

'TOBY THE REDHEAD' LEAVES STAGE LEGEND AS LEGACY TO LAUGHTER

Footlights Dimmed Last Time for L. Verne Slout Vermontville Opera House Silent Monument to Gifted Native Son, Dead at 61

(Special to The State Journal)

VERMONTVILLE, April 13 — Death unexpectedly rang down the final curtain on L. Verne Slout Tuesday night and with it brought to an end his character "Toby," whose red wig and antics endeared him to a generation of theatergoers.

Mr. Slout, who for 32 years lived the boards of the old Opera House here, died at 10:30 p. m. at the home, 250 S. Main st., following a heart attack suffered an hour earlier. The body is at the Otto funeral home.

The old Opera House built the year he was born here—1893—was once the scene of almost constant activity when Verne and vaudeville were in their prime.

TOURED NATION

The 61-year-old Vermontville actor began his career in 1919 when he began working in troupes around the country. In 1921, he returned to Vermontville, his home town, to stage his first show. In 1930, at the owner of Michigan's only tent show, Verne with his four trucks, van and two trail-

ers, began his final tour, at least he said it was.

In 1953 the boards of the old Opera House, became the scene of his last performance and with the closing curtain he stored his red wig away and retired.

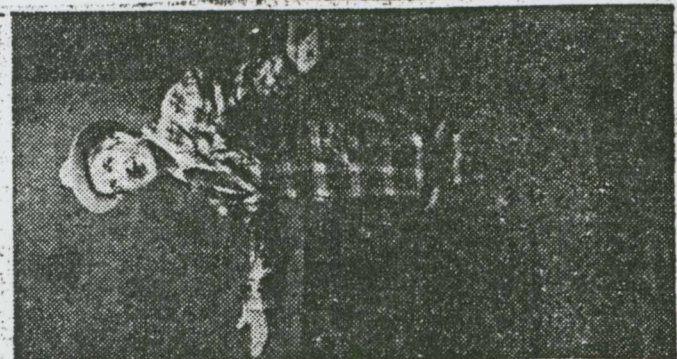
He was always to his fans the unpredictable, red-headed Toby, whose act was interrupted for asides to the audience, greetings to late comers and sudden comments about his own lines.

It was corn, Verne always maintained, but his audience loved it and he gave them what they wanted.

ASSISTED BY WIFE

In the parlance of show business, Verne wasn't a single. Throughout most of his career, he worked out his acts with his wife, Ora, who was "Orrie" to her audiences.

The former Ora Ackley, she joined the Slout troupe in 1936 after spending several years with musical comedies in the west. She had been prima donna of "The Sweetheart Company" and had done radio work. When not playing op-



MR. SLOUT AS TOBY

L. VERNE SLOUT