

FREDERICK RENNER PIONEER PHYSICIAN SOLDIER EDITOR

Story of a German University Man Who Drank Love of Liberty at School and Came to Nebraska Before the Indians Left to Make a Name and Home for Himself

A ROLLICKING, roistering student in the great German universities, studying sometimes fifty hours at a stretch and again indulging in the wild escapades that have made the German students famous; a careening good fellow, but still a deep student with strong power of concentration and application in Paris during the troublous times which marked the death of the first republic and the birth of the second empire; a lonely emigrant upon the primeval plains of the western part of the American continent, beset by wild beasts and Indians and traveling a road unknown; a pioneer in Nebraska when the white men within its borders were but a handful and when the Indians still sought to dispossess the land with the newcomers. These are four pictures from the life of Dr. Frederick Renner of Omaha. The diversity of the pictures indicates the wide range over which fortune had drawn him.

The city of Spire is on the Rhine in Bavaria. Frederick Renner was born in that city in 1848. Spire then had about 30,000 people. Later, when war and cholera had visited it, the population was much less. Today the population is greater. Frederick was the only son of his parents. His father was a physician, as his grandfather and the grandfather of his grandfather had been. Naturally, the only son took to the same profession, and his father directed his rigorous education toward that end.

Hard Work at School

The German curriculum is hard. At the age of 5 the boy went to the public school. At the age of 8 his father hired also a private tutor to teach the rudiments of Latin. At the age of 9 he entered the Latin school for a course of four years. Ten months a year he was at his books every day but Sunday from 8 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon. Then he entered the "gymnasium," where he was fitted to enter the University of Wurtzburg, which was seventy miles from Spire. Thither he went in the post coach and was inflated alike into the hard study and the wild conviviality of German student life, the chief outward signs of which were a brightly-colored cap, varying from vivid orange to royal purple, according to the class to which the student belonged. Besides the cap, there was the cane or baton and the sword. The sword was not worn on the street, but was kept for use on certain occasions when the lie direct or some equally insulting calumny had passed between students. Then the two came together, surrounded by a great crowd of their mutual admirers. They donned certain breast protectors, head pads and the like, and then did their best to disfigure each other's face. If one sustained only a slight scar, he rubbed it with beer to make the scar uglier. For it was a great thing to wear scars on one's face. Men respected a man with scars, and the girls, ah, they loved him.

This life Dr. Renner lived in the University of Wurtzburg for two years, taking his hard duty, his hard drinking and his dueling with the rest of them. At the age of 17 years he was further advanced in his studies than men in this country usually are when five years older. As his parents had talked German and French in the home ever since he was a boy, he was fluent in both these tongues.

He went to Paris first on a visit in 1848, when he was 17 years old, making the journey in a stage coach, for that was before the day of railroads. The cauldron of France's troubled government was still seething and boiling, but a new ingredient was making most of the trouble. Prince Louis Napoleon, who had been an exile and a prisoner through most of his forty years of life, had returned to Paris, where he was soon to be elected president of the republic. Young Renner's first trip to Paris was only for a short time and merely a visit.

Early Work for New Regime

Returning to Germany in the fall of 1848, he entered the University of Munich, where he continued his medical studies for several years. Those were troublous times in Germany as well as in France. The serfs had revolted and there was everywhere the shadow cast before of freedom for the masses. Renner was from his earliest days an advocate of liberty, though he sprang from a family of the better class, unoppressed by the aristocracy. He even translated the American Declaration of Independence while in the university, and held it up for the admiration of his fellow students.

