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LINCOLN'S JAGGED SKY LINE

Being a Dissertation on Street Architecture
in the Capital City of Nebraska

Architecture in the business district of Lincoln can boast a peculiar variety if not a distinctly artistic arrangement. It is a disorderly array that looks good or bad, according to the mood of the witness. Glancing down any of the streets one is impressed with the notion that the business men who built the structures on either side were actuated by as strong an architectural as a commercial competition. In other words, rather than strive for harmony in appearance their thought was to put together a building as alien to its elbow neighbor as possible; they desired a different structural design, no matter what the looks might be. The result is that a person craving enjoyment from one of these commercial vistas must seek it in the jagged character of roof lines and in rugged, jagged facades. On a day when the sun is shining brightly and the observer is feeling in the best of vim he can see in these inharmonious lines and angles a sort of inanimate opposition or warfare that gives the streets a spirited aspect, which with the moving multitudes of people and cars and trucks shows the city to be a pretty lively young metropolis, all interesting to say the least.

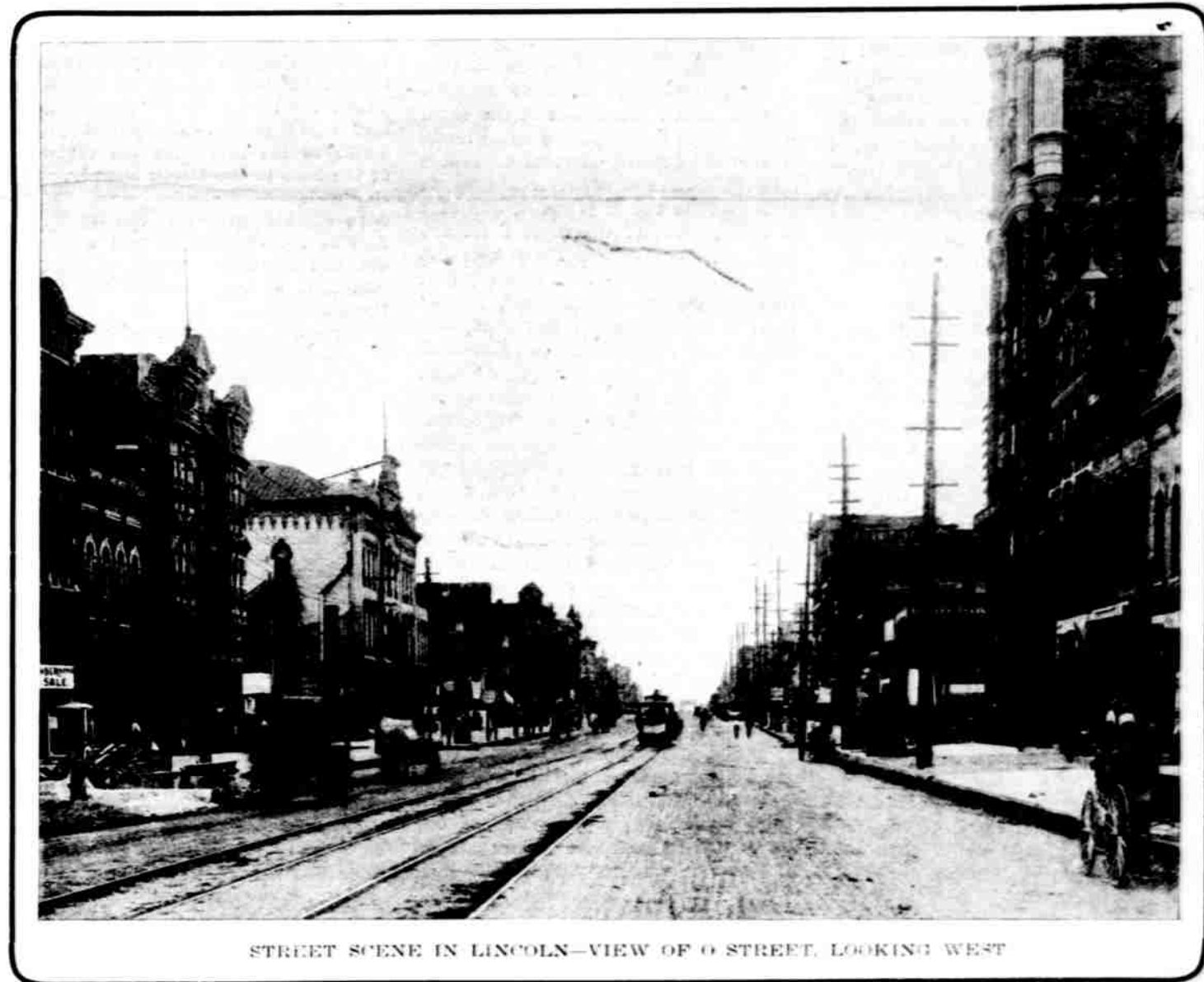
Tall buildings are oddly infrequent, or rather, so few are they that first sight of them strikes one oddly. The Burr block claims the greatest height, spiring upward from a square of low roofed buildings in a manner that never fails to excite the curious comment of the visitor. Spying it from the west or southwest it is sure to win some admiration. Though its dark hue is rather a sombre spectacle it gives an instant impression, with its serried ranks of windows each with its office sign, of its sturdy character as a hive of business. To look from it to the buildings below and about it hardly stuns one with admiration for them or for the society of buildings of so incompatible an architectural nature. Then too it is a disappointment to look from the chipped stones of the west and south walls to the nakedness of the brick that composes the east and north sides. It looks wholly unnatural all around. The only other particularly tall buildings are the Lincoln hotel at Ninth and P streets, the Richards block at Eleventh and O streets and the Farmers and Merchants block at Fifteenth and O streets. All four are structures good to look upon and good to think about. The Lincoln hotel, of a lead colored stone, is tall and staunch and with its fire escapes possesses airs that are strictly metropolitan. The Richards block, latest of new business block, is a handsome building with walls smooth and uniform with the exception of occasionally jutting adornments, enough and sufficiently tasty to relieve monotony. Much the same is the Farmers and Merchants block, tall and narrow with large windows set in artistically formed casements. These buildings are decidedly ornamental to the business district of the city. If doubted, fancy them absent, with some of the low roofed, com-

