



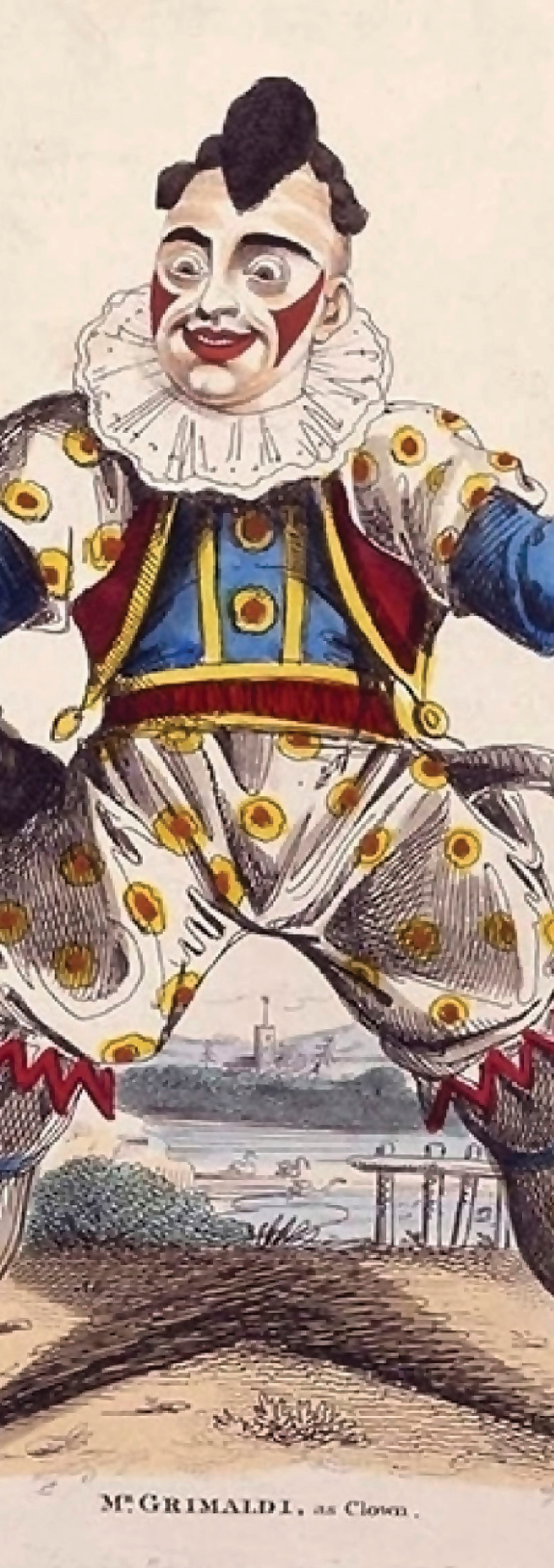
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THE CLOWN TRAIL LONDON



This trail follows the life of Joe Grimaldi, acknowledged to be the father of modern clowning. He created the colourful clothes, white face, red lips, and red nose of a clown. Joe was born into a theatrical family, his father, grandfather, and great grandfather were all theatre performers. Joe was born on the 18th December 1778 and died in 1837.



M^r. GRIMALDI, as Clown.



01 CLARE MARKET

Joe was born in a house in Stanhope Street, Clare Market which is near the present-day Aldwych. Stanhope Street no longer exists.

02 SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE

This is where Joe Grimaldi made his stage debut at the age of two. The theatre that Joe knew was the second theatre on the site, not the present-day building. It was here that he had an unfortunate accident that could have ended his career. He was playing the part of a monkey and being swung around his father's head attached by a chain when the chain broke. Joe was propelled into the orchestra pit but fortunately was uninjured. Joe often played the part of monkeys and various fairy tale figures. By the age of four he was performing here as a dancer. In 1802 he appeared for the first time as the Clown character, Joey, with the white face, red cheeks, nose, and lips that we now recognise as a theatrical clown. In 1818 he became part owner of the theatre, and Assistant Manager in 1825. Joe gave his last performance at this theatre on March 17th 1828.



03 THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE

Joe regularly performed here and for many years at the Sadler's Wells Theatre on the same night, running between the two theatres. There is a bar in the theatre called the Joe Grimaldi Bar.

04 GREAT WILD STREET, ST GILES

At the age of ten Joe's father died and they could no longer afford to live in Clare Market, Holborn so moved to Great Wild Street in the less expensive St Giles area. He lived here until his marriage in 1799 to Maria Hughes who was the daughter of the owner of Sadler's Wells Theatre.



05 37 PENTONVILLE STREET, PENTONVILLE

Joe and Maria moved here in 1799. Sadly, his marriage to Maria was very short and tragic as Maria died in 1800 giving birth to their son who also died in childbirth. Joe subsequently married a dancer, Mary Bristow, in 1801.

In 1806 Joe bought a second home in Finchley where they lived between theatre seasons.



Image by kind permission of Covent Garden Theatre

06 COVENT GARDEN

In 1806 Joe joined Covent Garden Theatre, this picture of Joe is in the foyer.

This is where Joe had great success having created a new type of clown in the production of the pantomime Harlequin Mother Goose. As a clown he made fun of contemporary life and modern fashion. He made the role of the clown into a full character. Due to ill-health he stopped performing here in 1822.



07 56 EXMOUTH MARKET, ISLINGTON

Joe and Mary moved here in 1818, and lived here until 1828 when they moved to Woolwich. During this time Joe gave his last performance on the 27th June 1828 at the Drury Lane Theatre.



08 33 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, ISLINGTON

(now called Calshott Street) – Joe lived here after Mary's death in 1834 until his own death in 1837. He spent his last few years alone and suffered with depression and alcoholism. This building has now been demolished.

09 MYDDLETON'S HEAD PUBLIC HOUSE

In his final years Joe liked to drink with his friends at this public house which was close to the Sadler's Well Theatre. This pub no longer exists but in Arlington Way behind the theatre is the Harlequin Pub which has a framed copy of Joe's farewell speech on display.



10 ST JAMES' CHAPEL, PENTONVILLE ROAD

Joe's grave is in the courtyard of the deconsecrated chapel which is now known as Joseph Grimaldi Park.



11 CHARLES DICKENS

Before he died Joe wrote his memoirs and these were subsequently edited by Charles Dickens who had seen Joe perform in Rochester. The original autobiography was considered too long and not good enough for publication and Charles Dickens was contracted to edit and re-write. This version was published in 1838.

12 ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HACKNEY

(formally Holy Trinity Church) – A service is held here every year on the first Sunday in February to commemorate Joe's life. The service has been held since 1946 and the church has become known as 'The Clowns Church'. The Church is home to the Clown Egg Register, which is an archive of painted eggs which record individual clowns' personal make up designs as there is an unofficial rule that no two clowns should have the same markings.



We hope you have enjoyed following the life of Joe Grimaldi and his creation of the Clown character. We would be interested in any comments you may have about his life.

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