

# THE HERMAN DISASTER

Details of the Storm that Brought Destruction and Death.

## TEN DEAD TWENTY-FIVE WOUNDED

Only Six Buildings in the Town Left Standing—Hundreds of People Homeless and Subjects of Charity—Measures Taken to Afford Relief.

HERMAN, Neb., June 16.—Special to the Omaha Bee: The desolation is indescribably pathetic. Such is the universal verdict of the thousands of spectators who have visited the site of the once pretty village of Herman today.

Yesterday it was peopled by a happy, prosperous half-thousand citizens as could be found in Nebraska. Today, with half a dozen exceptions, all are homeless without a place to lay their heads or a table from which to eat. Yesterday they would have scorned charity. Today the wealthiest are living on provisions sent by kindly-hearted citizens from neighboring towns.

Days will pass before the debris will have been cleared away and the scene will have lost even a portion of the heartrending features which may be seen on every side.

As a result of the storm, ten persons lie dead, one family having been almost entirely swept out of existence. Twenty-five are injured, some of them fatally.

The dead:  
A. B. HOPKINS, farmer, Herman.  
MRS. A. B. HOPKINS, Herman.  
ANDERSON HOPKINS, son of A. B. Hopkins, Herman.

MRS. KESLO, Pender, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins, whom she was visiting.  
LOUIS CLAUSSEN, machinist, Missouri Valley, Ia., injured so he died later in Blair.

W. S. RICHARDS, postmaster, Herman; died from suffocation, as he was suffering with chronic case of asthma.

J. E. HAWKINS, home five miles northwest of Herman; blown into barn and killed by lightning.  
THOMAS HINES, plasterer, Blair; died from injuries after removal to his home.

CHILD OF S. M. DAVIS.  
EARL PETERSEN, son of farmer four miles west of Herman in Dane Hollow.

The injured:  
Carrie Keslo, aged 7, home in Pender; skull fractured, will probably die.  
Ella Hopkins, Herman; face cut, head and body badly bruised.

William Anderson, Herman; left side of skull fractured, may die.  
Mrs. William Anderson, Herman; back and side of skull fractured; body badly bruised.

Ed Tackett, Herman, head cut quite seriously.  
E. G., or "Caney" West, head and body badly bruised, nail run through foot, removed to Tekamah.

Mrs. E. G. Pegan, Herman, head cut and bruised about shoulders.  
Mrs. John Klinskenbeard, Herman, head and face cut.

C. Rankin, employe on Herman stock farm, picked up in street; injuries consist of bruises and cuts about head; suffering from nervous prostration.  
Earl Pipher, boy, Herman, temple and head cut, hand badly bruised.

Fred Christensen, restaurant keeper, Herman, head cut, arm bruised.  
E. A. Pegan, merchant, Herman, head badly cut.

"Grandma" Nosler, mother of Mrs. Hawkins, five miles northwest of Herman, both arms broken, internal injuries, not expected to live.

Mrs. J. E. Hawkins, five miles northwest of Herman, ribs broken and body badly bruised, injuries not fatal.  
Miss Hawkins, daughter of J. E. Hawkins, five miles northwest of Herman, back badly sprained and bruised.

Peter Lenig, farmer one mile west of Herman, arm broken and body badly bruised, injuries may prove fatal.  
Mrs. A. Anderson, Herman, head and face badly cut, arms said to be broken, removed to Blair, injuries may prove fatal.

H. H. Herzog, lumberman, head cut slightly, body bruised.  
George Huntington, an aged citizen of Herman, face cut and badly bruised.

Fred Hurrell, farmer and spiker, head cut.  
Oliver Lowe, creamery man, Herman, head bruised and cut.

George Coyle, station agent, head cut slightly.  
Mrs. Louisa Wachter, wife of implement dealer, Herman, bruised badly, causing a succession of fainting spells.

Louisa Wachter, implement dealer, Herman, body badly bruised.  
Mrs. William Bree, Herman, left shoulder badly bruised and back sprained.

Yesterday afternoon at 5 o'clock Herman presented a peaceful scene. A little later clouds began to gather and before 6 o'clock torrents of rain were deluging the streets. The citizens were not frightened at the appearance of the storm, because they thought it was simply a repetition of the heavy rain-falls, which had visited that section previously. At 6 o'clock, however, ominous clouds began to appear, and little knots of people assembled in every part of the town to watch them. As the clouds grew more dense the inky blackness appeared terrifying and the more timid sought storm cellars. Scores of people congregated in these cellars awaiting the approaching cyclone.