monplace samples of architecture in their places. It would certainly be a dull looking town. There is just the proper degree of difference in their shading, and their projection above the roofs of the others of the town is distinctly attractive to the eye, especially from some point of eminence. These with the peaks and spires and cupolas scattered over the center of the city form a certainly interesting upper element of architecture. That it is surely the art and architecture of commerce

sky scraper. At present it has one need and that is a new, substantial office block. This is practically the unanimous opinion of the real estate men of the city. They think that with a new building such as the Richards block or the building of the Farmers Insurance Company, located somewhere between Tenth and Thirteenth streets, with modern equipments and the proper frontage, the city's office needs might be pretty well supplied. One real estate agent said:

"I have calls for first class offices and suites nearly every day and am unable to furnish desirable places. The choice is invariably a set of rooms fronting on O street. It is one of the queer things about the city that none of the large blocks possesses a frontage of any extent on O street. Another block at Eleventh and O streets would be a fine investment for the man with the cash

like hot cakes. It ought to have an east frontage and be on some O street corner. Perhaps you have never noticed it, but the city is unfortunate in the frontage of its blocks. All of those of most consequence, the Richards block, the Burr and the Farmers and Merchants building, you will notice, stand fronting the west. Talk about heat! Those outside rooms are like ovens in the summer time in spite of the awnings that are spread for the protection of the renters. I had my rooms in one of them for several years but I would not return to any of them again if the rooms were offered me for nothing. Of course there are a good many unoccupied rooms in blocks whose frontage is in the right position and which look from the outside like fine buildings. The trouble with these is two-fold, they are too far from O street and their lighting is



STREET SCENE IN LINCOLN—VIEW OF O STREET, LOOKING WEST

may readily be believed, even by one who does not chance to be a birdseye observer, when he centers his attention on the myriad advertisements of all sizes, colors and characters that cram the walls and interspaces. Taking the long view of a street, and it is one of the advantages of the city that it may brag wide streets, as shown in the illustrations, it is a receding parallel array of nondescript masonry and carpentry, fairly uniform as high as the display windows, but with a most uneven, gaping skyline with some smooth and other figured cornices and quite a showing of angles, a few tiny pinnacles, upper bay windows and an occasional column and buttress.

It is safe to say that it will be many years before the city will enjoy the distinction of a real sharp, heighty

to put it up. Two more blocks would be one too many, but one more, with good lighting and heating facilities, say the size of the Richards block, would be filled in two weeks without trouble. Blocks that stand a distance of from one block to two or three from O street are not very cordially regarded. Professional men desire to be where their signs may be seen by the passing throng. That is one reason why some of the more distant blocks are so thinly populated."

Another real estate man taking the same view said:

"Well, I believe one new block would just about fit the office needs of the city. One new block in the right locality and possessed of the modern features of light and heat would find immediate renters. The rooms would go

poor. They depend largely on sky lights that are entirely unsatisfactory. They are sandwiched in between high walls of other buildings and the offices are caverned from street view. A new block with the frontage and equipment I have mentioned would fill quickly and get a good many men officing in the three buildings I have mentioned. I do not believe in building to excess. Every surplus building is hurtful to the city, but it is hardly possible to have too many efficient, choice office rooms."

Another View of It

Street architecture is the background to outdoor, city life. If the background is sordid and squalid, the men and women who move in front of it do not feel that so far as their en-

(Continued on Page 2.)