, was postponed because of the assassination of President Lincoln. Kean particularly liked Owens' physicalization and make-up, and asked if he might observe him getting ready for the part one night. After doing so, and marveling at the thoroughness of the process, he thanked Owens for what he termed "an artistic revelation." After two weeks of full houses, the Keans relinquished the theater to Owens, who continued with Solon Shingle and The Live Indian, a bill which Wood announced as 'clearly unnecessary to change ... until Mr. Owens' engagement comes to an end.

On May 26 he ended the longest run of his career: 270 nights (170 of them as Solon Shingle). His closing night house was overflowing, and the nine-month engagement had not only helped restore the reputation of the Broadway Theatre, but had netted him $65,891.39. It also represented the longest run yet achieved by any actor in New York or any other city. However, Owens showed no
Intention of resting on his laurels. Having made arrangements with Benjamin Webster of the Theatre Royal Adelphi in London, he planned to sail May 27 to England. Wood refused to allow him two weeks he requested for rest before leaving, even though Owens offered to buy out the time and supply a star to fill the theater. Not having adequate time to see and thank well-wishers, he took out a long advertisement in the New York Herald to express his gratitude to the public of New York, which included these sentiments:

Success does not at all times appeal to the same emotions; and though in my long and varied professional experience it has been my proud fortune to receive many flattering and cherished marks of popular favor and esteem, yet never before has my pride as an artist and my gratitude as a man been more deeply stirred than by the kindness here lavished upon me; and I can but say that the thanks which now I seek to convey spring from the most earnest and warmest impulses of my nature.  

He concluded with a statement of thanks to the "gentlemen of the critical press, whose impartial sense of justice and of the true requirements of art, have pointed alike their praises and their censure."  

Only ten hours after his last performance, he departed on the steamer City of Boston for England, accompanied by his business manager, Clifton W. Tayleure. They were cordially greeted in England by Benjamin Webster. The theatre establishment in general, however, was not cordial. Mrs. Owens reports an atmosphere charged "with the unuttered thunder of 'we don't want you here,' and 'we hope you will be a failure.'" His debut in London appeared to be an uncertain venture at best, since the novelty of Yankee characters had diminished for British audiences by 1865, except in more sophisticated forms, such as Asa Trenchard in Our American Cousin. Throughout the first half of the century, Britishers had found their Yankee counterparts curious, and while condescending toward them, had still flocked to see their theatrical portrayal. As early as 1824, Charles Mathews, the English comedian, had traveled to America and returned with a character sketch he humorously portrayed. James Hackett, the first native
American to perform in England in Yankee roles, appeared there in 1827 and again in 1833, followed by Hill in 1836, Marble in 1844, and Silsbee in 1851.38 Thus, the shrewd New England peddler/farmer/teamster character was no novelty to English audiences by the time of Owens' arrival. In fact, one of Silsbee's reviewers noted as early as 1851 that the stereotyped Yankee was "fast becoming ineffective."39

Having so many Yankee predecessors, Owens could not depend upon the novelty of the Yankee character to attract audiences, even though the Spirit of the Times believed that Owens was superior to Marble and Hill, and the newspapers predicted that he "cannot fail in making a decided impression, as it will be the most brilliant specimen of eccentric comedy acting that our English cousins have ever had the opportunity of witnessing."40

In London Owens faced stiff competition, not only from numerous thriving British productions, but also from imported American stars, among them the comedians E. A. Sothern and J. B. Buckstone (better known as a playwright) and Mr. and Mrs. Dion Boucicault, who were drawing good audiences.41 The Times (London), however, regarded Owens as a better draw, calling him "the most popular comedian of the United States."42

**Solon Shingle** opened on July 3, 1865 at The Theatre Royal Adelphi to a full and fashionable house, including a number of discriminating intellectual figures, among them the American Minister, B. F. Moran, and Charles Dickens, all of whom sent him warmly congratulatory notes, as did visiting actress Charlotte Cushman.43 Dickens, in fact, said that he had "never witnessed a more complete expression of humor or a more vivid development of character."44 London critics deplored the play itself; the Daily News called it "one of the most impudently bad pieces of composition we have ever witnessed."45 Yet they praised the manner in which Owens had revised it, "elaborating it, without any regard to the story or the other characters. [However] . . . the disrespect which he showed to the story
was well deserved, for the plot is little more than an encumbrance to Solon Shingle.\textsuperscript{46} Audiences and reviewers alike appear to have admired a performer who could win praise when handicapped by such a vehicle: 'The man who found a diamond amongst a heap of rubbish is not reported to have talked much about the rubbish. The play-goers will find Owens' Solon Shingle the diamond in the dust-heap; ... The diamond has a bad setting; but anything more brilliant than the gem itself we have never seen.'\textsuperscript{47}

The \textit{Times} considered Owens to be 'one of the most elaborate artists ever seen upon any stage, that of Paris not excluded:

\begin{quote}
[His Solon Shingle] ... is evidently in a state of semi-inebriety, which has become to him a second nature. With small features, and a forehead rendered abnormally large by artificial means; with a long ill-fitting surtout that looks as if it had been tossed upon him with a pitchfork; with a hat, in which the brim has lost its boundary-mark, ... he presents a figure totally unlike anything that has hitherto been seen on this side of the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

Commenting upon the uniqueness of his dialect, different from the stereotypical sound of previous Yankees, of whom Britishers had tired, \textit{The Times} concluded that 'a new type is clearly before us.'\textsuperscript{49}

Observing his 'consistency of detail that is really marvellous [sic],' reviewers singled out Solon's sitting-down process, which brought a 'most remarkable ... hearty roar' from the audience. In all of his business, 'Mr. Owens is free from the coarse vulgarity which made the late 'Josh' Silsbee so detestable.'\textsuperscript{50} As \textit{The Daily News} perceived, 'everything depends upon the humour and mannerisms of Solon Shingle,' and its reviewer lauded the way in which Owens had individualized and controlled those mannerisms.\textsuperscript{51} Perhaps the highest commendation bestowed upon Owens during this engagement was the observation by \textit{The Daily News} that he was truly deserving of the appellation 'great genius,' a term which the paper also applied to his immediate predecessor at the Adelphi, Miss Kate Bateman--indicating the competition he had to follow to
gain acceptance. This was echoed by The Times: 'That Mr. Owens is a consummate artist there is no doubt.'

Occasionally accompanied by The Toodles, Solon Shingle (Owens now shunned its former title altogether) ran at the Adelphi for six weeks, when Webster offered to extend the engagement for another two. Doing so, Owens continued to attract relatively large and appreciative audiences, closing on August 19.

He next appeared in the town of his birth, Liverpool, at the Prince of Wales Theatre, commencing a two-week engagement on September 11. His main competition would be the farewell tour of Kate Bateman at the Williamson Square Theatre, prior to her departure for the U.S. Anticipating his arrival, the Liverpool Mail reported his success in London in triumphing over "a bad comedy," and hoped that the mediocre quality of the Prince of Wales' supporting company would not hinder him.

A filled-to-overflowing crowd greeted his opening in Liverpool and, reports the Daily Courier, "the laughter was continuous and hearty. . . . Mr. Owens was called to the front . . . and was loudly cheered." Critics attacked the script as "one of the flimsiest specimens of playcraft that we have ever witnessed," with the other characters merely sketched in to give Solon "somebody to talk to." But Owens' performance was notable for its control; he refrained from the farcical excesses earlier Yankees had indulged in, particularly in Irish stereotypes. The Courier praises his originality of Yankee characterization, believing it to be a truer picture of American rustics than others which had been imported previously: "There is no doubt that the conception hits off many of their most assailant little weaknesses."

Many theatregoers did not understand the character or various local references, but in general they appreciated Owens' acting ability, particularly his
detailed mannerisms: "For facial expression, minute elaboration in details, flashes of natural humor and Yankee drollery, and consummate self-control, Solon Shingle is remarkable. We have seen, from time to time, little 'bits' of the character, but we never remember to have seen the excellencies so combined or so cleverly displayed as by Mr. Owens." Thus, his British visit was moderately successful, and he was able to return to the United States knowing that he had revived some interest in a Yankee character when Britshers were tired of them. But perhaps not considering his success sufficient to warrant a return, or just contented with his career in America, he never returned to England.

George Wood had written him asking him to return to the stage of the Broadway in November. He replied in the affirmative, but requested a period of relaxation until January. He had two intentions in mind: the poor company which had supported him in New York convinced him of the need to rehearse more extensively this time; and the English opinion of the shoddiness of the vehicle he was using convinced him of the need to revise the piece more thoroughly. His wife asserts that he was not characteristically swayed by criticism, but he did acknowledge imperfections and accept suggestions for improvement whenever they surfaced, both in his acting and in the plays and roles he selected. He and business manager Tayleure reworked the script, minimizing the sentimentality and moralizing, and enlarging his role even more, renaming the play Uncle Solon Shingle, although the 'Uncle' was soon dropped. This version, while preserving all of Solon's eccentricities, added stronger motives for his actions and a slightly stronger plot to sustain them. While the changes are extensive, he did not notify the original author, Jones, until six years later (see below).

Upon his return to Baltimore in November, Owens was prevented from getting the rest he sought by friends and admirers there, who urged him to play the Front Street Theatre. The Baltimore Sun reports a hearty reception by
large and appreciative audiences, and praises the good dramatic company which sustained him and his quiet humor as Caleb Plummer. Keeping his repertory fresh, he played two or three nights of Caleb Plummer (now so named, although no evidence exists that he Solon-ized Dot as well), Solon Shingle, and other standard repertory roles.

He opened at the Broadway Theatre again on January 8, 1866, New York's record-breaking coldest night, with the temperature at 20° below zero. Nevertheless, a large, enthusiastic audience greeted him as he performed Uncle Solon Shingle. The New York Times lauded his "new version . . . in which the character of Solon Shingle is carefully preserved, while the other actors are relieved from their unhappy condition of comparative idiocy." Audiences filled the Broadway every night, with standing room only through January, and Solon Shingle, alternated occasionally with Caleb Plummer and The Live Indian, continued through April 28. Mrs. Owens recalls that "unabated prosperity continued until the closing night." * * * *

The spring of the year found him in Boston again, May 3-12, at the Boston Theatre, where he performed in Solon Shingle, as well as in Happiest Day of My Life and Live Indian. Crowded houses enthusiastically applauded the new version, which the Post pronounces "much improved, [with] . . . the part of Shingle greatly augmented--sufficient in fact, to justify its change of title. [The new character is] . . . one of the most natural and original that has been seen on the American stage for years." While audiences would probably have supported his staying longer in Boston, he had contracted to play in Providence and other New England towns; thus he completed his 1865-66 season, returning to Algburth for the summer. * * *

The 1866-67 season was a frenetic one, taking Owens to fifteen different cities in nine months, his most intensive touring to date. On September 24 he
began in Philadelphia at the New Chestnut Street Theatre under the management of W. E. Sinn. Since this was his first appearance there in eight years, he was again a novelty. The *Philadelphia Inquirer,* calling him "the most original, versatile and popular comedian of the day," notes his support by "a fine company" in performing before crowded houses which attended his *Caleb Plummer,* *Uncle Solon Shingle* and *The Live Indian* until October 20. From Philadelphia he traveled to Cincinnati, opening November 12 at the National Theatre with *Self* and *Happiest Day.* The manager called the opening night the largest crowd he had ever had in what was regarded as a large theater. The bill remained largely unchanged and drew favorable critical response and crowded houses. The same was true for one week engagements in Buffalo and Troy, New York. From there, he returned to the Broadway Theatre in New York, opening in December for four weeks. Standing room crowds still attended *Solon Shingle* there, although none of the major papers reviewed it this time. Maintaining the same repertory as he had performed all fall, he played four nights in Newark, New Jersey, in mid-January, then performed successfully in Louisville, Kentucky. The *Louisville Daily Democrat* reports densely crowded houses and warm, appreciative applause. It regrets the comedian's short stay, noting the besieged state of the box office, praising his "versatility of genius, and his protean-like power of disguising his identity." On the morning of his successful benefit (February 1) the paper predicted "the most brilliant gathering of the season." Paying heed to his love for common folk, he agreed to perform for one night in New Albany, Kentucky, a roughneck frontier town. While his posters for *The Live Indian* drew a good house, patrons left disappointed and mumbling that they had been misled—no live Indian had appeared to throw knives or do juggling tricks.

On February 18, 1867, he returned to New Orleans for the first time in six years. He found a city devastated by the war but still enthusiastic in its
welcome. This engagement was his only departure from performing at the
Varieties in New Orleans; Ben DeBar had cajoled him into performing at his St.
Charles Theater, counting (wisely) upon the drawing power of the return of this
favorite comedian.\textsuperscript{85} He played in \textit{Solon Shingle}, \textit{The Live Indian} and
\textit{Heir at Law}, and New Orleanians greeted him with unparalleled fervor; for the ten
nights he performed, even standing room was never available by the day of
performances and hundreds of patrons were unable to gain admission.\textsuperscript{86}

The New Orleans press prided itself on discerning Owens' greatness before
New York had done so and made ill-concealed references to the quibblings of
northern critics about his work.\textsuperscript{87} The \textit{Daily Picayune}, after citing the huge and
"most brilliant ever" audiences at the St. Charles, lauds the "vigorous breadth of
character, . . . quaint but delightful humor, and . . . artistic completeness"
of \textit{Solon Shingle}, noted long before the New York public or the London critics.\textsuperscript{88}
Its reviewer notes the change in the character, believing it to be more generalized
than just New England, but still exhibiting realistically "the intense selfishness,
the solid self-complacency [and] . . . the restless inquisitiveness of the New
England character."\textsuperscript{89} For his farewell benefit on March 1 he performed
\textit{The Victims} and \textit{Forty Winks}; as anticipated, the evening was hugely successful,
and the \textit{Picayune} lionized the "genius of the greatest comedian now gracing the
stage."\textsuperscript{90}

Appended to the \textit{Picayune}'s coverage of the benefit is a paragraph regretting
that Owens' "health has been greatly impaired lately by the fatigues of travel, and
of his incessant professional labors during the season."\textsuperscript{91} From this time until his
death from stomach hemorrhage twenty years later, he was plagued by bouts of
sickness brought on by overexertion, which he ignored in most cases, deferring his
recovery until each summer's rest at his farm.
His condition was certainly not helped by his 1867 spring schedule. He opened March 18 for one week at Baltimore's Holliday Street Theatre under manager John T. Ford in *Solon Shingle* and *The Live Indian*. Mrs. Owens notes recurrent and conspicuous adulation by local fans as he went about his daily business in that city. She also recalls that he spent his days supervising work at his farm, some of which was carelessly completed. Upbraiding his men once for their shoddy work, he was angered by their laughing at him. Enraged, he was about to fire all of them when they begged his pardon, explaining that they could not help themselves: they had seen him act the previous night and could not shake the hilarity of his performance from their minds. From this he extracted the maxim: "Never allow your servants to see you play a comic part if you wish to maintain dignified authority."  

With mostly the same repertory, he completed the spring by playing in Washington, Albany, Boston, New Haven, Utica and other New York towns, followed by a brief and necessary vacation at Brattleboro, Vermont. Returning to Aigburth in June, he took time to perform one night at Ford's Holliday Street Theatre in a benefit for his old friend J. L. Gallagher. Whether the season's schedule was a result of choice or necessity is unknown.  

Whenever Owens returned to Baltimore for the summer, he was treated as something of a hero by his friends and neighbors. According to his wife, wherever he would go, they would stop him and engage in friendly banter, reminding him how much they enjoyed his performances. She believed he always valued these encounters and sought to stay in touch with neighbors, even though it usually meant his inability to relax. For instance, in August, 1867, the Owenses took a seven-year-old nephew to Towsontown to the traveling circus. The management and crowd recognized him, individually then publicly, and his admission money was pressed upon him. After repeatedly insisting that he wanted to be treated just
like anyone else, he relented, but in turn spent the money on refreshments, to the point of the nephew's becoming sick. Owens concluded that he never again wanted to attend such an event in his own neighborhood, and escaped after the first act.96

The 1867-68 season found him touring much as he had the previous year. While continuing to appear in cities where he was already established, he also added some new ones. A good example of the reception he met with in each new city is his first appearance of the season, at the Opera House in Leavenworth, Kansas, under the management of his former fellow company member Susan Denin.97 The town itself, one of the farthest west in the states, occasionally sported Indians in full native array, yet also housed distinguished officers from Fort Leavenworth and an upper merchant class of its own. Although he had planned to play The Live Indian there, he happened to converse beforehand with J. B. 'Wild Bill* Hickock, then with G. D. Chaplin, Miss Denin's co-manager. From them he discovered that "the sight of you in an Indian dress would end our popularity here, perhaps your life; . . . for the pictures of the Indian (as an attraction) would most likely cause a riot, and result in an attack on the theatre . . . For the delineation of Indians, . . . 'go east, young man.''98 As a result, he altered his engagement to include Solon Shingle, Toodles, Paul Pry, Forty Winks, and Self. Crowded houses resulted in the most successful engagement in the Opera House's history, and the Leavenworth Daily Times acclaimed him the 'greatest living delineator of comedy characters,' praising the extent to which he 'perfectly merges himself in the character he represents . . . Everything he does bears the stamp of conscientious study, and minute observation.'99

On September 20 he opened at the Crosby Opera House in Chicago with Solon Shingle and the restored Live Indian.100 This was his first appearance in Chicago, and he was somewhat apprehensive as to what his reception would be
there, since its citizens had been exposed to many theatrical luminaries already. He was overwhelmed when opening night receipts totaled $1,548.90. From there, he traveled to Louisville for two weeks and then to Cincinnati again, for four weeks.

One of the members of the stock company who supported him there was young Clara Morris, not yet the star Augustin Daly would make her in 1872. She has vivid recollections of Owens and his predeliction for gags on and off stage. While in Cincinnati he contracted a severe cold, sore throat and fever, but continued performing. A physician who was treating him wandered around backstage with an acquaintance, while Owens and Miss Morris were on stage. Their backs to the audience, the two men ambled on stage inspecting the scenery. Owens paused in his performance as the audience's laughter drove the two men hastily from the stage. He then took Morris by the hand, assumed the exact attitude of the two men, and sang "Two Wandering Boys from Switzerland," to the delight of the audience.

Morris recalls John Owens as a brisk man who walked with short, quick steps. He had a wide mouth, good teeth, and a pair of wide, very funny eyes which showed an astonishing amount of whites when he rolled them, like "a pair of large, freshly peeled onions." She states that "his most marked peculiarity was his almost frantic desire to provoke laughter in the actors about him. He would willingly throw away an entire scene—that is, destroy the illusion of the audience—in order to secure a hearty laugh from some actor or actress whom he knew not to be easily moved to laughter." If they resisted, he persisted until they fell into helpless laughter, unable to speak lines, while he regarded the situation with dancing eyes and delighted smiles, seeming to accept the break-down as proof positive that he was irresistible as a fun-maker. Morris prided herself on her ability to resist, until he vowed to "settle her hash."
Mrs. Owens refutes this tendency to gag as undeserved. She believed that while he may occasionally have improvised a sentence or two not in a script,

... it always fitted so perfectly with the character ... that it seemed exactly what the author would have consistently written. Exuberance of spirits never led Mr. Owens to the objectionable habit of making topical jokes, or allusion to those surrounding him. He was far too conscientious an artist to sacrifice the integrity and illusion of a play to raise a laugh, or create merriment at variance with principle and taste.

She was evidently not present on several occasions narrated by Morris in detail. During one performance of *Solon Shingle* he advanced upon the young actress with bulging eyes and facial contortions until she succumbed to spontaneous laughter. It was on another such occasion that he "settled her hash" the most completely. In *Everybody's Friend*, she played Mrs. Swansdown, and he DeBoots, her landlord and husband-to-be. In one scene he showed her samples of wallpaper for her to choose from:

Where in Heaven's name he ever found those rolls of paper I can't imagine. They were not merely hideous, but grotesque as well, and were received with shouts of laughter by the house.

With true shopman's touch he would send each piece unrolling toward the footlights, while holding up its breadth of ugliness for Mrs. Swansdown's inspection and approval, and every piece that he thus displayed, he greeted at first sight with words of hearty admiration for its beauty and perfect suitability, until catching disapproval on the widow's face, he in the same breath, with lightning-swift hypocrisy, turned his sentence into contemptuous disparagement ...

At last he unfurled a piece of paper whose barbarity of design and criminality of color I remember yet. The dead white ground was widely and alternately striped with a dark Dutch blue and a dingy chocolate brown, and about the blue stripes were twined a large pumpkin-colored morning-glory, while from end to end the brown stripes were solemnly pecked at by small magenta birds. The thing was as ludicrous as it was ugly ...

Then Mr. Owens, bursting into encomiums over its desirability as a hanging for the drawing-room of a modest little retreat, caught my frown and continued: "Er—er, or perhaps you'd prefer it as trousering?" Then delightedly: "Yes—yes—you're quite right—it is a neat thing—cut full at the knee, eh?—close at the foot—yes—yes ... great ideal I'll send you a pair at once." [He continues in this vein amid shrieks of audience laughter until
Morris is convulsed as well:] . . . I buried my head deep in the sofa-pillows, and rolled and screamed and wept and bit my lips, clenched my hands, and vainly fought for my self-control, while at the same time I saw a pair of trousers cut from that awful wall-paper; and Mr. Owens just bulged his white, shiny eyes at me, and pranced about and rejoiced at my downfall, while the audience, seeing what the trouble was, laughed all over again.

It may well be that audiences' enjoyment of his breaking up of fellow actors and actresses was a important factor in his appeal. It nonetheless must have been disconcerting to those playing opposite him, although ample stories exist of his patience with them in helping make a scene work more effectively. Morris also relates an instance of his advice and coaching while playing the blind girl, Bertha, opposite his Caleb Plummer. He urged her to avoid stereotypical, groping blindness, "as if playing the piano," in favor of experimenting with her own eyes closed in rehearsal and transferring this hesitant physicalization and careful steps to her performance.

The hit of this engagement in Cincinnati was his introduction of Grimaldi, in which he portrayed the lead, an old French actor who adopts a street waif and makes her a gifted actress, watching as she gains fame and the hand of a nobleman. Not only was the accent difficult, but he had to portray the artist step by step from youth, through rich nobility, to a tender-hearted old man who was "merry, pathetic, ambitious, affectionate and proud." Mrs. Owens notes that he used voice, gesture and physicalization to create a realism which kept audiences spellbound, eliciting "the tribute of alternate smiles and tears." In addition to maintaining his skills as a comedian, he was apparently also developing further as a realistic actor, capable of moving audiences with pathos.

In December, vast crowds of appreciative theatregoers welcomed him when he returned to Baltimore's Holliday Street Theatre. The same was true in Washington and Philadelphia. From Philadelphia he traveled to Trenton, N.J., Newark, Brooklyn, then to Boston, where he opened February 10, 1868, for four
weeks at the Howard Athenaeum. By this time, his repertory was firmly set; with very rare variation, he alternated twelve plays: Solon Shingle, Everybody's Friend; Live Indian; Happiest Day; Victims; Forty Winks; Caleb Plummer; Self; Poor Gentleman; Married Life; Paul Pry; and Heir at Law. These were consistently favored by audiences and reviewers alike; nearly all were comedies in which he played eccentric old men, or men caught in such situations as to allow him to convey frantic facial and physical expression.

Only when he felt strongly challenged by the possibilities of a new role did he add it to his repertory. Such was the case in March, 1868, when he read Charles Reade's adaptation of Tennyson's poem, "Dora", while touring New England towns. He was impressed by the role of Farmer Allen, whose "imperative nature . . . veils (and even hardens) a loving heart, which endures self-torture while asserting 'my will is law.'" This father's affection for his son, "subordinated to maintain parental authority at all risks," provided him with a wide array of emotions: rage, grief, remorse and affection. He decided to try out Dora at the Holliday Street Theatre when he opened in Baltimore March 23.

Charles Getz, still its scenic artist, mounted exceptional scenic drops, special effects and stage settings. New music was arranged, including Christmas carols with a full chorus. Meanwhile, the Baltimore Sun waxed ecstatic over Owens' return: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country' cannot be applied . . . for nowhere is the meed [sic] of praise more fully given--nowhere can he find as appreciative a host of friends and admirers as here in his native city."

Farmer Allen was the most blatantly sentimental role he had played, including Caleb Plummer, as is evidenced in the scenic effects and the sentimental conversion of his character:

The last scene is a marvel of scenic beauty. The setting sun, slowly descending [in] a tinted sky, changes, before it disappears,
from glistening light to a lovely red, and sinks slowly from view, beautifying the heavens with prismatic splendor.

The fields in the meantime, with their golden grain, add to the autumnal glory. The living characters harmonize with surroundings, for the stern old man yields the prejudices of a life to the better feelings of his own calmed nature, regrets his passion, and becomes reconciled to his own blood in the person of his prattling grandchild.

THEN, WITH THE BEAUTIFUL HEAVENS, THE TEEMING
FIELDS, AND THE HAPPY HEARTS, THE PICTURE IS
COMPLETE. Nothing has or can surpass it.

The Sun praises the play's "exquisite taste and consummate beauty;" Farmer Allen "is equal, if it does not excel in finish and dramatic power, any of Mr. Owens' widely-known and renowned impersonations. The representation is truly a great one, and of Itself stamps the name of artist on the actor." As he had hoped, substantial houses appreciated the warm, sympathetic play and his performance. For his final week in Baltimore the theatre placed huge ads in the newspaper, with the names of his roles repeated 15-20 times, as he presented a sampling of his repertory and drew a "substantial benefit."

He closed the season with a successful western tour during May which led him to St. Louis, Cincinnati, Indianapolis (his first appearance there,) and Cleveland. Crowded houses greeted him in each city, and press reviews primarily reiterated three points: the spontaneous laughter he elicited from audiences, the strong credibility of his characters, and his position as one of the greatest comedians of his day. Passing the summer resting at Aigburth Vale, he took time to perform two benefits, one for victims of a flood in East Baltimore.

During the season of 1868-69 he toured primarily in the West, making his first appearances on the west coast itself. He opened October 12 in Pittsburgh for the first time in eight years. The animosity which had prevented him from playing there during the war was gone, and full houses attended his performances in the same roles as he had portrayed the previous season. From there he returned to
Cincinnati, where he tried out a new role, A Party by the Name of Johnson in The Lancashire Lass. This serious drama provided him with a purely villainous role; Johnson has to expose vindictively a hypocritical character named Danville. He portrayed the character intensely, using eyes and voice to convey his hatred and desire for revenge. Although audiences attended, they came primarily to see him in comic roles, and the Cincinnati Commercial concludes that while the part was well-acted, Lancashire Lass is "not what the viewers want." He dropped the play from his repertory before proceeding to Louisville for a week, replacing it with Dora which found the same popularity it had enjoyed the previous season. From there, he traveled to St. Louis in late November, then to Chicago for the Christmas season. Good houses attended, and critical comment focused on the same points as in the previous year. These one- and two-week engagements appear to have ensured maximum attendance; had he played longer, he may not have drawn consistently, particularly because he was still relying on native stock companies.

Returning east, he opened January 20, 1869, for three nights at the inauguration of Roberts' New Opera House in Hartford, Connecticut, where he was called by the Daily Courant, "The greatest of living comedians." Re-appearing at the Broadway Theatre in New York, January 25, he drew grudging approval from the New York Times. While calling The People's Lawyer [sic] "an antiquated farce," the reviewer believes that "Solon Shingle is introduced to coax a laugh out of an audience that never could enjoy the rest of the dramatis personae. . . . Everybody hereabout must have already seen it twice or oftener. Here is a case in which familiarity does not seem to have bred contempt, and although Mr. Owens' performance cannot be called a thing of beauty, it seems to be looked upon particularly as a joy forever." For the entire three weeks he performed, no other paper formally reviewed him, presumably because all of the plays were quite familiar by then to New Yorkers.
On February 16, 1869, Owens opened an entirely new phase of his career by traveling to California via steamer, a leisurely journey taking twenty-three days. He was met in San Francisco, then the major theatrical center of the Far West, by Lawrence Barrett. Barrett and John McCullough's New California Theatre had just opened and was one of the most elegant in the entire country; Owens would be the first star to perform on its stage when he appeared March 15. Arriving in a California that had just completed its greatest period of theatrical growth, he was no pioneer, as the real growth had occurred between 1849 and 1860, the Gold Rush Years. The stock company which would support him at the New California Theatre was atypical of most in the Far West at that time in that it contained a number of experienced, well-trained actors, among them Barrett and McCullough. Nearly all other companies in California at that time were haphazardly assembled fragments of previous companies, traveling actors of varying ability who happened to be in town, or local citizens demonstrating little more than a desire to earn some extra money. Stock companies were more informally run, were extremely fluid, and adhered to few, if any, of the rehearsal and production standards of those in the East.