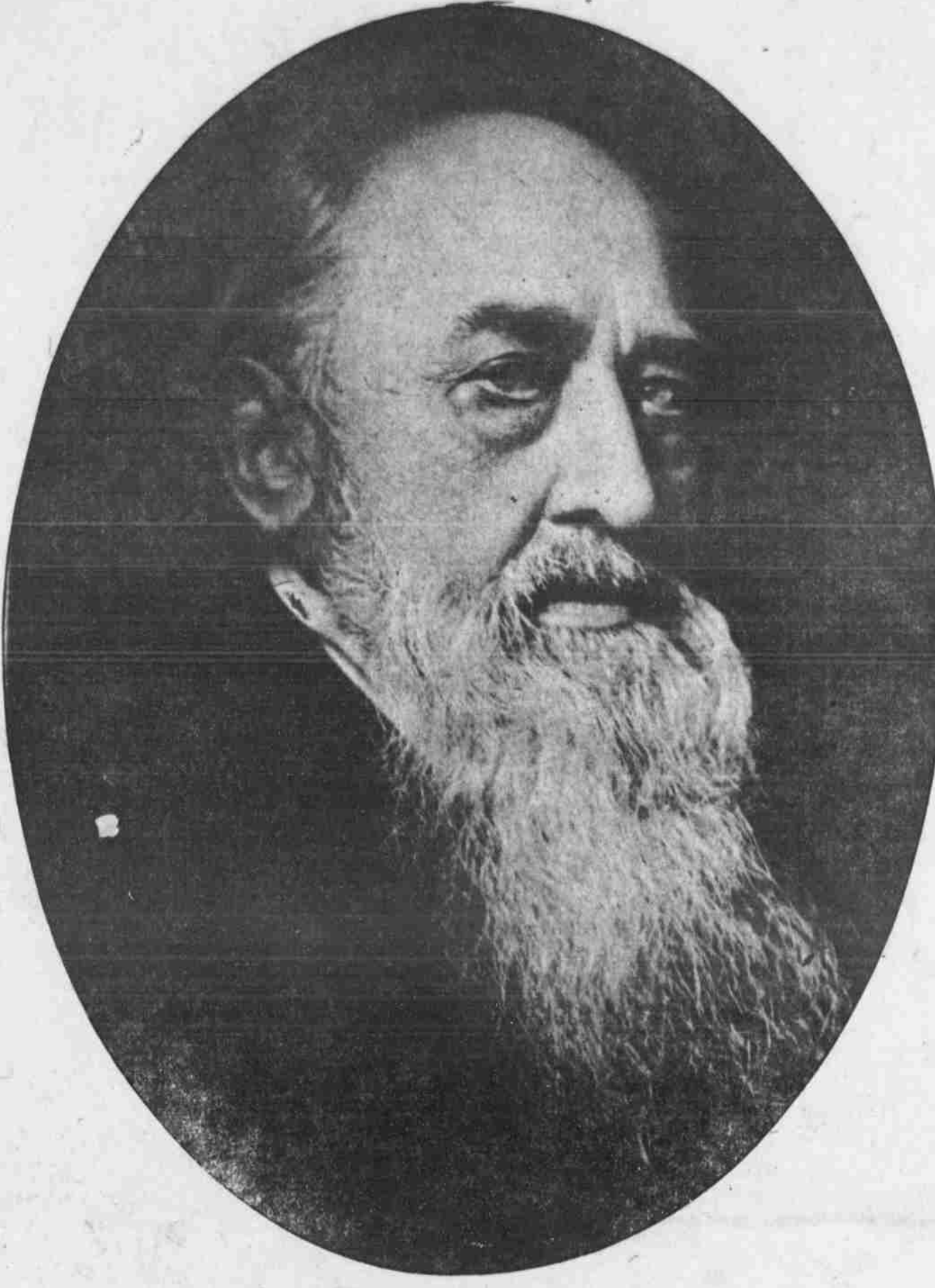
Having exhausted the German universities, young Renner was sent by his parents to Paris to receive the fine polish which comes from residence in a world capital and metropolis. He arrived in Paris in November, 1851. He secured lodgings and arranged for his studies. Then he went around to see the sights. Paris was not herself in those days. There was something wrong, yet there was nothing wrong. There existed over the great city a pall which no man could understand. There was that intangible something in the air which forbade some awful event. A week after Renner arrived in the French capital to pursue his studies, he was awakened by the sound of shouting and, looking out, saw a great mob moving and surging along the street toward the center of the city, the Louvre, the Tuilleries. He hurried down and joined the crowd and learned the great fact that a transformation had taken place, such a transformation as the world sees most frequently in the history of the French. When he had gone to bed the previous night he had lived in a republic. When he awoke and saw the mob surging past his windows he lived under an empire and Napoleon III. was emperor. During the night he had made his famous coup d'etat; had, with the connivance of a number of the leading men of the republic, caused the arrest simultaneously of all the men in the assembly who were opposed to him, and had then declared himself emperor. Napoleon the Little had become emperor of the Second French empire in much the same way as his uncle, Napoleon the Great, had become emperor of the first empire half a century before.

