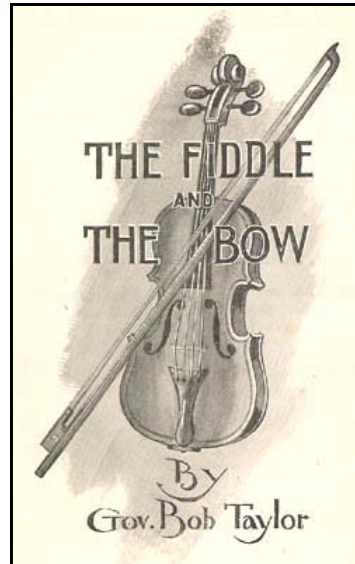
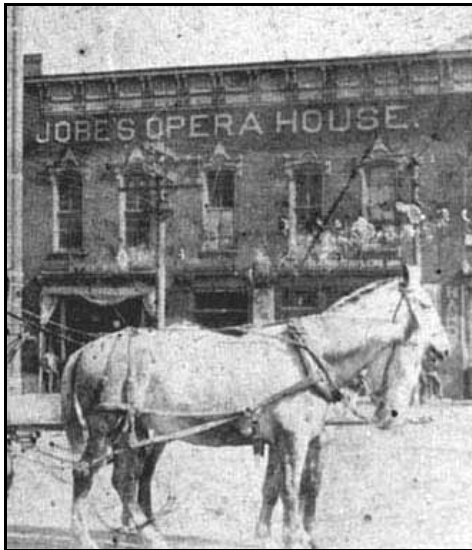


## *The “Fiddle and the Bow” Opens to Packed House in Johnson City*

The “Fiddle and the Bow” had its first professional appearance on **December 29, 1891** at **Jobe’s Opera House** in Johnson City. Jobe’s Hall was packed at 50 and 75 cents a head, and a large crowd was turned away. **It was a \$350 house!**



The following article appeared in the *Johnson City Comet* the following morning giving a review of the show:

**Ex-Governor Taylor** opened his great Southern lecture tour in Jobe’s Opera House last night under most auspicious circumstances. The occasion had been looked forward to with great interest, and none were disappointed. At the hour for the opening, the opera house was crowded to its utmost capacity with the representative intelligence and culture of the city and surrounding country. Delegations came in from all the surrounding towns, anxious to hear the magnetic orator whose wit and humor had charmed and delighted them many times in the hard-fought battles with his shrewd competitors in the political world.

That Mr. Taylor is one of nature’s most congenial humorists was evinced in the outset of his political career. But in those contests his ability for the lecture was not fully appreciated. He impressed the people with his clever

jokes as a comedian. They saw him as a clown in the political circus, **where the ridiculous often counts for more than profound argument.**

**But in the “Fiddle and the Bow” Mr. Taylor is seen in a different light.** He shows himself to be master of more than the comedian’s fun. Every phase of his magnanimous character blazed out in his wonderful picture of human life. Wit, humor and pathos are blended like so many lights and shadows, coming and going in rhythmical succession across the great arena of human action. He is not alone in his splendid and pleasing oratory, music of his poetical tenor, but is equally so in his **merits as an actor.** His facial expression and manner on the stage impressed his audience that the invisible gods of genius had anointed him for the stage before his young intellect was capable of measuring objective things.

Mr. Taylor was introduced by Mr. Robert Burrow, one of his old political associates. The lecture was a magnificent portrayal of the various human experiences. Both the funny and serious sides of life were pictured, and though the whole melody of the sweetest music ran. He pictured the many scenes of rural life – the old country singing master, courtship and marriage, the song of the disappointed lover, country school life, the old-field school exhibition, the old fashioned quilting.

The lecturer made some of the most beautiful and sublime flights of oratory it had ever been our pleasure to hear. It is with peculiar pride that we view his recognition of the people among whom he was born and raised by **first favoring them with a rendition of that magnificent portrayal of human life,** which he has polished with the graceful flourishes of rhetoric, and into which he has breathed the sweetest and purest sentiment of the soul.

#### **Postscript:**

Tour after tour was made with **“The Fiddle and the Bow”** until the lecture had been heard in every section of the United States. The records kept by Bob Taylor’s manager indicated that \$75,000 was taken in as admission fees for this one lecture series, a huge sum of money for that time. It was Bob’s greatest and most popular lecture and it is hard today to capture exactly the full nature of the **most charismatic politician in Tennessee history.**

Robert L. Taylor combined the best of comedy, drama, storytelling, song, and overall musicianship into both his political campaigns and lecture circuit. Democrats in Tennessee knew nominating Bob Taylor was basically a guaranteed victory and he was brought back from his national lecture tours to serve a third term as Governor just in time for the Tennessee Centennial Exhibition (World's Fair) in Nashville in 1897. Later an author and lecturer, Bob Taylor was serving in the U.S. Senate when he died in 1912 and over 40,000 people turned out as his funeral cortege proceeded through Knoxville to his original burial spot at Old Gray Cemetery. Bob Taylor's casket was later exhumed and re-interred at the Monte Vista Cemetery in Johnson City in 1938.

Robert L. as well as his brother Alfred (Alf) were two of the incredibly fascinating political leaders that helped shape Johnson City Tennessee and the surrounding region during the city's formative years of 1880– 1910.