Owens must have been pleased that an important criterion of his for performing in a theatre—a strong supporting company—would be met in such a location as California, far from the established theatrical touring route. Driving himself as he had for the past several seasons, he must certainly have seen in California the potential for widely expanding his popular following. He opened in San Francisco with *Everybody's Friend* and *Solon Shingle*. Moderate houses greeted "with general favor" Owens' portrayal of these and other pieces from his repertory, including some he had not played for some time. In general, critical comment was favorable, with preferences expressed for his Caleb Plummer and Grimaldi. For his farewell benefit on April 30 he presented *Comedy of Errors*,...
along with Self. These were received by a "large house," which he ardently thanked in a speech in front of the curtain, announcing that he had agreed to play twelve nights in Virginia City, Nevada, beginning June 1.\textsuperscript{136}

If stock company conditions in California were chaotic, those in Nevada were non-existent. Both the land and the people of Virginia City were rugged and decidedly unsophisticated. Managers of theatres considered only one thing important—securing a star whose name would attract crowds. Mrs. Owens remembers that her husband was astonished when he arrived at the first rehearsal to find the play uncast.\textsuperscript{138} The manager assured him, "No use getting mad about it. I didn't read no books [manuscripts] ... you sent. I knowed we could pick up people when we wanted 'em." His ultimate solution was a rag-tag cast of hulking miners and questionable ladies who could not read the plays' lines accurately, even though Owens confined himself to the most farcical of his pieces. Still, he patiently endured, and Mrs. Owens notes that,

\begin{quote}
... Fortunately the audience were good-natured enough to be indulgent to ... inaccuracies, and the comedy went off mirthfully. Some of those present were unaware of errors; and the cultured portion of the audience put up with the inevitable weakness of the cast, as they came to the theatre to see the star, and expected no enjoyment in addition thereto.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

Owens only played there, at Piper's Opera House, one week.\textsuperscript{140}

For several weeks Owens toured the Far West for pleasure, striking up a curious friendship with his stagecoach driver, "Foss". Foss' daily quips about the scenery and the ways of the people throughout Nevada, Utah and California afforded the comedian a wealth of character study and dialect practice. At journey's end, the rustic proclaimed his liking for Owens: "I haven't been as well pleased since I drove [Edwin] Forrest" (whom he had re-created for Owens on the trip).\textsuperscript{141} Undoubtedly Owens' mingling with local people of all walks of life and his drawing them out with friendly conversation was an important factor not only in his popularity with audiences, but also in his ability to create such detailed characterizations.
Returning to Baltimore in July, Owens scarcely had a chance to rest at Aigburth, when manager William R. Floyd approached him on behalf of Wallack's Theatre, at that time the theatre with the most respected stock company in New York. Wallack, like Owens, Burton, Boucicault and Placide, opposed the use of stars as the primary means of attracting crowds. Floyd offered Owens a contract for part of the summer season of 1869, (August 2 - September 11,) which he accepted, perhaps because of the company's reputation.

The engagement met with mixed reviews, and various accounts exist concerning attendance figures. Mrs. Owens says that he "had every reason to be satisfied with its artistic and financial success." The New York Times, praising his John Unit in Self, notes that he "never fails to be received with abundant demonstrations of amusement and gratification," both because New Yorkers were welcoming back a favorite performer, and because they were seeing him in a new play.

The Spirit of the Times, however, cites meagre houses, and provides two reasons for them. First was the play itself:

"Self" is one of the most singularly inconsistent and flimsy medleys of trash which ever obtained the honors of representation. There may have been worse plays written, but if so, they fortunately found their way into trunk-linings and domestic wrappings without being inflicted on a suffering world. No one character is depicted with any strength or carried to a logical or consistent conclusion; . . . and as for John Unit, if such a vulgar and obnoxious old wretch dared to intrude his purse-proud impudence and offensive familiarity in any house, high or low, he would be summarily kicked out into the gutter.

Second was the competition provided at the nearby Booth Theatre by Owens' most serious competition: Joseph Jefferson, playing his most famous role, Rip Van Winkle. By 1869, Jefferson had emerged to national prominence playing the same carefully crafted eccentric old men for which Owens was known. Critics noted that both thoroughly assumed the identity of their characters, and both
effectively individualized their roles, using facial and vocal expression consistent in great detail. Jefferson was known for this one role primarily, as Owens was known for Solon Shingle, and both utilized dialect and a balance of humor and pathos to elicit audiences' laughter and tears. The *Spirit of the Times* was the first to observe what became a recurrent refrain in the 1870's: "[Owens] . . . has no more dangerous rival than Joseph Jefferson, an artist regarded by many as the best comedian of the age." What was worse, in this engagement Owens was handicapped:

Mr. Jefferson presents himself to his audience in his best character; . . . Mr. Owens presents himself in what is confessedly his worst character—John Unit. . . . It may be said . . . that Mr. Owens has no part in which to contend for supremacy with Mr. Jefferson as Rip Van Winkle. So far from that being the case, it is the verdict of competent judges and cultivated critics that as Caleb Plummer, in 'The Cricket on the Hearth,' Mr. Owens has no living equal. The play itself . . . is vastly superior to 'Rip Van Winkle.'

In the face of competition from Jefferson, it may seem poor judgment for Wallack not to present Owens in *Caleb Plummer*. Perhaps Wallack was trying not to spend much money on the summer season, and *Dot* was an expensive show; or perhaps Owens favored plays such as *Self*, with easily played supporting roles, which would hardly have been necessary at Wallack's. Yet toward the end of the run, "Inveterate of purpose and perverse of will, Mr. Owens continues to play those pieces which he likes best and the public like least." The entire issue may have been a question of taste in acting style. An unidentified clipping dated September 18, 1869, observes that Owens

. . . has a great deal of the breadth and crusty flavor of the old school of acting—a school rapidly passing away, to give place to the accurate, realistic niceties of the new or French method. . . . [This] makes a piece of acting like that of John Unit peculiarly satisfactory. . . . But these characteristics, like those of many of Mr. Dickens's characters, are often very enjoyable [and give] a pungent relish to the character, without which half its comic force would be lost.
Thus, while some critics were praising him for his realistic details in characterizations, a reflection of a new style of acting, others said he was from the old school of acting. Perhaps the better the material was, the more realistic his acting was, or perhaps New York tastes were more sophisticated and demanding that those of the more rural cities in which he spent so much time performing, and where he had amassed such wide popularity.

Typical of such less-sophisticated cities were Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville and St. Louis, which comprised the Western tour with which he opened the 1869-70 season. In each city, crowded audiences greeted his one-week stays with hearty welcomes. In Cincinnati the Commercial reports, "Funny John Owens must have enjoyed his benefit last night. Long before the curtain rolled up the house was crowded, and before the first set was through, standing room was impossible." 151 The Louisville Courier-Journal notes full houses and "admirable" performances: "John Owens is an actor [who] . . . stands with Mr. Jefferson at the head of American comedy, and he has no living superior." 152 During the end of this tour, bitterly cold weather in St. Louis caused him to contract a severe cold and cough, which worsened from the exertions of performing. He tried to cancel the last week of the tour, but manager Ben DeBar refused. 153 Closing there October 30, Owens remained under medical care for several weeks, a delay which worried him, as he had agreed to perform at the Varieties in New Orleans November 22 and needed ample rehearsal time. Tour manager W. R. Floyd arranged for stock performances to fill the first week of that engagement, but Owens, still a sick man, opened in New Orleans November 29, after nine years' absence from its stage. 154

Despite a severe rainstorm, a crowded house attended his opening in Victims and Forty Winks. 155 For four weeks good houses continued, re-establishing his popularity in the Crescent City. 156 "In fact," notes Mrs. Owens, "John Owens' and
'the Varieties' were so inseparable in the minds of play-goers that the mention of one suggested the other."157 Reporting his very successful benefit on December 10, the Picayune tells of a theatre 'brimming over with the representatives of our very best society. Men and women whose refinement and intelligence were most pronounced."158 The paper indicates that this was not always the case: "We trust that those nulisances who, because the public often refuse to crowd theatres when there is nothing but miserable mediocrity on the boards, croak about merit not being appreciated and nothing taking but the sensational drama will now be convinced that talent pays in New Orleans."159

Critical comment was especially favorable for his Solon Shingle, but reviewers praised his believability in all roles:

His personations are always striking and intensely interesting, because they are true to nature. He makes each of the peculiar characters he portrays a special study, and therefore each is entirely distinct from the others—so much so that it is difficult to believe Joshua Butterby, Solon Shingle, Caleb Plummer, etc. are personated by one and the same individual. True, there are little idiosyncrasies which betray the man to those who are familiar with him, but these serve rather to embellish than to detract from impersonations.160

From New Orleans Owens traveled to Mobile, Alabama. The Mobile Daily Register, while regretting the deplorable acting of the supporting company, lauds Owens: "He absolutely radiates fun and merriment; there is an indescribable atmosphere of the ludicrous around him; and a single glance of his often tells more than a yard of Mr. [Edwin] Forrest's ranting."161

While traveling to his next engagement at Vicksburg, Owens was held up by a railroad accident and forced to spend the night in Meriden [sic], Mississippi, in a barn-like, cheerless hotel with poor food and worse beds. His wife records how he reacted the next morning when he was charged nine dollars by a surly desk-clerk:

"Come on now, look me in the face, and say for what I owe you nine dollars." The man ejaculated spasmodically, "Nine dollars—dinner—supper and lodging;" but looked steadily on the floor. "Ah, my friend," said Owens, "I see it is impossible for you to
meet my eye, and make a charge like that for the tortures of this hostelry. As you are not entirely lost to shame, I have some hope of your reformation. I present you with nine dollars, and enlighten you gratuitously. The civil conflict is over; war prices are out of date. You don't seem to know that fact. Bye-bye; I shall remember Meriden, and beware of a return to your hospitality." 162

The same vexation was directed at a local boy in Vicksburg, a dullard who, unable to secure some ale which Owens wanted one evening, said he would bring it around at six the next morning. The comedian retorted, "No, you won't; not if you value your life. The person who knocks at my door at that early hour surely dies." Not perceiving the joke, the boy asked Mrs. Owens, "What's he mean? Is he crazy?" The boy fled amid hearty laughter and Owens' reply: "It appears my fun comes after the play, for an appetizer." 163

After a successful week in Vicksburg, then another in Mobile, he returned to New Orleans to visit with friends and to play a benefit for W. R. Floyd. 164 On the same bill was Joseph Jefferson, but no newspaper ventured to review the performance or compare the two comedians. They did not actually perform together for this benefit; first Floyd performed in Arrah na Pogue, for which he was best known, then Owens performed Solon Shingle, then Jefferson played Hugh de Brass in the farce, A Regular Fix. 165 The only other evidence of Owens and Jefferson appearing on the same bill was when both were members of Ludlow and Smith's company in New Orleans in 1846-47, and Jefferson was merely apprenticing, being eighteen years old (see above, chapter one,) and their performance together in Self (1856-57). Thus, Mrs. Owens' recollection that "the two acted together on numerous occasions," emphasizing their lack of competition and asserting that her husband "highly prized the life-long friendship which existed between them," seems unfounded. 166

After a leisurely steamer voyage home, Owens rested at Aligburth Vale, closing the season with a brief appearance at Washington's National Theater in
March. The rest of the time he spent superintending the farm, which led to a number of humorous incidents. Being ultra-progressive, he sought every new labor-saving device for the farm (while jokingly telling his wife she was "non-progressive" for keeping old-fashioned methods in her house-keeping). A dealer from Boston convinced him of the expediency of buying the newest milking machine. When it arrived, he thought he would personally test it, while the farm hands were away. He returned in a half hour, discouraged: "I can't manage this machine alone. The 'sarned cows switch their tails so viciously." So the next day at noon he and Mrs. Owens went together to the cow-house:

Mr. Owens selected a mild-looking Alderney, placed the milking stool and pail for me, adjusted the patent milker, and then holding the cow's tail in one hand, with the other turned the crank. The cow kicked (literally and figuratively) against the machine. I was precipitated to one end of the cow-house, and Mr. Owens to the other. Regaining our feet, we gazed at each other, and then broke forth into peals of hearty laughter. . . .

With a merry twinkle of the eye, Mr. Owens said: "I suppose you think this wonderful invention is a failure! Nothing of the kind. The blame rests entirely with the cows. They are non-progressive—like—like—yourself!" Whereupon we had another hearty laugh.

The cow-milker was never again tested. Some time afterwards I came across it in a trunk, the contents of which Mr. Owens had desired me to catalogue; but this article he had already classified by placing upon it a tag labelled: "Owens' folly." On another occasion, he was badgered by a visiting theatrical agent with whom he had no time to talk. The agent inquired about farmer Owens' "magnificent mulberries" and asked permission to pick them. Receiving permission, the man went off and did so, but was tred by several large dogs. When Owens arrived from the city five hours later, he chased the dogs home, helped the man down, and invited him in for refreshments. From then on, the story was a regular part of the comedian's extensive story-telling bank: "No one was fonder of a joke, but there was never any animus in his raillery."
By this time, repeated years of touring must have acquired a monotonous sameness for Owens and for his wife, who still accompanied him. The season of 1870-71 opened with a tour under the management of George Fuller, with the same twelve plays from seasons past, to less-traveled cities. From September 19 to December 17 he played in Albany, Buffalo and Rochester, New York, various Pennsylvania towns, Cincinnati and Cleveland.\(^{171}\)

While in Cincinnati he received an offer to inaugurate the new Opera House in Terre Haute, Indiana.\(^{172}\) Since the supporting company there had played with him before and thus would need no rehearsing, he agreed, leaving Cleveland Monday afternoon (December 19) in ample time to make the evening curtain in Terre Haute. A freight train collision kept him delayed in Indianapolis until past curtain time, some seventy-eight miles away. Telegraphing his dilemma, he received the reply: "The audience will wait for you." At each succeeding station, the same message was relayed to him. When he finally arrived at the Opera House and dressed hurriedly (more so than his usual speed, for which he was well-known), the curtain finally arose at 11:00, and his Major DeBoots was greeted with a "deafening shout." This and his Solon Shingle were heartily applauded by the full house, who remained until the curtain rang down at 2:00 a.m., certainly a measure of his popularity.\(^{173}\)

After Terre Haute, he played one week in Louisville then traveled to Brooklyn's Park Theatre, playing Victims, and Live Indian and Solon Shingle.\(^{174}\) Every night, the Park was "crowded to excess, and turning people away from the doors" despite snow, sleet and bitter cold.\(^{175}\)

In the same roles he then toured New England under the management of Clifton Tayloure. This included a number of cities as far north as Portland, Maine, following which he returned south, playing in Washington in March.\(^{176}\) Large audiences attended, as they did in April at the Holliday Street Theatre in
Baltimore. The Baltimore Sun speaks of "a triumph beyond an artistic achievement" which was "welcomed by the earnest enthusiasm of thousands." Next came a brief western tour, to McVicker's Theatre in Chicago in late April, then the Theatre Royal in Montreal, returning to spend the summer at Aigburth Vale.

During the summer of 1871, conscience must have prompted Owens to recall the original author of the play which had brought him so much fame and money. Even though The People's Lawyer had never been copyrighted, and his new version differed significantly from the original, he wrote Jones a complimentary letter and enclosed a check for $500. He received in September a gracious reply thanking him for the check, acknowledging his preeminence as Solon, and proposing a public recognition of their collaboration. Owens declined the public recognition, however—whether out of modesty or a desire to keep the public thinking he was the author is not known.

He opened the 1871-72 season September 5 with a six-week engagement at the Globe Theatre in Boston. In addition to his usual repertory roles, he re-enacted Grimaldi, which received favorable reviews and packed the theatre. Critics praised his performance once again for its fidelity to nature, believability, and pathos. For the first time, during this engagement he included in his billing of Solon Shingle the statement, "as acted by him over 1000 times."

From Boston, Owens traveled to Philadelphia, playing at the Walnut Street Theatre to excellent business, then to Booth's Theatre in New York, with mixed results. He followed a very successful engagement at the Booth by Charolotte Cushman in tragic roles. According to manager Edwin Booth, profits from her appearance were "wiped out" by Owens, who could not hold his own opposite a fashionable opera season at nearby theaters; "My expenses are fearful," Booth reported in a letter to Lawrence Barrett. "I have only made thus far $49 dollars
[sic] this season—losing all and more on Owens than I made on Cushman. One reason for Owens' failure may have been, as Mrs. Owens notes, that this theatre was primarily a house for tragedy: 'The company has been selected for tragedy, and a serious element lingered depressingly in the atmosphere. The immensity of the theatre was more suitable for declamatory acting than for the subtlety of humor, where the play of the features, or neatness of action intensifies points.' While she says that the engagement was "chronicled by the press as an artistic success," this was not entirely the case. The New York Times offers some of the harshest reviews of Dot and Victims ever rendered to Owens. Each reflects well the factors which, while bringing him wide success in smaller cities, consistently failed to bring him critical acceptance in New York in any role but Solon Shingle. First, his scripts were weak; critics denounced Dot as "almost unmitigated twaddle; . . . most of the characters alternate . . . between idiotic laughter and maudlin pathos." Equally harsh with Victims, critics attacked its hackneyed dialogue and "frequent passages of laborious dullness." In addition, Owens' characterizations, which may have been novelties in other cities, provided nothing original to New York critics. The Times questioned whether "he is in truth a great comedian:"

Mr. Owens' performance of Caleb Plummer is good but not great. As an exhibition of carefully-studied senile pathos it is praiseworthy, but it by no means rises to genius, and rather deserves commendation for even fidelity than for any of those electric strokes of nature or passion for which, in an embodiment made so prominent, we naturally look. . . .

The only role to win commendation was Solon Shingle:

It is needless to say that Mr. Owens is uproariously comic in Solon Shingle. The portraiture has become a sort of classic of coarse nationality, and is ever greeted with affectionate recognition. No exception to this was noted last night, and if the weather depleted the audience in number, it affected them little in appreciative enthusiasm.
On December 11 he opened as the first star of the season at the (Third) Varieties Theatre in New Orleans in the same roles. Under the management of Lawrence Barrett, its supporting stock company was in the eyes of a New Orleans critic "a combination of artists rarely equalled on the boards of any theatre in America." In returning to New Orleans, Owens was perhaps seeking more certain adulation than he had received in New York. The New Orleans Picayune was, as always, effusive in its praise of the comedian, noting that, "It is always delightful to meet Mr. John E. Owens either on or off the stage." Barrett had purposely chosen Owens to become the first star at his new theatre, knowing that his appearance would of necessity assure success. Ironically, this use of a star to draw patrons to the Varieties, lavishly rebuilt after a second fire, was in principle contrary to what Owens had earlier stood for. In fact, the Picayune, while applauding Barrett's choice of Owens, expressed reservations: "It would, we think, be sound policy in Manager Barrett to allow intervals through the season for stock representations, if only to show that he is not exclusively dependent on 'stars' for the success of his theatre."

When Owens opened on December 11 in Everybody's Friend and Solon Shingle, "but few seats were vacant in the house, and those were lost sight of in the enthusiasm." The Picayune reports that his De Boots was "a spectacle of ludicrous absurdity, indescribable in its quaintness and originality," and the Bee urged everyone to see him, since words alone could not do his performance justice. Large, fashionable audiences enthusiastically encored him during his four-week run as he played in these roles and for Christmas week, Dot. The New Orleans Times comments on the particular claim which the city had on Owens: "In perhaps no other city in the Union, is John E. Owens better and more favorably known than in New Orleans. This artist has . . . long held a position acknowledged to be second to no actor on the American stage. . . .
The reception accorded him on his re-entree was most enthusiastic, and must have convinced him beyond conjecture that he still holds the same place in the estimation of New Orleans playgoers which has for years been accorded to him.¹⁹⁸

New Orleanians prided themselves as being discerning and sophisticated theatre-goers, proclaiming that in "no city in America" were the "tastes of the public . . . educated up to so high a standard as in our own."¹⁹⁹ Critics there believed it was due to their exposure to such luminaries as Owens, Jefferson, the Placides, Sothern and others that made the city's audiences so discriminating: "It is because of this careful training in so excellent a school that a keen appreciation of the perfect drama has been developed, to satisfy which is no slight task."²⁰⁰ However, a certain amount of this "sophistication" must have stemmed from regional pride; while the Picayune did carry a regular 'Theatricals' column informing readers of performances, stars and theatrical happenings elsewhere in the U.S. and abroad, the competition which artists such as Owens faced in New Orleans was certainly less keen than that faced in New York or London.

One example of the differences between New Orleans and New York audiences exists in the ready acceptance of the sentimentality of Dot by the former. Owens found Caleb Plummer to be his most effective performance there during this 1871 engagement, scheduling it at Christmastime. Since it had premiered there on Christmas Day, 1859, sentimentality was compounded by nostalgia, and audiences flocked to the Varieties.²⁰¹

Closing in New Orleans with a successful benefit on January 4, 1872, Owens returned home to rest at Aigburth Vale and visit with friends, then played short engagements in Washington and Baltimore in February and March, followed by a southern tour which included Augusta and Richmond.²⁰² He had not played in this latter city since 1857, and its citizenry persuaded him to re-enact Self, which they
remembered so favorably. The Richmond papers became nostalgic as well, printing the original cast and reviews. Pleased with his warm welcome and successful tour of the South, and mindful of spring improvements which needed tending to on his farm, the comedian returned to a long summer at Aigburth Vale.

During the past eight years Owens had been sometimes a member of stock, sometimes a star, sometimes a manager; in all he had distinguished himself as a versatile theatrical artist who was able to amass a considerable fortune during a critical period in American history. As a comedian who was able to elicit raucous audience laughter, he used facial and vocal expression, animated eyes and prolonged comic business (such as that in Forty Winks, above) successfully. In a period in which actors were increasingly judged for their ability to maintain naturalness, or fidelity to nature, he created characters rich with realistic detail. Reviewers spoke repeatedly of his ability to become merged with his characters, thus disappearing himself so that audiences saw only the character.

Also, Owens was able to maintain successfully a long run in an era when long runs were first becoming established. He decreased his emphasis upon farce when he narrowed his repertory to the twelve roles (eight of them in full-length comedies) which brought him the most recognition. That recognition came most readily from citizens and newspapers of smaller cities, particularly those in which he appeared for only a week or two, once a year. He was also able to maintain a wide popularity and critical acclaim in New Orleans. In New York, he was never able to win unqualified critical acclaim, yet still attracted good houses, and his Solon Shingle consistently drew good crowds and good notices. He had the foresight to adapt pieces as needed, when the scripts were notoriously weak, as with The People's Lawyer.
Perhaps his most successful trait during this period was his ability to judge public taste, something he may have acquired from association with Boucicault. He knew that the average American in the 1860's, whether from tiredness of war or lack of sophistication, sought mostly diversion and entertainment. This he gave them; John Owens was always able to make people laugh. Critic William Winter, who first saw him perform in Boston in the early 1860's, recalls that his most fortunate attribute was the personal quality of his humor. His comedy

... brings with it a sense of comfort. His presence warms the heart and cheers the mind. The sound of his voice, "speaking off," before he emerges on the scene, will set the theatre in a roar. This was [also] ... notably true of Burton. ... The glance, motion, carriage, manner, and the pause and quiescence of such a man, instil merriment. ... John E. Owens, describing the conduct of a bee in an empty molasses barrel, once threw a circle of his hearers, of whom I was one, almost into convulsions of laughter.

Owens' comic acting during this decade became increasingly more refined, more polished; critics spoke of the ease with which he created parts--the lack of artifice or contrived mannerisms. His sense of timing improved to the point where he could prolong moments or hurl them rapidly upon each other, to control audience laughter. Yet his serious acting also improved. In pieces such as Dot and Dora he drew critical praise and moved audiences to tears by the degree to which he created sympathetic, if sometimes maudlin, figures. In such roles, notes Winter, "there was an exquisite strain of spontaneous and involuntary tenderness, ... and the eyes that smiled at it always smiled at it through love and tears."206

The scripts that Owens chose to keep in his narrowed repertory were generally weak, but they were pieces in which he knew he could flourish--roles in which he was featured and an occasionally weak supporting company could not drown the entire production. He consistently sought strong supporting companies, and took the time to rehearse adequately with them, as with Clara Morris.
Perhaps the truest indication of Owens' success during this period is the frequency with which theatregoers and reviewers spoke of him as the greatest (or at least second greatest) comedian of his day, and bestowed such appellations as "artist" or "genius" upon his work. The *Spirit of the Times* observes in 1861 that "Genius was signalled by an instantaneous process of identification of the actor with the character." Such was certainly the case with Solon Shingle, and partially so with Caleb Plummer.

The most distinct aspect of his career between 1864 and 1872 was the energetic pace of touring he maintained, playing 15-20 different cities each year, in widely divergent parts of the country. In a seemingly constant quest for popularity and money, however, he may have compromised the artistry of his profession, by failing to choose better dramatic vehicles or take advantage of training at one of New York's companies known for comedy, such as Wallack's. All of his touring was done at the cost of his health, and all of it was done before the advent (1872-75) of combination companies. It was only understandable, then, that he would want to put together his own combination, utilizing his experience in management as well in touring to ensure a uniformly successful operation in the many cities he had already visited.
By 1872 John Owens' extensive touring experience placed him in the vanguard of one of the most significant developments in American theatre at that time. The proliferation of railroad lines spreading from New York to the Pacific, coupled with increasing demands for quality productions from theatre audiences across the country, had provided ideal conditions for the spawning of what came to be known as combination companies. Assembled in New York, these were packaged productions toured throughout the United States. Abandoning both the stock company tradition and, for the most part, the individual star, the producers of combination companies selected actors to meet the demands of specific roles.

By 1870 both the reign of the "star system" and the validity of stock companies were being challenged by combinations, the earliest of which were organized by Dion Boucicault and Joseph Jefferson. Jefferson believed that in the new system, a more perfect unity has been evolved. And further, the vast continent of America seems to have demanded the establishment of the important institution. The inhabitants of distant places, having fine opera houses, enjoy the advantages of seeing the same plays acted by the same companies as those of the larger cities. If they can afford and appreciate it, then they deserve it, and these entertainments can only be administered by the combination system.

Jefferson also recognized two inherent drawbacks to combinations for the performer: (1) the domestic inconvenience of keeping an actor away from his family for longer periods of time, and (2) the limitation placed upon an actor who only played one role in a season. At the same time, however, companies achieved a greater unity of playing and a higher overall quality of production as they traveled together. Local managers still maintained companies to perform between visits by combinations, but as more such combinations developed, these
local companies disappeared. By 1877 nearly 100 combination companies were 
touring the country, and by 1886 there were 282.¹³

John Owens was in the unique position of suffering from neither of the 
drawbacks Jefferson cited regarding combinations. His wife always accompanied 
him on his tours, serving him as personal dresser, and by 1872 he had established 
one role that served well as the mainstay of his repertory, while he still kept fresh 
ten or so others. Perhaps as a result of the uncertainty of uniformly good local 
supporting companies, or perhaps to put to use his own touring experience, he 
established his own combination company in the fall of 1872.¹⁴

During the summer of 1872 Owens began assembling a company to support 
him in a tour which would last for thirty-seven weeks and play in 137 cities and 
towns.⁵ While none of the members of this company achieved success on their 
own in later years, they were versatile and well trained, and he believed they 
supported him admirably.⁶ His leading lady, Mrs. John T. Raymond, gained 
particular favor with audiences under the stage name of Marie Gordon.⁷

For the combination Owens selected those plays which had brought him the 
best reviews and largest houses over the past two decades. At the Park Theatre in 
Brooklyn he spent the close of August rehearsing Caleb Plummer, Everybody's 
Indian, Paul Pry, The Poor Gentleman, Solon Shingle, and The Victims. This 
"combination repertory" was a departure from the usual procedure of touring only 
one production, but Owens had always drawn well by varying his repertory, 
providing the people of smaller cities with continued novelty. He no doubt wished 
to continue this success.

Perhaps previous poor reviews by New York critics influenced him to avoid 
Manhattan; he declined to play there for the next seven years, preferring instead 
to play in Brooklyn. His combination opened there on September 2 at the Park for
one week, yet the only major Brooklyn paper, the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, contains no review, only the paid billings. The company spent another five weeks performing in Newark, Albany, Utica, and other smaller New York towns, before journeying west.

Opening October 28 for one week at Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati, the company played what Mrs. Owens considers "the most brilliant engagement" of her husband's many appearances there. The Cincinnati Commercial reports that "large and fashionable" audiences attended and that Owens was "fully up to his personations [of] a year ago. Indeed, to judge by the laughter that frequently rippled over the big mass of faces there, he has improved in his wonderful humor." Particular credit was due, the reviewer believes, to his fully competent troupe, which "support him admirably."

His most popular performance in Cincinnati outside, of course, Solon Shingle, was in the role of Paul Pry. His wife recalls his performance during this engagement:

He gave a piquant delineation of that eccentric character, rendering the full quota of dry humor without the slightest shade of buffoonery. The play of features, so expressive, testified his marvellous mobility of countenance--his magnetic eye-power was wonderful; and the artistic judgment with which he used these gifts, rendered the effect charmingly natural. His laugh was so hearty and genuine that it was echoed by all who heard it.

