



NEW MISSION PLAY THEATER OPENS DOORS IN SAN GABRIEL

ARCHITECTURE TYPIFIES A GOLDEN DAYS OF STATE

**John Steven McGroarty Sees Long
 Deferred Wish Now
 Realized**

BY MARQUIS BUSBY

Out at Old San Gabriel, where the past still keeps its lingering hold, a dream house has been built. Like all dream houses it has the spaciousness and proud beauty of air castles in Spain, and yet it has all the tangibility of twentieth century America.

John Steven McGroarty realized a long-deferred dream when the Mission Play opened its sixteenth season in the lovely new Mission Play Theater last night. The new playhouse is across the road from the old weather-beaten, picturesque structure that housed the pageant for so many years.

At last this glorious drama of the golden days of California, days when the brown-clad Franciscan fathers walked the dusty El Camino Real from mission to mission, has a structure worthy of the story unfolded.

The new Mission Play Theater is a gleaming white building, designed by Arthur Benton, after the San Antonio de Padua Mission in Monterey county, now crumbling into ruins. The lovely lines of this old building seemed to lend itself to accommodating an auditorium, a foyer and cloistered promenades.

Of fireproof construction throughout, the new playhouse cost approximately \$650,000.

OF HISTORIC CHARM

But in spite of its newness the theater alights seems part of the historic charm that is San Gabriel's. There is romance in every brick of the walls and in every rough stone in the courtyard. The bricks were made from adobe excavated on the grounds by the Mission Indians. The stones which pave the courtyard were brought from Calabasas Road, near "The Millionaires' Club of Happiness," of which McGroarty writes in his newspaper articles.

If the outside suggests the past, the interior of the theater is the last word in modern construction. One enters from a wide foyer, with graceful iron-grilled balconies above, and then into the auditorium itself, a warm color symphony in browns and blues and greens.

On the walls of the auditorium are hung banners of the different provinces of Spain, Aragon, Castile and on through the list, their brave colors adding a rich splash to the ensemble.

Lighting of the auditorium is diffused through great lanterns of wrought iron, being of that weather-beaten, rusted appearance of antiquity.

EASY TO RECALL

It is very easy to remember the number that can be seated in this auditorium. Columbus discovered America in 1492, and just that number of people can view "The Mission Play" at the same time. It is an interesting coincidence and quite unintentional, said McGroarty.

Spaciousness rules in the Mission Play Theater, which is again a charming touch of the days that are gone, when California haciendas were low-lying and pleasantly rambling. Aisles in the playhouse are unusually wide, and perhaps no other theater has allowed more room between the rows of seats. Access to the loges along either side of the auditorium is through a long, wide, private hallway.

The curtains are things of beauty, too. An asbestos drop of brown, on which is emblazoned the royal coat of arms of Spain, seems in a miraculous fashion to blend into the other walls. It is almost as if there were no stage, no proscenium arch. Back of this drop, however, is a glorious curtain of soft blue iridescent tapestry, with figures of conquistadores and senoritas embroidered thereon.

The stage is particularly large, allowing full sway to the pageantry of the play. The dressing-rooms are large and all have rows of windows. The star's dressing-room has its own private reception room.

VENTILATING DEVICE

Every attention has been given to the comfort of the audience. On one side of the stage is a fan which sends fresh heated air into the auditorium and on the other is a device which draws it out. The air is washed every three minutes.

But perhaps the feature which comes closest to the heart of John Steven McGroarty is the long, outdoor cloistered promenade, where the audiences can walk and talk between acts. It is here that the miniatures

of the twenty-one missions will be found, a tiny El Camino Real in itself. And from this cloister can be seen the vineyards, orchards and the green hills beyond, not so much when Fray Junipero Serra first saw the fertile valley.

The site of the new playhouse is a seven-acre garden tract, which was once a part of the cactus-walled compound of the old San Gabriel Mission. Remaining in the tract are many objects of historic interest. One is the world-famous grapevine of San Gabriel, planted by the mission fathers in 1768, and the parent vine of all grapes in California. Then there is the quaint adobe house referred to in Helen Hunt Jackson's novel as the birthplace of Ramona. Underneath the rambling vines of the grape arbor now is an outdoor cafe, with service from the little adobe house. And here will be heard the strains of "La Paloma" and "La Golondrina," played on Spanish guitars—all part of the theater itself.

