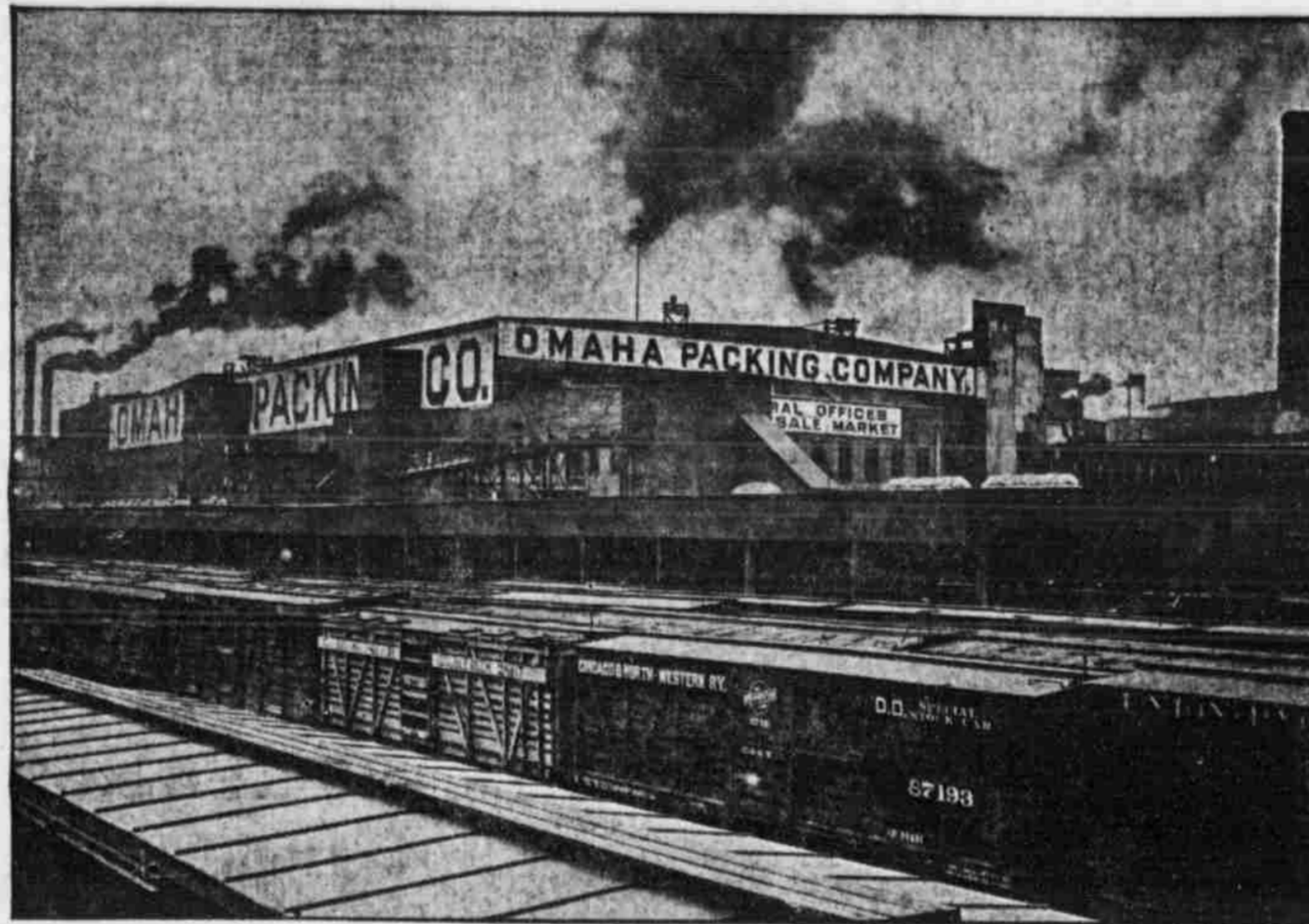


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SOUTH OMAHA, NEB.

THIS TOWN GOES THIRSTY

Because Its Citizens Were Not Quick at Figures.