Certain of her words provide clues to the sources of his success: "eccentric," "features," "natural," and "genuine." By this point in his career, Owens had gained his greatest fame in eccentric roles; his success resided in part in his ability to highlight the eccentricities of the characters he played, rather than outstanding dialogue. Critics repeatedly commented upon the flexibility and expressiveness of his features and the use of his eyes as major tools in the evocation of audience laughter, and a naturalness of manner. His acting was increasingly natural, placing him at the vanguard of a trend which did not become widespread until late
in the decade. (In 1879 the Atlantic Monthly reported that "public taste has undergone a complete revolution . . . Very quiet acting has taken the place of the old [declamatory] method."\textsuperscript{13}) Also, his ability to reveal genuine surprise was mentioned frequently by those who enjoyed his performances. By giving the illusion of "the first time," he provided a spontaneity which, coupled with his exuberant energy, endeared him to theatre audiences.

From Cincinnati Owens' company traveled to Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky, then north to Milwaukee and west to Omaha, Nebraska. It was during his engagement at Redick's Opera House in Omaha that Owens began billing Solon Shingle as the play "performed by him throughout the entire English World, upwards of 2000 nights."\textsuperscript{14}

The tour in the Midwest placed the company in some of the fiercest snowstorms of January, 1873. Frequently they were delayed or forced to switch trains suddenly, yet Owens made a point of keeping flagging spirits from affecting performances. On a number of occasions he turned an inconvenience into shared humor. One obstreperous baggage clerk along the way gruffly examined the Owens Combination luggage of over fifty stacked trunks and snarled, "You'll have to pay extra baggage." "I don't think so, because--," began Owens, but he was cut off with a curtly repeated demand. This exchange continued until Owens in exasperation withdrew to the waiting room. Later, cooled down, he returned and again attempted to state his case, but still could not gain a hearing from the clerk, who demanded an aggregate charge of $38.98 for "extra baggage." When the clerk finally asked, "Got anything to say, eh?" the comedian replied, "Yes, I have; and I wish you had permitted me to say it sooner. This," he handed the clerk a note, "is an order from the Superintendent of the road, to pass all of my baggage free of extra charge." Inspecting the document for authenticity, the man swore considerably, then indignantly demanded, "Why didn't you tell me you had this
paper?" "Because you wouldn't allow me to speak," answered Owens in a comically meek voice. Thus cornered, the clerk relented, and Mrs. Owens reports that her husband's winning manner kept the incident from causing resentment. In fact, every time he stopped in that particular station again, he made a point of seeking out the clerk and exchanging a joke about their previous confrontation; one time the clerk even invited him to dinner. This persistently jovial approach to touring must have done much to keep the company's spirits high and create a strong loyalty to their star and manager.

Many of the smaller towns in the Midwest contained citizenry with decidedly unsophisticated theatrical tastes, a consideration which the Owens Combination faced stoically. Accustomed only to circuses, traveling entertainers, and moral lecturers, such citizens often asked the actors, "What feats do you perform? Jump through hoops?" One local resident inquired of Owens, "Mister, do you belong to the show that's just got here?" "No," he replied, "the show belongs to me." The man persisted: "Well, where's your horses; where's your brass band?" Owens coolly replied, "this is not a circus, my friend, and there is nothing brazen about the company; as for myself I pose as the most modest individual and rely upon the public to discern my merit." Uncomprehending, the man continued: "I don't know what stuff you are talking, but I can tell you we expect a brass band; no show catches on in this town [Omaha] without it, make no mistake, mister." Aware that the enlightenment of such citizens would be slow in coming, Owens took his leave of the man, only to be heartened by that night's full auditorium, noting what a "false prophet" the man was.

During January the combination played short engagements in Kansas City, St. Louis (at DeBar's Theatre again) and Memphis. Attendance remained excellent despite rain, snow, mud and slush; many came back to see Owens play a role twice, especially Solon Shingle. The Missouri Daily Republican encouraged
everyone to see it "as often as possible," since "any human being who can sit through one of Mr. Owens' performances without feeling merrier and happier must be both deaf and blind. Recurrent comments by reviewers during this part of the tour praised the uniform excellence of the supporting company, a factor which made for admirable productions overall, not just showcases for a star. Yet many of the local press considered him a preeminent star. The Daily Republican observes that "He ranks among the first of living comedians, and in the very first in his special line of business [eccentric older men]."

The day before he left St. Louis, Owens received a photograph, accompanied by a letter in boyish script which read:

Dear Mr. Owens,--

I want you to see a boy you have made happy. Father says I'd be a bother to you if I went to the hotel; so I send my picture, and tell you I've seen you play ever so often. I laughed and laughed-- why, I just hollered. Now, Mr. Owens, some time when I'm bigger--I'm going on twelve now--will you give me your picture? I'd be so glad to get it. No more at present from Andrew L--

Charmed by the boy's adulation, he immediately sent him a photograph and some appreciative words. This prompt response to those seeking pictures and/or autographs was typical of Owens' respect of his followers of any age, as well as indicating his business acumen. Throughout his career, no sooner would he receive a request than he would reply with a courteous personal note.

After a harsh winter of northern touring, the company must have been happy to travel in February to New Orleans' more genial climate. Opening February 3, 1873, for two weeks at the Grand Opera House (Third Varieties), Owens received no less critical and audience acclaim than on his last visit. The Daily Picayune reports that 1200 people gave the comedian a "royal welcome": "Mr. Owens has always met with such favor at the hands of New Orleans playgoers . . . and that enlarged favor appears to remain as vigorous today as it was twenty years ago." Reviewers praised the company for its highly polished performances,
singling out (aside from Owens) Theodore Hamilton (whom Owens had hired as leading man from Booth's Theatre in New York) and Marie Gordon. The Picayune notes the care with which Owens had gathered the company and the smooth manner in which it provided support for his "comic genius." Large audiences continued to attend throughout the engagement; on February 5 a more-than-capacity crowd of 1800 applauded Everybody's Friend: "From the going up of the curtain until the final lowering, vociferous merriment reigned supreme." Critics praised Owens for the preciseness of his eccentricity and for his versatility, calling his Caleb Plummer "one of the most touching impersonations known to the American stage"; the role demonstrated Owens' ability to act well in farcical comedy and those parts "in which are involved some of the gentlest and sweetest touches of human pathos ever known to the stage."

From New Orleans the company moved to Mobile, then Richmond, then into New England, playing as far north as Portland and Bangor, Maine. The tour closed in April in Troy, New York and Owens returned to Aigburth Vale, cancelling the last week in order to be at the bedside of a close friend who was dying. He brought the man, Frederick Pinckney, a Maryland lawyer and statesman who had served as Deputy State's Attorney, to his home and stayed with him until his death in June. The death grieved Owens deeply, as the two had spent many long summer evenings together over the years.

Toward the close of the summer of 1873 Owens hired many of the actors who had toured with him the previous season. The company he assembled for the 1873-74 tour was primarily the same as the year before. They rehearsed and opened at Philadelphia's Arch Street Theatre on September 8 for two weeks. Once again he selected the roles which had brought him success the previous season, but he altered the itinerary slightly.
Throughout the opening weeks in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Baltimore and Washington, crowded houses consistently accorded the company cordial receptions, and critical response was generally favorable. The Philadelphia Inquirer spoke of his "wonderful and commendable attention to detail, the result of close and conscientious study," and his remarkable year-to-year consistency: "We can certainly discover no falling off nor lack of coloring, nor relaxation of effort as the result of frequent repetition." Reviewers occasionally compared Owens favorably to Burton; Mrs Owens paraphrases Philadelphia reviews: "Avoiding the broadness which marred the effect of that great actor's rendition . . . he adhered to his own conception. . . . [He was] excruciatingly funny, but devoid of coarseness. With the finest instinct for humor, he never permitted anything coarse or vulgar to find place in language or situation of the parts he played." This observation by his Quaker spouse undoubtedly explains in part her willingness to support him so completely in a profession generally shunned by those of her faith.

Traveling north, the Owens Combination toured New York state, then opened for two weeks at the New Park Theatre in Brooklyn, November 3. Here, metropolitan reviewers criticized Owens' supporting company:

Their pronunciation would have driven Webster into a lunatic asylum. Mr. Owens is a cultivated and educated gentleman and why it is that he has not directed their attention to this fault is something over which the large audience must have wondered. . . . The ladies and gentlemen who form his combination . . . fell very far short of excellence. In fact, they are very bad . . . [and one wonders] . . . why Mr. Owens does not instruct them, does not tone down their eccentricities. The reviewer singled out individuals for such faults as over-emoting and yelling without expression.
About Owens' acting the reviewer is more generous, praising him for carefully constructing each role:

In all of his parts his rich humor is the under stratum; his naturalness the next layer; and his artistic method the upper layer, while over all he spreads the one distinguishing merit which marks the character he assumes. In Pangloss (Heir at Law), the refinement and delicacy are distinguishable in everything he does. The delicacy is manifest, particularly in those scenes where the temptation to descend into buffoonery is held out.  

This control, plus his versatility, became more frequently mentioned in his years of combination touring than they had been previously. By this point in his career some critics expressed a preference for a particular role other than Solon Shingle, most often that of Caleb Plummer:

... Marvellous as is the minute detail of his ... Shingle, and as faithful an adherence to nature as is his picture of the sodden old farmer, yet it is exceeded by ... Caleb Plummer. It is greater, because the possibilities of the character are greater and because about the character there is a poetic atmosphere, entirely wanting in Shingle. In portraying the old farmer, but little more than the power of mimicry is called into play, but in Plummer, in addition to the wonderful detail of Shingle, we have an exhibition of the artist's powers in pathos...  

Such comments may have inspired him to vary his repertory somewhat, for in Brooklyn he added four plays from his past: The Rivals; The Married Rake; A Day After the Wedding; and Self, representing a variety of roles from broad farce to comedy of manners and sentimental drama.

From Brooklyn, the company toured Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, opening January 19, 1874, at Chicago's Academy of Music. Just as Brooklyn papers had called him "undoubtedly the great comedian of America," the Chicago Daily Tribune hailed Owens as "America's most famous comedian. These titles were bestowed on him during the late 1860's and early 1870's, after the death of Burton and before the zenith of Jefferson's career. Chicago audiences with whom Solon Shingle had been a favorite shifted their preference to Caleb Plummer, which they apparently appreciated for its consistency and fidelity to nature.
The Tribune's critic agreed that Shingle was "a trifle old," but preferred his John Unit in Self:

Owens' admirable and wonderfully natural characterization has made the play exclusively his own. His strict adherence to nature in his conception, blended into a power of pathos that at once fixes the attention and holds the sympathies of an audience, has made Mr. Owens' John Unit one of the greatest characters [of the stage].

This switch of allegiance from Shingle to others of his repertory could have been due either to its becoming old or stale, to changing audience tastes, or to his polishing of the other roles to a point where they moved audiences almost as effectively, such as Joshua Butterby in The Victims: "The breadth of some of the situations being toned down to nature, . . . the absurdities are linked together in such a manner that they cease to be absolute absurdities, and appear to be the actions of an eccentric, not an impossible personage."

By January 23, the Tribune asserts that Owens' success in Chicago "has been great, and ... promises to hold out good in defiance of the weather." However, at the close of the engagement it reports with regret that the engagement "was not a very pronounced financial success, [and played] not always to as large audiences as they deserved. However, the fine old comedian made money here." The paper speculates that this uncertain support may have been because he varied the repertory: "Had he played 'Solon Shingle' and 'The Victim' through the whole fortnight, the wonder would be abated." Thus, Owens was placed on the horns of a dilemma: whether to limit his appearances in Shingle, of which audiences might tire, or to perform it frequently as a sure box-office attraction. He decided to play it and Victims for the first half of each upcoming engagement, and provide a number of plays for one night each the second half. With this schedule the company continued to tour, through Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kentucky and southward to Memphis, Mobile, Montgomery, Atlanta, Augusta, Savannah, Macon and Columbus, Georgia. For the first time in his career
Owens left the company occasionally for a few days at a time, to play starring roles in such places as Selma, Alabama, perhaps to increase personal and/or company revenue.42

In April, 1874, after thirty weeks of touring, Owens met in his dressing room during the final performance in Columbus, Georgia, a representative from the executive committee of the Varieties Theatre in New Orleans. Granted exactly sixty seconds (he had asked for "a minute of your time," he implored Owens to accept a position as manager there for the coming season. The most he was able to extract from the comedian was a promise to visit New Orleans, where the Owenses subsequently spent two pleasant weeks. Wishing to take a respite from the rigors of touring, and having been offered "alluring terms," Owens agreed to manage the Varieties for the season of 1874-75, commencing in November.43 His profits for the two years of combination touring exceeded those of any star of his day.44

Assembling a largely new company, Owens filled the intervening months in Philadelphia, opening August 31 at Mrs. John Drew's Arch Street Theatre.45 It had just been thoroughly renovated, and the Inquirer observes with pride that it "has been so elegantly decorated and made so luxuriously comfortable . . . that it is now one of the most attractive places of amusement in the country."46 Famous both as an actress and manager, Mrs. Drew was known for the fine companies she trained at the Arch Street, and the quality of productions she mounted there. The company Owens had assembled maintained the theatre's reputation; the Inquirer calls it a company "of unusual excellence. . . . Their support was something remarkable in these days of inefficient stock companies."47

Large audiences welcomed Owens at the Arch Street as he performed Solon Shingle and The Victims, then rotated the other roles of his standard repertory.
However, the Inquirer questions whether the successful attendance was due to a renovated theatre and "the excellent support rendered by a company of more than ordinary merit, than to any special merit in Mr. Owens' acting, . . . . The not-at-all remarkable specialty of 'Solon Shingle', now, in fact, rather threadbare, excites no special wonder in Philadelphia, however acceptable in remote districts, where dramatic talent above inferiority is always at a premium. The reviewer levels several charges against the comedian:

The fun of Mr. Owens has a very wooden flavor about it, lacking all that fine, unctuous spirit which is necessary to a proper delineation of the character [of DeBoots]. He is too old an actor [51], however, to be any other than he now is, and we would try to be satisfied with his apparently sincere efforts to please if he were less coarse in some things he does, or could be made to understand that gentlemen, even upon the stage, do not interlard their conversation with oaths, and that actors who respect their art do not introduce "gags" into legitimate plays.

Mr. Owens had an especially respectable audience last night, which he grieved by certain things almost as much as he amused by other things. Possibly, Mr. Owens has never been quite able to shake off some of the vulgarity of the rowdy "Mose". Mrs. Owens says little of this engagement, merely that the performances met with 'satisfactory results.' The flaws noted by the Inquirer's critic are the very ones she maintains he never stooped to commit. Closing in Philadelphia September 12, the company spent the rest of that month and all of October performing in Brooklyn, Boston, Washington, and Baltimore, where both Owens and his supporting company met with generally favorable reviews and appreciative audiences.

The New Orleans to which the Owens company (not a combination) traveled in November, 1874, was city rife with political dissent and chaos, chafing under the martial law of General Sheridan. Owens expended extra efforts to present a fine repertory, purchasing the rights to a number of additional scripts, and to provide accurate costumes, stage settings, and thorough rehearsals. His hopes for the season ran high, and his thoroughly renovated theatre held a large and
fashionable audience on opening night, November 4. The previous management, poor and transient, along with increased competition from the other New Orleans theatres, had left the Varieties in a financial dilemma from which Owens hoped to extricate it. For the opening night bill he selected School for Scandal and performed as Sir Peter Teazle, a part far from his usual line, requiring the polish of an 18th century London gentleman. The Picayune criticized him for playing a character

... obviously and notoriously out of his line. ... We doubt if Mr. Owens anticipated a successful issue to his venture. [He] is too skilled an artist not to have made something of the character, but that something was not altogether the Sir Peter Teazle of the play and of the time.

The Republican concurred, finding the stage settings and costumes more striking than the acting, and the actors to have taken too many liberties with the script.

The second week of the season Owens performed in a number of his standard roles, drawing mostly favorable reviews. The Picayune undoubtedly reflected everyone's feelings about Solon Shingle by the end of 1874 with its comment, "Everybody knows what Mr. Owens' Solon is." Critics praised his other roles for their consistency and originality, and him for his dedication to detail and authenticity as a manager. (He even placed special notices in the papers that the matinees, Wednesday and Saturday, "will be characterized with the same attention to every detail of preparation" as the evening performances, and all entertainments selected "will be chaste and entertaining."

By the end of September, over-exertion began to slow Owens as a result of his constantly playing double bills (a main piece and a farce) as well as overseeing the quality of productions and seeking box-office revenue. Now age 52, he constantly overtaxed himself during this season and had to take frequent periods of rest and recuperation, a practice he continued for the remainder of his career. Beginning November 16 he took such a rest, allowing the company to perform
without him in Tom Taylor's new play *Clancarty*, followed by Holcroft's *Road to Ruin* and *The Marble Heart*. The press praised the performances and staging of all three productions. For the two weeks after that John McCullough performed classical tragedy to favorable reviews.61

Owens returned in mid-December to direct Boucicault's *Belle Lamar*, a sentimental drama about the life of General Stonewall Jackson which the *Picayune* condemned as hastily written and atypical of its author.62 Boucicault's name was elevated again the following week, however, as *Dot* (*Caleb Plummer*) took the stage. The *Picayune* observes, "The step we take from 'Belle Lamar' to 'Dot' is a single stride from a thing of shreds and patches to one of the most symmetrical forms of dramatic creation."63 The paper regrets the small house but makes an adamant point about the excellence of Owens' acting, asserting that it may be his finest role:

Mr. Owens might base fame and fortune upon this impersonation, for in this is seen the perfection of his art. The old *Toy Maker* as he proceeds from the hands of Mr. Owens is not only a beautiful dramatic picture, but a reproduction imbued with soul and feeling, with a quaint and bubbling humor, with a sense of the poverty which distresses but does not degrade, with a profound and tender maternal love and a joyous spirit which bravely battles against the oppressions of an iron state. There is a wonderfully melting exhibition in Mr. Owens's portrayal of Caleb's devotion to his afflicted daughter, and his remorse for the pious fraud which he had practiced upon her trust and confidence. Mr. Owens's art has served no more noble purpose than in thus recreating in living form one of the most lovable of Dicken's idealizations.64

One reviewer particularly admired Owens' fidelity to nature in creating this role:

Nature in its utmost simplicity and in its most affecting moods pervades and mobilizes the *Caleb Plummer* whom Mr. Owens's delicate and refined art creates. We see every line of the great artist's description reproduced with a fidelity which conquers our imagination and leads it ... to an illusion which has all the sense of a reality. We have no thought of play-acting as we see the poor old man ... move before us.65

During the rest of December, Owens withdrew from the Varieties to rest and left the stock company under Theodore Hamilton's management. They supported
Mrs. D. P. Bowers, a tragedienne currently at the height of her renown, and all drew excellent reviews. In January, 1875, while the Fifth Avenue Theatre Company from New York appeared at the Varieties, followed by Lawrence Barrett with his own company, Owens took his to Galveston, Texas. The patronage there was rough and unsophisticated, flourishing bowie knives and pistols. One prominent gentleman affably told Owens, "You ought to settle here—we will build you a theatre. Make this your home!" "God forbid!" the actor replied. To his company he asserted, "All the world may concede eminence to an actor, but his position is not established until he has passed the ordeal of a Galveston audience, and gained their approval." While they did gain approval there, he never returned.

All during this time, post-war resentment over northern military occupation of New Orleans continued to escalate. Armed citizens skirmished with federal troops under Sheridan, and North-South hostility remained volatile. People were too excited to attend the theatre, and the bulk of audiences were a floating population of visitors. All theatres in the city experienced depleted box-office receipts. Mrs. Owens notes that "Attractions which, under usual circumstances, would have insured crowded houses, failed to draw even moderately well."

Owens returned to the stage of the Varieties in February in several roles, but for most of the time performed in Self. Critics lauded his combination of humor and pathos; the Picayune observes that the performance "was much more effective than a sermon in enforcing the moral. . . . There were nice touches and gleams of pathos and tenderness." The newspaper also praised the clarity with which he conveyed the internal forces at war within the character and the detailed comprehensive study he had given the role. Owens' ability to convey effectively conflicting forces reflects either refinement of his acting style which critics had not observed in him a decade previously, or more discerning critics.
Owens rested for the last two weeks of February, 1875, while visiting stars Jane Coombs and J. K. Emmet performed with the stock company. These were both actors of melodrama, and drew only modest reviews. On March 8 Owens reappeared for a week in a number of roles. Theatre attendance improved somewhat during this week, and the Picayune reports "an Owens house— one of the elegant audiences who always grace the Varieties when their favorite comedian is on the boards." The 1874-75 season was completed by the engagement of Mrs. F. S. Chanfrau, already established in the city as an actress of merit in romantic leading roles. She received favorable reviews and parlayed her popularity into the position of manager of the Varieties for the following season. During the appearance of Mrs. Chanfrau, Owens acted only briefly, in Risks, as Pemberton Pembroke, Esq., an insurance agent. The role did not reflect the preparation of his other roles, and was "a sketch in the rough, . . . clothed with all the airiness of Mr. Owens's light humor, but [lacking] the full endowment of distinctive individuality which more deliberate analysis . . . will confer." While his name appeared in advertisements for the final week, other actors were inexplicably substituted for his roles, and the season ended on April 3.

Artistically, the season was one of the most successful New Orleans ever knew. The company's performances had been judged superb, and its standards of excellence praised. But while "generally brilliant in dramatic achievement," it was also a season of financial disaster; theatrical matters nationwide suffered sorely, with fewer successful seasons than has been the case in any year of the history of the American stage.

The theatrical offerings Owens had provided were entirely in keeping with dominant public tastes in New Orleans in the 1870's: broad comedy or farce alternated with contemporary drama and classical tragedy. But the political
situation preempted his success, and he gratefully yielded the Varieties to Mrs. Chanfrau, taking his company on a short tour of southern towns.  

While they were playing in Charlestown, South Carolina, in May, 1875, John Chadwick, the owner of that city's Academy of Music, approached Owens. Chadwick sought to consolidate his holdings and pursue business interests in Russia and offered to sell the Academy to Owens. Chadwick had invested thousands of dollars in the upkeep of the theatre, and it appeared to be a good buy. But the previous season of tiring management led Owens to ask for time to think it over, and he pondered the issue until July. By July 25 he decided to go ahead with the purchase and signed all papers, making a large cash payment. Sparing no expense, he gave orders for much new equipment and lavish decorating, prior to the Academy's September opening.

In subsequent years the Owens Academy of Music earned fame for its popular attractions and decor, although its management was not always astute. Owens relegated management for the first two seasons to a Frank Arthur, who proved to be very undesirable and his connection with the Academy terminated disastrously. In 1877 he hired John M. Barron, formerly of McVicker's Theatre in Chicago, who provided wise management until 1884 when Owens assumed active management himself. Barron supervised with close attention to detail, both in house furnishings and in stage settings and costumes. Also to Owens' satisfaction, he kept neat, accurate records, which unfortunately were lost in the 1885 earthquake which toppled the Academy.

Owens spent the summer and early fall of 1875 at Aigburth Vale, resting and duck-hunting on Maryland's Eastern Shore. A friend had given him a fine hunting dog, and he enjoyed many relaxing days in the sport. In October, one long spell in the duck blinds caused him to contract malarial fever. Doctors treated the severe attack in his home with quinine, but he was so eager to get back to work that he
doubled, then tripled his dosage, until he became somewhat delirious. In November, finally cured and wishing to find a new role to add to his repertory, perhaps as a replacement for the somewhat-stale Solon Shingle, he obtained the rights to a new comedy by Henry J. Byron called Our Boys. The role he took, that of Perkyn Middlewick, a vulgar old retired butterman, afforded him a chance to duplicate some of the pathos and tenderness of Caleb Plummer. The story concerns three sets of fathers and sons, with each son in love with a different girl. Each of the sons has been brought up a different way, with the butterman's, Charles, having been given anything he desired. Old Perkyn objects to his son's love for wealthy Violet, insisting instead on a girl, Mary, of poor but honest means. Charles, like the other sons, disobeys, and the father throws him out. In the last act, with the other two boys, hungry and cold in a third-story back room, Charles is sick in body as well as in heart. The fathers visit them and attempt to show them the proper paths to follow, but are forced to hide in a closet when the girls visit. The girls are horrified by the surroundings and stalk out, leaving the boys bewildered and bereft. The fathers attempt to lecture the boys about their profligacy, but are won over by their love for their sons. Melting, Perkyn relents. Meanwhile, the girls, feeling sorry for the boys, return, and each attaches herself to her initial beau. The moral is somewhat cloudy, but appears to be that no one system is preferable in rearing children. Owens interpreted the character of Perkyn as a man whose facade of intelligence and sensitive feelings masks a basic bluntness and vulgarity. (His frequent blunders in polite society provide much of the humor of the play.) In performance, he alternated wounded pride, anger, and tenderness with moments of racy humor. Our Boys premiered at the Academy of Music in Baltimore November 29, 1875, then (except for a brief Christmas vacation) played for two weeks in...
Brooklyn at the Brooklyn Theatre. In both cases excellent companies supported him. The managers of both theatres were happy to stage the play, as it required little in the way of elaborate scenic effects, a welcome relief in an age of extravaganzas requiring

... armies of supernumeraries, droves of horses, tons of scenery, the use of firearms, and great mechanical effects. [Many plays are produced] whose cost of preparation, both pecuniary and laborious, have been simply awful.

Our Boys required only three interior sets and had a relatively small cast—traits of the realistic domestic comedies and dramas which would become prevalent in the closing decades of the century.

Critics praised Owens' Perkyn for the same careful control and balance of humor and pathos which had brought him renown with Caleb Plummer, as well as for his realistic detail of movement, business, and voice. The reviewer for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle favored the way in which his vitality, laughing eyes, 'Owensish walk', and facial expressions contributed so well to this role. One critic, however, when he took the play to Chicago's McVicker's Theatre in March, believed these mannerisms detracted: 'He is too coarse, too greasy, too full of hiccups ... and too fond of winking and grimacing. In the last act he has some low comedy business ... that is utterly unworthy an actor of his reputation.'

From Chicago Owens traveled to St. Louis for two weeks, then to Philadelphia, where he opened May 1 for two weeks at the Walnut Street Theatre. In these cities, as in Baltimore and Brooklyn, large audiences enjoyed Our Boys, preferring it to some of his established roles. Reviewers note large houses kept in a 'continual roar of merriment,' but largely ignored specific performances, acknowledging his appearance with phrases such as: 'It is scarcely necessary to say that Owens appears nightly,' 'His impersonations are as enjoyable as ever,' and 'Good wine needs no use, nor Mr. Owens praise.'
reason for this may have been the preoccupation of public and press alike with frantic preparations for the nation's Centennial celebration, much of which centered in Philadelphia.

With Our Boys now a fixed part of his repertory, Owens spent the next few seasons touring by himself and relying upon stock companies for support, which were for the most part competent. He varied the cities and towns he visited frequently enough to keep himself a novelty in each while keeping largely the same repertory. His competence was still nearly unquestioned, as was his preeminence as a comedian. While critics admitted that his acting was within a fairly narrow range, most felt that "all are masterpieces, and have become standards."

In most cities during Owens' 1876-77 tour capacity houses attended. Beginning in October, he toured steadily until late April, finding particular enjoyment in the people and lovely scenery of the West: St. Louis, Louisville, and a dozen towns in New York state. He took one week in November to play the Brooklyn Theatre again, being one of the last stars to play there before it burned. Next he proceeded south, performing in January in Washington, in February in Boston, then spent March and April performing in Charleston, Savannah, Macon, Atlanta, and various towns in Tennessee, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Ontario.

Throughout this tour, his repertory consisted of roles from the past three seasons, and critical response was largely favorable. As before, reviewers regretted his use of poor scripts, but believed that in lesser hands than Owens' the plays would not have been effective. They praised his expressiveness of face and voice, and his ability to reveal physically what was happening internally to a character:

[He conveyed] . . . every conceivable shade of feeling. When he made love . . . he swelled with all the importance and
vanity of a turkey gobbler; his hair, his limbs all appeared conscious of his excessive gallantry. [When criticized] he visible [sic] shrank like a snail into his shell; a contrast which was so admirably drawn as to convulse the audience with merriment.  

Of his Caleb Plummer critics said, 'It is a marvelously deep and perfect piece of creative acting. The absolute lapse of the artist into a state of senility is a change so weird and fascinating that one hardly believes that the figure before him is a mere counterfeit.' This submerging of himself into the role of Caleb was complemented by his versatility of emotions; he received praise for his ability to show "deferential homage," "meek submission," "childish tenderness," "eager anxiety," and "anguish." Critics spoke of his thoroughness in attention to detail: "No painter is more careful to add the last delicate line or shading, that perhaps only his trained eye can detect, than is Mr. Owens to include the most imperceptible touches of expression." For his Perkyn Middlewick in Our Boys, which he had restored to his repertory by March, 1877, the Charleston News and Courier lauds his judicious blend of "humor, wit and pathos, and the vivid picture of real life called up before the eye, . . . making a living reality of Middlewick." Critics report audiences caught up in continual roars of laughter at his comic business and facial expressions as Perkyn. Often, a single modulation of his voice or a change of eyebrow position could start them laughing. The only negative comments center around his tendency to "gag" (break character and overplay a moment to get a bigger laugh) occasionally, marring the effect of realistic believability.