Club of Foreign Giants

At this time Renner was 21 years old, six feet two inches tall, wearing a full black beard after the fashion of the day, and belonging to a club of German and Russian students in Paris which called forth comment wherever it went because of the stature of its members.

"We organized ourselves into a club because we were all big men," says Dr. Renner as he recalls with a sparkle in his eye the old days when he was a handsome young student in the charming city of Paris. "Our leader was Oscar Osann, a Russian, seven feet tall. We used to walk a great deal on the boulevards and attracted much attention when we would enter a cafe. We walked always in a body, Osann being our leader. "I often saw Napoleon III., the emperor. He was always riding in his carriage and the horses were always going at a full gallop. They moved 'entre a terre'; that is, so that the bellies were nearly on the ground, the legs being stretched out on the gallop. The equipage was accompanied by four mounted horsemen, each with drawn pistol. I also saw many of the great men of the day, General Charginier, General Cavagnac, General Damartin and others."

After leaving school the young man traveled extensively in Europe. Then he decided to leave the old land of civilization and strike off to find his fortune in the new republic which was growing up across the western ocean. His parents, though he was their only son, made no objection to his plan, and in February, 1855, he went to London, thence to Liverpool, and there took passage on the "America," a sidewheeler of the Cunard line, for Boston. The passage was very stormy, both paddlewheels being rendered almost useless by the time the vessel had reached Halifax, Nova Scotia, which was two weeks after sailing from Liverpool. There the passengers enjoyed sleighing during a few days while the battered vessel underwent repairs. The voyage was resumed, and in another week they landed in Boston. Renner had made friends on the ship and he threw in his fortunes with some of these and proceeded in their company to Chicago. That seemed about the



FREDERICK RENNER, M. D.

Biggest Bear a Zoological Captive

WASHINGTON, May 2.—Any man or woman having in his or her possession a bear weighing more than 1,000 pounds is requested to communicate at once with Buster Brown, formerly of Alaska, present address Rock Creek Zoo, Washington, D. C.

Buster thinks, or at any rate his keepers think, that he is the biggest bear in captivity today, and he's not through growing yet. He's gained a small matter of 900 pounds since he reached Washington and is feeling as fine as silk, so there's no telling what he will do to the scales before he reaches his limit.

New York has some big bears of its own, but Buster outclasses them all. His next door neighbor in the Washington zoo is Dick, a big polar bear with a seven league stride and a reach as long as the arm of Providence. But Dick weighs 300 pounds less than Buster Brown and is two years older. Next to Dick is an old grizzly that weighed 750 pounds about fifteen years ago, and weighs just about the same now.

As these three bears compare very well with other bears in captivity at present Buster seems entitled to lead the procession. Old-timers tell of an enormous grizzly that was on exhibition at San Francisco in the '50s and has come down in history as weighing over 2,000 pounds. But nobody seems to have seen the bear weighed, and it is probable that the estimate was a good deal too big.

