

The Speakership of the House--Its Powers and Its Prerogatives

Portraits of the Men Who Are Aspiring to Fill the Speaker's Chair at the Impending Session of the Nebraska Legislature



R. B. WINDHAM OF CASS COUNTY.



W. H. WILSON OF PAWNEE COUNTY.



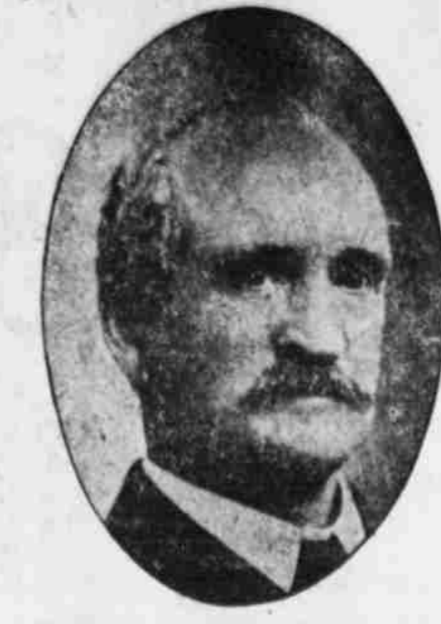
J. H. CASEBEER OF GAGE COUNTY.



E. B. PERRY OF FURNAS COUNTY.



JAMES A. DOUGLAS OF POLK COUNTY.



W. W. ROUSE OF HALL COUNTY.



N. D. JACKSON, ANTELOPE COUNTY.

COMPLY with your request to write something for The Illustrated Bee regarding "The Speakership of the House--Its Powers and Prerogatives, Its Trials and Tribulations." I do this in compliance with your request because from your newspaper standpoint it may, perhaps, at this time be somewhat of interest, and not because I think I can add much to what is generally known of the office, or because I am exactly qualified to write of it. When one has once occupied such a position I rather think it is true he is a trifle untried to look at it in the abstract, and is likely to apply to it his own personal experiences and conclusions as a sum total of its attributes.

Partiality to the House.
I am partial to the house as compared with the senate, for several reasons, one of which is that I have never been a member of the senate, while I have for two terms been a member of the house, and for one session its presiding officer. Were that not enough, I might add that the senate is so small a body, with so naturally good

an opinion of itself and dignities that as a rule it is easily managed by a presiding officer like my friend Harrison from Grand Island, and a few others; but over in the other end of the capitol building there is a glorious democracy that is self-asserting from all quarters, that adds interest to the body as a proposition, and refuses to be considered as of the routine or the humdrum. Unconsciously and without such intent, but as naturally as water tries to seek its level, gradually the import of the toga makes itself manifest in the bearing of the senator towards the humbler legislator of the house, while the feeling of the plebeian as surely manifests itself in return in ways of protest and determination not to be outdone in importance, and after the senate has sat down on house bills in one, two, three or four, while, as sometimes occurs, it is expressed in plain Anglo-Saxon on the floor of the house. This does not hurt the senate and it does relieve the house somewhat. Again, the house being the larger body to talk to, and containing a larger number of orators, the American habit of not weakness, but long haul, if such a term has aught of

definition in it when arrayed against weakness--public address is more indulged in, and, I believe, with greater power than in the senate as a whole. So, for these, and perhaps, other reasons, I am partial to the house.

Importance of the Office.
The speakership is the greatest office of the state during the session. The speaker is charged with naming the membership of the standing committees, some forty-four; and of referring bills and resolutions to the committees; of naming special committees; of assigning to members their right to the floor; of seeing that the house is called to order at the appointed time, and generally of seeing that the proceedings are orderly and properly conducted. Compared with the powers of either the lieutenant governor as presiding officer of the senate, or the president of the senate pro tempore, the powers of the speaker are more numerous and weighty and normally more impressive on the results of the session.

Generally speaking, no one should ask for or receive the speakership without experience as a member on the floor of the house at a former session. I do not say this intending in any manner to intrude the idea on the prospective organization. Neither would I say it but for the fact that I received the speakership during my first term. Before the session was through at which I held the office I so concluded, and so stated that I had made a mistake in asking for the office and receiving it. It is not a matter of fair knowledge of parliamentary practice, or having tact, even as a presiding officer. The speaker to these qualifications should add also a practical knowledge of the actualities of a session as a necessary and final requirement. He also should have a knowledge of the affairs of the state, and the affairs of a state of a million people are great beyond the ideas of the new member. As one out of the arena of politics, I desire to say that our people should keep their members who are useful longer in the legislative service. Perhaps the most useful members are those practical business

men who, by hard committee work and inquiry into the state's affairs, have understood the state's needs and are able to apply their business judgment. Our best lawyers, also, should be retained in the service to a greater extent than has been the habit.