Later on there will be built on the grounds an Indian village reproducing exactly the homes of the people who inhabited this section of California when the first white man set foot on its golden shores. Indians, descendants of the people who used to dominate this section, will actually live here and go about their craft of rug weaving, silver molding and pottery making.

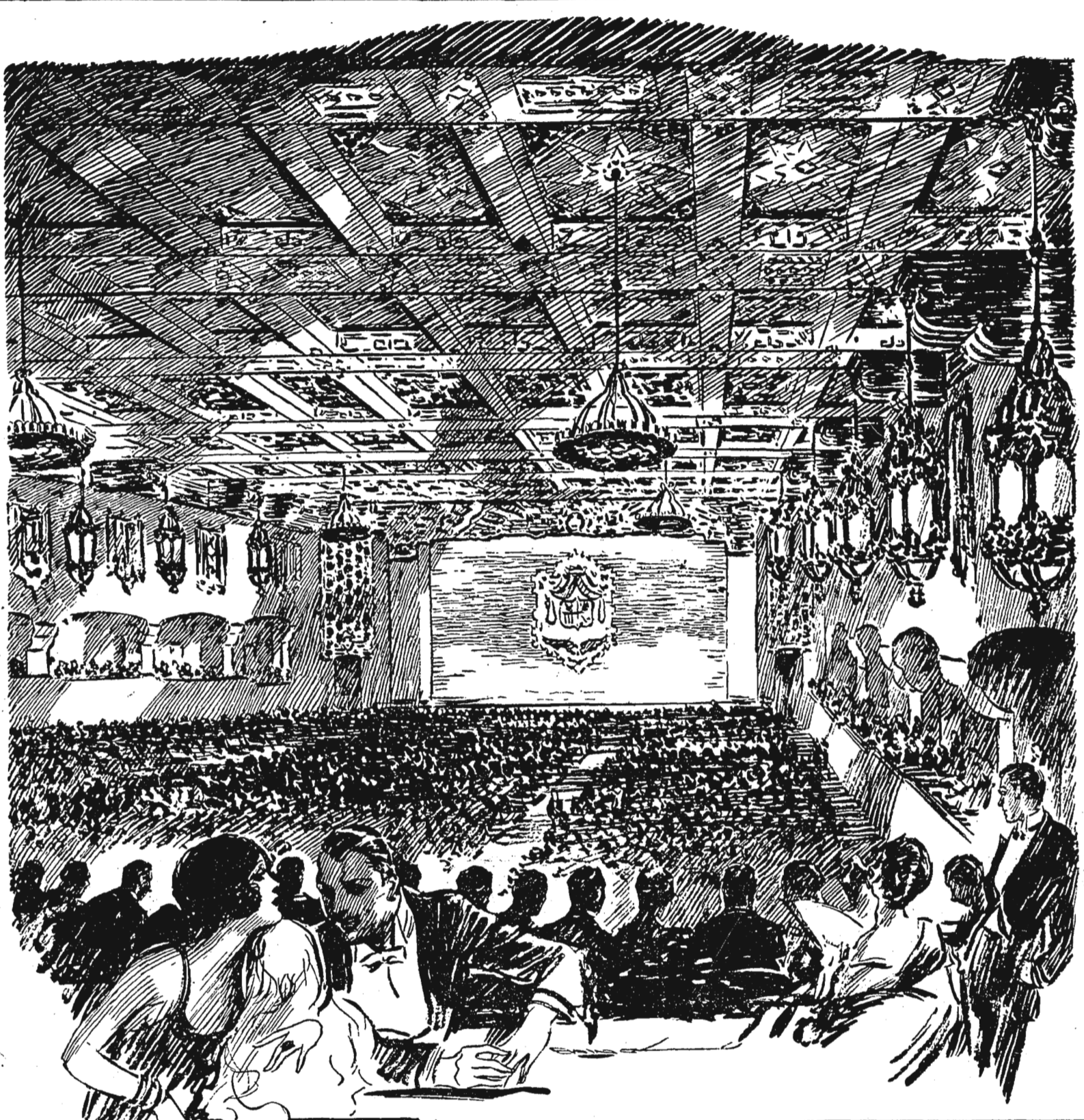
Five Hundred Desks Used in Office Scene

More than 500 desks were recently constructed by the production department at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios for use in what is said to be the largest office set ever used in a motion-picture production.