At 6:15 it swept down upon them, coming from the northwest with a frightful velocity. Those who were still in positions to watch its onward sweep say that it came from two directions and the appearance of the town today would indicate that such was the case. Old-timers who were cooler-headed, however, think differently. They believe it came down from the northwest, spreading as it struck obstructions and converging when these were torn out of the way. It required but a few minutes for the storm to do its work, although it seemed hours to the unfortunates penned up in the storm caves.

Citizens who are able to recall their impressions during the storm, although suffering with terror, say that

as the wind passed over them it seemed like the flight of thousands of large birds, accompanied by the intermittent crashes of heavy shells. They knew little of the havoc which was wrought in and around their homes. When they emerged it was to find a scene of desolation which was absolutely appalling.

Houses were blown down in every direction. With few exceptions the citizens could locate their homes only by the cellars in which they had crouched or by a few familiar pieces of furniture which remained in the shells which formerly had been comfortable and comfortable homes. As far as the eye could see, from south to north, no building stood to furnish a refuge for the homeless citizen.

It required only a moment of contemplation of the frightful scene to bring the citizens to a realization of the duties to each other. Parents began looking for children, wives for husbands and sons for their parents. As these were found unscathed the neighborly spirit took possession of them and they turned their attention to alleviating the sufferings of those about them.

The dead were removed to the Methodist church in the north part of the city, which served as a morgue. The injured were taken to a relief train to Blair. Relief trains came down from Tekamah and Blair with physicians, clergymen and nurses to aid in the search for the injured and dead. Ninety-six persons, injured and uninjured, were sent on an Omaha train to Blair, where they were cared for in the Clifton hotel and in the homes of the citizens. The night was made all the more disagreeable by the rain, which fell on the homeless citizens in torrents. It ceased only for an hour, apparently to gather additional force and make a second attack. Few thought, however, of seeking refuge from the elements, spending the night, especially the men, in looking for the injured. The women and children were sent to the school house and the other buildings which remained intact.

The darkness of the night was broken by brilliant flashes of lightning, which added to the impressiveness of the scene. The power of the storm appeared to have been irresistible, although its ravages were not plainly observed until this morning, when the sun revealed them in all their hideousness.

As the hours passed and the returns from the injured increased it seemed to the citizens as if every family in the town had suffered. After a systematic canvass had been made, however, it was discovered that those living in the northern portion had suffered most in casualties. It was there the storm had done its worst, although its force was almost as great in the heart of the town.

The storm undoubtedly came down from the northwest. Its first effects are reported from five miles northwest of the city, where the home of J. E. Hawkins was wiped off the earth. Mr. Hawkins was blown into his barn. Lightning seemed anxious to supplement the cyclone in its destructiveness and added a bolt. It struck the barn, setting it afire and killing Mr. Hawkins, if the force of the wind had not ended his life previously. This morning his remains were found charred to a crisp and unrecognizable. "Grandma" Nosler, mother of Mrs. Hawkins, was badly injured internally and both arms were broken. It is not believed she can survive. Mrs. Hawkins was badly injured and her daughter had her back hurt. The house was razed to the ground, while not enough of the outbuildings could be found to fill the box of an ordinary lumber wagon.

Continuing its southerly course, tearing trees up by the roots, leveling fences, strewn barbed wire across the country and covering the earth with debris the cyclone next made its appearance at the home of A. B. Hopkins, half a mile northwest of Herman. Here it wrought the saddest havoc, the happy family of the farmer being slain outright, with one exception.

The bodies of Mr. Hopkins and his wife were found 100 yards north of the house in his orchard after the storm. They had been blown out of the house by the wind, which, in its rotary motion, apparently whirled them out of its path as if angry at them for not having placed an obstruction in its way.

The body of Mrs. Keslo was found lying on a pile of debris near the former site of the house. Anderson Hopkins, the son of the owner of the farm, lay near in the last agonies of a terrible death. Back in the orchard holding to a small sapling as if her life depended upon the tenacity of her grip, lay Ella Hopkins, an elderly daughter, with her face and head badly cut and her body bruised. Near her little Carrie Keslo, granddaughter of Mr. Hopkins, was sitting on a stump, dazed and motionless, as if she did not realize what had happened.