Trials Many; Tribulations None.
The trials of the speakership are many; of its tribulations, there need be none. The membership of the house individually is good, of a good class of our people, meaning well for the state, and the majority and minority members looking out for an opportunity to make a record for themselves and their party and to spoil the record for the other side. At times that motive is given too much of a charge, and recs and hurts and has the opposite effect to what was intended.

As a rule the majority will stand by the speaker on party questions, be he right or wrong, and the minority will be ferocious with equal enthusiasm. The minority at times has been known to hold meetings and organize to make it hot for the speaker

and the majority, and the majority has responded with interest. This, of course, can have no relation to the coming session, which seems to be without a minority.

Most Important Duty.
One of the most trying duties that devolves on the speaker is to arrange the hundred members into the forty-four committees, so that each will bring to bear his best services to the session. The magnitude of this task can only be appreciated by one who has undertaken it. Another duty of some approximate idea by recalling the fact that the members are to a large extent unknown to each other till the time of organization, in performing this task the speaker must consider the party, business capacity, age, location, prior service, and many other questions that bear on not only each member, but also on the remaining members of the committee being filed, and also the fact of other committee service to which the member is being assigned.

Influence of the Speaker.
The position of the speaker is trying

in this, that he must have constantly in mind the fact that the session over which he presides will be one of usefulness or otherwise largely as he aids or hinders, as he acts independently for the best or surrenders himself to the lobby or vicious influences.

The relations of the presiding officer of the house are as a rule most pleasant and agreeable. A uniform courtesy is extended by the members and employes to the speaker. The speaker is consulted often by the governor and other state officers and persons interested in legislation. Altogether, the speakership of the Nebraska legislature is something that any member can rightfully look forward to as the culmination of a high and proper ambition, and in which, if attained, to be in a very large measure serve the interests of the more than 1,000,000 of our population, who are of the best of the world's population, and whose needs at this time require all of the tact, attainment and experience possessed by the perfect speaker.

W. G. SPANIS,
Speaker of the House, Twenty-Seventh Nebraska General Assembly.

South Omaha Public Library Ready to Move Into Its New Home

POSSIBLY there are few things which interest a reader more than the history of a movement that has succeeded. The smaller the beginning of a public enterprise the more honor and thanks should be given to the farseeing persons who think of it and are willing to work for it and enlist others in the cause.

With few exceptions the early history of a public library is the same in every city. Sixteen years ago, in the spring of 1889, when A. M. Winebrenner came to South Omaha with a proposition to establish a subscription library, he met the same problems and faced the same difficulties that a pioneer in any field must always overcome.

The outlook for a library was dubious, but Mr. Winebrenner talked with the representative men of the place and they encouraged him, some of them giving donations of books. E. C. Lane, so long and so well known as a prominent lawyer of South Omaha, interested himself especially in the library, and William C. Sloane, who was for many years mayor and one of the ablest business men of the city, did all he could toward establishing the library which formed the embryo of the present public library.

Mr. Winebrenner succeeded in establishing a library, which was maintained by a subscription, to be paid annually by each subscriber. When a person joined the association he was entitled to a membership ticket, and upon presentation of it at the library could draw books for home use. Several men and women, anxious that the library should succeed, took a number of shares in the association, although the fee of \$2 gave all the privileges of the library. It was understood, however, that if the library for any reason should fail the stockholders could recover the volumes purchased by their money. Selection of books was made by the members of the association, and the volumes were secured through Mr. Winebrenner.

First Home of Library.
The matter of a home for the library now became a question of some moment, as there was no money available to pay rent for a library room. B. F. Johnson, who was at that time in the drug business at the corner of N. and Twenty-fifth street, offered shelf room in his store, and agreed to care for the books and act as librarian. His offer was accepted and May 22, 1889, when the 20 volumes--the first purchase of the library association--arrived, they were given over into Mr. Johnson's care. He decided to leave South Omaha a few months later, however, making it necessary to find a new home for the books.