Overall, this tour proved to be one of Owens' most successful financially and artistically. Apparently, whenever audiences and/or critics tired of some of his roles, he was a shrewd enough performer by this time to vary both his tour route and his repertory slightly, and bring a return of good houses and good reviews. He was apparently also aware of the drain on his health of continual touring, and took a long (May through September) summer vacation, much of it passed at the New
England home of Lawrence Barrett, by then a prominent tragedian with an international following. The two performers relaxed together, yachting, fishing, going for drives, and (one of Owens' most favorite pastimes) engaging in lengthy conversation.¹⁰⁶

When touring, Owens took care to send manuscripts and casting instructions ahead to managers, so as to be adequately supported. His letter to Mr. Shewell, manager of the Boston Theatre, dated January 22, 1877, provides a glimpse into this careful process:

My dear Shewell

I send by Express this P.M. M.s. [manuscripts] and parts of Solon Shingle, and Prompt Book and Cut books of Victims. Kindly cast the plays and place the parts in hand as early as convenient [sic].

Read Victims carefully so that you will be able to cast it with an eye to the adaptability of your people to the different characters; then it will open for success—Your Merryweather a solid stolid business (John Miloney) sort of fellow. Fitzherbert In fact [sic], a Byronic cuss, and feminine bulldozer. Muddlemit, a Muggins Sir Oracle. Miss Crane—the sharp minded, is not necessarily [sic] an old woman although often played by the so called old woman of the theatre. She should be played by a lady of commanding presence and with character decidedly pronounced. On Miss Crane and Fitzherbert much of the success of the piece depends. If I can arrange to put in an appearance in Boston on Friday morning February 2nd can you give me the stage from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. for rehearsal?

Ask Harry McGlenen [business manager] to keep an account for me of the amount of paper he [illegible] and to be charged to me. What do you advise for second week? Pathetic or comic bits. Give me your views.

Mary Anderson opened on Monday last at my Academy in Charleston to nearly $900, and business has been very fine even since she continues with me part of next week.

My regards to Mr. Glenn Templeton, Charles Getz esq. [unidentified, and his former scenic artist in Baltimore, respectively]

Believe me
Very truly Yours

Towsontown

John E. Owens¹⁰⁷
As the end of this letter indicates, his Charleston Academy proved profitable until
the earthquake; newspapers mention occasionally his financial status. The
Brooklyn Daily Eagle notes in 1876 that he had by then amassed 'a handsome
fortune . . . in his long and prosperous career.'

The season of 1877-78 was a year of touring similar to the past several, but
it was touring in an America becoming increasingly modernized. A progressive
spirit, perhaps fueled by the Centennial just passed, created a somewhat more
sophisticated public that viewed rapid strides in industry and communication as
demonstrating greater value than entertainment of the nature John Owens was
offering. Increasingly, his performances began to be referred to as examples of
'the old comedy' that was not familiar to 'the young generation' but that was
nostalgic for oldsters.

In his final years of touring he relied far less on Solon Shingle as a draw, and
more upon Caleb Plummer, the "personation" (to use the critics' term) which
audiences asked for and reviewers commended. However, at the opening of the
1877-78 season, which began in September in Pittsburgh, he attempted once again
to introduce a new role to his repertory. The part of Ebeneezer Barncastle in
Barncastle and Reform, a satire of political institutions set in Washington, was
modeled after a Brooklyn politician whose ingenuity in borrowing money was
legendary. Pretending to have positions of political influence, the 'dead beat'
Barncastle unscrupulously and untruthfully cozens money from various
distinguished people. The role itself was the sole strength of the overwritten play,
and nearly all of the humor revolves around his attempts at embezzlement.
Owens conceived of the character as having a Virginia dialect and being prone to
making long speeches, but otherwise the part offered him no new challenge.
The other characters were poorly drawn and the plot dragged out over five acts.
While audiences appreciated the antics of the central character, they tired of the
play itself. Reviews were merciless. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle catalogues a half-
dozen major weaknesses of the play, admitting that only Owens' performance was
worthwhile, and concludes by saying, 'This may appear like a wholesome
condemnation of the piece, but it does not exhaust the list of its
shortcomings.'

Owens contacted the playwright, a Chicago journalist named
Gil Pierce, and implored him to rewrite and condense the play. However, the
playwright declined, asserting his faith that the actor's 'superb conception and
acting . . . was destined to make me a famous dramatist.'

Owens shelved the play after Brooklyn, telling its author, 'The comedy cannot survive unless a
free use of the pruning knife vitalizes it.'

Primarily because of Our Boys, which he alternated with Barncastle, Owens
drew very large audiences while in Brooklyn in October (at the New Park Theatre)
despite bad weather. He then played Robinson's Opera House in Cincinnati in
November and December. Disappointingly small houses attended, so he varied his
repertory extensively, relying first on standard items such as Self, Everybody's
Friend, Forty Winks and Solon Shingle, then trying Dot, then offering eighteenth
century comedy: The Rivals and She Stoops to Conquer. Nothing helped draw
theatregoers to the Opera House, for two reasons not his fault: 1) the weather
was bitterly cold, with snow and sleet, and 2) the nearby National Theatre was
drawing huge houses for its burlesque review, Dizzy Blondes. The Cincinnati
Commercial took an unequivocal stand regarding the competition (the police had
ordered the manager of the National to tone down his show or be closed):

If this beautiful theatre [Robinson's] is not well patronized this
week, lovers of the pure and high in comedy are dead and gone and . . . their places have been fully supplied with a
degenerate crowd who have not a mind above amateur theatrics and beer and whiskey halls. . . . Here will be the most
famous actor of the old school comedians, supported by an
excellent company. . . . Let us see by the size of the
audiences . . . whether there are left in the city any
dramatic taste and culture.
The public failed to respond to the challenge, however, and the Commercial bemoaned the "Frenchy trash that captures the popular taste" over the "rare perfection" of Owens' comedy.¹¹⁷

From there, he traveled through New Jersey and numerous New England towns, with "agreeable results."¹¹⁸ In January, 1878, he again organized his own combination company and re-visited each of these towns with Dot and Our Boys.¹¹⁹ Then, after seven years' absence from New York's Manhattan theatre district, he opened March 11 for one week at the Standard Theatre with Victims and Solon Shingle, using its company.¹²⁰ The New York to which Owens returned was a city that had mushroomed to a metropolis of one million residents, with a million and a half in the greater New York area.¹²¹ In a decade, Manhattan's three major theatres had expanded to twenty-four; in nearly all of these the main attractions were performers of serious drama: Edwin Booth, the young Henry Irving, Laura Keene, Ada Rehan, Ellen Terry, Clara Morris, and Owens' friend Lawrence Barrett.¹²² It was a Manhattan from which John Owens' absence had, according to the New York Times, "separated him somewhat from the people who were formerly his most ardent admirers."¹²³ That paper reports that generally large audiences attended his performances, but it does not hesitate to point out weaknesses and compare him to other comedians of the day:

As a comedian he is not to be named in the same day with Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Clarke, and his mannerisms are not nearly as droll [as some] . . . but he has communicative cheerfulness and much ease of manner. . . . These characteristics make up for the want of contrast and dramatic accent which impresses the critical witness.¹²⁴

The reviewer notes that Owens was "trotting out old Solon once again. . . . We cannot help wishing that the fruits of experience, study and imagination were better employed than in depleting a stupid and offensive old person."¹²⁵ Nevertheless, there was some merit in his performance, "marked by quaintness, consistency, and minuteness of detail."¹²⁶ As had been the case before, he once again failed to elicit unqualified praise from the New York Times.
Having received numerous offers to visit California since his visit in 1869, Owens decided to accept one, that of John McCullough, at whose California Theatre he opened April 1, 1878, for two weeks (the railroad having replaced his earlier lengthy steamship journey).\textsuperscript{127} For this engagement he limited his repertory to Dot, Our Boys, Heir at Law, and Self, with good reviews but poor houses. The \textit{San Francisco Chronicle} praised his Caleb Plummer as having improved with time, being "more complete . . . and more polished in detail. Its humor is more subtle and its pathos replete with finer feeling."\textsuperscript{129} The paper also praised his creation of a character faithful to Dickens' intent and faithful to nature. Caleb's senility was "the real identification with age; . . . his gestures, his attitudes of submission, his role of comforter, his aged gambols in the last act, are all . . . supremely human."\textsuperscript{130} Heir at Law fared poorly at the hands of all save Owens; stock actors mangled the playwright's lines: "Not only were single words and phrases changed, . . . but entire speeches were altered to suit failing memories."\textsuperscript{131} Mrs. Owens, however, recalls her husband's Dr. Pangloss as being more polished than at any time previous to this, "in sharp contrast with the other characters."\textsuperscript{132} Unfortunately, his polished performance had no effect on a sagging box office. As the \textit{San Francisco Chronicle} notes, "old comedy, though delightful to people of taste, seldom fills managerial coffers."\textsuperscript{133} When offered a third week at the California Theatre, Owens declined, "deterred by a prophetic vision of empty benches."\textsuperscript{134}

He was by this time, however, referred to in some papers as the richest actor in America.\textsuperscript{135} While his pride may have been occasionally touched by decreasing crowds, he could still look to his tangible evidence of many previous seasons of packed houses. Aside from the Charleston Academy of Music purchase, he had made no major investments, preferring instead to save his money. The \textit{Spirit of the Times} believed by the end of the 1870's that he continued to act only
to keep himself occupied.136 While he paid his actors well when assembling supporting companies, the paper observed that he no longer had an active management into which to sink funds for lavish scenery and house furnishings, such as he had done in New Orleans in the 1860's. The Spirit of the Times expressed the hope that he would use his fortune to encourage new playwrights or build a private theatre and hire an excellent stock company. "But it strikes us as unfair for him to charge the public from fifty cents to a dollar and a half to see him amuse himself, under the impression that they are to behold real acting."137

After a brief tour performing in Virginia City, Nevada, Sacramento, and a few smaller towns, Owens spent six weeks traveling for pleasure through the Far West. He took particular pleasure in the beautiful scenery, flowers, and climate, pushing professional matters to the back of his mind.138 The remainder of the summer he spent resting at Aigburth Vale.

One constant task which Owens faced during this period was the monitoring of the frequency with which he appeared in each city. If he appeared too often, audiences tired of his roles; if too seldom (and papers in a number of cities, notably St. Louis and New York, complained this was the case,) his audiences would forget him and turn to someone new, possibly Jefferson and/or Clarke, with whom he was compared almost daily. As if spurred on by this dilemma, he charted a frantic tour for the 1878-79 season. Opening at Ford's Opera House in Baltimore September 23, he played in Washington's National Theatre and then in Detroit and various other cities in Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, winding down the tour in Omaha, St. Louis, and Louisville, where he closed Saturday, November 29.139 The following Monday, he rehearsed in Toronto for a Tuesday night opening. Between December 23 and January 4, 1879, he played in Philadelphia's Broad Street Theatre, followed by another week in Baltimore, another in Philadelphia again, then one month in New York City at the Park
Theatre (January 20-February 15). Such a pace was surely exhausting, yet the Missouri Republican accuses him of not keeping up with his public: "He plays only a few engagements a season, and then resigns himself to affluence and ease."

His repertory for this tour was unchanged except for the resurrection of The Serious Family and the addition of a comedy, A Double Knot, which he dropped almost immediately. Far better audiences attended his performances this season than the one before, and critics were laudatory. For the first time he drew praise from the New York Times for his performance as Caleb Plummer, the role regarded by most critics as his finest portrayal. Nearly all reviewers praised the extent to which he became Caleb, and the Times advised everyone to see this rich lesson in acting: "His identity is absolutely lost in his part, and at no moment does he forget that . . . he is not Mr. Owens, but simply Caleb Plummer." The Times critic continues in this vein for paragraphs, recognizing that while "our new schools have given us new artists whom we have learned to love and respect, . . . we frequently miss in their work that completeness of illusion which is so characteristic of the older comedian." The Philadelphia Inquirer concurs: "It was as though the audiences saw before them the man himself." The critic for the Spirit of the Times agreed and believed the role worked well for Owens because his own personality suited the character so well. The pathos of Caleb brought Owens more fame in these later years than the antics of Solon. "There is not in the whole list of perfected character parts on our stage another . . . so cunningly cut," says the Spirit of the Times.

Most reviewers this season also praised his ability at age 55 to maintain roles with all the freshness and energy with which he originally imbued them. His own natural energy always seemed to always carry over into the parts. Many papers echo the sentiments expressed by the Baltimore Sun: "Mr. Owens was in the merriest mood and his personation was distinguished by an unusual . . .
sprightliness of humor.\textsuperscript{148} When he was not in a good mood, however, he could readily ruin a performance. The \textit{Philadelphia Inquirer} of January 6, 1879, reports "rather a curious kind" of performance in \textit{Everybody's Friend}. An important supporting actor had slipped on the ice just minutes before curtain time, and someone else had to go on reading book. While the replacement did very well, Owens

\begin{quote}
... was greatly annoyed at the mishap, and he did not trouble to conceal his vexation from the audience. ... To play "DeBoots" Mr. Owens made no effort. Nearly all the points ... were missed, as it seemed, wilfully, Mr. Owens "gagging" and slighting the role in a manner that did him no credit, and that was anything but respectful to the audience.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

Although some reviewers criticized the scripts he was still using as "rather too old for the times," this was the only negative note struck during most of the season.\textsuperscript{150} Most critics regarded him as a performer of consummate ability whose talent had been refined and polished well enough that it came close to being flawless. They praised "his keen sense of humor, his strong pathos, his unhampered flexibility, his grasp of character, his power of facial and dramatic expression, and his imperturbable and undisturbable repose."\textsuperscript{151} During this season the \textit{New York Times} calls him for the first time a great actor, justifying this point in a column devoted to a discussion of the elements that make up truly great acting. Point-for-point Owens fulfilled all criteria. The article concludes, "To be a great actor is to have the power of outwardly embodying a mental conception. ... Mr. Owens is a great comedian because he is successively the persons with whose individualities he clothes himself."\textsuperscript{152} These words must have brought particular satisfaction to this actor who for so many years had been deprived of such praise by this respected newspaper.

During this season of 1878-79 theatregoers never seemed to tire of Owens' characters. Apparently, the old found nostalgic value in seeing them again and again, and the young, who had not seen them, found them a fresh source of
delight. This critical and audience reception at first appears paradoxically contrary to previous seasons of poor attendance. However, during this season, he appears to have been particularly driven, with an intensity and buoyancy apparently lacking before. In addition, he never failed to disclose some new trait for each role, an indication that he was still consciously working at improving each one.  

While playing in New York in March, 1878, Owens received an offer to perform in Australia for six months during the summer of 1879. He gave careful consideration to the terms of the contract, but could not make up his mind to go. On March 12 he wrote to T. Allston Brown, a friend and later a respected theatre historian, that he was undecided and wished to talk over the venture with him. He eventually postponed consideration of it until August of 1879, when he decided definitely to go. He booked a stateroom on a steamer and made arrangements to stop first in Sacramento, then perform in Australia, and follow it up with a pleasure trip around the world. However, upon arriving in Sacramento, he received numerous insistent telegrams and personal visits from managers of theatres in Oakland and San Francisco, imploring him to perform there. He repeatedly turned them down, but they were so insistent that he eventually changed his arrangements with the steamer's agents to sail on a later boat and accepted the offers. Subsequent postponements finally led to his cancellation of the engagement in Australia. Instead, he remained in California until the spring of 1881.  

Owens opened in San Francisco on October 6, 1879, at the Standard Theatre, playing his usual repertory. In spite of bad weather, the auditorium was filled with enthusiastic crowds night after night. The manager reported business far above average and announced the indefinite extension of his engagement. The Daily Alta California anticipated a "long continuance of the season." The
population of San Francisco had swelled tremendously as a result of mining fervor, and tickets sold well. Reviewers believed Owens to be doing "some of his very best acting," and had improved since his last visit. With audiences increasing nightly, the management asked Owens to rehearse several new pieces (see Appendix "A" for authors): The Debutante (from his old repertory); Dr. Clyde (he as Higgins); and That Man from Catteraugus (he as Allen Trueman, the title role).

In the first of these he received good reviews, "arousing the laughter and applause of the audience almost constantly." In Dr. Clyde, which played to filled houses for three weeks in November, he performed as a verbose office-boy ("factotum") of the doctor. The role allowed him to utilize much comic business and facial expression (especially his eyes) as he expounded upon fancied medical knowledge. While the plot was "wholly deficient," Owens' comic timing was hilariously perfected. The third of these new plays, That Man from Catteraugus, was adapted specially for Owens by Piercy Wilson, a local playwright, and was to be presented for the first time on any stage. Additional rehearsal and revision was called for, however, and it was eventually withdrawn after several delays.

The "Owens comedy season" at the Standard closed on December 6, and he entertained thoughts of a tour back through the interior. He dropped these thoughts, however, and turned his attention to business interests which would significantly affect his fortunes. Ever since he had arrived in San Francisco various parties had approached him with offers of investments in mining companies. This wealthiest actor in America was not by nature speculative, but one offer appeared to be particularly promising—a gold mine in Arizona run by an already incorporated agency. Accompanied by two friends who were mining experts he went to Arizona to inspect the mine. Owens personally chipped off several large pieces of gold ore, sealed them in a box, and took them back to a San
Francisco assayer's office. When tested, the ore ranked with the richest ore yet assayed in California, and Owens purchased stock which eventually made him two-thirds owner of the mine. It was primarily because of this investment that he abandoned the Australia project and took up residence in San Francisco, intending to exercise close personal supervision over mining operations.162

Fate, however, proved unkind, and repeated delays in the obtaining of mining machinery and longer delays in striking lodes cost him greater amounts of money weekly. By the end of December he wrote to a friend asking to borrow $50 until he returned East.163 Ironically, while Maryland papers heralded the acquisition of a "Bonanza mine" by their native son, he was sinking into deeper and deeper straits.164 Finally, he tried by late 1880 (for one entire year he had ceased acting to oversee his investment) to withdraw from the business of mining. He believed a fortune could be realized from the mine, but he wished to spend no more money on it; he was proven correct four years later when a syndicate of corporate owners realized millions from it annually.165 While neither he nor his wife ever state how much money he lost on this venture, he was never again mentioned by newspapers as a wealthy man. In fact, at his death, the total value of his Baltimore estate barely covered his accumulated debts, and his wife was forced to sell it to pay them.166 She adamantly denies that he was in any way duped by "ore and mining sharpers."167 His ability as a theatrical manager and his thorough pre-investment investigation would seem to bear this out.

In the fall of 1880 Owens plunged himself into a performance and touring schedule that, in its intensity, must have been designed to recapture financial security. On November 25 he opened again at the Standard Theatre in San Francisco, this time in the delayed production of That Man from Catteraugus. His title role was that of a cattle dealer, an honest, ingenuous, warm-hearted man of the country who demonstrated vigorous intellect and (ironically for him) business
acumen. His bluff humor was tempered by an affectionate regard for his animals and his acquaintances, and the role gave Owens a chance to ingratiate himself easily to audiences. Critics said the part 'fitted Owens like a glove.' While the production was financially successful for the management, it is not known how profitable Owens' terms with the management proved to be; the play continued through December 4.

In February he took the role to Portland, Oregon, where immense, enthusiastic audiences warmly welcomed him. He decided to add Dr. Clyde, Self and Our Boys and these too were triumphs. Every seat was sold well in advance, and his engagement set new records of success for the burgeoning Portland theatre. His fame spread throughout the far Northwest and he received offers from as far away as British Columbia, but he decided instead to accept one from C. R. Gardner, manager of New York's Fifth Avenue Theatre, for March. Unfortunately, before making this decision, he had committed himself to enough theatres in the Northwest that breaking their contracts would mean the loss of thousands of dollars. Gardner would not grant him a postponement, so he returned East and honorably paid off the broken contracts. He hoped to repeat in New York his great success in That Man from Catteraugus.

Unfortunately, this was not to be the case. When the production, with the support of the Fifth Avenue Company, opened on March 28, it received universal condemnation; Mrs. Owens calls the engagement an unpleasant failure. But while she attributes this to Gardner's poor supporting company and other difficulties, newspaper reviewers tell a different story. The New York Times dismisses Wilson's comedy as 'stupid trash, long drawn out, and ... in the most offensive sense plagiaristic.' In fact, the piece was blatantly 'adapted' from a German play and from Anna Cora Mowatt's Fashion—even to the point of Owens' character's name, Allen Trueman, being a poorly disguised Adam Trueeman.
from that play. The *New York Times* does acknowledge that the "supporting company was very bad," but also reports an incoherent Owens: "Whether or not Mr. Owens was in a condition to do justice to his art is another matter. His performance was . . . queer, nevertheless, and unbalanced." The *Spirit of the Times* believed him to be either drunk or suffering from "a severe attack of spring fever, . . . but he was evidently unfit to appear before the public." All reviewers express a desire to see the "old Owens," acting familiar roles with his former control. The play drew poorly, but he kept it as the centerpiece of his April engagements in Philadelphia and Baltimore. The *Philadelphia Public Ledger* calls his "plain-spoken, blunt cattle dealer . . . highly amusing, [and] an excellent piece of acting." In both cities full houses gave him excessively warm welcomes; in Baltimore, his repeated attempts to speak the first lines of the part were drowned out by applause. And, his wife reports, even then he was nearly unable to speak, he was so deeply touched by this welcome from his home city. During a restful summer at Aigburth Vale, he received visits from numerous old friends, and allowed himself to forget the New York debacle. However, he never again enacted *That Man from Catteraugus*.

When at age 58 he opened August 22, 1881, for two weeks at Ford's Opera House in Baltimore, he returned entirely to his old repertory, which he continued to play during a fall tour: *Caleb Plummer; Everybody's Friend; Forty Winks; Happiest Day of My Life; Paul Pry; Poor Gentleman; Self; Solon Shingle; and Victims*. Large audiences and unseasonably warm weather cheered him as he toured towns in Virginia, Alabama, Florida and Tennessee, then swung north to towns in Ohio and Pennsylvania. His appearance was a popular attraction in these small towns; none were major cities. Unfortunately, the small towns' presses gave minimal billing to his performances, and nothing resembling creditable reviews; one must rely on Mrs. Owens' words that everywhere he was "a superlative favorite."
He spent most of December and all of January, 1882, recuperating from exhaustion, complicated by an incompetent business manager on the tour and the illness of his stage manager. He sought an engagement which would tax his energies less than his frantic touring had. In February some theatrical friends drew his attention to *Esmeralda*, then entering its fifth month at the Madison Square Theatre in New York under the management of the Frohman brothers, who a decade later would incorporate the Theatrical Syndicate and exercise firm control over nearly all New York theatres, actors and contracts. The Madison Square Theatre was ideally suited to Owens' style of acting; Jefferson reports that the stage was so constructed as if one were playing in a drawing room. All the lines "told," and the slightest twinkle in an actor's eye seemed to make a point. Most larger houses of the day encouraged exaggeration; the Boston Theatre, according to Jefferson, was a huge commons, a "graveyard of comedies" where everything had to be enlarged, and details suppressed. A stock company without featured stars was playing *Esmeralda* and Leslie Allen, the actor portraying "Elbert Rogers," was about to leave the company.

*Esmeralda* concerns a North Carolina farm family, consisting of honest old Elbert Rogers, his wife Lyddy Ann, and their daughter Esmeralda, who is in love with upstanding young Dave Hardy. Mrs. Rogers, shrewd and scheming, is simultaneously arranging a more prosperous marriage for her daughter and conspiring to bilk some local land speculators into buying their worthless farmland. She does sell it (Elbert meanwhile merely sits around and interjects local idiom—the role is a minor supporting one,) and the second act sees the family in Paris spending all the money. Dave has secretly followed Esmeralda to Paris, where he and Elbert try to persuade a wealthy old marquis to whom Mrs. Rogers has matched her daughter, to release her from the marriage contract. He refuses, but in the last act, Esmeralda herself scornfully rejects the marquis,
Elbert finally stands up to his overbearing wife, Dave marries Esmeralda and finds that the humble parcel of land he had purchased for her back in North Carolina is actually oil-rich, and all live happily ever after. While Owens was by no means enthusiastic about the part, he accepted the contract with the Frohmans, regarding it as "a restful change from his usual comedy characters and double bills." He took over the part on February 27, 1882, but drew no more mention than the following notice in the New York Times: "The public should be glad to know that Mr. John E. Owens—a gifted comedian whose acting reveals deep humor and exquisite pathos—is now performing . . . in 'Esmeralda". Thus identified to a new generation of theatregoers, he was merely listed among the members of the stock company in all billings. Critic William Winter sadly regretted the need for such a performer as Owens to adjust "his fine powers" to such a bland role as Rogers, but Mrs. Owens asserts that he turned the character into something memorable and prominent because of his portrayal; historian Arthur Hobson Quinn supports her contention.

The engagement proved to be a relaxing one for the comedian, and he was able to return on Sundays by train to Aigburth Vale, often accompanied by parties of friends. He found the role so comfortable that he continued with the play until it closed in New York October 7, then went on tour with it in fall. The management celebrated the 200th and 350th performances of the play in New York with elaborate souvenir programs, although the Spirit of the Times warns its readers that this long run was somewhat specious:

Those who wish to learn how the plays at the Madison Square are pushed to such extraordinary runs had only to drop in at the matinee last Saturday. Two such houses would have induced any other management to change the bill. [Manager Frohman] . . . simply nails Esmeralda to the mast until Oct. 9 [sic], takes the average receipts . . . and seems satisfied.

The 1882-83 season during which the Madison Square Company toured with Esmeralda was a restful one for Owens; he found particular joy in returning to
New Orleans for a week in December. The cheers and applause of theatregoers glad to see him again, as well as the myriad friends in private life who flocked to him, must have overjoyed this performer who had recently experienced some disappointing engagements. Flowers and letters of congratulation reached him daily at his hotel. Full houses and rave reviews cheered the company at the St. Charles Theatre, where they presented Esmeralda for eight performances.

Large houses and critics who speak of excellent performances typified the entire season, although most critics denounced the script as weak. When the company played in Buffalo in January, 1883, the Commercial Advertiser wrote that Owens was the most enjoyable feature of the play. His performance, it says, is excellent, with only two slight flaws: his North Carolina dialect was somewhat inconsistent, and he played Rogers as a little too much of an imbecile in the early acts, when he kowtows to his wife constantly. The successful tour ended June 10, 1883, in Rockville, Indiana, and the Owenses proceeded to Hot Springs, Arkansas, where she sought relief from rheumatism in its healing mineral waters.

The season of 1883-84 was John Owens' last season performing. During the fall, he had read a new play entitled Cooke's Corners (perhaps a re-write of the identically titled piece he had acted for the first time in 1862 in Philadelphia; the role he played is the same: Hezekiah Perkins.) He intended to act the part on tour, but only if two conditions could be met: he would be supported by an absolutely first-class company, and all details of management would be supervised by a good business manager, so that he himself would be entirely relieved of every responsibility save that of playing. An unsuccessful tour commenced in Wilmington, Delaware, in November and proceeded through New Jersey and New York state. The script never lived up to his expectations and the company fell far short of the "first-class" standard promised by the manager who had hired them.
Owens himself received moderately favorable reviews, but was unable to salvage the production; furthermore, Mrs. Owens reports, the weak, inexperienced stage manager was incapable of carrying out his suggestions for improvement. Thus, the entire project was shelved and Owens himself hired a new company to support him for the rest of the scheduled tour.\textsuperscript{191}

Together, they played old repertory pieces in Philadelphia, New Brunswick, Conn., and Providence, R.I., before his final engagement. He had scheduled to play the Harlem Theatre in New York, well outside the established theatre district, indicating the extent of his decline by this point, as does the small size of many of the towns in which he had played for several years. Traveling from Providence to Harlem, he became seriously ill, and a doctor diagnosed this as a stomach hemorrhage (possibly a bleeding ulcer). The doctor ordered strict bed rest for two weeks, but Owens insisted on filling the remaining engagement at the Harlem. With agonizing effort he did so, playing to full houses the roles of Major DeBoots and Solon Shingle. Unable to continue, he cancelled the rest of the schedule and returned to Baltimore where complications set in, with liver trouble. This sickness was apparently a culmination of many incidents of illness over the previous five years.\textsuperscript{192} A summer of rest and treatment at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, restored his health, but he decided to stay in retirement and fulfill an intention he had repeatedly deferred: that of personally managing his Charleston theatre, the Owens Academy of Music.\textsuperscript{193}

The Academy was a lavish theatre with a money capacity of $1,200 in 1884. It featured elegant iron opera chairs in the orchestra, balcony and dress circle, and cushioned seats in the family circle, with six private boxes.\textsuperscript{194} One of the best-equipped houses between Baltimore and New Orleans, the Academy had since Owens' purchase of it in 1875 offered many popular attractions, first under the brief tenure of the unscrupulous Frank Arthur, then under the wise, profitable
management of John M. Barron. When Owens arrived in September, 1884, he took
over management himself and selected as his assistant a very able young man
from the Hess Opera Company, William T. Keogh.\textsuperscript{195}

The 1884-85 season was an extremely profitable one; Mrs. Owens recalls it
as "a magnificent success; [sic] unequalled in financial and other respects."\textsuperscript{196}
Crowds jammed into the theatre to attend the first attraction, Barlow and
Wilson's Mammoth Minstrels. Opening night receipts were nearly $1,000, and the
News and Courier observes that "Charleston is a 'gold mine' for minstrel
companies."\textsuperscript{197} Following this group was a series of little known but apparently
popular figures: Bertha Welby (actress of comedy and drama); Mr. B. McAuley
(comic actor); the Ford Opera Company; Fanny Louise Buckingham (dramatic
actress); and C. B. Bishop (comic actor).\textsuperscript{198}

Owens' stay in Charleston contributed more than anything else to his
recovery; by January, 1885, he appeared fully recovered and announced his
intention once again to take to the stage with a revision of his former
repertory.\textsuperscript{199} In May Mr. and Mrs. Owens embarked on a leisurely steamer voyage
to New York, probably to make arrangements for a supporting company and tour
schedule, but en route he became seriously ill with dyspepsia and sea-sickness.
Arriving in New York, he could do nothing else but rest, and almost immediately
he returned to Baltimore. His close friend and personal physician had just died, so
he was forced to consult a new one, "represented to be a specialist in
dyspepsia."\textsuperscript{200} Under this doctor's treatment, he grew progressively worse and
was diagnosed as having incurable stomach cancer. He sought a second opinion
which contradicted this first diagnosis: he suffered merely from a curable liver
and stomach ailment. (Modern medical evidence would appear to indicate cancer,
but in remission.)
During the summer of 1885 his health steadily improved and he once again contemplated a return to the stage. However, all plans were shelved when he received the news of the destruction by earthquake of his Charleston Academy of Music. Without insurance, he lost his entire financial investment, and also grieved for suffering friends in Charleston. He immediately went there and telegraphed back to his wife: "Calamity more serious than pen or picture has described. No words can depict the desolation." He promptly set to work engaging contractors to rebuild the shattered theatre. He offered one relatively undamaged portion, the theatre's ballroom, as a hospital for the disabled and a refuge for the homeless, and contributed money to the city's earthquake fund, expressing regret that his own losses prevented its being larger. He received a lengthy, gracious letter from Charleston's mayor, noting contributions by other theatrical figures such as Irving and Booth, and relating the joy with which all Charleston citizens had enjoyed his Solon Shingle.