King Vidor, noted as the director of "The Big Parade," "La Boheme," is using the set in one of the sequences in "The Mob," his latest picture for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

James Murray is playing the role of a typical American office clerk. To portray the magnitude of the office, the set was constructed even larger than the average business office, resulting in the necessity for the large number of desks.

Eleanor Boardman, playing the leading feminine role, is supported by a noted cast including Dorothy Sebastian, Bert Roach, Estelle Clark, Daniel Tomlinson, and others.



The New Mission Play Theater is designed after the Mission San Antonio de Padua. Sketch by Staff Artist A. L. Ewing.

Opening of Mission Play at San Gabriel Brilliant Affair

NEW FEATURES PROVE DELIGHT

Cast of Historical Pageant Greatly Enlarged

Addresses Made from Stage by Principal Figures

Thanks Extended McGroarty's for Contributions

Editor's Note: A complete description and illustration of The Mission Playhouse will be found on the first page of the drama section.

BY EDWIN SCHALLERT

With a premiere of unqualified brilliance, old California as typified in the Mission Play, and modern California as exemplified in the new Mission Playhouse, joined in luring a great throng to San Gabriel last night.

John S. McGroarty's pageant drama of the State's early history was presented for the first time in this locality in a setting of the present, and the event was an epoch in the life of this far-famed California institution. It was an event as well in the world of the theater. There is perhaps no record to equal that of the Mission Play which has arrived at its 2520th performance, nor has the price of seats at even a New York opening surpassed the \$100-dollar mark that was set for the premiere of the new playhouse.

There was great enthusiasm over the housewarming. The minds of many perhaps went back momentarily to the old theater of vine-covered sentiment that still stands in the vicinity, but they greeted the new abode of the pageant drama as significant of those changes that time seems to make desirable.

RARE GEM

In any case, the new Mission Playhouse is a gem of the rarest description. No theater is more typical hereabouts of the spirit of California, mingling with the old Spanish tradition, nor perhaps any other structure

Throng Seeking Admission to Historical Play



Mission Pageant's Popularity Lines

more recently built for any other purpose.

The decorations are elaborate and of today. There is a cloistered attractiveness to the arrangement of the boxes, of which there are many on either side of the house. There are emphatic, but not obtrusive, notes of beauty in coloring and adornments, as well as an atmosphere that spells enticement. Notable among these effects is the variety of hues that mingle on the ceiling and the banners representing the various old kingdoms of Spain, like Castile, Aragon, Andalusia, Valencia and others that hang from the walls. Simplicity of style is preserved in the general scheme, and the huge beams and rafters of the ceiling echo to old-time primitive construction that made the old home of the Mission play so inviting.

I would like to vision the new theater a few years from now when it has acquired the fullness of beauty that belongs to it. There must of necessity be a certain edge removed from the newness of the structure before it will match perfectly the mellowed historic drama that unfolds upon the stage.

GAINS IN ENVIRONMENT

Still, there was nothing jarring about beholding the Mission Play in this different environment. Indeed it seemed to gain somewhat in glamor particularly during the radiant fiesta scene and other more spectacular episodes. I may say this also that because of the comparative familiarity of the surroundings, as contrasted with the old playhouse, one has a greater chance to concentrate upon the play itself, and in a sense to view it more critically. It is quite amazing how well the Mission Play meets the demands of this added test, and how forceful its drama. Both the earlier acts have tremendous climaxes. The final one retains its penetrating and poetic spirituality.

The ceremonies of the opening were significant of both the new spirit and the old. Particularly striking was the roll call of the missions. Banners representing each of these historic structures were presented to the theater, as the name of each was spoken by Mr. McGroarty from the stage.

W. I. Hollingsworth, president of the Mission Play Association, was one of several speakers.

The opening was attended by the social and the professional world, and

among the special guests was numbered Henry Van Dyke, the author, who has written in lavish terms of the historic pageant.

"It indeed affords me great pleasure to greet you on this, the premier performance of the Mission Play in its new home," said Mr. Hollingsworth. "I am sure you all share with me both the joy and pride of the achievement and feel that we have marked a really great event in the history of California. I want to thank all of you for the part you have taken in making possible this great enterprise."

