

JACK BENNY AND MARY LIVINGSTONE

During the Passover holiday of 1922, Jack Benny was appearing on the stage of the Orpheum Theatre in Vancouver, British Columbia, on a bill headlined by the Marx Brothers.

David and Esther Marks, distant relatives of the Marx boys, invited them to Friday night supper at their home at 1649 Nelson Street. Groucho, Chico and Harpo had other plans, but Zeppo, who had heard that there were two daughters in the Marks family, accepted the invitation, asking fellow performer Jack Benny to come along, promising a good Passover meal and “who knows what?” in the romance department.

When Zeppo and Jack arrived, they were greeted by David and Esther and their children, Ethel (Babe), age 16, Sadie, age 12, and Hilliard, 10.

“What did you bring me to meet these kids for?” Jack whispered to Zeppo. “Let’s get out of here.” And they left immediately after dinner.

Four years passed and Jack Benny was again playing an Orpheum Theatre, this one in Los Angeles, where the Marks family of Vancouver had moved a few years earlier. Sadie Marks had finished high school and taken a job selling hosiery at the May Company. Sister Babe, in town for a visit, took Sadie to the Orpheum to see Benny perform and they met him briefly after the show.

A romance began and, on Friday afternoon, January 14, 1927, Sadie Marks and Jack Benny were married in the Clayton Hotel in Waukegan, Illinois. Jack’s father and sister Florence and Sadie’s sister Babe were there, but not Sadie’s parents who were in California. After the ceremony, the newlyweds called her folks. Sadie’s mother said, “Your father and I wish you every happiness – but I don’t think it will work out!”

But it did. Sadie whose professional name became Mary Livingstone, and Jack, whose real name was Benjamin Kubelsky, were less than a month away from their 48th wedding anniversary when Jack died at the age of 80 on December 26, 1974.

(February is Jack Benny month on Those Were The Days.)