Unfortunately, the overexertions and agitation over his razed theatre brought a relapse of illness, compounded by a resistance dangerously lowered by earlier treatment—four months of anesthetics under the dyspepsia specialist. Since the earthquake in early fall, he had spent nearly a year in Charleston in rebuilding efforts, and upon returning to Baltimore fell mortally ill. Suffering considerably for the entire summer and fall of 1886, he briefly appeared to recover in November. However, while taking a morning walk on December 4, he collapsed with a sudden stomach hemorrhage and on December 7 went into a calm sleep from which he never awakened. At 1:30 in the afternoon he died. Funeral services were held December 10 and a large number of theatrical figures from around the country attended as he was buried in Baltimore's Greenmount cemetery. At Ford's Opera House, manager John T. Ford, a close personal friend, hung a large portrait of the deceased, draped in crape, with the quotation:
Of infinite jest and of most excellent fancy,
Tired he sleeps and life's poor play is over.
Sinless, endless rest, that change which never changes.
Farewell! A word that must be and hath been
A sound which makes us linger—yet—farewell.
The old King is dead.
The theatrical career of John Owens reflects many of the trends in acting style and management practice which developed during the nineteenth century. He learned his acting craft in an apprenticeship with William Burton, foremost among the "old school" comedians, during the 1840's in Philadelphia and Baltimore. While performing minor low comedy roles, Owens gained the opportunity to observe closely, and perform with, a number of major stars, both comedians and tragedians. Among those influential figures were Edwin Forrest, William Macready, Joshua Silsbee, and James Hackett. While the last two men undoubtedly influenced Owens' adoption of the Yankee line, the strongest impact on this young actor must certainly have been Burton. From Burton Owens learned to use his own flexible features, vocal variety, and different postures, walks, and mannerisms for each character to humorous effect, as well as how to play to an audience and control comic timing.

In 1846 Owens made his debut in New Orleans, where he would become a favorite performer for the rest of his career. From his work with Ludlow and Smith in the Crescent City, and later from Boucicault, he learned astute management practices which he applied to his own intermittent periods of management later in Baltimore and New Orleans. He earned a reputation for forming good stock companies, selecting popular productions, casting plays well, and carefully overseeing all details of well-mounted productions and audience comfort.

Owens' first major success with a Yankee character came in Philadelphia in 1848 with the "lasey" series. Later he applied characteristics of that role, such as a ruralized, nasal voice, cocky strut, and pugnacious facial expression, to the creation of his most famous role, that of Solon Shingle in J.S. Jones' The People's
Lawyer. In 1850 he successfully made his New York debut and in 1853 toured with his popular *Mont Blanc* lectures.

Owens had an eye for a hit, and produced, directed, and performed in two of the most successful productions of the 1850's, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Baltimore, 1855), and *Dot* (New Orleans, 1859). Yet his most significant success came in 1864, when he established a national reputation with his record-breaking New York long run as Solon Shingle.

Skirting the issue of the Civil War, Owens traveled instead to England, then to the far West. In London, full houses attended his performances as Solon, which critics admired as a triumph over a weak script. In the West, especially in California, he played consistently to good houses and good reviews as he narrowed his repertory to twelve or so roles that he would rarely vary or add to for the rest of his career.

During the latter 1860's and the 1870's Owens toured extensively, playing dozens of cities each year; in 1872 he performed in 137 cities and towns in 37 weeks. Anticipating the development of combination companies, Owens formed one to tour his narrowed repertory, which received fairly consistent critical praise and full houses across the country. Toward the close of the decade, and into the 1880's, however, when reviews and houses became less favorable, Owens toured ever-more-remote towns. Although the wealthiest actor in America by the late 1870's, he lost his entire fortune, and eventually his estate in Baltimore, as a result of gold mine speculation and an earthquake in Charleston that toppled his theater. These events, coupled with intense touring to recoup the losses, contributed to his death in 1886.

A century later, John Owens emerges as one of the most popular comedians of his time, especially at mid-century. He relied for comic effect upon an engaging personality, flexible features, comical and somewhat exaggerated
physicalization, and the individualizing of each of his characters. While known primarily for Solon Shingle and Caleb Plummer, he also created other lifelike characters, remarkable in their detailed realism.

During his acting career, Owens developed a quiet, natural style which followed trends away from crudely overdone stereotypes of Yankee buffoons. While the majority of his early roles were broad, farcical figures such as Toby Tramp and Henry Dove (see chapter one), he later refined his characterizations and played successfully roles which required subtle touches of pathos. Relying upon his abilities rather than upon any humor inherent in the generally poorly-written scripts he selected, Owens added to each role eccentric mannerisms and speech patterns. Derived from his careful study of people in his vast travels, these eccentricities became prominent ingredients in his unique characterizations. In fact, he may have preferred to use weak scripts so he could embellish them with his own personal stamp. During the 1860's and 70's particularly, critics spoke repeatedly of the individualizing details of his characters, which were "real and distinct to an extraordinary degree." One man observed, "I have seen Owens in many parts, but in none of them is he alike. There is a different voice in each play, a different face, a different laugh, a different pair of legs; in fact, a different man altogether."

Photographs of Owens in various roles (see Plates 1-3) reveal his individualization of each character. As Pangloss in Heir at Law he shows a supercilious, fixed expression as if daring anyone to doubt his knowledge. His left eyebrow is cocked, his mouth is perfectly straight except for the hint of a smirk at the corners, and his hair is piled high and powdered, suggesting a high, intellectual forehead. As the inquisitive Paul Pry he is pursing his features together in an attitude of disapproval. His eyes are suspicious and half-closed, his mouth angled in reproof, and a pair of pince-nez spectacles (a favorite Owens prop) perch on the
MR. OWENS as PAUL FRY.
MR. OWENS as SOLON SHINGLE.

(From a Painting by Constant Meyer.)
bridge of his nose. In an often-reproduced photograph as Solon Shingle, Owens is standing hunched over with slouch hat, farmer's baggy overcoat, seedy umbrella, and unbuttoned, stretched shirtfront straining for release. His facial expression is one of dour resentment, with lowered eyebrows shading small, squinting eyes. Spectacles about to fall rest on the end of his nose. His mouth grimly turns downward and his chin is almost upon his chest. His hands, fixed nervously in front of him, are ready to fiddle with whatever small objects may be available.

Owens captured more than just external appearances of a character, however; he was able to get inside the character and make the physical eccentricities convey internal traits. His audiences saw more than comic business or facial expressions; they saw a mind at work which motivated these external manifestations of character, an approach to acting which gained widespread acceptance in the profession only at the close of the century. In 1879 the New York Times praised Owens for his method: "His identity is absolutely lost in the part and at no moment does he forget that for the time being he is not Mr. Owens, [but the character]." His contemporary, critic William Winter, observed that Owens demonstrated a rare ability to "comprehend character at a glance, ... and he completely merged himself in his ideal."

Owens' ease of performance masked his careful study and preparation. Rather than revealing effort, his performances seemed to come naturally. He clearly relished being on stage, relating easily and directly to audiences, never imparting a sense of effort. His rapport with his audiences earned him frequent mention as an 'unctuous' actor, one with an engaging, ingratiating nature which caused audiences to like him and stay loyal to him. As early as 1846, Owens' entry upon a stage created a pitched excitement from the audience, which freely cheered approval.
Perhaps it was this freely granted approval which blinded Owens to some of his weaknesses as a performer. He may have read it as permission to "gag," to break character and overplay a comic moment, or to try to break up other actors on stage with him. It may also have clouded his vision in later years, preventing him from seeing that the roles he was playing were no longer suitable beyond smaller, rural areas of the country. He may have figured that as long as audiences loved him and his characters, he would seek new audiences rather than new roles.

As critics noted in the 1870's, he "trotted out" old Solon longer than was warranted, and he continued to rely on weak scripts, failing to utilize newer dramatic vehicles. Achieving only moderate success with the comedies of Shakespeare and the comedies of manners of Farquhar, Goldsmith, and Sheridan—perhaps because they limited him to dialogue and characterizations delineated by the playwright instead of his own invention—he stayed with the popular adaptations and plays currently in vogue. The demands of Barnett's The Serious Family, Coleman's Heir at Law and The Poor Gentleman, and such farces of J. Madison Morton as Poor Pillicoddy, were limited to broadly-written portraits which Owens could individualize. Using his fertile imagination, his highly flexible features and body, and his powers of observation and re-creation, he could bring success to these scripts, but only for a time. He failed to capitalize upon newer works such as those which brought fame to Jefferson in the closing decades of the century.

While the greater portion of Owens' fame came as an actor, he also deserves recognition as an astute manager, a fore-runner of the all-powerful producer-manager which emerged later in the century, such as Steele MacKaye and Augustin Daly. A thorough, demanding director in the modern sense, Owens pursued realism in properties, scenery, stage business, blocking, casting and acting performances. His stock companies, which he preferred over the use of stars, were uniformly good, unless (as was the case in his later years) he had little
control over their selection. He cast his plays carefully and paid his actors well. Expending considerable time and funds in decorating his theaters and mounting his productions, Owens was rewarded by audiences which gave him generally successful seasons at the box office. More often than not critics supported and complimented his managements in Baltimore, New Orleans, and, in absentia, Charleston. Managing his own combination company, he developed a wide popular following that was as profitable as his appearances as a star had been (e.g., Cincinnati and San Francisco). Yet he never seemed to derive the same satisfaction or enjoyment from managing as he did from acting.

Both as actor and manager, Owens appears to have been a driven man, always setting new goals for himself as soon as, or before, others were met. Having never known poverty, he did not spend money lavishly. The need for financial security appears not to have motivated his intense touring schedule so much as the need for acclaim from his followers, with whom he shared a mutual love affair. The actual fame and adulation does not appear to have provoked vanity in this self-effacing comedian, however; he prized those moments when he could mingle with everyday people, whether they were of high social station or just the laborers on his farm.

One of his most attractive attributes was a playful sense of humor. Throughout his touring, Owens consistently faced adversities, delays, and conflicting personalities with a sense of humor, often defusing a tense situation with a laugh shared by all concerned. Courteous and considerate, he generously devoted time and money to persons and causes in need. He enjoyed life fully, facing it with a "buoyant and merry temperament." His wife recalls that his favorite pasttime was telling stories to friends staying at Aigburth Vale: "Clearly, I can see the tinkle of the eye, the merry twitching of the mobile, sensitive mouth, even before he began to speak. These, and the vivid character with which
he invested the most trivial point, no description can convey."15 Whenever he addressed a cheering, full house in a post-curtain speech, he was characteristically modest, "a gentleman whose heart was too full for utterance, ... one upon whom the mantle of public favor had fallen with most unexpected expedition."16 His modesty kept Owens from demanding treatment as a star, even though, at the height of his career, he clearly could have claimed it. The dozens of managers who implored him at times to adjust his itinerary to include their theaters indicate his actual, if not acknowledged, star status. Even toward the end of his career he was forced to choose between expanding further in the Northwest and fulfilling requests to return to New York.

Beyond all critical judgments or fluctuating fortunes, John Owens was a comedian sui generis, loved by nearly everyone with whom he came in contact, on or off the stage. Even though he never played romantic leads and seldom even the leading roles in comedies, he was a star attraction in character roles. It was Owens whom audiences flocked to see. One admirer reiterated a sentiment often expressed throughout his career: "It is not only that I like to have a good laugh; but I believe a town is better after a visit from Owens. His magnetic mirth smooths asperities, and puts life in a bright aspect."17 Even critics who prided themselves on resisting the urge to laugh at low comedy often found themselves won over by Owens:

Mr. Owens was indescribably funny. ["ow funny"] may be imagined when an old blaze [sic] theatergoer like the writer is made to laugh from his heart—yes, made to laugh all over! until the actors could not be distinguished from one another, in consequence of the "laughing tears," as big as large peas, filling the eyes and rolling down the cheeks! When an actor can produce this effect upon me, I cannot find a heart or an inclination to criticize his acting too closely.18

That Owens was so personable may have been a factor that caused more than one reviewer to criticize him less harshly.
Clearly, Owens left his audience with more than he did the institution of American theatre. Basically a conservative in his profession, he attempted no major changes in acting or management, and introduced no significantly new type of character to the American stage. Whether or not he aspired to establish any lasting legacy, such as a school for the training of comedians or a theater with his name on it, the tragedy of his financial losses prevented him from doing so. Viewed from the objectivity of a century later, he was simply one of the best comedians of his age, drawing hundreds to the theatre wherever he traveled, giving vital life to the theatre in diverse parts of the country. Throughout the 1850's and 1860's, particularly during his remarkable run in New York as Solon Shingle and before the ascendancy of Jefferson, knowledgeable critics did not hesitate to "pronounce him the best low comedian we have ever had," an evaluation which placed him above even his mentor, Burton.19

During the 1860's and 70's several actors rivaled Owens' popularity, but only one surpassed him. Both E. A. Sothern, who made a career of the eccentric Lord Dundreary in Our American Cousin, and Denman Thompson, who did the same with Joshua Whitcomb in his own script of The Old Homestead, achieved fame only within the limited range of their singular roles. Never did they gain the following or the critical reception which Owens achieved.20 John Sleeper Clarke, popular in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York as a low comedian, chose to remain in England after 1870. His best-known role, DeBoots in Everybody's Friend, brought him generally better notices than Owens in that part, and he possessed the same ease of acting style and inherently comical nature as Owens, but he limited his repertory, and many critics considered him too broad, coarse and vulgar a comedian.21

Owens' closest rival in critical success, financial gain, and popular following was Joseph Jefferson III. Their careers are amazingly parallel, and the evidence
suggests that each must have been aware of, and sought to match, each others' accomplishments. Between 1837 and 1849 Jefferson toured the West and South in supporting, low comedy roles with considerable success. Apprenticing with Ludlow and Smith during the 1846-47 season in which Owens made his debut in New Orleans, he was impressed with Owens' performances; in fact, he admits that he frankly "had hoped to see something not quite as good" and that he "was a little annoyed to find such a capital actor." He stage managed at the Baltimore Museum in 1853, then performed at Laura Keene's theater in New York from 1856-59, where he played a long run as Asa Trenchard in Our American Cousin, the turning point in his career. Between 1859 and 1861 he played Caleb Plummer at the newly opened Winter Garden in New York to exceptional reviews. After a brief tour of Australia, he performed in San Francisco in 1861, staying removed from the Civil War because of his pacifist sentiments. Just after Owens' visit to London, Jefferson played at the same theater for 170 nights in Boucicault's revised (expressly for him) version of Rip Van Winkle. This one role became his most famous and he played it over 2500 times (Owens played Solon Shingle over 2000 times). For the remainder of his 71-year career, he toured widely (although not as extensively or as frantically as Owens) in a wide repertory. Among the roles for which he received consistently good reviews were some for which Owens was also known: Bob Acres in The Rivals, Dr. Pangloss in Heir at Law, and Caleb Plummer in Dot. Jefferson was spontaneously, intrinsically funny, a man deeply loved by his loyal audiences. Critics attributed much of the success of Rip Van Winkle, a script lacking in depth, dialogue and characterization, to Jefferson's own warmth of personality and humanizing of the character: "The character had a kindliness, a spirituality, and a humor which were projected so deftly and effortlessly that they seemed inseparable from the actor."
Like Owens, Jefferson was known as a close student of his craft who created detailed portraits which incorporated individualizing business, mannerisms, lines and telling moments.\(^{26}\) His most famous role, however, was created purely from his imagination, rather than, as Owens', from a living model.\(^{27}\) And while Solon was rural, down-to-earth, and tended to suspect everyone with whom he came in contact, Rip was an airy, alcohol-consuming idealist who saw the best in every situation.\(^{28}\)

Both comedians were able to blend humor and pathos skillfully. While, as many critics indicated toward the end of Owens' career, his Caleb was probably the more polished and subtle of his two major roles, even that did not equal the emotional impact of Jefferson's Rip, in terms of delicacy and control.\(^{29}\) 1869 appears to be the point in American theatrical history at which the careers of the two men crossed, Owens' beginning its descent and Jefferson's on the rise (see chapter four, above). A careful investigation of the cities and roles which both men played, and the dates of their performances, indicates that both were aware of the movements, followings, and reviews of the other. Thus, a comparison of the two in terms of their place in theatre history becomes a matter of date, city and role. After 1869, Jefferson must be regarded as the more accomplished and more successful of the two.

In New York in 1859 as Caleb Plummer, Jefferson received strong praise from the *New York Times* and other papers and drew some of the 'largest, most effective and solidly remunerative audiences . . . ever seen assembled in a New York theatre.'\(^{30}\) Like Owens in this role, he was praised for the 'discretion' which he, as a low comedian, could bring to this role: 'He is one of the few eminent low comedians who can command pathos, and the only one that we can call to mind who perceives the true Dickensonian balance—the half-ludicrous, half-pathetic balance.'\(^{31}\)
In 1861 in San Francisco, in a variety of roles, Jefferson met with disappointing audiences until he played Bob Acres; in that role he was "gloriously triumphant." The Daily Alta California reports houses "crowded to the ceiling, ... roars of laughter and thunders of applause" for his portrayal of this character. Reviewers noted his ease of manner, open and intimate relating to the audience, and comical (although somewhat awkward) physicalization, but considered him "more at home in the extravaganza than in the more genteel play [i.e., The Rivals]." His chief assets were his "good form, great activity, an expressive face, over which he has complete control, a fine voice, a decided talent for comic singing, and a ready wit to take advantage of any little incident that may turn up in the course of the play." Reviews of Owens' performances at this same time (see chapter three) noted exactly these same traits.

Both Owens and Jefferson were successful in London in 1865. Prior to the appearance of each, the Times (London) commented upon the marked popularity which each had achieved in the United States, noting that each would have to measure up to a sizeable image created beforehand in the minds of theatregoers and critics. After the openings of both men, the Times agreed that their reputations were well-deserved ("The success achieved by Mr. Owens bears high credit to his talents;" "Such, ... then, did Mr. Jefferson make his first appearance before an English audience and take it by storm.") Both comedians drew consistently full houses which laughed and applauded heartily. The Times praised Owens for his use of voice, flexible features, prolonging of comic moments for humor (particularly his sitting down and his snooping through the belongings of others), his use of costume and prop items to individualize his character, and the consistency of his characterization: "his impudence is unconquerable, and he addresses lawyers, ushers, or judge with equal and indiscriminating familiarity and aplomb." Two months later the same reviewer praised Jefferson for his
expressive voice, his "grace, moderation and suggestiveness" of physicalization, his balancing of humor and pathos, and his "thorough-paced" (consistent) characterization, "a quiet, sly wit, and a sharp-sightedness, ... gay and heartfelt," along with his use of business to develop character (e.g., holding timidly the long beard which is so strange to him). Owens created a "new kind of Yankee," demonstrating acting powers of which "there can now be no question;" Jefferson made it clear "that an actor of undoubted merit had at length arrived." By 1880, however, when Jefferson appeared in Philadelphia in The Rivals, he was clearly Owens' superior. His performance was, according to the Inquirer, "the perfection of the comedian's art—the artist's touch was so light and delicate, his grasp of the character so vigorous, his perception of its humor so profound, his expression of it so distinct." The newspaper doubted "if the part has ever before been so magnificently acted." In this city, in which Owens had performed so many times, "old habitues" of the theatre "need not be told [that Jefferson's] is the ripest, fairest fruit of the art of many generations of noble actors." Jefferson's eclipsing of Owens' fame toward the close of the century may well be the largest factor in our underestimating the accomplishments of the latter performer today.

Certainly John Owens was more than just a competent Yankee actor whose fame rested upon one stereotypical role. He performed well and popularly for several decades in a variety of roles, numbering over 400. He was capable of conveying both ludicrous humor and touching pathos. His characterizations were individualized with verisimilar details crafted from careful observation and fueled by an active imagination. At the height of his career he played a record long run in New York, then toured for two decades to ever-increasing territory of the United States at a pace unmatched by any of his contemporaries. As an actor and
as a manager he maintained a tremendous popular following and amassed a considerable fortune. Before the height of Jefferson's career, he was the wealthiest, most popular comic actor in America. And with his theatrical successes, he remained a fundamentally decent, generous, kind man free of vanity or demands to be treated as a star. A reviewer for the Spirit of the Times, which chronicled so much of his career, provided in 1858 one of the clearest statements explaining Owens' great popularity:

After seeing Owens act a few times, one feels like breaking out into a broad laugh the instant his face is shown on the stage, even if his countenance be in repose, or presents a melancholy aspect. [He puts the audience] in the very best of humor before speaking a line and not frequently into a broad laugh, with a look only, so great and irresistible is his comic humor.44

It is this "irresistible comic humor" which remains Owens' chief contribution to American theatre. With it, he invaded and conquered areas of the country which more sophisticated theatrical fare never reached. Many of the sixty-eight cities to which he toured (see Appendix D) saw only the broadest, unprofessional performances of local dramatic clubs or second-rate professional actors; John Owens was one of the best of the first-rate Yankee actors and comedians of the nineteenth century. Playing 447 different roles in over 15,000 performances to countless thousands of theatregoers in his career, he was a potent force in keeping theatre alive not only on the east coast, but also in the South and West. His original characterizations, fueled with his unique comic humor, formed an expanding theatrical frontier which paralleled the nation's own.
Footnotes - Introduction

1 Danforth Marble (1810-1849), James H. Hackett (1800-1871), and George Handel Hill (1809-1849), along with Joshua Silsbee (1813-1855), are generally regarded as the initiators of the "Yankee" line of business. For detail beyond the scope of this work, see Francis Hodge, Yankee Theatre (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1964).

2 Several sources substantiate these figures: New Orleans Daily Picayune, Feb. 4, 1873; New Orleans Times, Dec. 11, 1871; Omaha Daily Republican, Jan. 6, 1873; Montrose Moses, ed., Representative Plays by American Dramatists (Boston, 1918), II, p. 388. The full title of Jones' play is The Yankee Teamster; or, The People's Lawyer, and Owens first played the role in 1856.

Footnotes - Chapter 1

1Information concerning Owens' early life is taken from his wife's biography of him: Mrs. John E. Owens, Memories of John E. Owens (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1892).

2Owens, pp. 2-4.
3Owens, pp. 5-6.
4Owens, pp. 7-8.
5Owens, pp. 8-9.
6Owens, p. 9.
8Owens, p. 9.
9Owens, pp. 17-19.
10Neel, p. 132.
11Owens, pp. 10-11.
12Playbills, Hoblitzelle Collection.
13Philadelphia Public Ledger, May 13, 1841.
15Hoblitzelle.
17Hoblitzelle.
19Hoblitzelle.
20Keese, p. 125. See also p. 41.
21Keese, p. 125.
24Keese, p. 132.
25Keese, p. 133.
27 Keese, pp. 140-46.
28 Jefferson, p. 79.
30 Keese, p. 35 (see also pp. 24-29).
31 Owens, pp. 38-40.
32 Owens, pp. 15-17.
33 George Colman, the Younger, The Heir at Law in Cumberland's Plays. (London: G.H. Davidson, n.d.) XXXIII.
34 Owens, p. 16.
35 Owens, p. 17.
37 Thompson, p. 1.
39 Hoblitzelle.
40 Hoblitzelle.
41 Philadelphia Public Ledger, Aug. 10-11, 1843.
42 Baltimore Sun, Sept. 11-Nov. 10, 1843.
43 Baltimore Sun, Nov. 11, 1843.
45 Moncrieff, p. 21.
46 Baltimore Sun, Nov. 11-27, 1843.
47 Baltimore Sun, Nov. 29-Dec. 29, 1843.
51 Hodge, p. 262.

Hodge, pp. 56-58.


Dobkin, p. 6.

Hodge, pp. 81-82.

Hodge, p. 123.

Hodge, pp. 240-250.

Hodge, pp. 251-53.

Hodge, p. 240.

Owens, pp. 20-22. William Warren accepted Kimball's offer and so began the careers of two rising comedians.

Owens, pp. 22-25.

Baltimore Sun, Apr. 23-June 12, 1844.

Baltimore Sun, May 25, 1844.

Baltimore Sun, June 14, 1844.

Baltimore Sun, June 24-July 27, 1844.

Baltimore Sun, Aug. 26, 1844.

Baltimore Sun, Aug. 26-Nov. 3, 1844.

Baltimore Sun, Nov. 4, 1844-Apr. 19, 1845.


Kenney, p. 10.

Bogard, Moody and Meserve, pp. 98-99.

Baltimore Sun, Apr. 21-26, May 1, June 19-21, 1845.

Baltimore Sun, Apr. 25-Sept. 13, 1845.


Neel, p. 22.

Wilson, pp. 322-27; Hoblitzelle.


J. Thomas Scharf, History of Baltimore City and County, ed.


Baltimore Sun, Dec. 9-10, 1845.
82 Bernard, p. 23.
83 Scharf, p. 443.
84 Baltimore Sun, Feb. 16, 1846.
85 Baltimore Sun, Feb. 18-July 18, 1846.
86 Baltimore Sun, Apr. 29, 1846.
87 Baltimore Sun, July, 19, 1846.
90 Roppolo, p. 96.
91 Jefferson, pp. 36-37, 146.
92 Roppolo, p. 42.
93 Roppolo, p. 47.
94 Roppolo, pp. 75-76.
95 New Orleans Daily Picayune, Feb. 17, 1852.
96 Ludlow, p. 695.
97 Owens, p. 27.
98 Owens, pp. 28-29.
99 New Orleans Times-Picayune, Nov. 21, 1846-Jan. 23, 1847.
100 Roppolo, pp. 262-273.
101 Ludlow, pp. 648-651.
102 Dobkin, pp. 222-26.
103 Hodge, p. 238.
104 Hodge, p. 239.
105 Hodge, p. 221.
106 New Orleans Times-Picayune, Jan. 26-Apr. 16, 1847; Roppolo, pp. 252-73.
107 New Orleans Times-Picayune, Jan. 24, 1847.
108 Owens, p. 32.
109 Owens, p. 32.

Owens, p. 33; Nothing is known about Hamm's identity, and Owens never dealt with him after these two seasons.

Owens, pp. 32-34.

*Baltimore Sun*, Sept. 15, 1847.


Poole, p. 8

Poole, p. 69.

Poole, p. 19.

*Baltimore Sun*, Sept. 18, 1847.

*Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 1, 1847.

Owens, pp. 34.

*Baltimore Sun*, Sept. 15, 1847-Apr. 21, 1848.

T. E. Wilks, *State Secrets; or, The Tailor of Tamworth in French's American Drama; Minor Drama*. (New York: Samuel French, n.d.) IV;


Wilks, p. 7.

Oxenford, p. 8.

Coyne, p. 4.

*Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 18, 23 & 25, 1847.


*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Apr. 25-June 3, 1848.

Owens, p. 37.

*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, July 4-15, 1848.


Owens, p. 40.

Owens, p. 38.

Owens, p. 38.