"May I now thank my executive committee, D. W. Pontius, executive vice-president, who had charge of the construction of this splendid edifice; his broad experience in railroad construction has been of tremendous assistance in completing this building; Samuel K. Rindge and George I. Cochran who have given of their time, energy and substance, without stint. Nor am I less mindful of the great service Frank A. Miller of Riverside has rendered. He has always been ready and willing to lay aside his duties and pleasure to come to Los Angeles to advise with us.

"In fact, every director of this organization has taken a personal interest as well as a personal pride in seeing that this movement went forward to completion and I want to thank each one of them at this time.

PUBLISHERS THANKED

"There are also many others besides these gentlemen to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. The publishers of Los Angeles, each and all, have given us their enthusiastic support, and the Southern California press as a whole has never failed in keeping the public informed as to our progress. They have recognized the great benefits that are to accrue to California from an historical standpoint by the continuous production of the Mission Play. And I want to pause a moment to do honor to one who has borne the burden in the early history of the Mission Play, namely, William E. Hampton.

"Last, but by no means least, I wish to thank the author and his noble wife for the magnificent gift of the play itself, which they have bestowed upon the State of California by transferring all their right and title in the Mission Play, without money and without price, to our Mission Playhouse Corporation.

"Here in San Gabriel, doubtless

on the very spot which we occupy tonight, Father Junipero Serra and his faithful followers, brought to birth the spirit of California, and here in San Gabriel John Steven McGroarty has produced this immortal play which in no uncertain words embodies that spirit which tells so eloquently in song and romance our history and traditions, the echo of which will resound down through the ages."

CAST ENLARGED

The cast of the production has been enlarged and there are new stage effects in many of the scenes. The arrival of Don Gaspar's ship in the first act is signalized by the firing of a tiny cannon on its deck, as the miniature craft appears at the back of the stage in perspective during the fevered pleading of Fra Junipero.

The music this season is unusually effective, new numbers having been added. The dances are more vivid in their picturesqueness than ever, and seemed doubly so last evening because of the zest with which the company entered into the performance.

The most distinct success was, of course, that achieved by R. D. MacLean, for his interpretation of the role of Fra Junipero. His acting in the climaxing scenes was particularly vigorous and splendid. Altogether it was a strikingly interesting interpretation.

Violet Schramm again played Senora Josefa Yorbe, and displayed sensitive taste in her work as this member of an aristocratic Spanish California family.

Many of the others achieved unusually fine performances, and the staging and ensemble in the fiesta scene were splendid.

OPENING MARKS REAL TRIUMPH

Business Men Gave Service to Mission Play

Notable Success Rewards Unceasing Labor

Property Will Eventually Revert to State

The premier performance of John Steven McGroarty's Mission Play at the new Mission Playhouse last night was brought about in an energetic movement fostered by the Chamber of Commerce.



W. I. HOLLINGSWORTH

The members of the board of fifteen directors are among the most substantial business men of Southern California and the board elected for its active officers W. I. Hollingsworth as president, D. W. Pontius, executive vice-president; George I. Cochran, vice-president and treasurer, and Samuel K. Rindge vice-president and secretary. The following active officers were then selected by the board as an executive committee: Hollingsworth, Cochran, Rindge and Pontius.

These four men have worked unceasingly for the past five months in



D. W. PONTIUS

raising the necessary funds and completing an unfinished building that was under construction by the former owners of the Mission Play and the property and playhouse now stand as one of the most magnificent theatrical buildings, with its surroundings, on the Pacific Coast. The building will eventually become the property of California. No profit will go to any corporation or individual and any profit made will be used to rehabilitate old landmarks and missions in California in which no religious services are held. Mr. McGroarty has given the entire rights of the play to California.

Great numbers of Southern California citizens have freely subscribed to the fund and the playhouse, together with the land and equipment, represents an expenditure in excess of \$700,000.

As quickly as plans can be carried out, the entire property will be parked and an Indian village will be established adjoining the Mission.

The Mission Play portrays the early history of California and it is worth the time of those living here to see it and one visiting Los Angeles cannot really feel that he has seen Southern California without seeing the Mission Play.

Other officers and directors of the corporation are E. L. Doheny, Harry Chandler, Benjamin F. Bledsoe,



GEORGE I. COCHRAN



SAMUEL K. RINGE

John S. McGroarty is production manager; Norman Sprowl, business manager, and A. Pardoe, assistant secretary-auditor.