J. C. Collins, who had a music store on Twenty-fourth street, near N, was willing to shelve the books and they were taken there. For a long time Mr. Collins and his wife attended to the wants of the library patrons, both of them giving their services and the shelf room gratis. Considerable interest was taken in the project at this time and valuable additions were made to the book list by gift from various sources. As the work of caring for the books and serving the patrons increased, Miss Anna Glasgow assisted Mr. and Mrs.



BRUCE MCCULLOCH, PRESIDENT OF SOUTH OMAHA LIBRARY BOARD.

Collins in the work, also donating her services.

In the winter of 1894 the library was moved from Mr. Collins' store into a small office building owned by Dr. Glasgow, just north of the old postoffice. This room was kept open to the public from 6:30 to 10 p. m. on week days, and from 1 to 5:30 p. m. on Sundays. Just previous to this move the library association had been reorganized and a constitution adopted. Up to this time affairs had been managed by the stockholders and there was no special board of control. According to the constitution adopted at this time the library was to be managed by a board of trustees, six in number, to serve one, two and three years, two members being appointed for each of the terms respectively. The membership fee to this association was \$2 per year (changed January 23, 1895 to \$3) and members of the association had the privilege of taking books for home use, but the use of the reading room was free to all. The first board of trustees of this association was as follows: Prof. A. A. Munroe, president; Prof. W. J. Taylor, secretary; Miss Hattie Moore, treasurer; Mr. E. C. Lane, Mrs. Emma L. Talbot and Rev. H. J. McDevitt.

First Librarian in Charge.
May 27, 1894, the library was moved from the room rented from Dr. Glasgow to the building occupied by the Associated Charities, and for the first time some one was regularly employed to take charge of the library. George McBride was appointed librarian, and the library rooms were open from 3 to 6 p. m. and from 7:30 to 10 p. m.

The winter of 1895 found the library in bad shape financially; the fees from members of the association not being sufficient to carry on the work. The trustees decided to employ some one to canvass the

city for subscriptions. Mrs. Collins later signified her willingness to solicit funds for the library and \$150 was secured in this way. It was also deemed advisable to ask some of the societies of the city if they could not help the library cause. The King's Daughters responded to the request for help and donated \$50, the proceeds of an entertainment which they gave, and the women of the Women's Christian Temperance union also gave \$25 at this time, the receipt of a lecture by Fred Emerson Brooks. Not long after this the Associated Charities completed their work in South Omaha and the library trustees decided it would be best to look their books and not try to keep a reading room open during the summer.

In the autumn of 1895 the library board was called together by President Lane (the personnel of the board having changed slightly) who reported that the Board of Education of the public schools had granted the use of the Board of Education room to the library. It was decided to accept the offer of the school board; Prof. Munroe, superintendent of schools, was appointed librarian, and tab of book cases were given for the room. Mr. Paul McAuley made two neat cases for this purpose, and the books were moved to the Board of Education rooms at the high school building. Several of the high school instructors assisted Prof. Munroe in carrying out and attending to the wants of patrons during the school year, and some of the women members of the association kept the library open during the summer.

The little library, added to from time to time by gifts of books and donations of money, lived on through many vicissitudes, but there came a time when this course of culture and education was almost extinguished. The books remained at the High School building and for some months were kept in circulation, but the general public used them less and less, and finally they were stored and not used at all.

New Life for the Library.
There were changes on the library board, the president was called to rest, Prof. Munroe, Prof. Taylor and Rev. McDevitt left the city, only two of the trustees remained. It was decided by the two who were left (Mrs. Talbot and Miss Moore) to call a meeting through the papers to all interested in a public library. This meeting occurred November 24, 1899, and was convened at the home of Mrs. Emma L. Talbot, secretary of the board. Eight people responded to this call and they adjourned to a later date. On December 8, 1899, another meeting was held and a new board of trustees was made up as follows: Mrs. Josephine Carroll, Mr. James Hastings, Miss Hattie Moore, Mr. J. T. Nolan, Mrs. Emma L. Talbot and Mr. J. A. Beck. At a meeting of these trustees December 12, Mrs. Talbot was elected president, Miss Moore secretary and Mrs. Carroll, treasurer.

Shortly after the organization of this board Mr. J. F. McReynolds, proprietor of the Scott Stationery company on Twenty-fourth street, offered to house and take charge of the library free of cost. Mr. Mc-

Reynolds' offer was accepted and the books taken to the Scott store.

