



## *De's Dazzles – A Haunting We Will Go!*

A common question on tours – *Do you have ghosts?* – or some form of that. *Have you seen or heard a ghost?* So I will share Corning Opera House and theater tales! You decide if they are Tall Ghostly Tales or not!

Theatrical folk are superstitious! According to early theater days (1700-1800s), it is bad luck for an actor to whistle on or off stage! In the early days of theater, original stagehands were hired from sailing ships. The sailors were used to climbing the ropes and their skills were needed on adjusting theatrical rigging. Sailors used coded whistles to move the sails, therefore if you whistled on stage, the stagehand took that as his cue to lower a set piece from the rigging. If done at the wrong time this could result in injury or death. Today's stagehands use intercoms or light signals. Just remember don't whistle!

Then there are ghost lights! A single bulb is left on stage whenever a theater is dark. Some say it is to chase away mischievous spirits, others say it keeps the ghosts contented. But most likely it is for safety, no one wants to tumble off the front of a stage. Or items on a stage are always moving, today it may be set up like a kitchen, tomorrow it could be a band, the next day it could look like a saloon. In that case, lights are left on so you can easily find your way around. What do you think, for ghosts or safety?

The first year we opened, paranormal hunters set up in the opera house. They determined we had a friendly ghost that wished people a happy birthday! The tape sounded kind of garbled to me. Otherwise, it was quiet for the ghost hunters. Have you had the Corning Opera House ghosts wish you a happy birthday?

An interesting fact that most people don't know was recorded in the Adams County Free Press on September 7, 1933, where the headline read "FC Reese dropped Dead While At Work". The article goes on to say "FC Reese, age 70 dropped dead in the basement...." Now FC Reese was the entrepreneur who had the vision to build the opera house on the old First National Bank foundation – the only thing that remained after the great Corning fire! Amos Bulen called Mr. Reese to work on the installation of a new furnace because he knew the building extremely well. A. Gauthier, Mr. Bulen and Mr. Reese were all over the building during the day deciding where to put cold and hot air registers. The heart attack happened when FC went to the basement, and he crumpled to the ground without uttering a sound at 5:36 pm. Mr. Gauthier was upstairs preparing to leave for the day when he heard Amos yell, but within seconds FC Reese had died. The remainder of the article is FC Reese's obituary. Have you ever seen his ghost in the building?

I have been on theater tours that create friendly ghosts and ghost stories so they can sell more tickets for tours. For now, we will just keep wishing people a happy birthday and leave our ghost light on for you!

Sincerely,  
De Heaton,  
Executive Director  
10/3/2023