

Lincoln: A City that Believes in Itself



Postoffice, Federal Court House and Customs House in Lincoln, Which is Being Greatly Enlarged to Meet the Demands of the Continually Growing Patronage.

T By W. S. WHITTEN, Secretary Lincoln Commercial Club. THREE things there are which insure a city possessing them a future of prosperous growth and exceptional stability. These are its desirability as a city in which to do business, in which to make one's home and in which to educate one's children. For these are the three things—live, to love and to learn—which most concern the normal man because they lie nearest to his heart and his desire.

As An Educational Center

Lincoln is the leading educational center of the west, and has a student population during the school year of 5,000. Here are its leading educational institutions: University of Nebraska, embracing seven colleges, including the college of agriculture, which has a separate plant located two miles east of the main university; Nebraska Wesleyan university, the central college of the Methodist Episcopal church in the west; Cotner university, founded and maintained by the Christian church, a strong denomination in this section; Union college, headquarters in the west of the Seventh Day Adventists; Nebraska Military academy; Two large business colleges; Three thriving conservatories of music; Private finishing school for girls and boys.

assured of a volume of commerce measured only by the enterprise and talent of those who engage in business within its borders. Because of its fine, wide and shaded streets, its grassy parks, its paved boulevards, its well built homes, the absence of slums and the presence of a population composed of those elements that enter into the making of an alert and progressive people, it is a home city of unusual attractiveness. Because of its great universities—five in number—its business and musical colleges and its compact and up-to-date school system it offers to all who seek the foundations of a liberal education or the finish of the professions an opportunity to select and secure what they will. Numbered within the city and its environs are 6,000 people, men, women and children, who have come within the space of a few years to engage in business, to build homes and to equip themselves with a rounded education.

Capital City of Nebraska. All this has been accomplished in a little more than a generation, much less than fifty years. In 1868 the present site of the city of Lincoln was occupied by the small village of Lancaster, a sleepy little inland town where had gathered some hardy souls intent upon pioneering an unknown country. The conflicting ambitions of (then) better situated towns within the state and the inability of a majority of the people to favor one city above the other, led to the selection of Lancaster as the capital, located on the rolling prairie overlooking the valleys of two small creeks, and the renaming of the place as Lincoln.

Made Quick Start. As the capital of a young but fast growing state, Lincoln at once became the mecca for hundreds of ambitious young persons, and within a few years foundations had been laid for an enduring civic structure. Railroads backed by home and foreign capital sprang into being as though by a magician's wand, and where one already within the state's borders showed signs of hesitating about reaching out across the prairie to the new

metropolis, the people offered large subsidies or proceeded to build connecting lines themselves. Out of this welter of little and poorly-built roads there have been evolved five great modern railroads which serve the city, forming arteries of trade that bring vast commercial territories within the reach of its business men.

Early in its life as a city, Lincoln developed into a jobbing center, and as the state increased in population, as the railroads were extended and as agriculture multiplied, this form of commerce, linked with manufacturing in dozens of lines, became a dominant factor in its growth. As the capital, the city became and remains the political center of the state. The University of Nebraska followed shortly after the selection of Lincoln as the capital, and its growth has run far and fast ahead of that of the state itself as individual wealth piled up and the belief in a strong educational system grew. The dominance of agriculture as the great business of the state early led to the founding close to the city of a giant agricultural college and school, where hundreds of boys from the farm are taught everything there is to know about their business. To insure the stability of its educational institutions a large part of the agricultural domain was early set aside as school, university and agricultural lands. From sales and rentals a fund, invested in bonds and amounting now to \$10,000,000, has been collected—and there yet remain thousands of acres as the inheritance of the educational system of the state.

The Lincoln of 1890 numbered a thousand or two souls, clustered about a combination business and residence district that was less than a mile square. Today the city proper has an area of eight square miles, and within five miles of the postoffice 60,000 people live and labor. The one-story frame store buildings with flaring fronts of pioneer days have been replaced with modern business blocks, ranging in height to eight stories, equipped with all modern devices for comfort and quick dispatch and filled with merchandise of quality and worth. The tily-equipped cottage of the pioneer has vanished and in its place are found the bungalow, the fine residence and the palatial mansion. There are no rickeries where the shiftless and the unlucky seek refuge, no districts where vice and crime are given quarter to flourish and to prey. The Lincoln of today enjoys a prosperity so well distributed that it is equally as well famed for the absence of Knob Hill slums as it is for the absence of slums.