Carnegie Comes In.
By this time the name of Andrew Carnegie, in connection with library buildings, was becoming known. He had given an impetus to the library cause all over the world by donating library buildings to towns and cities. The trustees of the South Omaha library hoped to interest him in their needs and so enlisted the aid of Congressman David H. Mercer and the result of this effort is shown by the following letter, a reply to one written by Mr. Beck:

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 28, 1899--J. A. Beck, Esq., South Omaha: Friend Beck--Just before Christmas I wrote Andrew Carnegie at New York suggesting that if he was anxious to make a Christmas present to a good, live town he might place \$75,000 in South Omaha for a public library building. Mr. Carnegie and I have had correspondence heretofore with reference to the library which he donated to Washington, and knowing that he has been quite generous in the distribution of money for libraries throughout the United States I thought I might interest him in South Omaha. At this time in view of the fact that the city of Lincoln had lost its library by fire, he had concluded to present that city with \$25,000 for a building, and for the present that amount must do for Nebraska. In view of the fact that Lincoln is in the city of our state and the fact that I am sure that if it had not been for the fire at Lincoln the South Omaha would have gotten a nice Christmas present. Yours truly, DAVID H. MERCER.

The letter was a disappointment to the library board and the residents of South Omaha, although every one was glad such good fortune had come to Lincoln. Mr. Mercer did not give up the idea of a Carnegie library for South Omaha, and again communicated with Mr. Carnegie and received the following reply from his secretary:

SKIBO CASTLE, ARDAGY, N. B., June 25, 1901--Hon. David H. Mercer, Washington, D. C.: Dear Sir--Have consulted Mr. Carnegie about yours of April 3. On account of Mr. Carnegie having been traveling it could only now be taken up. If the city of South Omaha will furnish a suitable site and pledge itself by resolution of council to maintain the library at cost of not less than \$50,000 per year, Mr. Carnegie will provide \$50,000 for a free library building. The matter of architects and other details are left to the community to manage. Mr. Carnegie thinking that outside parties are not fit to do that if you will submit sketch of proposed building, however, to Mr. Anderson of the Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh, he will be glad to give his opinion on it.

Purchasing the Site.
The library board met on March 14, and decided to advertise for bids for a site for the building. On April 2 the bids were opened and the board took a recess and looked at several sites, and at the next

which will be greatly to your advantage. Very respectfully yours, JAMES BERTRAM, Private Secretary.

Arranging to Accept Gift.
In order to accept this gift it was necessary that the library board be organized under the state laws by the city council, and also conform to a new city charter which had recently been adopted. The state law provides for nine members on the board, who elect their president and secretary, the city treasurer being named in the ordinance creating the board, as its treasurer.

The library association conferred with the mayor, A. R. Kelly, in regard to the matter of a reorganization of their board and found him thoroughly in sympathy with the move to secure a library building for South Omaha. Conforming to plans considered with members of the Library association, the city council passed an ordinance creating a Board of Library Trustees, defining their duties and providing an annual appropriation of \$5,000 for the maintenance of the library. Mayor Kelly submitted to the city council the names of the four ladies acting in the directory of the old association, together with the names of five gentlemen selected and recommended by the four ladies. Later this board was confirmed by the council, and pursuant to the suggestion of Mayor Kelly, and effected a temporary organization. On March 19 the new board met again and proceeded to the election of officers for the permanent organization. The list of members of this first Board of Directors of the South Omaha public library was as follows: Bruce McCulloch, president; W. S. King, vice president; Mrs. Emma L. Talbot, secretary; Rev. D. W. Moriarty, Mrs. Josephine Carroll, Mrs. Ella M. Sloane, Rev. R. L. Wheeler and Dr. W. S. White. Rev. R. L. Wheeler declined to accept the appointment, and at an early council meeting the name of W. B. Cheek was presented by the mayor and confirmed and this gentleman thus took the place made vacant.

Accepting the Gift.
At a meeting of the trustees it was decided to purchase for \$3,500 from the Glasgow estate a plot of ground 70 by 50 feet on the northwest corner of Twenty-third and M streets, on which to erect the library.

Description of the Building.
The building as now completed is an artistic structure of buff Bedford stone, Romanesque in style, with Byzantine details. It has a frontage of seventy feet on M street, is two stories high, with a commodious basement.

