

Tulsa Spotlight Theatre – How It All Started

THE TULSA TRIBUNE, SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 1952

Tulsa Group Founds Club Of 'Creators'

Formation of the Tulsa Spotlight club, which will have quarters at 518½ S. Main st., was announced Friday by Karl Janssen, temporary chairman of the group.

Janssen, radio program director, said the membership will be open to all persons who are active in the seven fields of creative endeavor in Tulsa. These include dramatics, painting, music, writing, dancing, radio and television.

Purposes of the club, Janssen said, will be to foster a better understanding among the various creative arts in the city; to encourage the continued progress of the arts commensurate with the growth of the city; to promote a better understanding by the citizens of Tulsa of the arts and artists and to promote greater participation in the arts.

At a recent meeting 20 representatives from various organizations completed preliminary plans for the club. An initiation fee of \$25 was set up. The monthly membership dues will be \$1.

Formal opening of the club is planned in mid-September. The date will be set following a meeting next Tuesday night.

The club quarters will be at the present Mike's restaurant. Lunches will be served to the public as in the past, but after 5 p. m. the quarters will be open to club members only. Mike Badeen, a former vaudeville performer, who owns the restaurants, will act as catering manager for the club.

A standards committee was chosen to establish membership rules in the various fields. Committee members are Richard Mansfield Dickinson, Martin Weisendanger, Mary Hoagland, Mrs. B. Paul Thompson, Mrs. Carl H. Jacobsen and Gerald L. Johnson.

Why is there no mention of *The Drunkard* and the Olio in this news article? Why was the Spotlight location different than today?

The idea for performances came almost a year after the club formed. Richard Mansfield Dickinson, Tulsa's leading thespian and a club founder, returned from a visit to California. We don't know but we assume he saw a performance of *Ten Nights In A Barroom And What I Saw There*. The play was royalty-free. Dickinson proposed to adapt the play (specifically, to shorten it considerably) and put on a single performance at his home on Riverside Drive – what is today the Tulsa Spotlight Theatre. That took place Nov. 14, 1953 and never stopped. Just for the record – the SECOND performance was the following Friday, and THEN began the endless series of Saturday shows.

More evidence of the fact that the "club" was originally a social affair can be seen on the next page in the program dated Nov. 7, 1952 – a year and a week before the first performance of *The Drunkard*. There was a Thanksgiving-themed dinner and a mix of entertainment. Also, the club members ordered a bingo set from the Bingo King company in Littleton, Co. The set was delivered to the address cited in the news article: 518 ½ S. Main, Badeen's Restaurant.

You wouldn't buy bingo cards if you planned to perform a play every Saturday for the next 60 years. As it turns out though, the Spotlighters make use of that same Bingo set at our social events. The bingo cards are a more original artifact of the Spotlighters than the theatre itself is!



Program

GRAND OPENING

November 7, 1952

T U L S A S P O T L I G H T C L U B

Menu

Green Salad

Baked Turkey With Dressing

Green Peas

Candied Yams

Giblet Gravy

Cranberry Sauce

Hot Rolls

Pumpkin Pie with Whipped Cream

Coffee

On May 10, 2014 Dorothy McFadden performed at the Spotlight as a "Surprise Celebrity." She was 99!

Program

Richard Mansfield Dickinson.....*Master of Ceremonies*

Gerald L. Johnson.....*President, Tulsa Spotlight Club*

Mr. and Mrs. William Bender.....*Musical Comedy Vocal Selections*
Ed Noble.....*Accompanist*

Marguerite Bailey, Suzanne Morrow
and Jean Bleakley.....*Dance Selections from Rio Rita*
Jerry Green.....*Accompanist*

Virginia Banfield Thompson, Richard Cook
and Karl Janssen.....*"Ring on Her Finger"*
One Act Comedy

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Sassano.....*Operatic Selections*
Dorothy McFadden.....*Accompanist*

Suzanne Morrow.....*Ballet*

Following the program there will be dancing to the music of Honey Hudgens and her Combo.