

THE UNION PACIFIC SHOPS.

A Great Hive of Industry, Where 1,300 Men are Employed.

THE GROUNDS AND BUILDINGS.

Four Historical Incidents—Character of the Workmen—The Amount of Wages Paid Annually.

[Written for the Omaha Sunday Bee.]

The "shops," in this instance, are meant the multitudinous structures in the northeastern part of the city, in which are carried on the manufacturing and repairing of material belonging to the Union Pacific road.

That they are still here is not because efforts have not been made to have them taken elsewhere. He is not a very old citizen of Omaha who does not remember that, at one time, Kansas City felt that she was to be honored with these hives of industry. Neither must he be a very old resident to recall the anticipations of Denver and Cheyenne, and even of Council Bluffs, when some uncounted winged rumor led each to believe that the glory of the shops was about to depart from Omaha forever and lodge with them for all time of importance. Nevertheless, the shops are still here, as has been remarked, and it may not be amiss to say that here, in all probability, they will, for a very long time remain. It is well that this is the case. With all her strides to metropolitan greatness, Omaha could scarcely afford to lose these manufacturers. They are a source of employment to hundreds of her citizens, as well, also, as a source of wealth to many of her merchants. More than any one enterprise, or even more than a dozen of her industries, these shops contribute to her prestige as a manufacturing center as yet but in its infancy. It is not an easy matter to outline

THE LOCATION.

of the shops. Suffice it to say that the grounds upon which they stand, may be approached from Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets, while the streets from the west which run up to their outline, extend both north and south for about half a mile.

Within this enclosure is a heterogeneous collection of small and large, young and old, brick and frame structures. They are scattered about in all directions, assume various shapes and subserve an unlimited variety of purposes. They are about as varied in their uses as the birds of that lively land. But antiquity, dust, dirt, smoke and elemental disturbance, have, in many instances, tarnished their brilliant exteriors. The ground outlined above, is, in some sense,

HISTORICAL.

It witnessed, at one extremity, the inception, way back in '65, of the great road which now extends from several different points, half way across the continent. It has seen the growth of cities, small and great, and the treacherous currents of the Missouri on many and many a threatening day. Several times has it been overflown, and several times have the fires gone out in the shops, while the mechanics have been also compelled to retire to their homes. To-day, however, it would not be able to resist, perhaps, any more successfully the rise of the river, from past experience the property it contains might more successfully be guarded from danger.

THE GREAT FLOOD.

One of the latest visitations from the river was in 1881. To look at the river now, and assume that it could rise and flood the territory mentioned would appear incredible. And yet, the year mentioned is also several others preceding, witnessed such an event. It had been a long and cruel winter. For nearly six months ice and snow lay upon the streets of Omaha, and so deep and compact, that the largest water mains to-day doing duty under our streets, lay beneath the crust by at least half a foot. A stranger would not have known that they had been laid along the gutter. The same time, the rivers and ice, relatively speaking, covered the country north. At length, the sun of spring began to melt the mountain streams and down the Missouri a Tiber looking flood, rushed madly in eddy and swirl bearing upon its surface countless thousands of cakes of ice, which seemed to enjoy the madness of their own adventurism. Some outlined the banks. The shops and crossed work, and everybody watched to see the water override the banks and flow in upon the ground of the shops. The water rose and the shops were flooded. It rose over the windowsills of the car shops and lodged a number of inches deep upon the floor. A large number of the tools of the carmen were destroyed, and damage of other kinds was also experienced. The company made a forcible resistance to the flood. A host of men was engaged night and day banking with stone, dirt, brick and other material the weaker points. The debris was hauled from all parts of the city and deposited in the yards as far as the teams could enter. It was then put on the wharves, and rolled down the planks where the banking was being done. So well was this work carried on that the water stood fourteen inches above the track before it entered the yards. But it finally overcame both watchers and bank. At about 1 o'clock, one morning, while the men were at work with pitchfork and shovel, a float of ice washed in the fence of the smelting works with a crash.

A GREAT CRASH.

The men with few exceptions fled precipitately, fearing that death was coming with the flood. In their absence, and the renewed impetus which had been gained by the flood, the water at length secured its dominion over the resisting territory. During that flood

ONE OF THE LARGEST STEAMERS

which plied on the Missouri steamed into the Union Pacific, and landed up at the pile of the company, which had originally been intended for the supplying of machines of locomotion on land only. There are photographs extant which depict this incident. The steamer was not in a hurry to resume the channel of the river. It did eventually however, and steamed away, leaving the iron and the white silken banner of the "Durance" together with the silver trumpets they had bought and won at fairs.

THE SHOP OFFICES.

Entering at Cass street, one finds the general offices of the motive power and car department. It is a light two-story brick building, and contains the business places of Clem Hackney, John Wilson, his assistant, and T. A. Davies, master mechanician of the Nebraska division. There are besides a number of other offices, giving employment to about forty clerks. The exterior of this building is covered with cladding which seems to be in the ejection of solicitors ever on the part of some person. On two sides of the building, on the ground, is a green lawn mown with excellent skill, while half a dozen trees at intervals diffuse a shade, especially favorable to the lower offices during the heat of both morning and evening.

THE ROUND HOUSE.

is situated to the south and east. It is semi-circular and contains twenty stalls. It was silent, ring, when I passed through

it, about half a dozen locomotives, some of which were being dismantled and loaded as if they had donned their wraps, not expecting company.

The business of the road is such now that engines can not be spared to rusticate in the stalls, those that were there being gotten in readiness for almost immediate use. Adjoining, on the north, is the

TIN, COPPER AND IRON shop, a brick building about 100x44 feet. Here about eighteen men are engaged daily in the work of their trade for the demands of the roads. The boiler shop employs about thirty men, and presents a scene of activity and noise which one rarely experiences. There is an incessant hammering not altogether musical, and a sounding of iron trying upon inexperienced ears. Here the boiler work for the road is done.

THE ROADMASTER'S DAISY.

Outside this shop lay a structure on wheels. It was about fourteen feet long, and had a roof like an elongated carriage. Its sides were loosely covered with canvas, while within was an upright boiler, intended for locomotive power. The places of the engineer and fireman were behind, while in front was a seat about three feet apart, the truck, the driver and the roadmaster's engine.

It is intended to enable an accurate inspection of the road, which most people would desire. As a rule they are industrious and thrifty.

The workmen are a credit to the road and Omaha. They seem devoted to the company and its present management, and realize that, with steady employment, reasonable wages, health and home, they approach as near a realization of perfect happiness as may be imagined in this sphere.

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