Municipal Growth. Within the eight square miles of territory are to be found sixty-three miles of paved streets, sixty-five miles of street railways and ninety-five miles of sewers. It owns its own water plant and its own street lighting plant. It has also branched out into commercial lighting, and through the competition thus given has secured the lowest electric rates possible in a city of any considerable area. Its street car system maintains up-to-date cars upon schedules faster than those of other cities of its size, and by reason of the compactness of the business district and the spreading character of the residence sections few homes are beyond a fifteen minutes' ride to business and a few cars are overcrowded.

The roll of the prairie upon which Lincoln is located is so gentle that there are no great hills to climb, no cuts through which streets need burrow their way, no

giant cliffs up which one must toil to reach the haven of home—just easy grades that make riding upon the boulevard a pleasure and that make possible the giving to each home a setting of lawn and shade that doubles its attractiveness.

Neither is Lincoln set down upon a flat and cheerless plain. To the west is the valley of the Platt, wherein are the greater part of the railroad yards and around which cluster the larger manufacturing and warehouses. On the gently undulating rise from this valley is the business district, which thrusts its way to the east, spreading fanlike as it goes, to be checked by the slightly elevated plateau around the Antelope and that border the Salt on the east. Thus it is that after passing the ramports of the flat buildings, apartment and rooming houses that surround the business section of every city, building sites, ideal and attractive, are found upon which thousands of Lincoln people and other Nebraskans have built comfortable and cozy homes.

The great agricultural west, in its real development, is scarcely more than a generation old. The first citizens of Lincoln were men and women with their fortunes to make. They labored so well, not so much with respect to themselves personally as for the city of their adoption, sacrificing and working so that those who came after them might be better fitted to make the city what in their dreams it had been to them, that today one of the strong "pulls" of the city is that which it exerts upon the other residents of Nebraska. Within the last ten years hundreds of men who had made modest fortunes upon the farms and in the smaller towns of the state have come to Lincoln to live. These are men whose \$10 and \$20 land has become \$100 and \$150 land; merchants whose thrift and labor have given them a surplus that fills their every physical need; bankers who have garnered rich sheaves from the wheat fields of fortune; lawyers and other professional men who had made so good a start outside that they felt they could safely challenge the competition of the city field. Some of these newcomers had made all the money they desired and have retired, but most of them retain the interests where their fortunes first rooted.

City's Pulling Power. It is difficult in a paragraph to sharply picture to the imagination the effect upon the character of the population that this sort of emigration has had. Few persons move to a large city because they prefer it as a place of residence. The pulling power of a big city lies in what it can offer in the way of work for those who are yet seeking the bubble fortune or in the way of increased advantage for those who are already well established in a line of business. It is from this source of supply that a city gets its vigor and its bustle, but that which differentiates one city from another, which makes one more attractive than the other, is its power to draw from other strata of society.

With Lincoln, which drafts the major portions of its population gains from the same source as other large cities, there has also rested this advantage, that it has also been gathering the cream skimed off other sections of the state. Taken in connection with the fact that already the city had bulged better than the average commercial center by also weaving into its structure the strong fiber

of superior educational facilities, this immigration has given to the population a tone and to its civic life a flavor that raise it above the dead level of a mere home town. A condition like this makes for a democratic community, since it raises the average of education and experience, the sources of real learning, and thus elevates the general level, whereas in most cities the tendency is towards an aristocracy of wealth on one hand and a communism of poverty on the other—the big house on the hill and the thatched cottage in the lowlands.

While the cultural advantages of Lincoln as a residence city have been emphasized in its development, there has been no neglect of the material side. Completely encircling the city, but within its borders, runs a paved boulevard, interlaced with dozens of other equally well-surfaced streets, that accommodate a constantly increasing automobile pleasure traffic. Leading out from the city in other directions are other boulevards, paved part way and tapering off into well-drained and well-graded dirt roads. These lead out to and past a dozen parks, including amusement resorts, grounds attached to state institutions and municipal recreation grounds.

