

Today in Columbus History:

On January 13, 1876, an advertisement appeared in the *Columbus Daily Times* for a show entitled "Col. Mulberry Sellers" starring the renowned John T. Raymond and under the management of John T. Ford. The show was part of Ford's Southern Tour in 1875 and 1876 that included the Saulsbury Troubadours and Edwin Booth, as seen in another advertisement from October 26, 1875, prior to the tours run.

The show was based on the 1873 book *The Gilded Age* by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in which Colonel Sellers is a character. Raymond was associated with the role for many years. Twain based the character on his cousin, James Lampton. However, Twain disputes the notion that he created the character, claiming that he only put him down on paper as he was in real life.

Twain remarked on Raymond's performance as Colonel Sellers in his autobiography. He said, "Raymond was great in humorous portrayal only. In that he was superb, he was wonderful -- in a word, great; in all things else he was a pigmy of the pigmies." To Twain, Colonel Sellers was more than a character, he was the cousin beloved by friends and family. He went on describing the actor, "Raymond was not a manly man, he was not an honorable man nor an honest one, he was empty and selfish and vulgar and ignorant and silly, and there was a vacancy in him where his heart should have been."

The phrase "There's millions in it" or just "millions in it" appears in both advertisements for the show. Colonel Sellers does not utter that phrase in the book. Instead, another character in the story Silas Hawkins says it, referring to a parcel of land that supposedly contains iron ore. The phrase, however, has Georgia origins. According to the New Georgia Encyclopedia, it originated with M. F. Stephenson, assayer of the Dahlonega Mint, on the steps of the Dahlonega Courthouse. In an impassioned speech trying to convince North Georgia goldminers not to leave for California, he pointed to Findley Ridge saying, "There's millions in it." The Digital Library of Georgia article on the Dahlonega Gold Rush ("Thars Gold in Them Thar Hills, Georgia Gold History") says that the miners took the phrase with them to California where Twain picked it up.

Colonel Sellers reappears in Twain's book *The American Claimant* published in 1892 and so does that phrase. In this book, Washington Hawkins, the son of Silas says, "Colonel -- if the half of this is true, there's millions in it -- millions." In response to one of the Colonel's schemes.

Raymond returned to Columbus on January 10, 1880 to play Ichabod Crane in the show *Wolfert's Roost*, that tells the story of the Legend of Sleepy Hollow. An article published in the *Enquirer-Sun* prior to the show mentioned Raymond's previous visit as Colonel Sellers. Raymond appeared a third time at the Springer on February 22, 1887 as Samuel Bundy in "The Woman Hater."

Raymond was born in New York in 1836 as John O'Brien. He died in on April 10, 1887, in Evansville, Indiana, just a few weeks after his last appearance in Columbus. He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York. The *Columbus Enquirer-Sun* announced his death on April 12 and ran an article on his career from the *Savannah News* on April 14.

Unfortunately, Raymond did not make the cut among the actors who graced the Springer Opera House stage in the book *In Order of Appearance* by F. Clason Kyle. However, another member of John T. Ford's Southern Tour did. Edwin Booth made it for his February 15, 1876 appearance in Columbus. You may

remember Ford as the man who owned Ford's Theater in Washington, DC. That is, until the government confiscated it after Edwin's brother John Wilkes assassinated Abraham Lincoln there.

Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.

Springer's Opera House.
"Col. Mulberry Sellers."
"There's Millions In It."

MR. JOHN T. FORD has much pleasure in announcing, under his management, an engagement, for one evening, with the eminent American comedian,

MR. JOHN T. RAYMOND

who will appear in this city supported by a

Special Dramatic Company,
On Tuesday, January 18th,

The scale of prices will be the same as those of the standard New York theatres.

Secured places.....\$1.50

Admission—One dollar; Gallery seventy-five cents. The sale of seats will commence on Friday, January 14th, at Chaffin's Book Store.

jan12-6t

Advertisement for the "Col. Mulberry Sellers" show at the Springer Opera House from the Daily Columbus Times, January 13, 1876, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

AMUSEMENTS.

