

Stage, Screen and Circuses

After a hard day's work, toiling in the factories, selling their wares or driving carts and carriages, our ancestors needed some form of relaxation. It might be sitting by the fireside, talking with their families about how their days had gone, but sometimes other diversions were needed. Whether they visited the Music Halls, listened to the radio or maybe the circus had come to the nearest town, it did mean that entertainment was available from outside of the family home.

Maybe your ancestors were the ones providing the entertainment! I wonder how they stepped into that world from whatever background that had been born into. Whichever of the performing arts they ventured into, theirs will be a fascinating story.

What did they do?

Maybe they travelled from town to town; maybe they sought the bright lights of the big cities. Here is a miscellany of some of the occupations that you might come across:

Book Boy - Turned the pages of the large book of music for the conductor when indicated. He also kept the library of books in order, handed out the music to the performers and collected them after the show.

Fireman - In charge of fire extinguishing apparatus in theatres, music halls, etc.; made periodic tests of all water hydrants; had to be in attendance at all public performances and was responsible for keeping exits clear.

Key Grip - The person in a film crew who was – and still is today - in charge of the camera equipment.

Prestidigitator – Magician

Sprechstallmeister – Circus Ringmaster

Vedettes - Female singers and entertainers skilled in Latin styles of singing and/or dancing and/or acting.

Please be aware that this is just a small list of occupations that your ancestors from the field of entertainment might have done. You will probably find a lot more!

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If you have a question about your Stage, Screen or Circus ancestors, we have a forum where you can post those queries. Register for FREE at <http://www.genealogy-specialists.com/> and tell us about the ancestor that you are researching. The members will do their best to help you.

If you would like to discover more about your ancestors from Stage, Screen or Circuses, whether in front of the audience or behind the scenes, the types of work that they did or want to know more about their lives, listed below are some products that will certainly help you - and all of them are available from [www.parishchest.com](http://www.parishchest.com). Just pop the reference number in the website search box to see the details:

John Wilton's Music Hall: The Handsomest Room in Town Ref: IHP-8831

My Ancestor Worked in the Theatre Ref: SR-MY15

Savoy Hill Ref: IHP-4682

The First Oasthouse Theatre in the World (Book) Ref: KFHS-3719

Many more products are also available from Parish Chest that would be specific to the area that you are researching. Use the website search box to pop in key words such as **Theatre**. You never know what you might find!