FIRE STARTS A SWIFT DEBATE

Relative Value of Water and Lumber in Death Valley Was in Question and the Drink Emporium Burned.

GREENWATER, Cal., Sept. 28.—If there had been as much knowledge of mathematics among the citizens of this flourishing desert town as there are fleas, Chuckwala Charley Hennessy's drink emporium, the Death Valley Vault, would not have burned to the ground last night. Because the leading citizens in this town are not as quick at figures as they are at raising before the draw, Greenwater has been robbed of its chief center of moral and social uplift. Today the boys are admitting that mental arithmetic beats presence of mind. Chuckwala Charley's saloon burned because the leading members of the community could not figure out on the spur of the moment whether it would be cheaper to let the place burn and rebuild it with lumber at \$3 a thousand feet or to put the fire out with water costing \$8 a barrel. While the discussion went on the fire got so far that the party in favor of using the water were squelched by force of circumstances.

Of course, they put up a holler right away, but now it is up to Chuckwala Charley to tote a couple of wagon loads of pine across Death valley at the present high teaming rates. The lumber has to be hauled thirty miles; water has to come only about twelve miles.

Climate at Greenwater.

The situation in Greenwater is unusual. Some months ago a real estate boomer put an advertisement in a Los Angeles paper which said that Greenwater was a garden spot of the desert, kissed by the warm and healthful rays of a perennial sun and blossoming like the rose. He was right about the kisses. The average sun kiss here in the north end of Death valley registers about 125 degrees Fahrenheit ten months out of the year, and occasionally the Death Valley Dead One has to suspend publication because its ink rollers melt.

As for the garden business, there is a fine collection of tomato cans out back of Sandy Hedger's place and the Joshua tree grows plentifully in these parts. In passing it may be added that the man who put that advertisement in the Los Angeles papers went dippy from sunstroke up in the funerals back of town about a week after he committed the crime.

Since a misguided mortal picked out this site for a town about a year ago because he grubbed up some copper outcroppings down where the foot of the main street now is quite a few individuals have come here to take a parboiling treatment and prospect for more copper, some gold and grub to eat meanwhile.

Matter of Washings.

They usually take a good wash at Mojave before coming into the valley and, if they live to get back to Mojave they take another wash at the end of the journey in Mike Stetson's commodious rain barrel. Only those fellows who bet \$500 on a

busted flush before the draw can afford to take a bath all over in Greenwater. But right here mention must be made of the enterprise of Chuckwala Charley that endeared his emporium to the populace.

When Chuckwala put up the Vault he painted a sign and hung it behind the bar. "Free Wash With Every Drink," the sign read. And Chuckwala stuck by his contract.

After you had bought your two fingers of squirrel whisky and paid extra for a water chaser, if you felt you could afford it, all you had to do was to go out back of the saloon, and there a China boy would pour out about three inches of real water in a washbasin and you could loosen the surface crust on your face. The wits in town called this a homeopathic bath. Chuckwala's homeopathics made an instant hit with the citizens, and the custom of taking a wash had grown up about the Vault until it was recognized as one of the features of Greenwater's social life.

Water Cart Is Lost.

Now it happened that several days ago Bill Haskins, who drives the water cart from Ash Creek to Greenwater every day and thus supplies the town with the fluid, sat down on a tarantula out on the desert road and thereby suffered some pain and considerable inconvenience. He could not sit on the seat of the water cart for a week, said Doc Burton, the popular veterinarian and dentist, and since all the they wouldn't take the desert road for \$100 they wouldn't take the desert road for \$100 an hour the committee on water works of the town board had to hire a Chinaman to take Bill Haskins's place temporarily.

The Chinaman was all right the first two days and kept the water supply from Ash creek pretty well up to the high level. But day before yesterday, just the day of the fire, the Chinaman didn't come back to town with the watercart.

The citizens don't know yet what happened to him and today an expedition went out to find the cart, which is too valuable a piece of town furniture to lose. They may find the Chinaman also.

Fire Adds to Embarrassment.