Footnotes - Chapter 2

1 Baltimore Sun, Sept. 16, 18, & 30, 1848.

2 Baltimore Sun, Oct. 26, 1848.

3 Baltimore Sun, Nov. 22, 1848.

4 Owens, p. 40.


6 Colman, p. 19.

7 Baltimore Sun, Nov. 22, 1848 - Jan. 6, 1849.

8 Baltimore Sun, Jan. 7, 1849.

9 Owens, p. 42.

10 Baltimore Sun, Jan. 6-Feb. 25, 1849.

11 Owens, p. 42.

12 Neel, p. 59.


14 Owens, p. 41.

15 Owens, pp. 46-47.

16 Owens, pp. 56-57.

17 Owens, pp. 140-41.

18 Philadelphia Ledger, Jan. 23-27 and Mar. 12-17, 1849; Playbills, Hoblitzelle Collection.


21 Baltimore Sun, Mar. 12-May 24, 1849.

22 Owens, p. 42.

23 Owens, pp. 42-43.

24 Owens, pp. 43-44.


26 Owens, p. 45.

27 Baltimore Sun, May 25-July 5, 1849.

28 Baltimore Sun, Sept. 3, 1849.

The most common variations on the names of character in The Live Indian over the years were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Name Variations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporal Tim</td>
<td>Miss Crinoline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Jones</td>
<td>Coralie Crinoline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Bobbin</td>
<td>Miss Furbelow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal Trim</td>
<td>Henrietta Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Jones</td>
<td>Miss Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Fennelia Crinoline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Owens, pp. 48-49.

Baltimore Sun, Nov. 21, 1849.


1 Morton, p. 22.

Owens, pp. 50-51.

John B. Buckstone, Married Life in French’s American Drama. (New York: Samuel French, n.d.) XVII.

Buckstone, p. 13.


Buckstone, p. 30.

Baltimore Sun, Jan. 1 - July 6, 1850.

Baltimore Sun, Sept. 1 1850 - Apr. 10, 1852.

Owens, p. 58.


Owens, p. 51; Baltimore Sun, Dec. 5, 1850.


Owens, p. 54.


Barnett, p. 12.

Barnett, pp. 36-37.

Owens, pp. 52-53.

New York Herald, Jan. 9, 1851.

New York Herald, Jan. 15, 1851.

Owens, p. 53.

Owens, p. 53.

New York Herald, Jan. 23, 1851.

Owens, p. 53.

Owens, p. 54.

Spirit of the Times, Jan. 11, 1851.


New York Herald, Jan. 18, 1851.

New York Herald, Jan. 18 - Feb. 15, 1851.

Among the Comedians, "Atlantic Monthly, XIX (June, 1867), 755.

Owens, p. 55.

Owens, p. 56.

Owens, p. 58.

Baltimore Sun, Mar. 3, 1851 - Mar. 10, 1852.

Henry Mayhew, The Wandering Minstrel in Spencer's Boston Theatre: Minor Drama. (Boston: William V. Spencer, n.d.) VIII. The Toodles is variously attributed to Burton, "Cowley," and R. J. Raymond; the leading role in Minstrel is variously listed as Jim or Jem Bags, Bags, or Baggs.

Owens, p. 59.

Atlantic Monthly, p. 756.

Owens, pp. 59-60.

Owens, pp. 60-63.

Baltimore Sun, Dec. 6, 1852 - Jan. 1, 1853; see also Scharf, p. 693.

Owens, p. 64.

Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, Lincoln Center Branch.

The extraordinary stage history . . [of this play] . . began at the Troy Museum in Troy, New York, on 27 September 1852, when George C. Howard and his family presented George L. Aiken's (Howard's cousin) dramatization of Mrs. Stowe's novel, and from then until Howard's death in 1887 the family devoted themselves to 'Tomming'. In 1852-3 eight versions of the play appeared in London, and in 1853-4 five in New York." (Bogard, Moody and Meserve, p. 99).
109 Hoblitzelle Collection, letter to George C. Howard dated Mar. 10, 1855.
110 Neel, p. 13.
111 Owens, p. 73; Baltimore Sun, Mar. 26 - Apr. 16, 1855.
112 Owens, pp. 73-74.
113 Owens, p. 74.
114 Owens, p. 74.
115 Owens, pp. 74-76.
116 Roppolo, pp. 75-76.
117 Baltimore Sun, Apr. 25, 1855.
118 Baltimore Sun, Apr. 16 - May 21, 1855.
119 Owens, p. 71.
120 Actually, Bourcicault; he did not drop the "r" from his name until 1860.
121 Owens, p. 76.
122 Owens, p. 54.
124 Neel, pp. 150-51; See also Spirit of the Times, XX (May 4, 1850).
126 New Orleans Times-Picayune, Dec. 14, 1847 and June 27, 1849. See also Spirit of the Times, Nov. 30, 1844.
129 Anderson, pp. 163-68.
130 New Orleans Times-Picayune, Oct. 10, 1856.
132 Roppolo, p. 105.
133 Wilson, pp. 165-67.
134 Owens, pp. 76-77.
135 New Orleans Times-Picayune, Dec. 2 and 3, 1855.
Despite generally good reviews, the Gaiety venture was not a success for Boucicault and after these three months he gave it up. Robert Hogan, *Dion Boucicault* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), p. 40.

Owens, pp. 80-83.

Jefferson, p. 65.
Footnotes - Chapter 3


3 Jones, p. 415.

4 Matthews, p. 331; Bogard, p. 175; Hodge, pp. 214, 257.

5 Owens, p. 84.

6 "Among the Comedians," p. 756.


8 Hodge, p. 214.

9 Owens, pp. 84-85; Albion, Jan. 13, 1855, p. 19.


11 Owens, pp. 85-86.


18 *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, Apr. 24, 1857. See also Mar. 21, 1857.

19 *St. Louis Leader*, May 7-10, 1857; *Pittsburg Daily Union*, May 12-23, 1857.


21 These statements by a Boston reviewer entitled "Baize" are quoted in Owens' clippings file in the Billy Rose Theatre Collection. "Baize" also appeared frequently in the *Spirit of the Times*, but these quotes appear neither in that periodical or in Boston newspapers.
22See Wilson, pp. 155-62; See Bogard, p. 186; Brockett, p. 422; Neel, pp. 34-35.

23See Neel, pp. 16-18, 29.


25See Buratti, pp. 200-201; Neel, pp. 34-35.

26See Neel, pp. 74-75.

27Boston Post, Mar. 8 and May 11, 1858.

28Boston Post, Mar. 2-July 23, 1858. See also: Owens, pp. 95-100; Eugene Tompkins, The History of the Boston Theatre 1854-1901 (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1908; rpt. 1969), p. 93; Playbills, Hoblitzelle and Billy Rose Theatre Collections. During Owens' engagement in Boston, theatres there were first permitted by the Massachusetts legislature to hold Saturday evening performances; he played the first one on May 1, 1858.

29Winter, Other Days, p. 207.

30Winter, Other Days, p. 208.

31Boston Post, Mar. 24, 1858.

32Spirit of the Times, Apr. 24, 1858.

33Spirit of the Times, May 1, 1858.

34Spirit of the Times, May 15, 1858. The Boston Post reports (May 12) John Brougham's joining the combination and saying to the audience: "I was here last night and heard Mr. Owens make his speech, and after that I didn't see how I was to manage; it quite frightened me off the path, I assure you."

35Spirit of the Times, May 15, 1858.

36Spirit of the Times, Oct. 30, 1858.

37New Orleans True Delta, Dec. 6, 1858.

40 Roppolo, pp. 40-41.
41 Spirit of the Times, Dec. 21, 1858.
42 Kendall, pp. 374-75. See also Ludlow, p. 704; Melebeck, pp. 383-84.
43 Spirit of the Times, Dec. 21, 1858; New Orleans Daily-Picayune.

Dec. 6, 1858-May 16, 1859.
45 Kendall, pp. 374-75. For further details concerning these negotiations, see Roppolo and Melebeck.
46 Melebeck pp. 385-86; New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 12, 1859. For comparable prices at other theaters, see Roppolo, pp. 44-46.
47 New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 13, 1859.
48 Roppolo, p. 41.
49 Roppolo, p. 49.
50 Roppolo, p. 75.
51 Roppolo, p. 92; New Orleans Times-Picayune, Feb. 15, 1860.
52 New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 23, 1859.
53 New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 12, 1859-May 6, 1860. See also Melebeck, pp. 386-417; Roppolo, pp. 672-97.
57 Owens, p. 107.
60 Philadelphia Inquirer, Dec. 24, 1878.
61 Robert Grau, "Memories of Players of Other Days," in clippings files of Players Collection, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, dated 1913.
62 Grau.
63 Owens, p. 109.
64 Owens, p. 109.
65 Owens, p. 106.
66 Melebeck, pp. 401-402.

Kendall, p. 387.

See New Orleans Daily Picayune, Apr. 2 - May 7, 1860.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Apr. 11, 1860.


New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 7, 1860.

Melebeck, pp. 401-402.

New Orleans Times-Democrat, May 2, 1906.

Owens, pp. 112-13; Roppolo, pp. 100-102; Schaal, pp. 224-26.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Jan. 6, 1854.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Jan. 6, 1854.

Owens, pp. 112-113.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Aug. 12, 1860.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Sept. 2, 1860. For the new ceiling, the artist Boulet contrived "The Power of Genius":

He represents Genius, surrounded by emblematical figures, symbolizing Comedy, Tragedy, Poetry, Music, &c., who, with eyes intent upon their leader and guide, are following the course he is taking in the empyrean, and pointing to them the way. . . . The dome, of which this painting forms the centre, is surrounded by a broad border of rich scroll work, to be finished in gold and white. In the four corners of the cornice, from which springs the arch sustaining the dome, are medallions, in the centre of each of which is a golden lyre. Around and in the border enclosing the group we have described are other medallions of arabesque work, in gold and white, four of which are so constructed, as, while conforming in appearance with the rest, to serve also as ventilators.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 21, 1860.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 28, 1860.


Owens, p. 113.

Playbill, Hoblitzzelle collection, dated Jan. 5, 1861.

Melebeck, pp. 429-30.
Owens, pp. 113-114.

Kendall, p. 390.

Owens, p. 113-14.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Feb. 1 & Apr. 8, 1861; New Orleans True Delta, Apr. 5, 1861.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 26, 1860-May 7, 1861. (Mrs. Owens is vague about this season and the next, perhaps due to the confusion of the outbreak of war.)

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Mar. 28, 1861.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Mar. 31 and April 11, 1861.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Apr. 2, 1861.

Melebeck, p. 433.

Melebeck, p. 440.

Kendall, pp. 390-91.

Owens, p. 114.


Owens, p. 114.


Blaisdell.

Blaisdell.

Blaisdell.

Baltimore Sun, Nov. 19, 1861.

Baltimore American, Nov. 25, 1861; Baltimore Sun, Nov. 18-23, 1861.

Owens, p. 115.


Coad and Mims, 223.


Coad and Mims, 224.

120 Boston Post, Mar. 3, 1862.

121 Edgett, p. 89; Playbills, Hoblitzelle Collection; Boston Post, Mar 3, Apr. 21-May 16, 1862.


124 Neel, p. 67.

125 Owens, p. 118.

126 Boston Post, Feb. 9-21, 1863.

127 Cincinnati Daily Commercial, Apr. 25, 1863.

128 Cincinnati Daily Commercial, Apr. 23, 1863.

129 Owens, p. 118.

130 Owens, p. 118-20.

131 Boston Post, Nov 2-21, 1863.

132 Owens, pp. 120-1.

133 Owens, p. 121.

134 Owens, p. 121.

135 Jefferson, p. 312.


138 Morris, Life on the Stage, p. 268.

139 Morris, p. 268.

140 Morris, p. 268.

141 Owens, p. 97.
Footnotes - Chapter 4

1 Owens, p. 122.
2 Owens, p. 122.
4 Owens, p. 123; Cahn, pp. 16-18.
8 New York Herald, Sept. 27, 1864.
13 Owens, p. 124.
14 Matthews, p. 331.
15 Atlantic Monthly, p. 756.
17 Atlantic Monthly, p. 757.
18 Atlantic Monthly, p. 757.
19 Owens, p. 128.
20 Owens, p. 128.
21 Blaisdell, p. 36.
25 Spirit of the Times, Mar. 20, 1865.
26 Owens, p. 126. For complete reviews of Dot, see New York Times advertisement, Mar. 17, 1865.
27 Owens, pp. 126-127.
29 Owens, p. 126.
30 New York Times, May 9, 1865.
31 Owens, p. 131.
33 Owens, pp. 130-131.
34 Owens, p. 131.
35 Scharf, p. 123.
36 Owens, p. 132.
37 Portia Kernodle, "The Yankee Types on the London Stage, 1824-1880."

*Speech Monographs, XIV (1947), 139-47.*
38 Kernodle, pp. 139-47.
39 Kernodle, p. 142.
40 Spirit of the Times, Apr. 15 and June 2, 1865.
41 The Times (London), July 8 and 31, 1865.
42 The Times (London), July 8, 1865.
43 Owens, p. 133.
44 Dickens' quotation appears on playbill in Enoch Pratt Library, Baltimore.
45 London Daily News, July 4, 1865; see also The Times (London), July 5, 1865.
48 The Times (London), July 5, 1865.
49 The Times (London), July 5, 1865.
53 The Times (London), July 5, 1865.
54 The Times (London), Aug. 19, 1865.
55 The Liverpool Mail, Sept. 9, 1865.
56 The Liverpool Mail, Sept. 9, 1865.
57 Liverpool Daily Courier, Sept. 12, 1865.
58 Liverpool Daily Courier, Sept. 12, 1865.
59 Liverpool Daily Courier, Sept. 12, 1865.
60 Liverpool Daily Courier, Sept. 12, 1865.
British correspondent for the *Spirit of the Times*, in clipping, undated, in Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

Owens, p. 135.

Owens, p. 135.

Owens, p. 136.

Owens, p. 136.

*Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 27, 1865.


Owens, pp. 136-37.


*Boston Post*, May 4, 1866.

*Providence Daily Journal*, May 14-15, 1866. See also Owens, p. 137.


*Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, Nov. 12 - Dec. 3, 1866.

Owens, p. 141.

Owens, p. 141.


Owens, p. 141.


*Louisville Daily Democrat*, Feb. 1, 1867.

*Louisville Daily Democrat*, Feb. 1, 1867.

*Louisville Daily Democrat*, Feb. 1, 1867.

Owens, pp. 142-43.


New Orleans Daily Picayune, Mar. 1, 1867.

Owens, p. 144.

Owens, pp. 144-46.


Baltimore Sun, June 15, 1867.

Owens, pp. 148-49.

Leavenworth Daily Times, Sept. 19-26, 1867.

Owens, pp. 150-52.

Leavenworth Daily Times, Sept. 21 and 24, 1867.

Chicago Tribune, Sept. 30 - Oct. 12, 1867.

Owens, p. 153.

Louisville Daily Democrat, Oct. 21 - Nov. 2, 1867.


Morris, Life, p. 269.

Morris, Life, p. 269.

Owens, p. 103.

Morris, Life, p. 269.

Morris, Life, p. 152.

Morris, Life, p. 151.

Jesse May Anderson, "Dion Boucicault: Man of the Theatre," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Univ. of Chicago, 1926,) p. 58. The play, by Boucicault, was written for his wife Agnes Robertson, who played the actress, Violet, for many years.

Owens, p. 154.

Owens, p. 154. Her husband had, by this time, bought exclusive rights to the play from Dion Boucicault.

Baltimore Sun, Dec. 9-20, 1867.


Newark Daily Advertiser, Feb. 4, 1868; Boston Post, Feb. 10 - Mar. 7, 1868; Playbills, Billy Rose Theatre Collection and Hoblitzelle Collection.

Owens, p. 156.
Baltimore Sun, Mar. 23, 1868.

Baltimore Sun, Mar. 23, 1868.

Baltimore Sun, Mar. 31, 1868.

Baltimore Sun, Mar. 25 and 30, 1868.

Baltimore Sun, Mar. 23 – 31, 1868.

Cincinnati Commercial, May 11 – 16, 1868; Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 18 – 23, 1868.

Owens, pp. 156-57.

Owens, p. 157.

Cincinnati Commercial, Nov. 1-21, 1868.

Owens, pp. 157-58.

Cincinnati Commercial, Nov. 12, 1868.

Chicago Tribune, Dec. 15 – 25, 1868.

Hartford Daily Courant, Jan. 20 – 22, 1869, Jan. 20, 1913 (recalling 'When Roberts Opera House Opened . . . Forty-Four Years Ago This Evening'.)


Daily Alta California, May 1, 1869.

Daily Alta California, Mar. 15 – Apr. 30, 1869.

Owens, pp. 162-64.


Owens, p. 167.

Virginia City Daily Territorial Enterprise, June 1-9, 1869.

Owens, pp. 167-73.

Owens, p. 174.

Owens, p. 174.

Owens, p. 174.


Spirit of the Times, Aug. 21, 1869.

Spirit of the Times, Aug. 21, 1869.
148 Spirit of the Times, Aug. 21, 1869.
149 Spirit of the Times, Aug. 28, 1869.
150 Unidentified clipping dated Sept. 18, 1869, in Billy Rose Theatre Collection clippings file.
151 Cincinnati Commercial, Oct. 9, 1869.
153 Owens, p. 175.
154 Owens, pp. 175-76.
155 New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 30, 1869.
156 New Orleans Daily Picayune, Nov. 29-Dec. 25, 1869.
157 Owens, pp. 176-77.
158 New Orleans Daily Picayune, Dec. 11, 1869.
159 New Orleans Daily Picayune, Dec. 10, 1869.
161 Mobile Daily Register, Jan. 1, 1870.
162 Owens, p. 178.
163 Owens, p. 179-80.
164 Owens, p. 180.
165 Owens, pp. 180-81; Melebeck, p. 612.
166 Owens, p. 180-81.
168 Owens, p. 138.
170 Owens, pp. 182-83.
171 Albany Evening Journal, Sept. 23-24, 1870; Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser, Oct. 21-27, 1870; Cincinnati Commercial, Nov. 28-Dec. 10, 1870; Cleveland Plain Dealer, Dec. 12-17, 1870.
172 Owens, p. 186.
173 Owens, pp. 186-89.
175 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Jan. 21, 1871.
176 Owens, p. 190.
177 Washington Star, Mar. 20-25, 1871; Baltimore Sun, April 3-15, 1871.
178 Baltimore Sun, April 4, 1871.
179 Owens, pp. 190-91; Chicago Tribune, Apr. 23-May 6, 1871.
180 Owens, pp. 193-94.
181 **Boston Post**, Sept. 6, 1871.
183 Playbills, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.
184 **New York Times**, Nov. 6–12, 1871.
186 Owens, p. 195.
188 **New York Times**, Nov. 21, 1871.
190 **New York Times**, Nov. 21, 1871.
191 **New Orleans Times**, Nov. 26, 1871.
197 See Harrison, pp. 91–99.
198 **New Orleans Times**, Dec. 2, 1871. The newspaper further notes that the public of New Orleans "is quick to acknowledge the claims of genius of 'the ablest comedian of the age.'" See also **New Orleans Times**, Dec. 11, 1871–Jan. 4, 1872.
201 Owens, pp. 196–97.
203 Owens, p. 200.
204 Owens, p. 201.
207 *Spirit of the Times*, Mar. 2, 1861.
Footnotes - Chapter 5

1 Jefferson, pp. 250-52.
3 Brockett, p. 417.
5 *Spirit of the Times*, Feb. 4, 1893.
7 Owens, p. 202. Another member of the company was Owens' brother Tom.

8 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 2-7, 1872.
10 *Cincinnati Commercial*, Oct. 29, 1872.
11 *Cincinnati Commercial*, Oct. 29, 1872.
12 Owens, p. 203.
13 *Atlantic Monthly*, XLIII (April, 1879), 456.
14 *Omaha Daily Republican*, Jan. 6-7, 1873.
15 Owens, pp. 207-8.
16 Owens, pp. 209-10.
19 *Missouri Daily Republican*, Jan. 21, 1873.
20 Owens, p. 211.
21 See letters in Hoblitzelle Collection, dated Sept. 22 and 27, 1872 and July 30, 1879.
24 *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Feb. 8, 1873.
25 *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Feb. 8, 15, 1873. See also Jan. 4, 1872.
27 Owens, pp. 213-14; Scharf, p. 697.
29 *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 10 and 18, 1873.
30 Owens, p. 221.
31 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 4, and 10, 1873.
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<td><em>Brooklyn Daily Eagle</em>, Nov. 14, 1873.</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td><em>Brooklyn Daily Eagle</em>, Nov. 10, 1873.</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td><em>Brooklyn Daily Eagle</em>, Nov. 4, 1873; <em>Chicago Daily Tribune</em>, Jan. 19, 1874.</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td><em>Owens</em>, pp. 222-23.</td>
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<td><em>Chicago Daily Tribune</em>, Jan. 27, 1874.</td>
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<td><em>Chicago Daily Tribune</em>, Jan. 20, 1874.</td>
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<td><em>Chicago Daily Tribune</em>, Jan. 23, 1874.</td>
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<td><em>Chicago Daily Tribune</em>, Feb. 1, 1874.</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td><em>Owens</em>, pp. 223-26.</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td><em>Owens</em>, pp. 229-30.</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td><em>Harrison</em>, p. 249.</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td><em>Philadelphia Inquirer</em>, Sept. 8, 1874.</td>
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<td><em>Philadelphia Inquirer</em>, Sept. 1, 1874.</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td><em>Philadelphia Inquirer</em>, Sept. 11, 1874.</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td><em>Philadelphia Inquirer</em>, Sept. 8, 1874.</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td><em>Owens</em>, p. 231.</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td><em>Owens</em>, p. 232.</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td><em>Kendall</em>, pp. 446-48.</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td><em>New Orleans Daily Picayune</em>, Nov. 4, 1874.</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td><em>Owens</em>, pp. 232.</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td><em>New Orleans Daily Picayune</em>, Nov. 5, 1874.</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td><em>New Orleans Republican</em>, Nov. 5, 1874.</td>
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<td><em>New Orleans Daily Picayune</em>, Nov. 10, 1874.</td>
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<td><em>New Orleans Daily Picayune</em>, Nov. 12-17, 1874.</td>
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<td><em>New Orleans Daily Picayune</em>, Nov. 14, 1874.</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td><em>New Orleans Daily Picayune</em>, Nov. 17-Dec. 5, 1874; See also <em>Harrison</em>, p. 253.</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td><em>New Orleans Daily Picayune</em>, Dec. 15, 1874.</td>
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67 Owens, pp. 234-36.

68 Owens, pp. 233-34. See also Kendall, pp. 437-46.


70 **New Orleans Daily Picayune**, Mar. 9, 11, 12, 1875.

71 **New Orleans Daily Picayune**, Feb. 8 - Mar. 6, 1875.

72 **New Orleans Daily Picayune**, Mar. 9, 1875.


75 Kendall, p. 436.

76 **New Orleans Times**, Apr. 4, 1875.

77 Harrison, p. 1318.

78 Owens, p. 236.

79 Owens, p. 237.

80 Owens, p. 239.

81 Owens, pp. 239-40.

82 Owens, p. 240.

83 Owens, pp. 242-43.

84 **Baltimore Sun**, Nov. 27, 1875.

85 **Chicago Daily Tribune**, Mar. 21, 1876.

86 Owens, p. 244.

87 **Brooklyn Daily Eagle**, Jan. 4, 1876.

88 **Brooklyn Daily Eagle**, Jan. 4, 1876.

89 **Brooklyn Daily Eagle**, Jan. 10, 1876.

90 **Brooklyn Daily Eagle**, Jan. 4, 1876.

91 **Chicago Daily Tribune**, Mar. 21, 1876.


93 Philadelphia Inquirer, May 1-13, 1876.

94 See **Boston Post**, Feb. 6, 1877.

95 **Brooklyn Daily Eagle**, Nov. 13, 1876.

96 Owens, pp. 246-48.
Shortly after this engagement, while playing at the Rochester (New York) Opera House, Owens heard the tragic news of the fire, and the death of the actors with whom he had just performed. He implored the manager of the Opera House to close the house in memoriam, saying, 'Their voices linger with me yet—I can't play. Poor fellows! Let us render the tribute of silence to their charred remains.' The manager agreed to do so until after the funeral of these friends.

Owens, pp. 248-49.

Owens, p. 250. See also Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 13-16, 1876.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 14, 1876, reviewing his Joshua Butterby.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 16, 1876.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 16, 1876.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 14, 1876.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 16, 1876.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 14, 1876. See also Spirit of the Times article of Feb., 1877, in clippings file, Billy Rose Theatre collection.

Charleston News and Courier, Mar. 6, 1877.

Charleston News and Courier, Mar. 6, 1877.

Owens, pp. 250-51.

Hoblitzelle Collection.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 14, 1876.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Oct. 9, 1877.

Owens, p. 253.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Oct. 11, 1877.

Owens, p. 253.

Owens, p. 253.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Oct. 9, 1877. See also Spirit of the Times, Oct. 13, 1877.

Cincinnati Commercial, Nov. 26-Dec. 9, 1877.

Cincinnati Commercial, Dec. 2, 1877.

Cincinnati Commercial, Dec. 4, 1877.

Owens, p. 254.

Owens, p. 254.


Still, p. 224; Brockett, pp. 417-25; Bogard, pp. 100-107.
Owens, p. 255.
San Francisco Chronicle, Apr. 1-14, 1878.
San Francisco Chronicle, Apr. 2, 1878.
San Francisco Chronicle, Apr. 7, 1878.
San Francisco Chronicle, Apr. 14, 1878.
Owens, p. 255.
San Francisco Chronicle, Apr. 7, 1878.
San Francisco Chronicle, Apr. 14, 1878.
San Francisco Chronicle, Apr. 14, 1878; Spirit of the Times, Apr. 2, 1881.
Spirit of the Times, Apr. 2, 1881.
Spirit of the Times, Apr. 2, 1881.
Owens, p. 256.
Baltimore Sun, Sept. 23-25, 1878; Hunter, p. 76; Washington Post, Sept. 30-Oct. 7, 1878; Owens, pp. 261-64; Missouri Republican, Nov. 18-24, 1878.
Owens, pp. 264-65; Philadelphia Inquirer, Dec. 23, 1878-Jan. 6, 1879;
Missouri Republican, Nov. 29, 1878.
Philadelphia Inquirer, Dec. 24, 1878.
Spirit of the Times, Jan. 25, 1879. See also Baltimore Sun, Sept. 25, 1878.
Spirit of the Times, Jan. 25, 1879.
Baltimore Sun, Sept. 24, 1878.
Philadelphia Inquirer, Jan. 6, 1879.
Missouri Republican, Nov. 29, 1878.
Spirit of the Times, Feb. 8, 1879.
The California reviewers concentrated on audiences' responses and general acting traits, rather than any discerning critique of acting theory like their eastern counterparts.

When the Madison Square Theater opened on February 4, 1880, under the ownership of Steele MacKaye, the Spirit of the Times called it "the most exquisite theater in the world." (Coad and Mims, p. 265.)
Winter, Shadows, p. 144; Owens, p. 278; Quinn, p. 215. See also
Boston Transcript, Apr. 9, 1895.

Owens, pp. 278-90. Mrs. Owens includes one gracious letter from the Pickwick Club, and her husband's reply. Her husband expresses his inability to convey how touched he was by all this attention, promising them that, "your assurances of esteem and friendship, and your good opinion of me... touch my heart, and are very precious to me."


Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, Jan. 26, 1883.

Owens, p. 281.

Owens, p. 282.

Owens, pp. 282-85. On March 24, 1882, for example, a letter to the 'Lambs Club' in his wife's handwriting apologizes for his inability to attend their dinner as he had taken very ill. Letter in Hoblitzelle Collection.

Letter dated Aug. 4, 1884, in Hoblitzelle Collection.

After Owens' death in 1886 Keogh supervised the rebuilding of the Academy after its destruction by earthquake, and continued to manage it profitably until the close of the century. The Charleston News and Courier lists an "H. J. Clapham" as manager on opening night, September 19, 1884, but no other source mentions this name.

Owens, p. 286.

Charleston News and Courier, Sept. 19-20, 1884.


Charleston News and Courier, Jan. 4, 1885.

Owens, pp. 286-88.

Owens, p. 288.

Owens, pp. 289-90;


Baltimore Sun, Dec. 7-11, 1886.

Baltimore Sun, Dec. 8, 1886.
Footnotes - Chapter Six

1 Matthews, p. 331. See also Baltimore Sun, Dec. 9, 1867.
2 Owens, pp. 255-56.
3 Owens, p. 256.
5 Owens, p. 128.
7 Winter, Shadows, p. 148. See also p. 142, and Spirit of the Times, May 1, 1858, and Atlantic Monthly, pp. 757-58.
8 See Winter, Shadows, pp. 146-48.
9 See Winter, Shadows, p. 143.
10 Jefferson, p. 65.
13 See Owens, pp. 259-60, Winter, Other Days, p. 216, and Shadows, p. 149.
14 Winter, Shadows, p. 145. See also Owens, pp. 72, 100, 129, 165, and 215.
15 Owens, p. 259.
16 Boston Post, May 11, 1858.
17 Owens, p. 264.
18 Spirit of the Times, May 1, 1858.
19 Spirit of the Times, May 1, 1858.
21 See Coad and Mims, p. 219, Atlantic Monthly, pp. 753-60.
24 Bogard, p. 104.

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26 See Atlantic Monthly, pp. 751-52.