Grizzlies weighing 1,500 pounds have been shot out in the Rockies, but it was in the autumn after the bears had gorged themselves with sweet acorns and had put on their winter layer of fat. Bears in the natural state feed themselves up in the fall preparatory to hibernating. If captured or shot at this time they weigh several hundred pounds more than in the spring or summer. But Buster Brown and other captive bears do not hibernate, nor do they take on this extra weight.

Buster is a jolly, roaring young blade of a bear, with a decided fondness for the women. He keeps house in company with a pleasing roly-poly young bear person of the female gender and the Yakuta variety, known to the keepers as "Yakkie." Buster weighs pretty nearly three times as much as Yakkie, a fact of which each of them is now quite well aware.

The keeper, with a shrewd nod of his head, assures you that "you can bet Buster wears the trousers in that family!" But it wasn't always like that.

When Miss Yakkie was first put into Buster's enclosure he was the worst scared bear that ever tried to run away. He lumbered feverishly up and down as far from her as

he could get, and if she so much as looked at him he backed off into a corner.

He scuffled around on the cement floor pit so constantly, trying to escape from his little visitor, that his great horny feet became so sore he could hardly walk. Yet lame and sore as he was, he was in such mortal terror of Yakkie that he would hobble to the furthest corner as soon as she glanced his way. Finally the keepers had to put him in the house and shut the gate between him and the lady so that he could rest in security.

Having allowed him to recuperate a little, they turned him again into the pit where the little bear was calmly making herself at home. Buster was once more paralyzed with terror.

To make matters worse, Yakkie evinced a friendly curiosity and tagged around after him until she finally cornered him. Even then she kept coming closer, and Buster Brown, not knowing how otherwise to escape her, reared up on his hind feet.

When he stands up that way he is about ten feet tall and is a magnificent creature. But Yakkie was totally unimpressed, and as for Buster, he still looked timidly down his nose at her as she sniffed around his feet.

But he couldn't stand up there forever. He stuck it out as long as he could; then he had to come down to all fours. That brought their noses together, and, to Buster's evident surprise, Yakkie did not immediately proceed to eat him alive.

They soon made friends after that, but Buster remained in wholesome awe of his companion until they had a set to over something, and he made the pleasing discovery that he could knock her galley-west without half trying. Since then he has, as the keeper said, worn the trousers.

He seems very fond of Yakkie, but that has not prevented his casting an appreciative eye on Mrs. Minnie, spouse of big polar Dick, next door. Minnie is rather a flirtatious lady and had noticed Buster on several occasions. Thus encouraged, Buster laid himself out to please and haunted that side of his pit which is separated only by a stout iron lattice work from the home of Dick and Minnie.

Dick already had several green spots on his back, where he had rubbed the paint from the iron fence, but a violent attack of jealousy soon made him about fourteen shades greener in spirit than any of these spots were. Whenever Buster was hanging around the lattice, Dick would chase Minnie over to the far side of their abode and keep her there, for the next pit on that side is occupied by the old grizzly, who was considered too old for flirting.

Dick could not keep constant watch,

however, so it happened that one day when Buster was gazing through the lattice Minnie ambled over to that side and said "Howdy." Buster was enchanted.

He thrust out a friendly tongue, and, as the holes in the lattice are a little over an inch square, the tip of his tongue stuck through one of these holes. Then it was that Minnie showed what kind of a person she is; for, in spite of the fact that she had led him on, every bear in the row knows it, she pretended to be very much insulted and up and bit off all she could get of the end of his tongue, that being fully half an inch.

Buster bled frightfully and the ardor of his admiration for Minnie suffered a considerable frost, so that Dick does not have quite so much cause for jealousy in that quarter as he once did. Yet he has his hands full, for Buster still signifies that he is sensible of Minnie's fascination, while, on the other side, the old grizzly is falling an unexpected victim to the same charms.

It is queer how these bears differ in temperament. Buster is a cheerful, equable, easy-going creature. Dick, for instance, is by no means insensible to the fact that Yakkie is a delightful young person and he has sometimes conveyed his admiration via the lattice.

