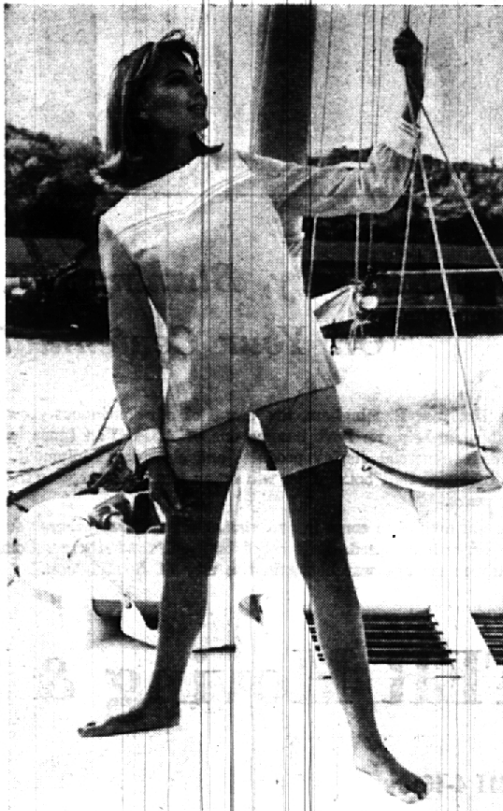


They Ran To 'Cover' In 1864



THEN . . .

Dress for the Seaside: There've Been Some Changes Made.



AND NOW . . .

Gas Buggies Changed Pace Set by Godey

By LAURENA PRINGLE
Special Writer

In 1864, fashion chitchat coming through from the Big Cities to smaller communities concerned itself with Andalusians and paletots, casquetes and arions, embroidery patterns for madeleines, and gimp styling for wraps.

In the millinery departments buff and salmon (shrimp to us) were the leading colors for trimming. The "Poche Pampadour" (it looked like a brace of saddlebags) was the top seller in ladies' totes. And hoops were getting wider.

Godey's Lady Book was the stylists' bible and not without an eye to practicality. In spring of 1864 it was promoting the fleecy-knitted petticoat. With wider hoops, these handmade garments came, and we quote, "highly recommended for wear under crinolines as they cling so nicely to the figure for warmth." And we can suppose that Michigan's springs were as capricious then as they are now and the good ladies of Birmingham got out their needles and whipped up a few red and white numbers.

THERE WAS GREAT emphasis on "occasion dressing" in those times. None of this just slipping into anything. You got out a something — a morning robe trimmed with fluting, a buff alpaca boating costume heavy enough to sink the ship, special outfits for "half-mourning," if there had been a bereavement in the family a year or so before, and, because costume balls were the Living End, everyone was on the lookout for something new in Grecian, gypsy or Turkish ensembles.

Those were the days when no one would, even if she could, walk into a shop and pick off the peg, as the English say. The girls stayed at home and whipped up a little basic in the evening. There was no television to distract them.

Or they snapped up their bolts of mousseline de soie and grenadine and walked around the corner to little Miss Sparrow who took in sewing.

THE COVERED-UP look was IN. Bare arms were only for evening wear. The swimsuits would overwhelm the sun worshippers at Oakland Hills as completely as the modern bikini would have given great-grandma an acute case of the vapors.

But before Birmingham was to reach her mid-century mark, there was in the making a mechanical monster that proved to be 20th Century fashion's most potent influence.

The girls needed shorter skirts to heist themselves into the motor car. No horseless carriages could (or can to this day) take three hoop-skirted girls in the back seat. Skirts became narrower and started their climb up milady's leg.

Veils that were mere wisps of fashion became solid protection for Nellie's whole hat, not just the bird thereon. And whoever needed a duster when Dobbin was doing the work.

The Henry Fords and Walter Chryslers did what Balenciaga and Dior swore up and down never was done: There is no revolution in fashion, only evolution."

Uproar Followed Film Fade-Out

Although Birmingham was a growing community by the turn of the century, the village did not get a movie theater until 1913 when the Family Theater was built.

Two Royal Oak men, Levenseler and Miller, decided to erect a modern building on the old Orrin Poppleton property at Woodward and Hamilton streets (then called Middle street).

At the same time, James F. Wooster, owner of the Birmingham Inn, decided to build a theater next to the hotel. Both were to be ready in a month.

WOOSTER, however, bought out Levenseler and Miller and all the rest of the Poppleton property, which extended south to the corner of Hamilton, and proceeded to build Birmingham's first "movin' picher show."

A contest was held for the name of the new theater and "The Family Theater" was selected. The building stood on the site of the old Birmingham Eccentric at Woodward between Oakland and Hamilton. Stock was sold for \$1 a share.

The theater opened on Feb. 12, 1913. It was completely fire-proof, with an asbestos roof and film booth. The vestibule was decorated in birch wood, while the interior was of black walnut.

Four ventilating fans and six electric fans kept fresh air circulating. A steam heating plant kept the 286-seat theater warm in winter.

OPENING NIGHT featured a minstrel show, 3-piece orchestra and songs to accompany the films. The theater was open every night and showed week end matinees. Regular admission was 10 cents. Ray Gravin played the piano for

all performances and Homer Leon managed the reels. From three to five films were shown nightly. The Family Theater served a long-felt need in the village, but it closed in the early Twenties and Birmingham went until 1928 before film-land returned.

By 1926, Birmingham residents

were ready for a modern moviehouse. But, a controversy arose as to the showing of Sunday movies. It almost led to a "Blue Law."

MINISTERS of the local churches vigorously protested Sunday shows and, when John H. Kunsky, of Kunsky Theatrical Enterprises,

agreed to build a \$200,000 show, petitions were circulated to resist the construction.

However, due to increased interest, the building was started on March 1, 1926. It replaced the old Whitehead home on the east side of south Woodward.

Scheduled to open in September, construction was halted when the issue became one of the hottest in Birmingham's history. Ministers called for a Sunday "Blue Law" and Kunsky threatened to leave.

The matter was decided on a ballot in March of 1927 when Birmingham, led by its womenfolk, decisively defeated the "Blue Law."

THE NEW Kunsky-Birmingham opened on March 21, 1928, at a cost of \$400,000. Opening night saw Woodward jammed for blocks with autos as 1,500 persons stayed until 11:30 p.m.

Tickets for that first night were as scarce as could be. Birmingham turned out in all its glory for the occasion. The Kunsky Theater is now the present Birmingham Theater.

Years later, Birmingham had its second "movin' picher show" when the Bloomfield Theater was built.

Lent His Assistance To Library Group

Through the kindness and assistance of Hugh Irving, local hardware dealer, the Ladies Library Association in 1881 was able to complete its arrangements for the addition on the old Library Hall which once stood on the corner of Merrill and Bates streets.

The addition was 16 by 25 feet, and was paid for by money raised from plays, parties and other entertainments.



OPENING NIGHT AT THE KUNSKY THEATER
All Birmingham turned out for the gala evening in 1928.