The wind played strange pranks around this house, apparently delighting in the destruction it was making. The trees in the orchard north of the house were torn up by their roots. Their tops pointed in a westerly direction as if they had been blown down by a wind coming from the north. To the west of the house the trees were blown toward the southeast, the wind apparently resuming its original course. Not an outbuilding was left standing. Bed clothing, wearing apparel, furniture and stock were scattered in every direction.

Having demolished everything about the Hopkins homestead, the death dealing cloud sped upon the town. It struck the first house in the extreme northwestern portion. This was occupied by Peter Christensen. Hardly a vestige of the formerly comfortable cottage was left. It being carried away and smashed into such small fragments that Mr. Christensen could not find even the lintel of one of his doors. Again the storm seemed to desire vengeance upon an unintentional obstruction. Not only did Mr. Christensen lose his home in Herman, but the storm swept away his house and barn on his farm four miles west of the city, in what is known as Dane Hollow.

In the same yard with Mr. Christensen was the home of Mrs. William Bree. She had seen the storm approaching and had taken refuge, with

her daughter, Mrs. Louisa Wachter, in the cellar beneath the front porch. Mr. and Mrs. Christensen came and joined them, and it is to this destruction of their home that the latter two owe their lives. The Bree house was torn from its foundation and tumbled to the south, leaving the cellar and its occupants unprotected. A brick struck Mrs. Bree on the shoulder, while several flying missiles fell upon Mr. and Mrs. Wachter, bruising and cutting them quite severely.

Veering a trifle to the east, the wind passed between the Bree house and a dwelling across the street, leaving the latter unharmed, although it was only fifty feet away. Right on this street is where the storm spread. Striking the home of John Fitch on the corner of the street southeast of Mrs. Bree's house, it commenced the leveling process, its wrath being two blocks in width. As if guided by a hand which believed in destroying everything possible, it backed up a trifle, crossing the back yard of the home of Mrs. J. C. Stokes, the first house on the west side of the main street which was injured. Only slight damage was inflicted here, however.

Across the street from Mrs. Stokes it struck a house where dinner had evidently been ready when the storm approached. The table was set and even today the dishes are still untouched. It was here that the Andersons lived. They took to a cellar, accompanied by Louis Claussen, which proved so poor a refuge that all were injured. Claussen so badly that he died several hours later after having been removed to Blair.

Most of the citizens between Seventh and Second streets felt the full brunt of the storm. Across from John Fitch's place, west of West street, his barn was razed, not a single shingle being left. A little further south on West street the home of Mayor E. W. Burdick had the roof lifted off the eastern wing. It was not far from this point that Postmaster W. S. Richards lost his life. He sought safety in a cellar, but it proved his tomb. He was suffering from chronic asthma and it is believed that this, augmented by the terror of the occasion, was the cause of his death, as there were no marks upon his body when he was found.

Another was so seriously injured in the heart of the city that he died later. He was T. J. Hines, a contractor from Blair, who had come to Herman during the afternoon to attend to some business. He was caught under some debris which fell between two buildings and injured fatally. He was removed to his home in Blair, where he died this morning. Mr. Hines was formerly a resident of Omaha, where he was well known and highly respected. He came to Nebraska early in the '60s.

With the exception of the Central hotel and a residence a block north not a single building was left standing in the heart of the city. Both these buildings were fairly gutted by the wind. The storm came just as the evening meal was being served at the hotel. In fact, two guests were at the table when the proprietor, M. J. Kenyon, entered and advised them to accompany him and his family to a cave until the danger had passed. In this cave the ten persons composing the family of Mr. Kenyon, the help at the hotel and ten boarders and guests, found a safe shelter from the storm, as no one was injured.

The Baptist church, several blocks above the hotel, was leveled, the wind scattering the seats about the streets and carrying the pulpit several blocks toward the south. Just below the church the implement house of Louis Wachter was demolished. A large stock of bugles and farm implements was wrecked, the wind carrying the lighter portions of the vehicles away and, angry at the resistance of the more weighty machines, wrapping them up in coils so they would be rendered useless forever.

The Plateau bank, the only brick structure in the town, was torn to pieces, the brick being scattered for blocks. Nothing but the vault was left standing, the wind driving a heavy rail through its side to remind the owner of its terrific force.

Below the bank the general merchandise store of E. A. Pegan, the millinery store of Mrs. M. Denny, the harness shop of William Gray, the general store of Kenyon & Co. and the hardware store of D. W. Harper, the saloons of Sam Deaver, Ed Bonneau and Sam Barrett, the grocery of Ben Lydblood, the drug store of G. M. Lydick and the general store of H. H. Wallace were crushed to splinters, the loss being almost total in each case. Mr. Lydick had just put in a handsome soda fountain, which was disfigured beyond recognition. His loss is very heavy, as he also had about \$1,200 worth of furniture stored in another part of the city which was totally destroyed.