It was just when the town was thus embarrassed by a meager water supply that the fire came to the Vault. One of the boys must have been careless with his cigarette stub. The flames were discovered about 7 o'clock last night just when the citizens were congregating for their after dinner drink.

Chuckwala was the first to spot the blaze over in the corner near the fare tables. It was about a foot high and there was little smoke.

"Boys," said Chuckwala, "all who have not yet drunk their water chasers please throw them on the fire and I will consider the same a favor. Don't throw any whisky; it's such high proof that it will burn like coal oil."

Some of the boys were saving their chasers to enjoy with their smoke and they promptly went over and dropped them on the fire. Chuckwala himself came from behind the bar with half a pitcherful of water—all he had left because of the drought—and spread the contents carefully on the blaze.

Some hunted for sacks to beat out the fire and some tried to stamp it out. But wood which has been in Death Valley for a year burns like paper and the flames quickly climbed up the wall and spread to adjacent corners.

"Run down to Jerome Jessup's and ask him for the loan of his pail of water," commanded Chuckwala with a tense, white face.

"Circulate around by the barber shop

and Judge Thomas' place and bring all the water they've got," roared somebody else in terror.

Cactus Johnny's Calculation.

Just as the boys were scouring the main street of Greenwater for water the rest of the citizens in town came streaming down toward the burning Vault. Cactus Johnny O'Brien stopped the citizens who were going for water and began to argue: "I'll take three barrels of water to get that fire out," said Cactus Johnny. "There aren't three barrels of water in town, and anyway that makes \$24, maybe much more, if we don't find the watercart in a day or so."

The boys gathered around Cactus Johnny and began to argue.

"Any galoot with the sense of a jenny burro could figure that there's 800 feet of lumber in Chuckwala's saloon," yelled Doc Burton. "Pine lumber from Mojave costs \$9 a thousand feet. Eight-tenths of \$8—divide both by two; that equals four-fifths—four-fifths of \$8, \$64. Three barrels of water's only \$24. Make it \$23 even and Chuckwala still loses. Come on, boys, and get that water."

"Now, just wait one minute," chimed in Judge Thomas. "It ain't that I grudge Chuckwala or the Vault my two pails of water, but anybody that wasn't foolish with the heat could figure out the theory of probabilities in this case."

"Now, supposing we pour three barrels of water on that fire, that's \$24 gone, maybe more. Supposing it will cost Chuckwala \$64 to get new lumber from Mojave if the whole shack burns down. All right, so far, so good; but listen to me. "What if we go and dump \$24 worth of water on that fire and don't put it out? There's \$24 plus \$64, which equals \$88, gone to the bad, if I don't miss my guess. And what's worse, every minute we stand here talking that fire's going to keep on burning and it's going to take more water to put it out."

Outcome of the Argument.

Doc Burton told Judge Thomas that he was a rat-tailed, stuck-up, old buzzard and the Judge swung on Doc. The other boys gathered around and quit arguing to watch the fight.

Just about the time that the Judge went down for the count from a cross to the ear the front wall of the Vault fell in. Chuckwala Charley strolled over to the bunch with a look of withering scorn on his face.

"Gents," said he, "I have to thank all of you for the advice you have given me and for the gallant part you have taken in helping the Death Valley Vault to incinerate."

"And what's more," he added, "there ain't going to be any Phoenix bird business over the ashes of this fire. I'm going back to Suffolk county, Long Island, where there's trees and water enough to swim in."

What He Found.

He was a new deputy sheriff and had been out on his first trip through one of the most unproductive sections of Warren county, Kentucky. Among other papers given him was an execution against a man who lived on about the thinnest tract of land and most dilapidated out-buildings to be found even in this almost barren section of country.

When the new deputy came in from his trip he asked one of the experienced men in the office how to make his returns on the various papers. He was told to write briefly the facts, as he found and understood them, on the back of each one.

On the execution referred to above he wrote as follows: "No property found to satisfy within execution, and none will be found so long as he stays where he now lives."—Harper's Weekly

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