But does Buster therefore excite himself and chase Yakkie into the house and lie down before the door, as Dick does with his Minnie? Not a bit of it. Buster beguiles Yakkie into a friendly frolic, playfully lams her over the head, just by way of reminding her who's who, and there the matter ends.

Probably this happy disposition is one reason why Buster has grown to be such a fine big fellow. He has always been contented; always liked his feed. He was caught near Cape Douglas, Alaska, in May, 1901, and weighed then only 18 pounds.

Cubs of the Alaskan brown bear species are worth from \$200 to \$250 delivered at Seattle. This particular cub was not received at Washington until January, 1902, by which time he weighed 180 pounds.

He has been weighed about once a year since then, the last time being about a month ago, when he had reached 1,050 pounds, a gain of eighty pounds in the last year. He is about four and one-half feet high at the shoulder and when he gets up on his hind feet he stands almost ten feet tall.

It is a simple matter to get Buster into his house, close the gate behind him, and then get him out into the great moving box, which is hauled onto the scales for weighing. But it is next to impossible to manage Dick that way.

western boundary of civilization, but the brave adventurers had set their eyes on the golden fields of California, across 2,000 miles of desert, plain and mountain and, in company with two Frenchmen, brothers, named Broquet, Renner pushed on to Dubuque, Ia., by stage coach. From there to Sioux City the trip took twenty-seven days.

"Part of the way we had a stage," says Dr. Renner, "but further west we had to use a wagon, and drew it ourselves. We carried a considerable amount of mail with us and, as the streams were swollen, we had to swim across and guide our wagon over with ropes, getting the mail pouches over in the same way. West of Independence there was no settlement in Iowa. When we reached Sioux City we bought a skiff and floated down the Missouri river to Nebraska City."

Life in New Land

This was to be the home of Dr. Renner for thirty-five years. Events occurred to keep him there, and associations grew up which caused him to abandon all thought of California. First, he met Colonel Charles A. Manners, who was engaged in marking the boundary line between Kansas and Nebraska. Colonel Manners offered Renner a place with his surveying party and Renner accepted, gaining much experience in that summer, and the following summer spent roughing it on the plains. During the winters he lived in Nebraska City at the Nuckolls house, and practiced his profession among a people who were so healthy that they could be nothing but a discouragement to an ambitious young doctor.

Dr. Renner married Miss Christina Melchoir in January, 1859. He had then established a fair practice. The following winter he embarked on a voyage upon the sea of German journalism which lasted actively more than thirty years, and continues to the present time to some degree. Twenty German-American residents of Nebraska City started the first German newspaper there, subscribing for 100 shares of stock at \$5 each, which produced a sum sufficient in that crude day to establish a newspaper. Dr. Renner was the moving spirit and was made secretary, editor and business manager of the new publication. Nebraska was still a territory then, and Dr. Renner tells how he economically arranged for the title line of his paper. He wanted to call it the "Nebraska Staats Zeitung" or "Nebraska State Newspaper," but as Nebraska was still a territory, this was impossible. So he had the head cast in three sections and called the paper at first the "Nebraska Deutsche Zeitung." When Nebraska became a state he merely substituted the word "Staats" for "Deutsche." The material for printing the paper was brought from Cincinnati, and on April 4, 1861, the first forms were locked up and taken on a wheelbarrow to the office of the Nebraska City News, where the paper was printed on a hand press. From that time until 1892, when he sold out, Dr. Renner continued to edit and publish the Staats Zeitung. It wielded a powerful influence among the sturdy German settlers of the state, and Dr. Renner always stood for what was best in government. During the civil war he was a strong union man and abolitionist, and he reflected his beliefs in his paper with a strong pen. The paper is now published in Nebraska City by John Mattos, Jr., former vice consul of the United States in Berlin.