In its course southward the storm struck the row of workshops of the city and demolished them. A great iron boiler sixty feet in length and weighing seventy tons was rolled a block.

Not only did the storm wreck all the buildings on the main street, but it went out of its way to deal the railroad a pretty hard rap. The stock yards, opposite the Plateau bank, were razed, the heavy fence and deeply imbedded posts proving poor obstructions to the wind. Back of them the Peasey elevator and the elevator of the Crowell Grain and Lumber company contributed their roofs, the upper portion of the cupola leaving in each case. The contents were thus exposed to the rain, which poured down upon them in floods all night.

Along the Omaha railroad track nine cars were blown over, their trucks being twisted off and carried twenty-five or thirty feet away. Two cars were apparently picked up from the track and set down three feet away, thereby giving the impression that the wind had found them with their load of grain too heavy for further transportation. The railroad depot, coal sheds and telegraph wires were blown down, the books of the depot being carried half a block away and deposited in a bunch upon the hill. Superintendent Haynes estimates the loss to the railroad alone at \$6,000.

Over across the railroad lived the only man who carried cyclone insurance in the town. This was John Larson, section foreman for the Omaha railroad. When Larson saw the storm approaching he gathered his family about him and descended to the cement cellar which he had constructed

shortly after a hard windstorm several years ago. He thought from the appearance of the storm at that time that he might need it and it was for this purpose that he put so much toll and money into it. His labor was rewarded by the success of his venture. That day he saved his life and those of the beings he valued most. The storm carried away his house, leaving the cellar open to the world, but the occupants were secure from harm. He is homeless today, but his cellar will remain and a new home will rise on the site of the old one, as John says he intends to retain the cellar as long as he lives. He had \$1,000 cyclone insurance on his house and contents. As scarcely a vestige of either remains he will ask the Phoenix Insurance company to pay his policy.

Returning to the main street and concentrating its force, the storm scattered the lumber from the yard of the Crowell Lumber company to the four winds, although they seemed to have been concentrated into one for the time being. The cottage of D. W. Fichter, local agent for the Standard Oil company, lost its roof, and the oil company's building, which was south of the cottage, was lifted from around the two heavy tanks and blown across the country to remain unidentified. The pipes around the tanks were bent into coils, having the appearance of having been wrapped around a gigantic spool.

Opposite the office of the Standard Oil company the homes of Dr. Clark and D. W. Harper were visited. The roof of the rear wing of the Harper residence was torn off and the side of the house badly marred by flying pieces. The wind blew the windows out of Dr. Clark's house and the rain did the rest during the night, coming in through the damaged roof and soaking everything within.

The last house struck in the southern portion of the town was occupied by S. J. West. It was switched around so the corners rested on the sides of the foundation, but the damage was slight, except to the contents, which suffered materially from the soaking they underwent. It was here that "Caney" West was injured. The remainder of the family went to the cave as soon as they saw the dark cloud approaching. "Caney" West did not think the cloud would strike Herman, so he remained in the house. When he saw it really intended to visit the little town he removed his shoes so he could wade to the cave. He was too late, however, as the wind caught him before he left the house. It carried him out through the window, which was broken by the wind for his passage. He was found by his brother later limping around in the yard in a dazed condition, trying to find his way back to the house. He had run a nail through his foot and was seriously injured about the body.

After passing West's house the storm veered to the east, and left the large school house and a couple of cottages opposite it uninjured. Then, as sated with destruction, it rose in the air and left the vicinity which it had ravaged so sorely.

When the spectators began to arrive this morning the sight was one which appalled the most thoughtful. Piles of lumber lay in the streets. Wherever the eye turned it rested upon the results of the visit of the elements. Hogs, horses, cattle, chickens, ducks and cats were strewn along the streets, the storm having driven them to their death. The household goods of the citizens were strewn from one end of the town to the other. Vases, books, furniture of all kinds, china and glassware and kitchen utensils were seen on every hand. Men who considered themselves well off in the world yesterday wandered over the scene of their late abodes today wondering where the next meal was coming from. Piteous smiles, which were given with a vain attempt to be cheerful, marked the faces of the unfortunate citizens when they spoke of their misfortune. Each tried to make light of his own losses when a neighbor was near and to offer his condolences for the hard luck of the other.