SOUTHERN TOUR!
1875-6,

Under the management of **JOHN T. FORD**, of Baltimore and Washington.

Saulsbury's Troubadours,
(American Vokes.)
JOHN T. RAYMOND,
("Millions in it.")
And
EDWIN BOOTH.

Mr. Ford has the honor to introduce to the citizens of Columbus on
WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY,
October 27th and 28th,
Salsbury's Troubadours,
in their comic absurdity, embodying the attractive elements of **COMIC OPERA**, entitled
PATCHWORK!

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Advertisement for the "Southern Tour" under the management of John T. Ford from the Daily Columbus Enquirer-Sun, October 26, 1875, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

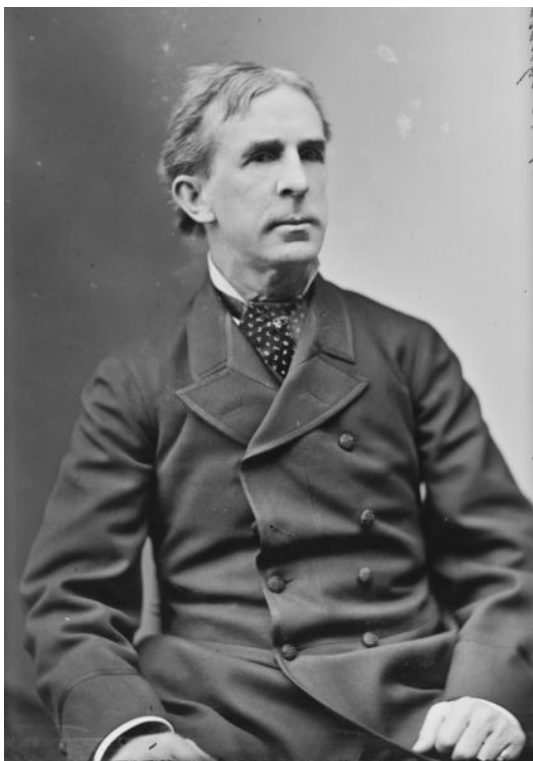


Photo of John T. (O'Brien) Raymond from FindAGrave.com



Photo of John T. Raymond (as Colonel Mulberry Sellers) and Mark Twain from www.twainquotes.com/ColonelSellers.html

JOHN T. RAYMOND died at Evansville, Ind., Sunday. The American stage loses one of its "bright particular stars," and next to Jefferson, the most popular comedian of this generation. It is safe to say no actor of equal merit will follow him in the roles he had just laid down. It would be rash folly for any man to attempt "Colonel Sellers" before people who had seen Raymond, and the same may be said of several other characters.

Article on the death of John T. Raymond from the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun* April 12, 1887, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

RAYMOND'S EARLY LIFE.

Reminiscences of "Colonel Mulberry Sellers."

Savannah News.

John T. Raymond, whose death was announced by telegraph to the Morning News yesterday, was well known in Savannah, and had many friends here. Many a night has he entertained the Savannah public, and there was general regret at the news of his death. His last appearance in this city was scarcely two months ago, when he was seen in "A Woman Hater" and "Col. Mulberry Sellers." The latter was his most popular play, and he was most widely known through that piece.

In 1865 or 1866 Mr. Raymond, in connection with Theodore Hamilton, made an unsuccessful effort to establish himself in this city. It was in the days before traveling companies had come in vogue, and theatres were kept open the entire season by a "stock" company, which, in the absence of stars, undertook any role from Richard, Hamlet or Macbeth to the lightest or most whimsical farce. It was not infrequent that the bill for the evening consisted entirely of three or four one-act

Part of a lengthy article reflecting on John T. Raymond's career reprinted from *Savannah News* and appearing in the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, April 14, 1887, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.