Experience with Indians

Ugly wounds on both arms and a scar a quarter of an inch from the jugular vein are reminders of Dr. Renner's Indian fighting days. It was in the early days of the civil war that four companies of soldiers were raised at Nebraska City in response to the proclamation of Governor Sanders. Dr. Renner was elected captain of one of these, known as the Otoe County Mounted Reserves. They were kept at home to defend the settlers against the Indians who, emboldened by the departure of most of the fighting men to the scenes of the civil war, were becoming more and more menacing.

Serving his country by publishing a loyal newspaper and holding himself constantly in readiness to go out against the Indian foe whenever the red men became troublesome, Dr. Renner passed the first three years of the civil war. Then came the days of the Indian uprising in the west. On August 7, 1864, Colonel O. P. Mason came into the newspaper office in Nebraska City and ordered Captain Renner to lay aside his pen and take up the musket. He told him of the uprising of the Indians and ordered him to proceed at once against them with the Otoe County Mounted Reserves. He also had him sign a receipt for thirty muskets, five carbines and 3,000 rounds of ammunition.

Captain Renner lost no time in getting his men together, and that same afternoon they rode away to the southwest. They found the homes of the settlers deserted along the line of their march. Arriving in Beatrice, they left a few of their surplus arms there, and then rode on south to the Kansas line, meeting everywhere the most horrible scenes of slaughter, rapine and devastation. A brush with the Indians occurred near Alexandria, where Dr. Renner was badly injured.

"I was taking aim at an Indian," says Dr. Renner in recalling the incident. "But at the same moment another shot at me with a gun loaded with a terrible load of slugs and other things. He had cut up lead and had taken the buttons from the vests of United States soldiers who had been killed and had loaded his gun with these articles. The charge struck me in the right and left arms and in the throat, which were all pretty much on a line while I was in the position of taking aim. One slug missed my jugular vein by a hairbreadth, and if it had struck, of course, nothing could have saved me. My two arms were shattered and useless. A very peculiar thing about one of the brass soldier buttons was that it struck on my forearm and left the imprint of the eagle on the skin so that it could be distinguished for years afterward."

"I had my chest of medicines and surgical tools with me, and with these I managed to fix up my wounds so that I could be moved back to Nebraska City."

Distinguished in Politics

As a legislative and executive officer, Dr. Renner is also distinguished. He was a councilman in Nebraska City three terms. He was elected to the territorial legislature in 1864, and was a member of the constitutional convention which met on July 4 of that year. He was appointed assessor of internal revenue for Nebraska in 1867, and served until 1870. He was appointed revenue agent for Texas, Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado and Indian territory in 1875, with headquarters at St. Louis, but resigned this place one year after and returned to Nebraska City. He was the first president of the Nebraska Territorial Pioneers' association.

Dr. Renner has ten children, nine of whom are living. These are as follows: Frederick Renner of the Yetter Wall Paper company, Omaha; Albert B., farmer and stockman, Jansen, Neb.; Percival, proprietor Renner Printing house, Hastings, Neb.; Horace Greeley and Friel Nuckolls, ranchmen and mine owners, Rand, Colo.; Flora, wife of Edward W. Peterson, wholesale coffee merchant, Chicago; Lulu, wife of William Headrick, jeweler, Sterling, Colo.; Lillie, wife of Dr. J. M. Cottrell, Hebron, Neb. and Grace, wife of Elbert S. House, Heiley, Neb.

Dr. Renner is still a vigorous man, in spite of his seventy-eight years of strenuous life. He has never worn glasses and reads now without their use. He lives with his wife at 930 North Twenty-seventh street. He has done much writing in an editorial way for the Omaha Tribune and the Westliche Post since coming to Omaha, and has been active in politics.

A number of documents in his possession indicate the unselfish services which he rendered to the country in the days of the civil war. He has commendatory letters from Brigadier General Isaac Coe, Colonel O. P. Mason, Governor Saunders, J. Sterling Morton and others. That of General Coe says in part that he was "noted for his bravery and public spirit," and that "he did not ask for nor receive compensation for his services as scout, fighter and surgeon during the civil war time."