

THE PET TOWN of JUPITER CITY

That Flourished Until The Aladdin Lamp was Kicked Over

BY GEORGE FITCH

Illustrations by L.A. SHAFER



JIM, THANK YOU, NO! I'll get across this darned buzz-wagon stampede by myself, or go down shouting for luck. Any man that has swum the Missouri and herded nervous cattle on a cross-eyed cayuse aint got a right to be afraid of no Fifth Avenue street. Hey? Whoa!—steady there! That one shore grazed us. Why don't you put a tight rope over such a canyon for the use of folks that travel on their feet? Give 'em a chance.

Yep, thanks. I'll stop right here and have something in a nice leather chair. I want to rest up before I tackle Sixth Avenue. Which way do they get worse, up or down?

What's that? Want to live here? Me? Hell, no! But don't get riled, Jim. I aint running the place down, you know. It's a wonder, Noo York is, but it's too big for me. I could live here and keep it from stepping on me, if I was as lively as all get out, but it would n't leave a heap of time for sleep. I aint got any proprietary interest in the town. I could n't feel like a father to it, and help it grow up and spank it when it got unruly, and beat some other fellow over the head when he tried to shove it with his town. I could n't lie awake at night figgering how to make it into a rip-roaring metropolis with 7,000 people. It's been done already. I could n't handle this job. It aint my size. I like a town I can take hold of and shake up and improve. I want to stand off and look at it with one eye shut, and see how it sets off against the scenery, and then go and rustle up another eating house to fill up a bald spot, or move the whole darn thing somewhere else, if necessary.

I had a pet town of my own like that, once, Jim, and I'm free to tell you that since I lost Jupiter City, which I started myself, and nursed in my bosom, and taught to eat out of my hand, so to speak, I aint had much heart in towns. I can't seem to take any interest in 'em. I'm a disappointed man as far as metropolusses go. I aint against 'em, but I can't work up enthusiasm, and sweat over 'em, the way I used to.

Never heard of Jupiter City, eh? No, I suppose not. There's more you human ants back here aint heard of than could be jammed into a book as big as Pike's Peak. Heard of Pike's Peak, aint you? Well, don't get grumpy now. I met a fellow yesterday that did n't know about South Dakota, and did n't care either.

My pal, Ike Sanders, and I, founded Jupiter City about ten years ago. We did it sort of accidental. Had n't gone out to South Dakota to bring up any infant towns by hand. We'd gone out to farm. A smooth agent up in Northern Nebraska had sold us a farm that would n't raise anything but cattle, and being as we only had one cattle and no credit, business was n't what you could call magnificent. We built a dugout for ourselves, and a nice one-room house for the cow, and were setting around waiting for some blind man to come along and buy us out, when Ike got to reading some circulars he'd got out of the postoffice over at Thunder Creek one day, and all of a sudden he let out a yell.

"LOOK here, Bill," says he, "we aint going at this business right. We're wasting our opportunities. We've got a chance to get rich right under our noses, and we aint takin' it. Look at this here advertisement of New Chicago. See what it says: *Magnificent site, stretching hundreds of miles on each side, giving ample room for growth; fourteen railroads racing for the town, unequalled opportunity for cement block factory, waterworks, woolen mills, steam laundry, and general store. Population has doubled in two years, but corner lots on State Street can still be bought for one hundred dollars. I seen New Chicago last fall and it did n't have forty people in it. Look at us here, setting around twiddling our thumbs. Why aint we starting a town?*"

"Sure, why not?" I asks sarcastic. "We got a hammer and plenty of nails."

"Aint this as good a place as any?" Ike asks, waving his arm around. "Aint there an awful demand fer towns in this section? Aint there 10,000 square miles of beautiful land all around here? Did n't that dam land agent tell us so hisself? Aint there railroads all around us, both approaching and fading away? Don't we need a steam laundry wuss'n New Chicago? We aint had a clean shirt for a month. Darn it all, we can lay out a half section into streets and blocks, and start a roaring town and get richer'n mud. Here we was going to let this farm slip out of our hands for \$570, or \$200, if we could n't git that. It'll be worth a million, when the city hall goes up."

He's such a convincing cuss, Ike is, that he got me lit up in spite of myself, and we



We named the town Jupiter City, from my hunting dog

ERIAL CAFE



Both irrigation plants went out of business That was a hard blow

sat up most all night discussing our town. Next day, we laid off a street past our dugout, and some side streets, and staked out the city hall. We named the town Jupiter City, from my hunting dog, and by that time I was so enthusiastic that I was plumb sore because I could n't find our town on the map. That afternoon we went after Pete Fleming, who was farming it on the next section and was going to build a house. He was reluctant at first, but after Ike had talked most all day, he gave in and took a lot. Ike was sure eloquent about Jupiter City. I listened to him talk to Pete and it got me so hypnotized that I half expected to see the office buildings looming up before we'd crossed the river on our way home.

Next week, Pete hauled a load of lumber from Thunder Creek and built his house. It took him all day, and it was a dream—poreh and window and everything complete. When it was done, Ike and I went out and walked around Jupiter City, solemn but exalted, viewing it from all sides, suggesting improvements and predicting her future. Nothing was too good for her. We loved her already. Asphalt streets and boulevards were hers by birth-right. The more we talked and rode clouds around, so to speak, the more disgusted we got with our house. It had been a good house before Jupiter City came, but now it gave us a pain to look at it. It was too darned provincial. We kept on criticising it and running it down until we could n't stand it, so we chased the cow out of the barn and moved in ourselves. It would be a sight colder in winter than the dugout, but it was good looking, and we owed it to the dignity of Jupiter City to live in a frame house.

LUCK was with us right from the start. Three days later, the boys over at Thunder Creek got sore at Ying Lee, who was trying to run a laundry on a cash basis in that totally unpromising field, and drove him out of town. We noticed Ying traveling past, and annexed him kindly but firmly, pointing out the great advantages of getting into a town before the rush of rival laundries. That made four hustling citizens for the town, and Ike and Pete and I were delighted. We painted signs on the sides of cracker boxes and laid out a lot of new streets that week, and what with advising Ike on the circular he was trying to compose, and holding town meetings every night, and prevailing with Ying, who had a couple of icebergs for feet and could n't see any prospects for business, we were as busy as bees and a blamed sight happier.

The next week a regular windfall struck us. It was nothing less than Sam Linthicus. Sam owned the next section to the south and was n't visiting in Thunder Creek, owing to a slight coolness between him and the inhabitants, he having sold them the town site two years before. When Sam discovered our town