The main floor is very convenient in its arrangement and complete in its equipment. To the left as one enters, is the reading room for adults. It is a spacious room, a wide grave and carved stone mantel lend beauty to it, while the plate windows, reaching to the floor and opening as doors on the front and side, afford excellent light. The children's room is to the right, and the main feature of this room are the same as the adult reading room. All the wood work on this floor is antique quarter-sawn oak, the paneled entrance, with its pillars at each side of the passage, giving a substantial as well as graceful finish to the interior. Tables, chairs, benches, book cases, etc., are all made of the same wood, and accord with the rest of the equipment in style and finish.

Directly in from the entrance, passing the delivery desk, one comes to the book room, which is fitted with metal stacking and has a capacity for 5,000 volumes. To the left of the delivery desk, just back of the adult reading room, is the librarian's office, fitted with appropriate furniture, a steel book lift from the unpacking room below being one of the convenient features. Opposite the librarian's room is a commodious store room, and off the passage leading to the children's room is a small toilet room, with lockers for the use of the librarian and her assistants. Two small reading rooms, one opening from the adult reading room, and

Start on the Building.
A committee on construction was selected by the library board and on April 16, 1902, Thomas R. Kimball of Omaha was employed as architect for the new library. Plans for the building were adopted and the construction was begun in June, 1902. Work progressed slowly, as great care is



MISS JANE ABBOTT, LIBRARIAN OF SOUTH OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY.

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These properties were accepted by the Library board with thanks, and it was decided to rent a library room and place the things received from the South Omaha Library association in it, and hold future meetings there. Two rooms in the Murphy block on Twenty-fourth street were secured and the books taken to them shortly thereafter.

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necessary in the erection of a thoroughly fireproof stone building.

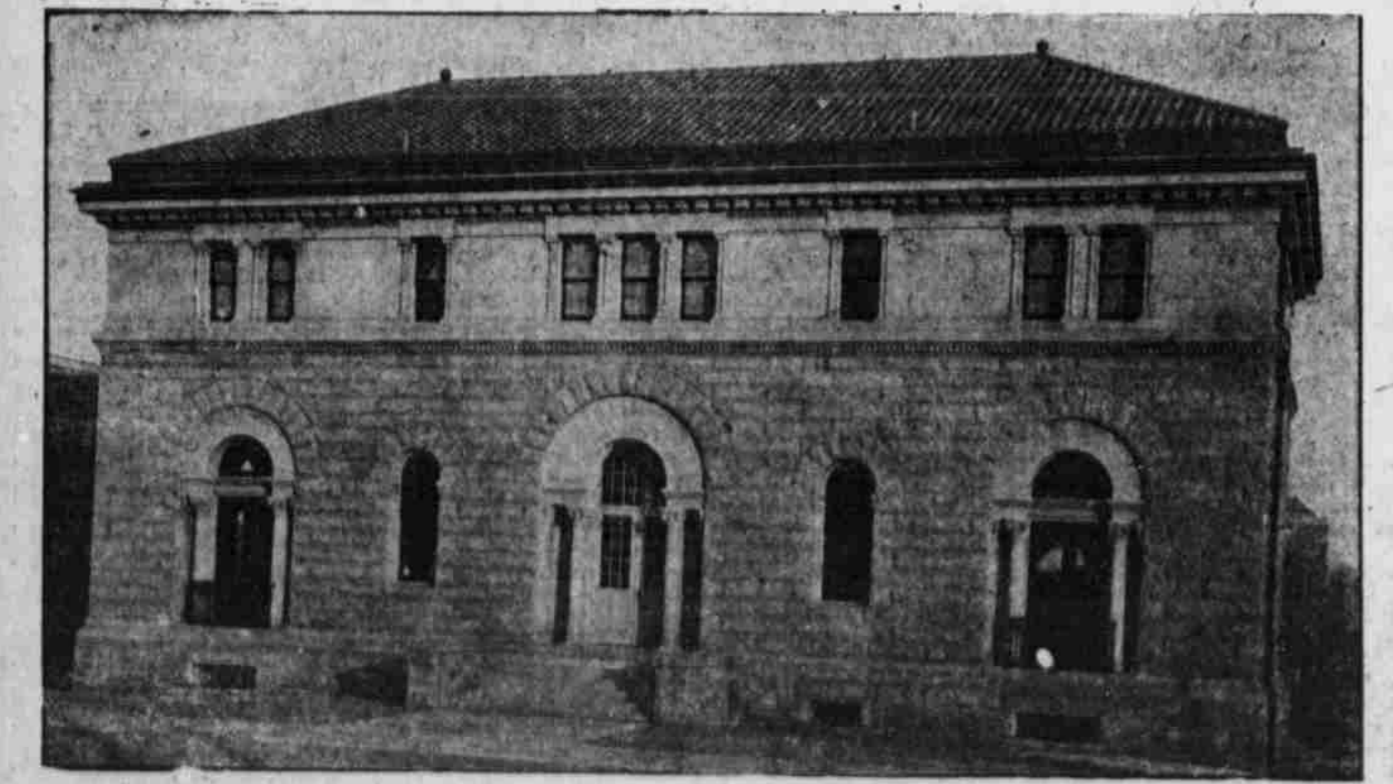
In the spring of 1902 the library building being well along towards completion, the board decided to elect a librarian in order that the books might be purchased and prepared for circulation, to be in readiness when the building was opened to the public. Miss Jane H. Abbott, an experienced librarian, was chosen for the position and asked to assume her duties the first of June. At the same time the assistant librarian, Mrs. Grace Pinnell was elected, her duties to be assumed when needed by the librarian.