It was a scene of destitution, although few of the sightseers appeared to realize it. Two thousand of them wandered over the ruins looking for souvenirs of the storm. They did not seem to realize that what they were taking might be the dearest pieces of bric-a-brac some women might have among all that mass of broken and mangled remnants. Each carried off something, some of the most humane, it must be confessed, contenting themselves with limbs from the broken trees or pieces of bark from the scarred veterans which had withstood dozens of storms, but finally succumbed to this one, which appeared to have contained all the violence of those which had passed before in years.

It is estimated that 5,000 persons visited Herman and spent the day in sightseeing. Scores carried kolaks with them and the unsightly piles were photographed that others who were not so fortunate as to have had the opportunity to come might see them. The saloon men whose stock was buried under the ruins unearthed several eggs of beer and set up their dismantled bars. Over these they sold their drinks and kicked because citizens objected to the sight of drunken men on the streets while their hearts were full from the misfortunes they had suffered. At 4 o'clock the beer gave out and the saloon men were forced to vend cherry wine and pop, which to them seemed a sacrifice of time and much needed money because they might have done so much better on the brown liquid.

Sioux City Sends Relief.  
SIOUX CITY, June 16.—Sioux City at noon today sent a draft of \$210 to the relief committee at the stricken town of Herman, Neb. This money was raised inside of an hour and the committee is still at work. More money will be sent after the committee has had a chance to do some more soliciting. Donations of clothing and bedding also have been called for by the mayor and Commercial association.

Poincare Accepts the Task.  
PARIS, June 16.—Poincare informed President Loubet this morning that he would accept the task of forming a cabinet. He will take the war portfolio, in addition to the presidency of the council.

M. Mellie, in an interview with M. Poincare, strongly urged the latter to form a cabinet whose main plank will be the settlement of the Dreyfus affair.

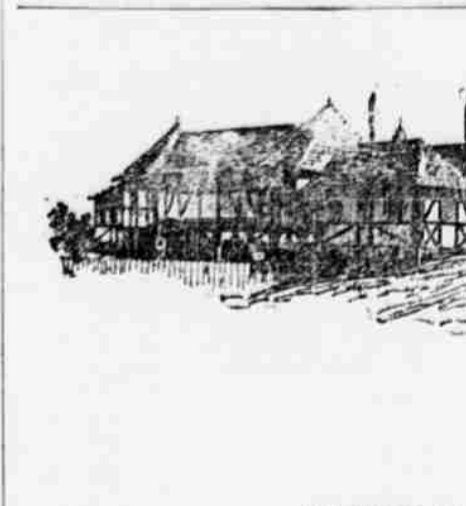
# THE GREATER AMERICA

How It is to Be Shown in the Forthcoming Exposition.

## TURNSTILES MOVE JULY 1, 1899.

At This Time the Masses Can Pass Into The Beautiful Grounds and View What Has Been Gathered From All Sections of the Country for Their Education and Delight.

Any intimation or suspicion that the Greater America Exposition, to be held at Omaha, beginning July 1 and continuing four months, may fall or prove aught but a perfect success in point of attractiveness, educational worth or actual attendance, is wholly without foundation in fact or reason. The conservative, careful men of wealth who have carried this project forward have not expended over \$100,000 with

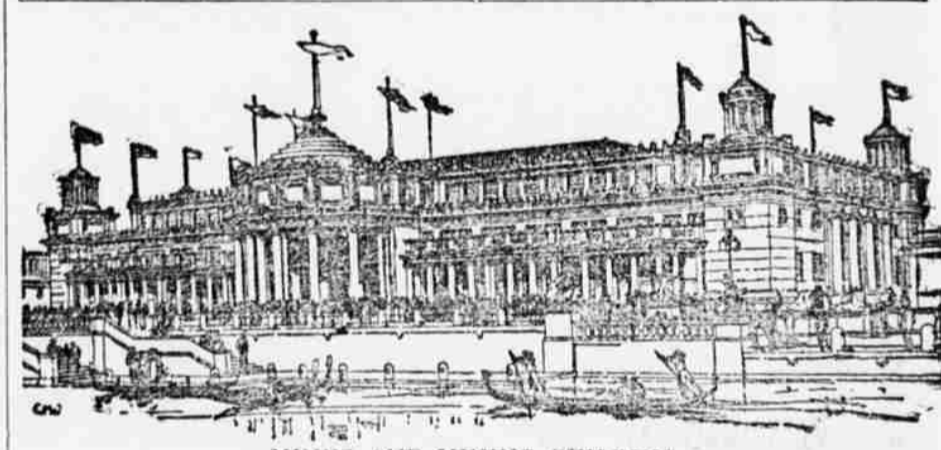


SECTION OF THE MIDWAY.