The city maintains two parks, one in the west section and one in the east section. The latter, Antelope park, is but the beginning of an ambitious project that will include a wide strip of land, partly woodland now and part of it railroad right-of-way, running through the city diagonally. Already Antelope park is the mecca of thousands who find recreation in its leafy shades. The city employs a band to give concerts regularly in the summer season, it maintains a zoo and botanical gardens, and is developing all other phases of park growth. Southwest of the city is Epworth Lake park, the home of the Nebraska Epworth assembly, where for ten days each summer thousands of Nebraskans live the simple life in tents and listen to programs that excel in attractiveness any of the western chautauqua gatherings. West of the city is Capital Beach park, located upon a wide spreading lake and equipped with the usual white city amusement devices. To the northeast are the grounds of the Nebraska state fair, where one of the greatest live stock and agricultural exhibitions in the country is held for eight days early each fall. On the east are several small parks, maintained by the state or by suburban towns that lure hundreds of their cool stretches in summer time. Lincoln holds a membership in the Western Base Ball league, which maintains two parks.

Its Educational Plant. No city in the west is so well equipped with an educational plant as is Lincoln. This city offers opportunity for a complete education, from the kindergarten up through the high school and into the university, and from there into any one of the leading professions. The secondary schools consist of twenty-eight public and private schools. A new high school building that is the latest word in construction and in devices for effective work, and which will cost nearly three-quarters of a million, is nearing completion. Sixteen ward school buildings house the remainder of the 13,000 school children. The parochial side of education is given strong emphasis in the schools of Lincoln. The fact that so large a percentage of children leave school before they complete the grades in every city has been recognized here

and an effort made to meet the conditions. Instead of seeking to combat a situation that has its basis in economic conditions, the school management has substituted practical studies for the theoretical. Not only are the boys and girls in the grades being taught things, the knowledge of which will become of practical value to them just as soon as they leave school, but they have been organized into a Junior civic and industrial league, whose 2,700 members are periodically shown through the great industries of the city and made acquainted, through talks and illustrations, with how industry is organized, what each one offers in the way of pay and opportunity and what problems and chances they face. In similar practical ways are they taught how they are governed through the state, county and city administrations.

To add attractiveness and interest to the task of gaining an education 1,300 home and school gardens are cultivated; there are fully equipped playgrounds at twelve buildings; three summer recreation centers are maintained and domestic science and manual training given unusual prominence in the curriculum. In the hours when the city plant is not running, pre-vocational and night schools occupy the buildings, and at other hours they are made use of as social centers.

In addition there are high-class private and parochial schools, a military academy with a nation-wide reputation, two splendid business colleges, several conservatories with staffs recruited from the best known musical centers of the world, and other colleges where concert singing, dramatic art and oratory are taught. A dental college is also an adjunct of a practical nature.

As a University Town. Located in suburbs immediately adjoining Lincoln are the Nebraska Wesleyan university, the leading college of that denomination in the west, with an enrollment exceeding 900; Cotner university,



City Building, Located on Federal Square, in Which the Several Departments of City Government are Housed.

maintained largely by the Christian church denomination, where 285 students pursue knowledge, and Union college, the western denominational university of the Seventh Day Adventists, and where 200 students are fitted for missionary and other church activities.

The capheat of Lincoln's educational structure is the University of Nebraska. At the last election the voters of the state were asked to determine whether they wished the university to be extended upon its downtown campus or to be consolidated with the State Agricultural school upon the farm campus, on the eastern border of the city. They overwhelmingly voted against consolidation, and at the same time authorized the

(Continued on Page Seven—Column One.)

As a Political Center

Lincoln is the political center of a larger area than any other city in the United States, due largely to the fact that it is the home of Hon. W. J. Bryan, secretary of state, who was thrice honored as a democratic nominee for the presidency.

At Lincoln are located: The state capitol. The State Historical society building. The state penitentiary. The State Orthopedic hospital. The state fair. The governor's mansion. The State Hospital for the insane (one of three). Three-fourths of the state political conventions are held in Lincoln, and all of the state officers are required by law to maintain residences in the city.

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