

Pioneer Women of Omaha Now Enjoying Life's Evening

Mrs. A. J. Poppleton



Mrs. J. M. H. Patrick



Mrs. James E. Boyd



Mrs. Geo. B. Lake



Mrs. T. L. Kimball



Mrs. Enos Lowe



Mrs. Alvin Saunders



Mrs. Edward Rosewater



Mrs. Byron Reed



Mrs. Eleazer Wakeley



Mrs. Chas. B. Rustin



Mrs. Geo. W. Liningier



Mrs. T. B. Cuming



Mrs. Thomas Swift

SERENELY resting out the quiet evening of their lives, looking back over many years of activity as helpmeets to the pioneers whose energy made an empire of a wilderness, and built a great city where the red man had his wigwag half a century ago, a number of the mothers of Omaha occasionally find comfort in chatting of the days that are gone. These women shared with their energetic husbands in the stern realities of pioneer life; they were here in the "days before," when the surroundings were those of primitive civilization, and joined with the men folk in overcoming and developing, until the hope of the beginning blossomed and ripened into the realization of dreams fulfilled. Coming as brides, from homes that knew the comforts and even the luxuries of life of the day, they faced the unknown conditions of life, the uncertainties of existence, that made a journey to the "west" of that time a trip of adventure; but their courage was equal to the demands upon it, and now, surrounded by all that old age should bring with it, they are sweetly abiding among grown-up sons and daughters, with grandchildren in troops, and friends uncounted, watching the sunset of life deepen into the glories of rose and pink that come with the close of a perfect day. Useful, active lives they spent in the service of bringing civilization's comforts to the wilds; strenuous days they knew, in that past, when the west was young, when white men were few, when the ways of the frontier were rough, and uncouthness had to be conquered by the sheer dint of culture. It was these women who brought the beginnings of culture into the frontier settlement, and who, by their example and precept, set up a standard that has never been lowered. Almost without exception, they came as brides, joining with their husbands in the work of winning a home from the wilderness, of setting up a roof-tree and establishing themselves a family, and together they did what they set out upon. Of the women who are here dealt with it may be said in the truest sense, they were the mothers of Omaha, just as their husbands were the fathers. Their husbands have turned the corner, just a little ahead of them; life was full of meaning to them, active and earnest, and they did not shrink their tasks nor stint their energies, so when the call came for them to cease their labors, it was simply to rest from duty never deserted.

Three Were Governors' Wives.

Among these women are the wives of three former governors of Nebraska—Mrs. T. B. Cuming,

Mrs. Alvin Saunders and Mrs. J. E. Boyd. Mrs. Cuming was first of the number to come to Nebraska; she was wedded to Thomas B. Cuming at Keokuk, Ia., in 1853, and a few months later he was named by President Pierce as secretary of the new territory of Nebraska. Francis Burt of South Carolina had been designated by the president as governor of Nebraska, but while the party was yet at Bellevue and before the capital city of the territory had been chosen, Governor Burt sickened and died, and Secretary Cuming became acting governor. It was his official act that located the first capitol of Nebraska at Omaha. This was in 1854, when Omaha had about 150 inhabitants and was without any accommodation for the reception of the acting-governor and his bride. They made their home at Council Bluffs for a time, but when it was practical, set up their household in Omaha. As wife of the governor, Mrs. Cuming found herself the "first lady" of the young community, and cheerfully and successfully devoted herself to the onerous social duties that devolved on her as such. She has never lost her fondness for the society of young folks, and still loves to surround herself with a bevy of girls, taking an interested part in their doings and adding much to their enjoyment by her sayings. She has always been a devout Catholic and has taken a deep interest in the charities of the church. After the death of Governor Cuming, she made her home with her brother, Frank Murphy, until his death, and still keeps the

home on St. Mary's avenue, where many quiet social gatherings assemble.

Also Came From Iowa.

Mrs. Saunders also came with her husband from Iowa, coming here in 1861, when her husband was named by President Lincoln as governor of the territory of Nebraska. One of the latest of President Lincoln's official acts was to sign the commission for Governor Saunders' second term. Later Governor Saunders was chosen United States senator from the new state of Nebraska, and thus his wife was brought into the most brilliant circles of Washington society. The home of the Saunders family on Sherman avenue was long known for its hospitality and its eminence in social affairs. Mrs. Saunders there presided as hostess for President Benjamin Harrison on the occasion of his visit to Omaha some twenty-two years ago. Mrs. Saunders was and still is active in church and charitable work.

Mrs. Boyd came to Nebraska as a bride, although she had only to come across the river. She came to Council Bluffs in 1858, and there met James E. Boyd, a member of the Nebraska legislature. She married him and came to Omaha to make her home. Before Governor Boyd was called to the executive chair he had served long as mayor of Omaha, and this had given Mrs. Boyd much experience in the social duties that fall on the wife of a public man, so that she was well prepared for

the tasks that became hers as the "first lady" of the state. She gave a great deal of her time to the work of the church and to charitable undertakings, although since her husband's death and until a little while ago she was quite active in the management of the business of the estate.

Chats of Early Days.

Mrs. Byron Reed is another of the pioneer women of Omaha who came as a bride from Council Bluffs. Her parents moved to that city when she was but 10 years of age, and she was married while still in her teens to Byron Reed, and with him joined in the work of making a center of culture and social activity out of Omaha.

Mrs. Reed tells of a most brilliant social affair which was held in the old hotel at Florence in 1857. "Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Reed, "it was one of the most beautiful parties I have ever attended and one which I will never forget. I was only a little girl at that time, but I well remember just how pretty the women appeared to me. The hotel

was kept by three old maids, who had come here from Philadelphia, and whenever they entertained everyone always went for one was sure of a splendid time."

Mrs. Reed sat back in her chair as she told of these days and a bright smile came and went as the happy and sad times were recalled. She came to Council Bluffs with her father when she was 10 years old and married when she was in her teens. Her first home was in Florence and she recalls the visit of the Mormons to that village very plainly. Soon after she was married she moved to Omaha and has made her home here ever since. She has been one of the active workers in Trinity cathedral and her social duties are many. Her home for many years was on Twenty-fifth and Douglas streets and Byron Reed was one of the active business men of the city.

Was Here With the Earliest.

One of the earliest of the pioneer women to come to Nebraska was Mrs. A. J. Poppleton, who came to Omaha in 1854, and she recalls in a most interesting way the early days of the city. She says: "Mr. Poppleton was one of the first settlers of Omaha, coming here from his native state, Michigan, in 1854, and was a member of the first legislature. I came to Council Bluffs with my father's family from New York in the same year and Mr. Poppleton and I were married the second day of

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