the possibility of seeing it wholly lost. Every dollar needed to insure the complete and emphatic success of this great enterprise will be forthcoming with practically as much certainty as if it were now in the exposition treasury. The colonial exhibits planned as the basic feature of the enterprise are being collected and will be landed in this country by government trans-

possibly, of the World's Fair at Chicago. It will also be the first exposition ever designed to afford information on a practical, tangible question. No citizen will be fully equipped to best exercise the privilege of suffrage in the solution of the great pending question of expansion until he has seen the colonial exhibits at the exposition and has studied the people, products and resources of the lands acquired through the war with Spain. Several departments of the federal government, notably the war and agricultural departments, are lending material assistance in the collection of comprehensive exhibits from these countries.

A contract has been closed with the Palm Fireworks company of Chicago for twenty marvellously brilliant spectacular performances during the first two months of the exposition. "The Fall of Manila" and "The Destruction of Cervera's Fleet" will be reproduced with elaborate scenery—realistic pyrotechnic effects, splendid costumes and grand illuminations. Over 300 people will participate. The stage around which the scenery will be set will be 100 feet long and 50 feet



MINES AND MINING BUILDING.

ports. The governmental departments are manifesting an interest in this enterprise that ensures it a successful opening should other resources fail. Above all the people of the country are manifesting an intense curiosity concerning the colonial exhibits, which, in view of the great question now pending as to the policy to be pursued in the dispositions of lands acquired through the war with Spain will come as a response to the prayers

American ingenuity and handicraft will be more graphically shown in the manufacturing exhibits than at any of the expositions of the past. Some of the novelties promised are mentioned. The Allen Chester Silk company of Patterson, N. J., will have in full operation every day three looms and a spooling machine. The same which took the gold medal at the World's Fair. One loom will manufacture white silk ribbon badges bearing colored pic-



FRATERNAL BUILDING.

of a perplexed people for additional light and information on a subject needing elucidation. Special features of great interest to every citizen of the republic are being planned, and before the fall of 1899 has passed into history the pilgrimage of the preceding year to Omaha will have been reenacted.

The Greater America Exposition for

tures of President McKinley. Vice President Hobart, officers of the exposition and other celebrities. Another will weave silk handkerchiefs bearing pictures of exposition buildings and a third will turn out fine silk dress goods.

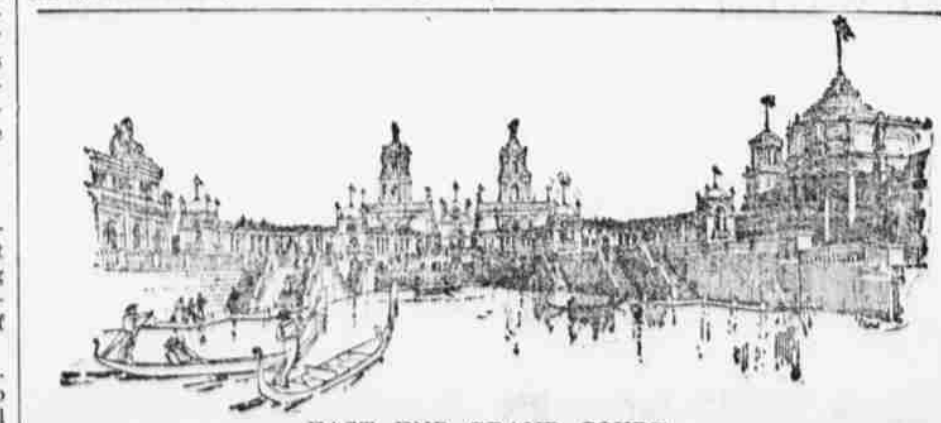
The concessions being granted for Midway attractions at the Greater America Exposition at Omaha this



LAGOON AND FINE ARTS BUILDING.

1899 will be the first in history in which large appropriations of taxpayers' money have not been asked from public treasuries, and it will eclipse in magnitude and attractiveness any of its predecessors, with the exception

summer already exceed those of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition. Carl has been exercised to permit only the most interesting novelties to get a footing on this year's cosmopolitan Midway.



EAST END GRAND COURT.