The library board having at its disposal about \$1,500, which had accrued from the tax levied under the state law for the maintenance of public libraries, selected books to that amount and the work of preparing them for the shelves was at once begun.

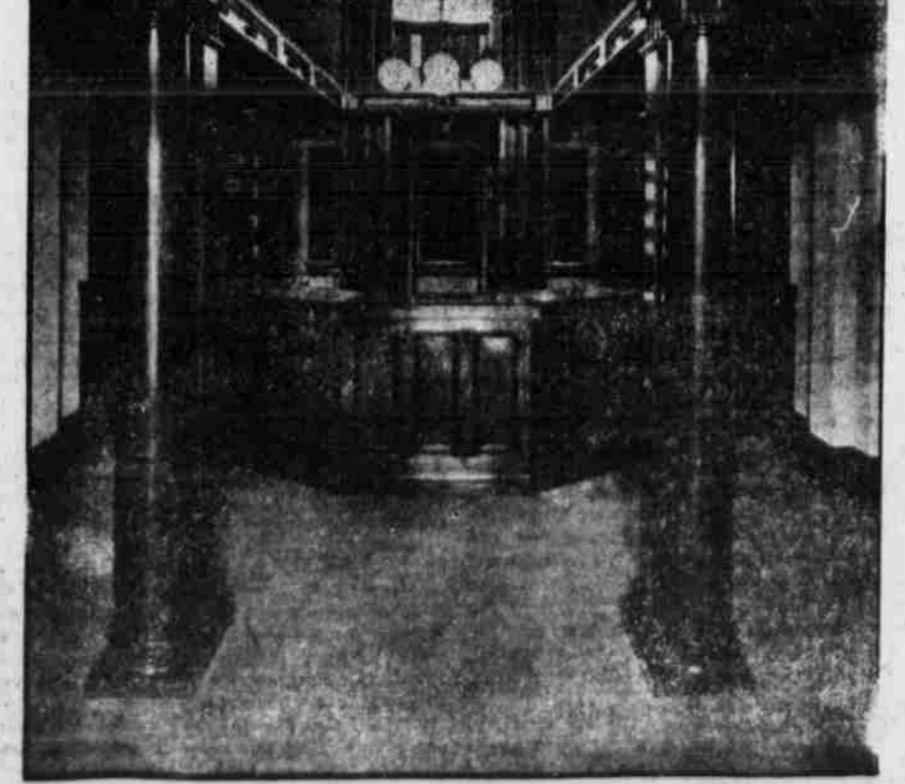
All this time the library board, as appointed by Mayor Kelly, had remained about the same, a few changes only occurring as terms expired or members of the board left the city. The trustees at the present time are: Bruce McCulloch, president; W. S. King, vice president; Mrs. Emma L. Talbot, secretary; Mrs. Ella M. Sloane, Mrs. Mary McCarran, Dr. W. S. White, Rev. James Ahern, Rev. Joseph Chudelak.

The present mayor, Frank Koutsky, has at all times co-operated with the library board, and has been interested in the progress and success of the work in hand.

(Continued on Page Seven.)



FRONT VIEW OF THE NEW CARNEGIE LIBRARY AT SOUTH OMAHA--Photo by a Staff Artist.



MAIN ENTRANCE, SHOWING THE DELIVERY DESK--Photo by a Staff Artist.



VIEW IN THE STACK ROOM, SHOWING THE STEEL BOOK LIFTS--Photo by a Staff Artist.