

Comparative Statistical Review of Omaha's Most Prosperous Year.

PROSPERITY FOR JOBBERS

Improvement Noted in Practically All Departments of Trade. LOCAL MANUFACTURERS ARE DOING WELL

Only Favorable Reports Heard from Men Who Buy and Sell—Money Plentiful and Collections Good—Everyone Well Pleas'd.

The class of the present calendar year calls attention to the fact that 1899 has been the most prosperous in the history of the Omaha jobbers. Times have steadily improved throughout the year in all the western country, so that consumers have had more to buy both in necessities and luxuries of life.

Local manufacturers have shared with the jobbers in the general prosperity, and in nearly all lines there has been a steady expansion. The larger manufacturing enterprises, such as the packing houses, smelters, etc., are familiar to everyone, and a whole city knows that they are prosperous and employing an army of men turning out trainloads of merchandise every week.

YEARLY BANK CLEARINGS

Steady Increase is Shown on a New Basis More Consistent with Safe Business Methods.

Adjustment of methods made during the year just closing preclude the possibility of intelligent comparison of the records of 1899 and 1898 in bank clearings.

Prior to March, 1899, South Omaha bank transactions were included in the Omaha clearing house by means of a system of estimates necessary because of the difference in time between the clearing hours in the two cities. These estimates were usually too full. Discrepancies among the banks of the two cities brought on a controversy that terminated in a refusal of the Omaha banks interested to accept any estimate whatever and of the South Omaha banks to clear at all.

About June an amicable agreement was reached whereby most of the South Omaha clearings are again run through the Omaha clearing house. The tendency of the controversy has been to diminish the sum total of Omaha clearings for the year materially, although it is well known an increase exists in the actual business transacted in that respect.

Inspection of the figures given for each month below discloses the effects of the controversy, showing a decrease for the year as compared with the last, but it also shows that since the readjustment there has been a steady increase. A few months more will round out the year under the new regime, when a better comparison can be made of the increase in Omaha clearings. The year 1898 was under the old system of clearing time in force, the banner year in Omaha's history. The comparative figures for 1898 and 1899 follow:

Table with columns for Year, Clearings, and Percentages. Rows for 1898 and 1899.

BUSINESS AT THE POSTOFFICE

Receipts Are About the Same as Those of the Exposition Year.

At the Omaha postoffice receipts during the exposition year of 1898 far exceeded those of any former period of equal length and it was expected to stand as a record-breaker. The past year, however, has given it a close race, and in some particulars has been better. The following table shows the business of the year 1899:

Table with columns for Category and Amount. Rows for Money orders, Domestic orders, etc.

During the year there was mailed as second-class mail matter 2,985,168 pounds, at a cost per pound, making a total amount collected of \$29,851.88.

BRISK DEMAND FOR REALTY

Increase of Over Thirty Per Cent in Volume of Transfers. COMPARATIVE FIGURES TELL THE STORY

Noticeable Increase in Current Real Estate Mortgages Over Last Year—Facts About Tax Levies.

One of the most hopeful signs of Omaha's prosperity has been the gradual but perceptible awakening of activity in real estate transfers and better prices secured for property. Tenement property for both rental and investment has been in great demand throughout the year, and the tenant class has been sorely pressed at times to find comfortable quarters.

Rentals sustained a rather sharp advance during the year and residences in sections for years avoided by cheap paying tenants have filled up with reliable and responsible people. Not only have all vacant storehouses been filled, but a tendency has been constantly growing to crowd two and three modest business enterprises into one storehouse.

Efforts to locate a number of manufacturing establishments or their agencies in the city have disclosed a painful lack of available buildings suitable for wholesaling and jobbing. This need is so imperative that the Commercial club has several times contemplated issuing an address to capitalists setting forth that capital supplying such structures at a moderate but assured rental would be of distinct advantage to the city.

CONDITION OF THE WEATHER

Uncommonly Delightful and Warm—Fulfilled Omaha During the Past Year.

During the year 1899 there were no great extremes of heat and cold in Omaha. The coldest day came in January and the hottest in September. The precipitation was sufficient to mature an abundant crop. The accompanying table shows the weather conditions by months as compared with the preceding year:

Table with columns for Month, Temperature (Max, Min, Mean), and Precipitation. Rows for 1898 and 1899.

OMAHA AS A HEALTH RESORT

Smallest Number of Deaths for Ten Years—Record for Birth List is Increased.

During the last year Omaha has established a remarkable record for good health, fecundity and longevity. The mortality statistics showing a decrease in the number of deaths and an increase in the number of births. Only 863 deaths occurred during the year, a smaller number than for any year in the last decade.

The most significant figures for the year are those regarding deaths, which reach the lowest point in 1899, the mortality rate of each of the seven years previous to 1898. The following table for the last eight years traces the record:

Table with columns for Year, Males, Females, Total. Rows for 1891-1898.

The foregoing figures show that the decrease in mortality during the last six years, due to it is claimed by physicians to the increasing use of the anti-septic treatment. The slight increase in the death rate this year is regarded as simply an incident without any particular significance.

MILES OF NEW PAVEMENT

Large Area of Permanent Surfaces is Laid During Season—Asphalt the Prevailing Material.