27 See Atlantic Monthly, pp. 756-57.

28 See The Times (London), Sept. 10, 1865.


32 See Daily Alta California, July 8-25, 1861.

33 Daily Alta California, July 13 and 15, 1861.

34 Daily Alta California, July 25, 1861.

35 Daily Alta California, July 25, 1861.

36 The Times (London), July 9 and Sept. 10, 1865.

37 The Times (London), July 9 and Sept. 10, 1865.

38 The Times (London), July 9, 1865.

39 The Times (London), Sept. 10, 1865.

40 The Times (London), July 9 and Sept. 10, 1865.

41 Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 14, 1880.

42 Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 14, 1880.

43 Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 13, 1880.

44 Spirit of the Times, May 1, 1858.
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Chicago Tribune
Cincinnati Commercial, Daily Commercial, Commercial Tribune
Cleveland Plain Dealer
Daily Alta California (San Francisco)
Hartford (Conn.) Daily Courant
Leavenworth (Kan.) Daily Times
Liverpool Daily Courier
Liverpool Daily Mail
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The Times (London)

Virginia City (Nev.) Daily Territorial Enterprise

Washington Post

Washington Star

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McClure's

New York Clipper

Scribner's Monthly

Unpublished Materials

Baltimore County: Public records, Register of Wills, Office of Land Records.

Baltimore City: Land and Records Office.

Billy Rose Theatre Collection

Lincoln Center Branch

New York Public Library

Includes: Clippings file, Players Collection, Grey Locke Collection,
Frederick King Collection, playbills, and Owens' promptbook for
Forty Winks.
Hoblitzelle Collection, Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas

Includes: Playbills, letters

Theatre Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia

Includes: Playbills

Theses and Dissertations


APPENDIX A - Roles Played (447)

For the omissions in the list below, I take refuge in the statement by Allardyce Nicoll in Volume II (p. 230) of his History of Late Nineteenth Century Drama:

That this list is not complete I am aware, although I have used every endeavor to render it as comprehensive as I possibly could . . . . Sometimes adequate records are unavailable; sometimes the kaleidoscopic change in titles (a favorite device of the time) renders available records uncertain or ambiguous. It is probable that several plays given here under the names of their writers reappear with a different nomenclature among the dramas by 'unknown authors'.

However, the reader may be certain that this list has been developed from and checked against daily billings in newspapers for the entire period of John Owens' career, and histories of American drama cited in this paper's bibliography.

Key: Play, (type), playwright, role, date and city where Owens first played it:

(//: alternate spellings)

Adeline; or, The Victim of Seduction (drama) by J. H. Payne--Ketzler--1844--Baltimore

Agnes deVere; or, The Wife's Revenge (or, The Broken Heart) (drama), by J. B. Buckstone--Oliver Dobbs--1844--Baltimore

Alarming Sacrifice--Bob Ticket--1850--Baltimore

Alcestis; or, The Strong Minded Woman--Admetus--1852--Baltimore

All That Glitters is Not Gold; or, The Factory Girl (sometimes: All is Not Gold That Glitters) (comedy), by Thomas and J. M. Morton--Toby Twinkle--1851--Baltimore

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The Alpine Maid; or, Swiss Swains (operetta or farce), by Benjamin Webster—Swig—1845—Baltimore

Alpine Rambles (lectures)—see Ascent of Mont Blanc (lecture/performance)—1853—New York

Andy Blake; or, The Irish Diamond (comic drama), arranged by Dion Boucicault from The Genius of Paris—role unknown—1856—New Orleans

The Arcade by John Brougham—Wigton—1846—Philadelphia

The Argument of Tears (comedietta)—Grimaldi—1859—New Orleans

The Artist's Wife ('Pathetic sketch' in two acts or farce), by Gilbert A. Beckett—Andrew—1848—Baltimore

Ascent of Mont Blanc (lecture/performance)—1853—New York

As You Like It, by William Shakespeare—Touchstone—1849—Baltimore

The Barbers at Court (comedy)—Max. Hogsflesh—1847—Baltimore

Barncastle and Reform, by Gil Pierce—Ebenezer Barncastle—1877—Pittsburgh

The Bath Road (farce)—Tom—1844—Baltimore

Battle of Austerlitz—Walter—1854—Baltimore

Beauty and the Beast (extravaganza), by J. R. Planche—John Quill—1845—Baltimore; Sir Aldgate Pump/or Croton Pump, Esq.—1847—Baltimore

Begone, Dull Care—Buttercup—1842—Philadelphia

The Belle's Stratagem (comedy)—Flutter—1846—Baltimore

Betsy Baker; or, My Wife's Washerwoman (farce), by J. M. Morton—Marmaduke Mouser—1851—New York

Black-Eyed Susan (described variously as musical farce, nautical drama, and melodrama), by Douglas Jerrold—Gnatbrain—1847—New Orleans

The Blue Devils (comedy), by George Colman the younger—James—1845—Baltimore

Bloomers Out in Force—Sparks—1851—Baltimore
Bob Nettles; or, The English School Boy (or, To Parents and Guardians) (burletta),
by Tom Taylor—Waddilove—1855—New Orleans

Bombastes Furioso (described variously as burlesque tragedy, musical burlesque,
burlesque operatic extravaganza, and burletta), by William Rhodes or
William Barnes—General Bombastes—1855—Baltimore

Boots at Barnum's; or, The Man Without a Name (farce)—Jacob Earwig—1848—
Baltimore

Boots at the Swan (comedy or farce), by Charles Selby—Jacob Earwig—1844—
Baltimore

The Bottle (drama)—Coddles—1847—Baltimore

Box and Cox (interlude or farce), by J. M. Morton—Box, a printer—1848—
Baltimore

Box, Cox and Knox (farce)—Box—1848—Baltimore

The Brewer of Preston—Tom Tubbs (the Brewer)—1846—Baltimore

Bronze Horse by Edward Fitzball—Ping Sing—1852—Baltimore

Brother and Sister (comic opera)—Pacheco—1845—Baltimore

Brother Bill and Me—role unknown—1869

Brougham and Company—One of ensemble—1850—New York

Brutus; or, The Fall of Tarquin (tragedy) by J. H. Payne—Messenger—1840—
Philadelphia

Buried Alive—Benjamin Bowbell—1852—Baltimore

The Cabinet (opera)—Attendant on Count Caruoso—1840—Philadelphia

Caleb Plummer (see Dot)

Captain Charlotte (comedy)—Bambinetti—1844—Baltimore

Catching an Heiress (farce), by Charles Selby—Tom Twigg(s)—1847—Baltimore

The Catspaw—Appleface—1850—Baltimore

Change Makes Change, by Epes Sargent—The Fire Laddle—1846
The Chapter of Accidents (farce)—Bobby—1845—Philadelphia

Charles XII; or, Charles of Sweden (or, The Seige of Stralsund) (drama in two acts), by J. R. Planche—Priptolemus Muddlewerk—1845—Baltimore

The Children in the Wood (described variously as a domestic drama, a burlesque extravaganza by G. C. Brydon, and a musical interlude by Thomas Morton)—Gabriel—1850—Baltimore

Chimney Corner (play), by H. T. Craven—Peter Probity—1863—Boston

The Christening (farce)—Mr. Hopkins Twiddy—1845—Baltimore

Clari; or, The Maid of Milan (opera by J. H. Payne)—Jocoso—1844—Baltimore

The Cockney in Corsica (see The Thumping Legacy)

The Coiner's Haunt (drama)—Sawney McFile—1848—Baltimore

The Comedy of Errors, by William Shakespeare—Dromeo (sic) of Syracuse—1846—Baltimore

Comfortable Service (farce), by Thomas Bayley—Simon—1844—Baltimore

A (The) Conjugal Lesson (see Husbands Beware), ("laughable duality"), by H. Danvers

Cooke's Corner—Hezekiah Perkins—1862—Philadelphia

The Country Squire (comedy), by Charles Dance—Sparrow—1848—Baltimore

Cousin Joe (see The Rough Diamond)

Cousin Lambkin (farce)—Dr. Lionel Lambkin—1845—Baltimore

The Cricket on the Hearth (domestic drama)—Tilly Slowboy—1846—Baltimore

Crimson Crimes; or, Deeds of Dreadful Note (farce), attributed to William E. Burton—Mr. Jonathan Fright—1846—Baltimore

Crossing the Line (farce)—Wouverman Von Broom—1844—Baltimore

The Culprit (comedlette)—Bob—1843—Baltimore

A Cure for the Heartache (comedy), by Thomas Morton—Frank Oatland—1846—Baltimore
The Czar and the Mechanic; or, The Two Peters! (farce)--Voudunder--1848--Baltimore

The Dancing Master (comedy)--Splatter--1848--Baltimore

The Daughter; or, The Victim of Circumstance (drama) by R. P. Smith--Peter--1844--Baltimore

David Copperfield (from Dickens; drama in 3 acts), by John Brougham--Uriah Heep--1851--New York; Wilkins Micawber--1851--New York

A/The Day After the Wedding; or, A Wife's First Lesson (interlude, petite comedy or comedy), by Marie Therese Kemble--role unknown--1857--Washington

A Day in Paris (protean farce or comedy), by Charles Selby--Sam--1844--Baltimore

The Dead Alive (farce) by O'Keefe--Diggory--1847--Baltimore

The Dead Shot (farce), by J. B. Buckstone--Mr. John James Pooley--1845--Baltimore; Hector Timid--1844--Baltimore

The Debutant/e/; or, A Peep Behind the Scenes (see The First Night)

Deeds of Dreadful Note (see Crimson Crimes)

Dick Turpin and Tom King (farce)--role unknown--1868--Philadelphia

Did You Ever Send Your Wife to Lafayette? (farce), possibly after Did You Ever Send Your Wife to Brooklyn?, by J. S. Coyne--Mr. Honeybun--1847--New Orleans

Dr. Clyde (comedy), by Sidney Rosenfeld--Higgins--1879--San Francisco

Does Your Mother Know You're Out? (farce)--John Mizzle--1849--Baltimore

Dombey and Son (drama), from Dickens, by John Brougham--Captain Ed'ard Cuttle--1849--Baltimore

Dora (drama), by Charles Reade, from Tennyson's poem--Farmer Allen--1868--Baltimore
Dot; or, The Cricket on the Hearth (*domestic play in fairy form*), from Dickens,
by Dion Boucicault—Caleb Plummer—1859—New Orleans

A Double Knot—role unknown—1878—Louisville, KY.

The Drunkard (drama) by W. H. Smith—Sam Sooerlove—1844—Baltimore; Bill Dowton—1850—Baltimore

The Dumb Belle/s/ (farce), by J. R. Planche or W. B. Bernard—O'Smirk—1844—Baltimore

The Dumb Doctor (farce)—Buggs—1847—Baltimore

An Editor with $5000 (*local piece*) by W. W. Clapp, Jr.—Thomas Todd—1858—Boston

An/Englishman In India (comedy or comic opera), by William Dimond—(See Sketches In India)

Esmeralda (drama), by Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett and William H. Gillette—
Gringoire (a Poor Poet)—1849—Baltimore; Elbert Rogers—1882—New York

The Eton Boy (comedy)—Mr. Dobster—1848—Baltimore

Everybody's Friend—by J. S. Coyne—Major Wellington DeBoots—1859—New Orleans

Exchange No Robbery (comedy)—Sam Swipes—1847—Baltimore

The Exiles of Erin (drama)—Slang—1848—Baltimore

Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady (dramatic sketch or comedy in one act), by J. R. Planche—role unknown—1854—Philadelphia

Family Jars; or, A Bull in a China Store (farce, by Joseph Lunn—Old Delph—1847—New Orleans

Fazio; or, The Italian Wife—Phalario—1844—Baltimore

Fearful Murder Across the Rhine (farce)—role unknown—1858—Cincinnati

A Fearful Tragedy on Federal Hill (farce)—Timothy Slumpington—1857—Baltimore

Fête Champêtre—Giles Fairland—1850—Baltimore
The First Night; or, A Peep Behind the Curtain (or, The Dubutante) (laughable drama), by J. M. Maddox or T. Parry—Mons. Achale (Achille) Talma Dufo/a/rd, "The Old French Actor"—1854—Baltimore

The Flowers of the Forest; or, The Gipsy's Prophecy (drama), by J. B. Buckstone—Cheap John—1849—Baltimore

Flying Dutchman (farce) by William Dunlap—Peter Von Bummel—1852—Baltimore

The Follies of a Night (comedy in two acts), by J. R. Planche—Pierre Palliot/l/Paillot—1847—Baltimore

For California on a Venture (local sketch)—Tom Dab—1848—Baltimore

Fortune's Frolic; or, The True Use of Riches (farce), by J. T. Allingham—Christopher Strap—1846—Baltimore; Robin Roughhead—1848—Baltimore

Fortunio (extravaganza)—Strongback—1848—Baltimore

Fortunio and His Seven Gifted Servant/s (musical extravaganza), by J. R. Planche—Emperor Matap—1860—New Orleans; The Seven Gifted Servant—1845—Baltimore

The Forty Thieves; or, The Woodcutter of the Black Forest ("grand fairy spectacle"; "fairy musical drama") by R. B. Sheridan and G. Colman—Ali Baba—1851—Baltimore

Forty Winks; or, Blunders in a Bed Room, by William E. Burton—Horatio Spruggins—1852—Baltimore

The Four Sisters (protean farce), by W. B. Bernard—Sam Snaffle—1845—Baltimore; Jack Snaffle—1848—Baltimore

Frank Fox Phipps (comedy)—Mr. Spicy—1848—Baltimore

Frightened to Death (farce), by Oulton—Jack Phantom—1855—Baltimore

Frightful Occurrences—role unknown—1850—Baltimore

/A/Fugitive from Justice (farce)—role unknown—1856—New Orleans
The Gambler's Fate (domestic drama or melodrama), by H. M. Milner--Birman--1848--Baltimore

Gammon and Backgammon (play)--Simle Simpkins--1851--Baltimore

The Gardener's Wife (see Nipped in the Bud)

A Ghost In Spite of Himself (See The Spectre Bridegroom)

Giralda; or, The Invisible Husband--from the French of Eugene Scribe, by Dion Boucicault--Gil Perez--1851--Baltimore

A Glance at . . . . (play by and after B. A. Baker's A Glance at New York):

A Glance at Baltimore--Jakey (One of the B'hoys)--1849--Baltimore
A Glance at New Orleans--Mose--1856--New Orleans
A Glance at Philadelphia--Jakey--1848--Philadelphia

The Golden Cross--Walter--1855--Baltimore

The Golden Farmer; or, Vel, Vot of It? (or, Jemmy Twitcher In England)

(melodrama), by Benjamin Webster--Harry Hammer (the Auctioneer)--1845--Baltimore

Good for Nothing; or, Nan, the Good for Nothing (farce), by J. B. Buckstone--Tom--1852--Baltimore

A Good Night's Rest (farce)--Snoblington--1844--Baltimore

The Green-eyed Monster (comic opera), by J. R. Planché--Kraut--1845--Baltimore

Gretna Green; or, A Trip to Scotland (farce), by J. S. Jones or S. Beazley--Jenkins--1844--Baltimore

Grimaldi; or, The Life of an Actress, by Dion Boucicault--Grimaldi--1860--New Orleans

Grimshaw, Bagshaw and Bradshaw, by J. M. Morton--Grimshaw--1851--Baltimore

Grumbler--1842--Philadelphia
Guy Mannerling; or, The Gypsy's Prophecy (operatic drama), by Daniel Terry—Dominic Sampson—1848—Baltimore

Hamlet (tragedy), by William Shakespeare—First Gravedigger—1849—Baltimore; Second Gravedigger—1841—Philadelphia

The Happiest Day of My Life (comediette), from the French of Eugene Scribe, by J. B. Buckstone—Mr. Gil/I/man—1851—New York

Hearts are Trumps—Joe Martin—1850—Baltimore

The Heir at Law (comedy in five acts), by Colman the younger—Zekiel

Henry IV: Part I; or, The Battle of Shrewsbury (or, The Humors of Falstaff) (play), by William Shakespeare—Francis—1857—Cincinnati; First Carrier—1861—New Orleans

Highway Robbery—"Owens in Two Characters"—1852—Baltimore

His First Champagne (farce), by W. L. Rede—Dicky Watt—1847—New Orleans

The Hole in the Wall (see The Secret)

Home Again (drama)—Ben Bradshaw—1847—Baltimore

The Home Squadron; or, The Female Sailors (drama)—Jem Stiles—1842—Philadelphia

The Honest Theieves (farce), by Thomas Knight—Obadiah—1848—Baltimore

The Honeymoon (comedy), by John Tobin—Jacques, the Mock Duke—1847—New Orleans

Horse Guards—Tommy Tubbs—1855—Baltimore

How to Settle Accounts with Your Washerwoman (farce), by J.S. Coyne—Mr. Whittington Widgetts—1848—Baltimore

The Hunchback (drama), by J. S. Knowles—Fathom—1845—Philadelphia

Hunting a Turtle (farce), by Charles Selby—Timothy Dandellion—1844—Baltimore

A Husband at Sight (farce), by J. B. Buckstone—Paul Parchivitz—1845—Baltimore
The Husband of My Heart, by Charles Selby—Brioche—1851—Baltimore

Husbands Beware; or, A/The Congugal Lesson, by H. Danvers—Mr. Simon Lullaby—1857—Cincinnati

The Hypocrite (comedy), by Isaac Bickerstaff—Mawworm—1855—New Orleans

The Illustrious Stranger (farce), by James Kenney and J. G. Milligen, or by William E. Burton—Benjamin Bowbell—1852—Baltimore

Intrigue; or, A Woman's Wit—Tom—1844—Baltimore

The Invisible Prince; or, The Isle/Island of Tranquil Delight/s (extravaganza), by J. R. Planche—The Infant Furlbond—1848—Baltimore

The Irish Attorney; or, The Galway Practice in 1770 (farce), by W. B. Bernard or Tyrone Power—Jacob Hawk—1847—New Orleans

Isabelle; or, The Three Eras of a Woman's Life (or, Isabelle, The Maid, Wife and Mother) (drama), by J. B. Buckstone—Andrew—1845—Baltimore

I've Eaten My Friend—Jellytop—1852—Baltimore

The Jacobite ("laughable drama"), by J. R. Planche—John Duck—1847—Baltimore

Jakey's Marriage/with Lize (drama)—Jakey—1848—Philadelphia

Jakey's Visit to California by W. Chapman—Jakey—1849—Baltimore

Jemmy Twitcher in France (sequel to Golden Farmer) (drama)—Pietro/Petra—1845—Baltimore; Jemmy Twitcher—1848—Baltimore

Jenny Lind; or, The Swedish Nightingale (operatic bagatelle)—Baron Swigitoff Beery—1849—Baltimore

Jim Crow in London (farce)—Tommy Popps—1845—Baltimore

Joconde; or, The Festival of Rosiere (comedy)—Lucas—1844—Baltimore

John Dobbs ("Petite comedy"), by J. M. Morton—Peter Paternoster—1850—Baltimore

John Duck—John Duck—1874
John Jones (of the War Office) (farce), by J. B. Buckstone -- role unknown -- 1847 -- New Orleans

Jonathan Bradford; or, The Murder And/At the Roadside Inn (domestic drama or melodrama), by Edward Fitzball -- Caleb Scrummidge -- 1851 -- Baltimore

Jonathan in England (also: John Bull at Home) (comedy), altered by J. H. Hackett from George Colman the younger's Who Wants a Guinea? -- Andrew Bang -- 1847 -- Baltimore

Jubilee House -- (see Bob Nettles)

Kabri -- Nico, a Wooden Shoe Maker -- 1850 -- Baltimore

Kate Kearney; or, The Fairy of the Lakes (domestic fairy musical drama, fairy drama, petite opera, comic drama, or romantic drama), by William Collier -- Ned Ryan -- 1844 -- Baltimore

Katharine Catharine and Petruchio; or, The Taming of the Shrew (farce), by David Garrick, after Shakespeare -- Grumio -- 1847 -- New Orleans

Kill or Cure -- John -- 1842 -- Philadelphia

The King and I (farce), by Morton, Jr. -- Perkin/Peter/Pyefinch -- 1845 -- Philadelphia

King Henry IV -- (see Henry IV)

The King's Command -- Simon Knockernose -- 1845 -- Baltimore

The King's Gardener -- (see Nipped in the Bud) (Also: The Gardener's Wife)

A Kiss in the Dark (farce), by J. B. Buckstone -- Mr. Sellim Pettibone -- 1846 -- Baltimore

Knotting the Handkerchief (farce) -- Inkpen -- 1848 -- Baltimore

Kossuth Kum/COME -- L. Dietcherappenheimer -- 1851 -- Baltimore

The Ladder of Love (vaudeville) -- Francois -- 1845 -- Baltimore

The Ladies' Battle (comedy), by T. W. Robertson or Charles Reade, from A. E. Scribe and E. Legouve -- Gustave de Gridnon -- 1851 -- Baltimore
The Ladies' Club (comedy or burletta), by Mark Lemon—role unknown—1855—New Orleans

The Ladies' Man (farce)—Kit Crimmins—1845—Baltimore

The Lady Abbess; or, Out Without Leave (comedy)—Chevaller Dorval—1844—Baltimore

The Lady and the Devil (petite comedy or farce), by William Dimond—Jeremy—1843—Baltimore

The Lady of Lyons—Gaspar—1844—Baltimore

The Lady of the Lions; or, Love and Cabbages (travesty, operatic burlesque, or burlesque); by O. E. Durlavage—Clod Meddlenot—1845—Baltimore

The Lancashire Lass, by Watts Phillips—A Party by the Name of Johnson—1868—Cincinnati

La Sonnambula (opera), by Bellini—Alessio—1845—Philadelphia

Lavater; or, The Physiognomist (comic drama in two acts), by J. R. Planche—Betman—1849—Baltimore

Law, Love and Physic (also: Love, Law and Physic) (comedy)—Lubin Log—1845—Philadelphia

Leap Year; or, The Ladies' Privilege (comedy), by J. B. Buckstone—Charles/William Dimple (Esq.)—1850—Baltimore

Lend Me Five Shillings (farce), by J. M. Morton—Mr. Golightly—1848—Baltimore

Leoline; or, The Spirit of the Fountain (fairy drama)—Perkyn—1848—Baltimore

A Lesson for Lovers (see The Young Widow)

Life in Merrie England—Caleb Pipkin—1848—Baltimore

The Life of an Actress (see Grimaldi)

Lilly Dawson (drama)—Short Bill—1848—Baltimore

The Lioness of the North (play)—Triptolemus Krout—1855—Baltimore

The Little Devil's Share—Gil Vargoes—1844—Baltimore
The Live Indian; or, Robbing a Tobacconist (comic extravaganza), by W. T. Thompson—Corporal Tim Jones—1849—Baltimore—(also: Tim Bobbin, Corporal Trim, Miss Jones, Miss Fennelia Crinoline, Miss Furbelow, Henrietta Jones (a mantua maker), Whiskey Mickey (a real roaring Live Indian), Whiskeedrunkum, Tim (a filibuster), Tom Brown, Miss Coralie Crinoline, Kin-ne-no-ne-au, Whiskeneekee, Whiskonske, Chaw Youks)

A/ The Loan of a Lover (vaudeville or musical farce), by J. R. Planche—Peter Spyke—1844—Baltimore

Log Hut Life; or, Domestic Economy (farce)—John Grumley—1855—New Orleans

Lola Montes/z; or, A Countess for an Hour (or, The Pas De Fascination; or, Catching a Governor) (burlesque extravaganza), by J. S. Coyne—Michael—1849—Baltimore

London Assurance (comedy), by Dion Boucicault—Mark Meddle—1846—Baltimore;

Mr. Adolphus (Dolly) Spanker—1841—Philadelphia

Look Before You Leap (comedy in five acts), by G. W. Lovell—Jack Spriggs—1847—New Orleans

The Lottery Ticket (farce), by Samuel Beazley—Wormwood—1844—Baltimore

Louise; or, The White Scarf (drama)—Andrew—1848—Baltimore

Love and Money; or, A School for Scheming (comedy in three acts), by Dion Boucicault—The McDunnum—1856—New Orleans

Love Chase—Wildrake—1846—Baltimore

Love in All Corners; or, Hide and Seek (or, The Wrong Box) (musical interlude or farce), by Joseph Lunn—Simon—1847—Baltimore

Love's Sacrifice; or, The Rival Merchants (comedy), by G. W. Lovell—Jean Ruse—1846—Baltimore
Lucille; or, A/ The Story of the/a Heart (three-act domestic drama), by

W. B. Bernard—Issac/zack Schuyp—1844—Baltimore

Luke the Laborer; or, The Lost Child (or, The Lost Son) (drama), by

J. B. Ruckstone—Bobby Trott—1848—Baltimore

Macbeth (tragedy), by William Shakespeare—First Witch—1849—Baltimore; One of a chorus of "singing witches"—1845—Philadelphia

The Maid of Crossey; or, The Golden Cross; or, Theresa's Vow (dramatic sketch), by Flemming (or drama by Mrs. Gore)—Walter—1844—Baltimore

The Maid of Munster (see Perfection)

Make Your Wills (farce), by Edward Mayhew and G. Smith—Joseph Bragg—1847—Baltimore

The Man with the White Hat (farce)—The Man with the White Hat—1846—Baltimore

The Man Without a Name—role unknown—1856—Baltimore

Married and Settled—Benny Bowbell—1855—Baltimore

The Married Bachelor (burletta), by P. P. O'Callaghan—Sharple—1843—Baltimore

Married Life (comedy in three acts), by J. B. Buckstone—Henry Dove—1849—Baltimore

The Matchwoman of Baltimore (farce)—Corporal Tim—1849—Baltimore

A Matrimonial Speculation (farce), by Simpkins—Mr. Jeremiah Jogtrot—1858—Boston

The May Queen (melodrama), by J. B. Buckstone—Caleb Pipkin—1848—Baltimore

The Merchant and His Clerks—Kit K/Cockles—1847—Baltimore

The Merchant of Venice (comedy), by William Shakespeare—Launcelot Gobbo—1847—New Orleans

The Merry Wife of Windsor, by William Shakespeare—Slender—1861—New Orleans

Mesmerism (extravaganza)—Lecturer (Mesmerizer)—1845—Baltimore
Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags (tragedy), by J. A. Stone—

Goodenough, a Puritan Soldier—1841—Philadelphia

The Midnight Watch; or, The Revolution of 1795, by J. M. Morton—Jacques Coco—

1849—Baltimore

The Militia Training; or, Down East (also: The Militia Muster) (original sketch),

attributed to J. H. Hackett—Captain Pluck—1861—New Orleans

The Miller and His Men—Karl—1850—Baltimore

The Miller's Maid (domestic drama), by John Faucit—Matty Marvelous—1847—

Baltimore

Milly, the Maid with the Milking Pail (comedy with songs)—Die/c/con—1855—New Orleans

Miralda; or, The Justice of Tacon (play), by M. M. Ballou—Seth Swap—1858—

Boston

Mr. Peter White (also: Mr. and Mrs. White) (farce), by R. J. Raymond—Mr. Peter White—1844—Baltimore

Money; or, Duplicity Exposed (five-act comedy), by E. G. Bulwer-Lytton—

Graves—1845—Baltimore

Mose and Jakey in Philadelphia (local sketch) by T. W. Melghan—role unknown—

1849—Philadelphia

Mother and Her Child Are Doing Well (comedy) by J. M. Morton—Mr. Felix Fluffy—1846—Baltimore

The Mountain Sylph (operatic ballet)—Christie—1845—Baltimore

Much Ado About Nothing (comedy), by William Shakespeare—Dogberry—1847—

New Orleans

The Mummy; or, The Liquor of Life (farce), by W. B. Bernard or William E.

