

... Again At The ... Opera House, The New Little Theater Reaches P

Little Theater of Jamestown will reach a new peak, by ending its 32nd season in new, ultra-modern, spacious facilities in the totally renovated old Shea's Theater building.

House lights have dimmed hundreds of times since the summer night at the Chautauqua Golf Club in 1936, when members of the old Players Club pooled their resources to establish Little Theater.

Delving back in to its theatrical lineage, we find a continuous story of hometown talent creating a theatrical saga few towns can boast.

Glancing back through the kaleidoscope of theater years, old records date LT's forefathers to 1894 when the venerable old Shakespearean Avon Club at Jamestown High School was formed by the late Mary Willard. Elizabethan plumed knights and gracious ladies stepped from the classic pages of the Old Bard's plays, and eager youths read his immortal lines at JHS for 22 years. When Miss Willard retired in 1916, the club disbanded, a distinct tribute to her outstanding tutelage.

It was war time in 1916, and the rumbling of drums in Europe during World War I stirred the patriotic fever of Americans. Efforts were mainly diverted to wartime channels and the entertainment field was far less well organized. Activities dropped off during this period.

In 1920, the Players Club was organized, largely through the enthusiastic efforts of Mrs. Harvey M. Osgood, who again in 1936 was a main spring for the creation of Little Theater. The garage gymnasium at Mrs. Osgood's parent's home, (the late Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus E. Jones), on Fairmount Avenue, was a mecca for Players Club rehearsals and memorable outdoor performances.

Many will recall the post-

war interest shown in theater here when residents, released from the tensions of war, readily turned to the bright lights and tinsel world for release.

The Players Club had averaged 500 members per season. In 1945, Little Theater of Jamestown tabulated one of the highest amateur theater memberships in the nation with 5,400. Memberships are expected to break that record in the new theater.

When the theatrical touch was needed through the years, this versatile group stood ready to cooperate and has played a vital role in whetting the community's appetite for entertainment.

In reviewing LT's past, the names of such prominent directors as Mr. and Mrs. George E. Warren, Melvin E. Berg, George T. Bolton, Sam Wren, and Paul Weinbach, come quickly to mind. Each made a special contribution to theater here, developing use of the old LT workshop at 414 Fairmount Ave., which was sold for \$80,000 last year as part of the organization's move to East Second Street. That property is now on the tax rolls as a service station.

In conjunction with the workshop, where expansion plans failed to materialize, LT productions were held primarily at the Scottish Rite Temple auditorium, Fourth and Prendergast. The groups close a long association next week when the current play, "Spoon River Anthology," closes there Sunday, Feb. 23.

Little Theater anticipates opening at its new quarters in April.

Thousands of Jamestown and area theater-goers have thrilled to live theatrical presentations here for nearly three quarters of a century. We can now look forward to thousands more good productions and more members at the new revitalized theater.