

# Dubinsky Brothers

Entertainers

Maurice (1882-1929); Edward (circa 1886-1960); Barney (1892-1949)

by Daniel Coleman

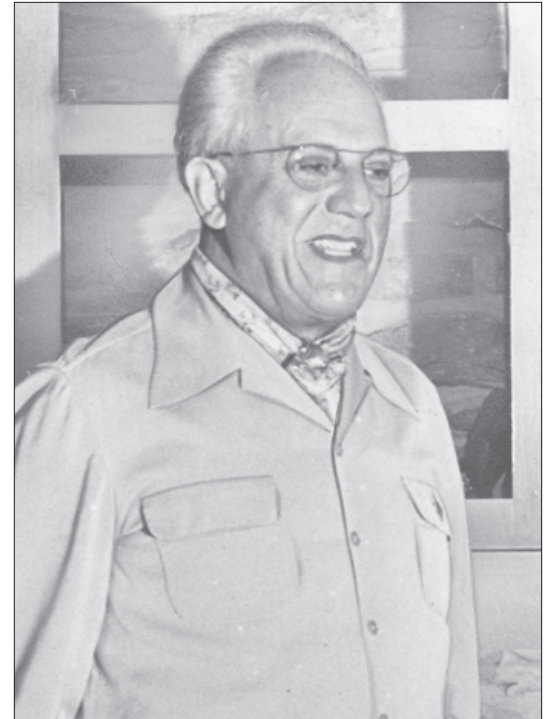
Kansas City's Dubinsky Brothers were talented performers and innovative entrepreneurs. Their story illustrates the changing trends of popular entertainment in twentieth-century America. Maurice, Edward, and Barney Dubinsky would move from a life of traveling tent shows to the silver screen, building one of Kansas City's largest companies along the way, and spawning the career of a Broadway legend.

The children of Simon Dubinsky and Sarah Schoop Dubinsky, the Dubinsky Brothers spent a portion of their early years in Rock Island, Illinois. Maurice was the oldest, born in Pennsylvania in 1882, followed by middle brother Edward, born in Rock Island. Barney was the youngest, born November 11, 1892.

Around 1906, Maurice, Edward, and Barney began traveling the Midwest, performing melodramas and their own versions of contemporary Broadway successes. Over the next ten years their tent shows would pass through Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Texas, offering small theatrical productions of larger, big city shows like "The Virginian" and "The Squaw Man."

The flamboyant "Handsome Ed," featured in the photo at right, played the lead masculine roles, while Maurice played the villain or "heavy." Younger Barney played lighter parts and juvenile characters in the plays. One heroine, or "damsel in distress" among the cast was another Kansas Citian, Jeanne Eagels, who began her acting career traveling with the Dubinskys. In the 1920s she would surface as one of the country's biggest Broadway stars, achieving iconic status for her performances as the heroine of Somerset Maugham's "Rain."

Life on the road eventually became tiring for the brothers, and in 1920 they decided to concentrate on a more stationary entertainment venue: the movies. They bought a Kansas City movie house called the Regent Theater, and a decade later the brothers were at the helm of one of the largest theater chains in the



Midwest. By 1932 their company owned 40 theaters throughout Missouri and Kansas.

Maurice Dubinsky died August 25, 1929. In 1936, Barney Dubinsky was seriously injured in an automobile accident, and retired from the movie business. He died July 18, 1949. Edward Dubinsky, who had changed his surname to Durwood, died March 23, 1960, at the helm of Durwood Theaters, Inc., which had screens in Kansas City, Jefferson City, St. Joseph, and Leavenworth.

Edward Dubinsky's son, Stan Durwood, took over this company upon his father's death, and in the subsequent decades built it into AMC Entertainment, now the second largest movie house in North America. In July 2004, AMC Entertainment operated 218 theaters in the United States and Canada, as well as 14 locations in six additional countries.

The Dubinsky Brothers, who began as players in primitive rural tent shows, now influence popular entertainment on a global scale.

### **Sources**

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