Burton—Toby/ias Tramp—1845—Baltimore
My Fellow Clerk (farce), by J. Oxenford—Victim—1843—Baltimore; Tactic—1847—New Orleans

My Little Adopted (farce), by T. H. Bayley—John Dibbs—1844—Baltimore

My Neighbor's Wife (or, Brown vs. Smith) (farce), by Alfred Bunn—Mr. Brown—1844—Baltimore

My Precious Betsy (farce)—Mr. Bobtail—1850—Baltimore

My Sister Kate (farce), by Mark Lemn—Tom Chaff—1844—Baltimore

Mysteries and Miseries of New York (local sketch), by H. P. Grattan—role unknown—1849—Philadelphia

My Wife's Out (farce)—Mr. Scumble—1844—Baltimore; Sharp—1846—Philadelphia

My Wife's Second Floor (farce)—Jacob Close—1844—Baltimore

My Wife's Washerwoman (see Betsy Baker)

Nan, the Good for Nothing (see Good for Nothing)

Nature's Nobleman (comedy), by Harry Watkins—John Smith—1852—Baltimore

The New Footman (comedy or farce)—Bobby Breakwindow—1845—Baltimore

Nicholas Nickleby; or, Poor Smike (or, Doings at the Do-The-Boys Hall) (burletta),

by Dion Boucicault—Old Squeers—1858—Boston

Nipp'd/ed/in the Bud; or, The King's Gardener (or, The Gardener's Wife) (farce, musical farce, or burletta)—Galochar (various spellings)—1843—Baltimore

The Ocean Child (national drama), by C. A. Somerset—Peter Poulinc (an apothecary's apprentice)—1841—Philadelphia

The Old Guard; or, La Vielle Guard (or, Napoleon's Old Guard) (dramatic sketch),

by Dion Boucicault—role unknown—1847—Baltimore

Old Heads and Young Hearts (comedy), by Dion Boucicault—Bob—1851—Baltimore

Old Honesty (comedy or domestic drama), by J. M. Morton—Toby Perch—1848—Baltimore
Olympic Devils, by J. R. Planché—Pluto—1851—Baltimore

The Omnibus; or, Pat's Blunders (farce), an alteration of R. J. Raymond's Cherry
   Bounce, by Isaac Pocock—Tom/my/Dobbs—1845—Baltimore

One Hour; or, The Carnival Ball (farce or petite comedy), by T. H. Bayley—
   O'Leary—1845—Baltimore

The/Hundred Po...nd Note (farce), by R. B. Peake—Billy Black—1847—
   Baltimore

Otello (burlesque opera)—Iago—1845—Baltimore

Our American Cousin, by Tom Taylor—Asa Trenchard—1859—New Orleans

Our Boys (comedy), by Henry J. Byron—Perkyn Middlewick—1875—Baltimore

Our Mary Ann/e (farce), by J. B. Buckstone—Jonathan Funks—1844—Baltimore

Our National Defences[sic] (drama)—Simon Marrowfat—1849—Baltimore

Our Old House at Home—Jemmy Jenkins—1849—Baltimore

Owens Worried by Clarke (burletta)—John E. Owens—1855—Baltimore

Owens Worried by /Ben/Rogers (burletta)—John E. Owens—1853—Baltimore

Palo Alto; or, Our Army on the Rio Grande (drama)—role unknown—1846—New Orleans

The Panel (farce)—Thomas—1843—Baltimore

Paul Pry; or, I Hope I Don't Intrude (comedy), by John Poole—Paul Pry—1847—
   Baltimore

A Peculiar Position (comedy), by J. R. Planché—Pepl to—1845—Baltimore

The People's Lawyer; or, The Yankee Teamster (or, Solon Shingle) (domestic
   drama), by J. S. Jones—Solon Shingle—1856—Baltimore

Perfection; or, The Maid of Munster (comedietta, petite comedy, or one-act
   Interlude), by T. H. Bayley—Sam—1859—New Orleans

Peter the Great, by William Dunlap—Hans Lubberlick Von Dunder—1850—
   Baltimore
The Picnic Party (comedy in two acts), by Charles Dana—John Littlejohn—1845—Baltimore

Pinafore (operetta), by Gilbert and Sullivan—Sir Joseph Porter—1879—Baltimore

Pizarro; or, The Conquest of Peru (play), by R. B. Sheridan—Gomez, a Spaniard—1841—Philadelphia

A/The/My Pleasant Neighbors (farce), by Mrs. J. R. Planche—Christopher Strap—1844—Baltimore

The Ploughman Turned Lord (comedy)—Robin Roughhead—1848—Baltimore

The Poor Gentleman (comedy in five acts), by G. Colman the younger—

Dr. Ollapod—1845—Philadelphia; Stephen Harrowby—1845—Philadelphia

Poor of New York, by Dion Boucicault—Badger—1858—Cincinnati

Poor Pillicoddy (comedy), by J. M. Morton—John Peter Pillicoddy—1848—Baltimore

The Poor Soldier (comedy, operatic piece, or musical farce), by J. O'Keefe—

Darby—1848—Baltimore

P.P.; or, The Man and the Tiger (farce), by Thomas Parry—Bob Buckskin—1845—Baltimore

The Pride of the Market (petite comedy or comic drama in three acts), by

J. R. Planche—Issa/i/e/dore Farine—1848—Baltimore

The Princess Fair Star; or, The Singing Apple and the Dancing Water—Lord Stalk—1845—Baltimore

The Printer's Devil (comedy)—Pierre Pica—1845—Baltimore

The Queen's Heart, by Dr. John W. Palmer—Napoleon Bonaparte Gravier/Aravler/

Aravir—1858—Boston

The Queen's Horse (comedy)—Tom Tubbs—1846—Baltimore

Queer Dilemmas; or, What Ill My Wife Say? (farce)—Pierre DuBois—1844—Baltimore
The Queer Subject—Bill Matlock—1851—Baltimore

Rachel is Coming (farce or burletta), by Dion Boucicault—role unknown—1856—New Orleans

Railway Mania (farce)—Mouser—1846—Philadelphia

Raising the Wind; or, How to Get a Breakfast (farce), by James Kenney—Sam—1844—Baltimore

The Rake's Progress; or, Three Degrees in Loafing (or, Three Degrees in Crime; or, The Upper Ten and Lower Twenty) (melodrama), by W. L. Rede—Sam Strap/Slap—1848—Baltimore

The Ransom (farce), by J. R. Planche—Phillippe—1844—Baltimore

The Rear Admiral (comedy)—Andrew—1845—Baltimore

The Rebel Chief (drama)—Mark Anthony Tape—1848—Philadelphia

The Rendezvous (farce), by Richard Ayton—Simon—1845—Baltimore

The Rent Day; or, The Farmer's Home (melodrama or domestic drama), by Douglas Jerrold—Bullfrog/Frog—1847—New Orleans

The Review; or, The Wags of Windsor (farce), by G. Colman the younger, Caleb Quotem—1848—Baltimore; John Lump—1845—Baltimore

The Revolution of 1795 (see The Midnight Watch)

Richard III (burlesque of fifth act)—Richard III—1846—Baltimore

Richelieu (domestic tragedy), by J. H. Payne—Goaler—1841—Philadelphia

Rio Grande; or, Our Country Forever (drama)—Roaring Jake—1846—Baltimore

Risks (play), by Bartley Cambell—Pemberton Pembroke, Esq.—1875—?

The Rival Captains (comedy)—Traptrick—1845—Baltimore

The Rivals; or, A Trip to Bath (comedy), by R. B. Sheridan—Bob Acres—1858—Boston; David—1859—New Orleans

The Road to Ruin (five-act comedy), by Thomas Holcroft—Silky—1858—Boston
The Robber's Wife; or, Mark Redland (romantic drama in two acts), by I. Pocock—Sawney McFile—1843—Baltimore

The Robbers (romantic drama), by J. H. Payne—Sawney McFile—1842—Baltimore

Robert Macaire (described variously as comic pantomime; drama in one act; farce; and comic ballet), attributed to Charles Selby—Jacques Strop—1847—Baltimore

Rob Roy/MacGregor; or, Auld Lang Syne (drama or operatic drama), by Isaac Pocock—Bailie Nicol Jarvie—1842—Philadelphia

A Roland for an Oliver (farce, comedy or musical farce), by Thomas Morton—Fixture—1845—Baltimore

Roll of the Drum (drama)—Peter Peaflower—1848—Baltimore

Romance and Reality, by John Brougham—Tom Badger—1858—Boston

Romeo and Juliet (tragedy), by William Shakespeare—Peter—1847—Baltimore; Balthasar—1841—Philadelphia

Rory O'Mo/o/re (drama or burletta), by Samuel Lover—DeWelskin—1848—Baltimore

The Rose of Aragon; or, The Vigil of St. Mark (drama), by S. B. H. Judah—Nunquillo—1844—Baltimore

The Rough Diamond; or, Cousin Joe (farce or interlude), by J. B. Buckstone—Cousin Joe—1850—New York

The Rover's Bride (see The Wreck Ashore)

A Rule of Contrary (farce)—Dr. Merrypegs—1845—Baltimore

Saturday Night and Monday Morning (comedy)—Jolly, a bailiff—1846—Baltimore

Sayings and Doings (farce)—Dr. Merrypegs—1846—Baltimore

The School for Scandal (comedy), by R. B. Sheridan—Sir Peter Teazle—1874—New Orleans

School for Tigers—Mr. PANELA—1852—Baltimore
The Sea F/ght (see The Spitfire)

The Sea of Ice/And the Thirst for Gold; or, The/Wild/Flower of Mexico (or, The Mother's Prayer), by A. D'Ennery and F. Dugue—Barabas--1859--New Orleans

The Secret; or, A/The Hole In the Wall (farce or comedy), by John Poole or E. Morris--Thomas--1843--Baltimore

The Secret Agent (comedy), by J. S. Coyne--role unknown--1856--New Orleans

Secrets Worth Knowing (comedy), by T. Morton--Nicholas Rue--1859--New Orleans

Self (drama), by Mrs. Sidney F. Bateman--John Unit--1857--Baltimore

Sent to the Tower (farce)--Perkyn Puddlefoot/Purrfoot--1851--New York

The Serious Family (comedy in three acts), by Morris Barnett--Aminidab Sleek--1850--Baltimore

The Seven Champions of Christendom; or, The Dragon of the Nile (spectacle)--The King of Thessaly--1841--Philadelphia

She Stoops to Conquer; or, The Mistakes of a Night (comedy), by Oliver Goldsmith--Tony Lumpkin--1846--Baltimore

Shocking Events (farce), by J. B. Buckstone--Mr. Puggs--1845--Baltimore

The Siamese Twins (farce), by A. Beckett--Denis O'Glib--1851--Baltimore

The Siege of Belgrade ("Grand Historical Opera")--Second officer--1840--Philadelphia

Sketches in India; or, The Stage Struck Tailor--Tom Tape--1848--Baltimore

Slasher and Crasher (farce), by J. M. and T. Morton--Mr. Sampson Slasher--1849--Baltimore

The Slave; or, The Lovers of Surinam (opera)--Servant--1840--Philadelphia

Smith and Brown--Brown--1846--Baltimore

The Snake Indians (drama)--Jeremiah Dobbs--1847--Baltimore
The Soldier's Daughter (comedy), by A. Cherry—Timothy Quaint—1842—Philadelphia

The Soldier's Return (drama)—Karl/ltz—1844—Baltimore

The Solitary of the Heath—role unknown—1862—Cincinnati

Solon Shingle (see The People's Lawyer)

Something Original—Solomon—1842—Philadelphia

The Somnabulist; or, The White Phantom of the Village (drama), by W. T. Moncrieff—Colin de Trop—1845—Baltimore

Sons and Systems (comedy)—Rootz—1845—Baltimore

The Spectre/tral Bridegroom; or, A Ghost in Spite of Himself (farce), by W. T. Moncrieff—Diggory/Dickory—1843—Baltimore

The Spirit of the Fountain (fairy drama)—Perkin—1844—Baltimore

Spirit of '76—Dash—1852—Baltimore

The Spitfire; or, The Sea Fight (or, The Fight at Sea) (farce), by J. M. Morton—Tobias Shortcut—1846—Baltimore

State Secrets; or, The Tailor of Tamworth (or, A Call for Papers) (farce, vaudeville or burletta), by T. E. Wilks—2nd Cavalier—1840—Philadelphia; Gregory Thimblewell—1845—Baltimore; Humphrey Hedgehog—1847—Baltimore

Still Waters Run Deep (comedy)—role unknown—1856—New Orleans

A Story of the Heart (see Lucille)

The Stranger; or, Misanthropy and Repentance (domestic drama), from Kotzebue, by William Dunlap—Peter—1842—Philadelphia

Sudden Thoughts (farce), by T. E. Wilks—Jack Cabbage—1842—Philadelphia

Sweethearts and Wives (comedy), by James Kenney—Billy Lackaday—1845—Baltimore
The Swiss Cottage; or, Why Don't She Marry? (operatic farce, musical vaudeville, musical farce, operatic piece), by T. H. Bayley—Natz Trick/Teik/Teike—1844—Baltimore

The Swiss Swains (see The Alpine Maid)

The Tailor of Tamworth (see State Secrets)

The Taming of the Shrew (see Katharine and Petruchio)

Temptation—by John Brougham—Toby Perch—1850—Baltimore

That Man from Catteraugus, by Piercy Wilson (adapted from German play, The Cattle Dealer of Upper Austria)—Allen Trueman—1881—San Francisco

Therese, the Orphan of Geneva (melodrama), by J. H. Payne, from the French of Du Cange—Lavigne—1844—Baltimore

The Thimble Rig; or, Going to the Races (comedy)—Sam Shindy—1845—Baltimore

This House to Be Sold (burletta), by John Brougham—Chatterton Chopkins—1848—Baltimore

The Three Clerks (comediette)—Victim—1844—Baltimore

Three Degrees in Loafing (see The Rake's Progress)

Three Degrees of Crime (see The Rake's Progress)

Three Hunchbacks ('eastern drama')—A hunchback—1846—Baltimore

A/The Thumping Legacy; or, A Cockney In Corsica (farce), by T. and J. M. Morton—Jerry Ominous—1845—Baltimore

The Ticket-of-Leave Man, by Tom Taylor—role unknown—1867—Baltimore

Time Tries All (domestic comedy), by J. Courtney—Tom/my Tact—1852—Baltimore

Tippoo Salb; or, The Storming of Seringapatam (drama)—Jerry—1841—Philadelphia

Tom and Jerry; or, Life in London (grand operatic extravaganza or burletta), by W. T. Moncrieff—Jerry—1851—Baltimore; Logic—1842—Philadelphia
Tom Noddy's Secret (comic piece or farce), by T. H. Bayley—Inkpen--1845--Baltimore

The Toodles; or, Mr. and Mrs. Toodles ("excentricity[sic]" or farce), by William E. Burton, but also attributed to Cowley and R. J. Raymond--Timothy Toodles--1852--Baltimore

To Parents and Guardians (see Bob Nettles)

A Tragedy Rehearsed; or, A Peep Behind the Scenes (sketch), by Sheridan--Whiskerandos--1862--Boston

The True Use of Riches (see Fortune's Frolic)

Trumpeter's Daughter (comedy, drama or farce)--Phillipot--1844--Baltimore

The Turned Head (farce)--King--1847--New Orleans

Turning the Tables; or, The Uxbridge Exciseman (comedy or farce), by John Poole--Jack Humphreys/ries--1845--Baltimore

The Turn-out; or, The Enraged Politician (musical piece or farce), by James Kenney--Gregory--1848--Baltimore

The Turnpike Gate (musical farce), by T. Knight--Crack--1845--Baltimore

'Twas I; or, The Truth a Lie, by J. H. Payne--Marcel Margot--1850--Baltimore

Twelfth Night, by William Shakespeare--Sir Andrew Aguecheek--1861--New Orleans

Twice Killed/and Not Dead Yet/ (farce), by John Oxenford--Euclid Facile--1848--Baltimore

/The/Two Gregories; or, Luck in a Name (or, John Bull In France; or, Where Did the Money Come From?) (musical farce), by T. J. Dibdin--Gregory--1844--Baltimore

Two Queens (drama)--Magnus Lob/b/--1844--Baltimore; James--1844--Baltimore

The Two Thompson; or, A Stage Coach Adventure (farce), by Caroline Boaden--William Thompson (the 2nd Thompson)--1844--Baltimore
'Twould Puzzle a Conjurer (comedy)—The Great Official—1848—Baltimore; Hans Luberlick Von Dunder—1855—Baltimore

Uncle Sam; or, A Nabob for an Hour (petite comedy or farce), by Dion Boucicault—Hobbs—1848—Baltimore

Uncle Tom's Cabin (dramatization by George L. Aiken of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel)—Uncle Tom—1855—Baltimore

Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life in the South as it is ('a satirical, quizzical burlesque. . . . by Mrs. Harriet Screecher Blow'), by Joseph M. Field—Pheleg Golightly—1852—Baltimore

An Unwarranted Instruction; or, Owens Worried by Brougham—himself—1858—Boston

The Upper Ten and Lower Twenty, by T. B. DeWalden (adaptation of Three Degrees of Loafing)

The Upper Ten Thousand (comedy)—Sam Swipes—1847—Baltimore

Used Up; or, There's Nothing in It (comedy), by Dion Boucicault—role unknown—1855—New Orleans

The Vagrant and His Family; or, The Joy of Repentance (melodrama)—Jules Coco—1844—Baltimore

Valet and I—Wiggler—1851—Baltimore

(The) Valet de Sham (comedy)—Sam Wiggle/Wigler—1845—Baltimore

Vicar of Wakefield—Moses—1852—Baltimore

/The Victims (three-act play), by Tom Taylor—Joshua Butterby—1857—Baltimore

Victorine; or, /I'll/Sleep on it (drama), by J. B. Buckstone—Blaize—1847—Baltimore; 3rd Tradesman—1840—Philadelphia

The Village Lawyer (farce)—Sheepface—1847—Baltimore

Violet—Grimaldi—1857—Baltimore

Wags of Windsor (see The Review)
The Walking Ghost (comedy)—Diggory—1848—Baltimore

The Wandering Minstrel (musical entertainment or farce), by Henry Mayhew—Je/Im Ba/e/g/gs—1852—Baltimore

The Warrior King; or, The Farmer and His Friend (drama)—Triptolemus Middlewert, a Burgomaster—1843—Philadelphia

West End; or, The Irish Heiress (comedy), by Dion Bouicault—Major Fuss—1859—New Orleans

What Will My Wife Say? (farce)—Pierre Dubois—1846—Baltimore

White Farm (domestic drama)—Peter Singleton—1850—Baltimore

Who Speaks First (farce)—role unknown—1858—Cincinnati

Who's the Right Man? (farce)—Gregory Redtail—1844—Baltimore

Who Stole That/The/My Pocket Book? (farce), by J. M. Morton—Tompkins

Tibthrop—1855—Baltimore

Who's Your Friend; or, Fete Champetre (or, The Queensbury Fete) (petite comedy in two acts)—Giles Fairfield/land—1845—Baltimore

The Wife; or, A Tale of Mantua (tragedy), by J. S. Knowles—Bartolo—1847—New Orleans

Wig Wag—Simon—1851—Baltimore

Wild Ducks—John Duck—1850—Baltimore

The Wild Indian, by W. T. Thompson—Tim—1851—New York

Wild Oats; or, The Stolling Gentleman (comedy), by J. O'Keeffe—Ephraim

Smooth—1847—New Orleans; Sim—1858—Boston

Wilful[sic]Murder—Pythagorus—1847—New Orleans

William Penn (drama), by Richard Penn Smith—Timothy Twist, a Dealer in Dry Goods—1842—Philadelphia

The Windmill (farce)—Sampson Low—1844—Baltimore
The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret (comedy), by Mrs. Susanna Centlivre—Lasardo—1847—New Orleans

The World's Fair, by W. E. Burton—Jack Waggles—1851—Baltimore

The Wreck Ashore; or, the Pirate's Bride (or, The Rover's Bride) (drama in three acts or domestic drama), by J. B. Buckstone—Marmaduke Magog/Agog/(the Parish Beadle)—1846—Baltimore

The Writing on the Wall (play), by T. and J. M. Morton—Fergusson Trotter—1852—Baltimore

The Yankee Teamster (see The People's Lawyer)

You Can't Marry Your Grandmother (petite comedy or farce), by T. H. Bayley—Tommy Small—1847—Baltimore

The Young Actress (protean burletta), by Dion Boucicault—The Celebrated Tragedian—1855—New Orleans

Young America (farce)—Mr. John James Pooley—1845—Baltimore

Young England (farce)—John James Pooley—1859—New Orleans

The Young Reefer (drama)—Simon Penny (a Cockney Linen Draper)—1849—Baltimore

The Young Widow; or, A Lesson for Lovers (farce, Interlude, or comedy in one act), by J. T. C. Rodwell—Splash—1847—Baltimore

Your Life's in Danger! (farce), by T. and J. M. Morton—John Strong—1849—Baltimore
## Program of "Ascent of Mont Blanc"

### PART FIRST,

**THE JOURNEY:**
- Introductory and initiatory, which discloses our motives for an European Tour.
  - Departure for Liverpool by the American Steamer Atlantic.
  - A Glimpse at our companions in Voyage, wherein we introduce Mrs. Partington, a responsible elderly Lady, Empress of a Mysterious Quintess, and her Simpsons Daughter, Miss Fanshawe, an effete young lady severely addicted to Rhyming, together with a genuine specimen of a New York Upper Tenement, Major Fred Henry, who will be introduced through the medium of a Song—the Past Young Yankee Traveller.
  - Arrival at Liverpool, whence, discovering the Antigua Locomotion of Blaise, and its more modern competitor, Glaucus, we adopt, for the occasion, the Spirit Exhaling Mode of Transit and speed on the wings of imagination, through London, New Haven and the ancient French fishing town of Dieppe.

### PART SECOND,

**DISCOURSE AND PARTICULARS:**
- The Metropolitan of Amusement, Gaiety, Jazz, and Revolutions. Numerous Scenes in a Parisian Cafe. Pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, or French without a Master.
  - Departure of the Diligence for Geneva!
  - Interesting anecdotes with Voltaire, Byron, Rousseau, and Gibbon, the Historian. Let us make the acquaintance of an extraordinary personage, designated as "the man with the involuntary muscle" and unexpectedly meet our old Grand Company, the pamphlet Master. Departure for the Castle of Chillon.

### PART THIRD,

**THE CASTLE OF CHILLO.
PAINTED BY SETT.
- Historical facts connected therewith. Another unexpected rencontre with Mrs. Partington and Daughter. The latter arrives with a brief dissertation on Byron's poem of "The Prisoner of Chillon." We form another acquaintance in the persons of a Penetaphonic Native American, A Mr. Heaton, who determined to regulate his autobiography, the eminent statesman of the cell in the prison of Chillon. Mrs. Partington and nieces meet with a sorrow less. Journey in the Chac's Bateau Martigny, at the foot of the pass at St. Bernard. Arrival at the scene of Napoleon's great achievement. Assent to the confection.

### PART FOURTH,

**OF ST. BERNARD.
PAINTED BY SETT.

### APPENDIX B.

**Program of "Ascent of Mont Blanc"**
PART SECOND.

Ascent of Mont Blanc

"Ye rolling crags of ice!
Ye avalanches, whom a breath draws down
In mountainous overreaching!
I hear ye, moment by moment, aloof beneath,
Crash with a frequent conflict."

The VILLAGE OF CHAMOUNI

Determination to attempt the Ascent. Difficulty in procuring Guides.
Number required by the Authorities to undertake the Ascent. Requirements and Equipment.
Morning of Departure. Battle in the Court of the Hotel des Lords.
Mrs. Partridge's Motherly Precaution. The March through the streets of Chamouni.
Commencement of the ascent.

The Chalet and Cascade of the Dèterines!
PIERRE A L'INCLUSION!
Our morning report, 7000 feet above the level of the sea. Origin of the name of this Spot. The

GLACIER DU BOISSEAU


THE WALL OF ICE OF THE GLACIER DU TACNOT
The Constellation and Schemes to Scale it. Fearful sensation experienced during the Ascent. Reckless danger of Francesco, the Guide. The summit safely reached. The Fall Snow Bridge. Peculiar method of crossing. Arrival at THE GRAND MOLETS, OR ROCKY ISLAND

Rising perpendicularly 300 feet from the Glaciers.

THE ENCAMPMENT FOR THE NIGHT!


GRAND PLATEAU BY MOONLIGHT!


VALLEY OF CHAMOUNI

Congratulations and Welcomes await us at the Hotel des Lords. Strange developments during our absence. The last tidings of the missing Peguele.

THE RETURN HOME!

VIEW OF THE BAY OF NEW YORK

BY MOONLIGHT. Painted in Watercolor.

TREDUX & BURGESS, Agent.

Bull & Tuttle, Stereotype Job-Printers, Clipper Office, Baltimore.
APPENDIX C

Description of Owens Estate, Algburth Vale


The home of John Owens lies to the north of Baltimore about six miles, on the verge of the little village of Towsontown. You reach it by a lovely road, displaying a mixture of all pictorial ingredients which give such enviable distinction to Maryland scenery. The greatest variety of trees, crowded together with picturesque abandon, variegate the perspective. At last, we reach a broad gate which is pointed out as Mr. Owens' grounds. On the left, as we enter, is a stretch of clear meadow, to the right, a waving cornfield. Nothing more can be seen till we saunter along the avenue of smiling maples, for perhaps four hundred yards, when the road suddenly droops and bends, and we stand in full view of a stately manor house nestling in the valley below. Descending by a winding path, the visitor passes through grounds cultivated with charming skill, and laid off into plats of diamond and semicircle, fringed with loveliest parterres. Dainty bits of country gardening, watched and defended by sentinel elms, make up the immediate surroundings of Algburth Vale. Around this charming scene, at a respectful distance, is a circle of green hills.

Mr. Owens has lived here since 1853; loving his country home so well, that he has gradually extended it, until now he is monarch of nearly three hundred acres. . . .

The house is very large, generously constructed with all modern improvements, and is far handsomer than any other in the region around. A piazza runs the entire length of the southern or principal front, and the wings are tastily finished off with gables. The comedian's sanctum, on the right as you enter the wide hall, is a large apartment, and opens into a cozy smoking room. Over the well-filled bookcase is an oil copy of Droeshout's Shakespeare. The walls are entirely covered with paintings and engravings of celebrated actors and authors. One space is filled by the life-size half figure of the comedian as Solon Shingle, by the painter, Cross; another, three-quarter figure of Dr. Ollapod, by D'Almaine; both, wonderfully realistic pieces of work in expression, drapery and coloring.

The furniture is rich and solid, not gaudy. Good taste prevails in all things. The walls of the hall are hung with the portraits of characters once famous on the English and American boards. To one of these the comedian points with especial pride as the only portrait ever taken of Edmund Kean. . . .

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To the right and left of this cherished gem, hang the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Duff, Macready, Foote, Mrs. Darley, Mr. and Mrs. Francis, and many more; all being the work of the celebrated artist, Neagle . . .

A great variety of choice landscapes hang in parlor, sitting-room and dining room, representing French, Flemish and English art, as well as our own. Take it all in all, Algburth Vale is a home which reflects the refined taste and generous nature of its owner.
APPENDIX D. Cities Owens Played

John Owens played in the following 68 cities during his career. The date following each city indicates the first time he played there. He also played other 'various towns' in New England, New York state, and the South, but no source specifies exact names.

Philadelphia, Pa. (1840)
Baltimore, Md. (1841)
Buffalo, N.Y. (1843)
Pittsburg, Pa. (1846)
New Orleans, La. (1846)
New York, N.Y. (1850)
Washington, D.C. (1851)
Richmond, Va. (1856)
Cincinnati, Oh. (1857)
St. Louis, Mo. (1857)
Boston, Mass. (1858)
Portland, Me. (1862)
Providence, R.I. (1862)
Worcester, Mass. (1862)
Nashville, Tenn. (1863)
Memphis, Tenn. (1863)
London, England (1865)
Liverpool, England (1865)
Troy, N.Y. (1866)
Newark, N.J. (1867)
Louisville, Ky. (1867)
New Albany, Ky. (1867)
Albany, N.Y. (1867)
Utica, N.Y. (1867)
New Haven, Conn. (1867)
Leavenworth, Kan. (1867)
Chicago, Ill. (1867)
Trenton, N.J. (1868)
Brooklyn, N.Y. (1868)
Indianapolis, Ind. (1868)
Cleveland, Oh. (1868)
Hartford, Conn. (1869)
San Francisco, Cal. (1869)
Virginia City, Nev. (1869)
Mobile, Ala. (1869)
Vicksburg, Miss. (1870)
Rochester, N.Y. (1870)
Terre Haute, Ind. (1870)
Montreal, Canada (1871)
Augusta, Ga. (1872)
Lexington, Ky. (1872)
Erie, Pa. (1872)
Milwaukee, Wis. (1872)
Omaha, Neb. (1873)
Kansas City, Kan. (1873)
Bangor, Me. (1873)
Wilmington, Del. (1873)
??, Minnesota (1874)
Montgomery, Ala. (1874)
Atlanta, Ga. (1874)
Savannah, Ga. (1874)
Macon, Ga. (1874)
Columbus, Ga. (1874)
Galveston, Tex. (1875)
Charleston, S.C. (1865)
Hamilton, Ontario (1877)
Fall River, Mass. (1878)
Detroit, Mich. (1878)
??, Iowa (1878)
Toronto, Canada (1878)
Portland, Ore. (1881)
Norfolk, Va. (1881)
Talladega, Ala. (1881)
Selma, Ala. (1881)
Pensacola, Fla. (1881)
Rockville, Ind. (1883)
New Brunswick, Conn. (1884)
Harlem, N.Y. (1884)
VITA

Thomas Arthur Bogar was born on November 21, 1948, in Washington, D.C. After graduating from Sherwood High School in Montgomery County, Maryland, he attended the University of Maryland, receiving his B.A. in Speech and Drama Education in 1970. Between 1970 and 1978 he taught in the Montgomery County Public School system. During this time he earned his M.A. in Theatre from the University of Maryland (1974) and served as President of Maryland Drama Association (1977-78).

On a sabbatical from Montgomery County Schools, he attended Louisiana State University during 1978 and 1979, then returned to Montgomery County, where he is now on the faculty of Seneca Valley High School, teaching courses in Theatre, Writing, and Honors English.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Thomas A. Bogar

Major Field: Speech Communication, Theatre and Communication Disorders

Title of Thesis: The Theatrical Career of John E. Owens (1823-1886)

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

November 22, 1982