During the last year 2,444 miles of pavement were laid in Omaha, a considerably less area than in 1898, when 3,805 miles were put down. That year, however, was an exceptional one in this respect, and ran far ahead of its predecessors. Of the total pavement laid during the last year 2,355 miles were of asphalt and eighty-nine miles of brick. Of the \$1,500 miles of pavement in the city the proportion of materials is as follows: Asphalt, 29,765 miles; brick, 10,995 miles; stone block, 24,771 miles; macadam, 1,666 miles; wooden block, 15,409 miles.

The total cost of Omaha's pavement amounted to \$5,036,772.91. The work done in 1899 is as follows:

Table with columns for Material, Length, and Cost. Rows for Asphalt, Brick, etc.

GROWTH IN OMAHA RAILWAYS

Illinois Central Becomes a Factor in City's Transportation Affairs. ONE OF THE BEST YEARS EVER KNOWN

Betterment of Roadbeds, Equipments and Terminals and Prospective Improvements Give Much Hope for Future Omaha.

Local railroad men are unanimous in declaring the year 1899 satisfactory in every respect. The last year has witnessed the accomplishment of much which should work to the welfare of Omaha as a distribution center.

The advent of the Illinois Central opens to Omaha a vast territory tributary to the lines of this great railroad system, extending to Chicago, southeast to Louisville and south to St. Louis. The line to Omaha properly begins at Fort Dodge, a distance of six miles west of Fort Dodge. The grades on the line nowhere exceed twenty-six feet to the mile and the curves are very light. The roadbed is of heavy concrete steel, the roadbed is thoroughly ballasted and the physical condition is of a high standard.

By the inclusion of the Illinois Central into Omaha Minneapolis and St. Paul are brought nearer to this city by some thirty miles by reason of the connection made between the Minneapolis & St. Louis and the Illinois Central at Fort Dodge.

The last year has also been of great importance with the Union Pacific. Improvements in the equipment of the system have been numerous, the passenger and freight service has been enhanced and the running of fast trains has been brought to a new standard.

Several million dollars more will be expended on the roadbed to bring it to the condition of perfection which the executive officers have in mind. The main trunk line under way for a route which will in some way obviate the use of Sherman hill, a steep grade, precluding the possibility of fast time through Wyoming. A cut-off will also be completed during the coming year which will avoid Piedmont hill, in western Wyoming.

During the past year the Oregon, Short Line and the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company, the western branches of the Union Pacific, have come under the direct control of the parent system by the transfer of Union Pacific stock for the outstanding stock of these two systems. Separate executive heads are maintained over the three systems, but it is believed that this will gradually be superseded by the control of the parent system by the executive officers of the Union Pacific.

The Union Pacific's new union depot at Omaha was opened December 1. Its cost with the attendant improvements in track facilities passed the \$3,000,000 mark. The main building is 350 feet long, and an auxiliary building 200 feet in length is immediately in the rear. The union depot is used by the Union Pacific, Chicago & Northwestern, Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, Great Northern, Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, the Omaha & St. Louis and the Illinois Central railroads. The number of regular passenger trains using the new depot daily is: Arrivals, forty-five; departures, thirty-five.

The Burlington has within the last year made several great improvements to its system in Nebraska. Surveys have been made for extensions of its line to Hartsville, Wyo., and to Brush, Colo. These extensions will connect the Burlington with Omaha and are identical as far as Bridgeport, on the Platte river. Then one line branches off and follows the northern banks of the Platte to Hartsville and the other proceeds south to Brush. The line is already completed in and in operation as far as Bridgeport.

A new factor in Omaha railroad circles has been brought in by the inauguration of operations by the Omaha Bridge and Terminal Company, which was a bridge across the Missouri river, connecting Council Bluffs and Omaha. This company is temporarily furnishing the Illinois Central access to Omaha for its freight trains and also providing it with freight facilities with its warehouses both in Council Bluffs and Omaha.

The Omaha, Council Bluffs & Suburban railway, while not a railway in the strict sense of the word, partaking more of the nature of a street car line, will be in operation during the coming months. Work has already progressed toward the laying of rails from Omaha to Council Bluffs and thence to Lako Manava, and equipment for a modern electric railroad has been ordered.

The lines of the Northwestern system—the Chicago & Northwestern, the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha, the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley and the Sioux City & Pacific have enjoyed a year of unprecedented prosperity. These Northwestern lines, together with the Missouri Pacific, have secured and improved their depot facilities at the Webster street station. The Northwestern's new construction completed during 1899, opening up new trade territory for Omaha, exceeds all others. New lines constructed during the last year and now ready for operation are as follows:

Table with columns for Line, Length, and Cost. Rows for Kirksport, Wain Lake, etc.

Total, 298.62 miles. The addition of these 298.62 miles will add to the total approximate mileage of the Chicago & Northwestern in operation with the beginning of 1900, 8,283.02 miles.

Other Railroads. With the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific the year has been profitable. Like all the other roads operating out of Omaha the capacity of their freight and passenger facilities has been taxed during the last few months to the utmost.

The Missouri Pacific and the Omaha & St. Louis are improving the physical condition of their systems, and during the coming spring their lines will be laid with new eighty-five-pound steel rails. These two roads were accorded unusual passenger patronage during the year.

It is given out unreservedly that two more railroad companies expect to extend their lines to this city—the Great Northern and the Minneapolis & St. Louis. The former road, through its president, J. J. Hill, has long been anxious to get a foothold in Omaha, and the first step has been

LIBRARY IN CONSTANT USE

Home Circulation Increases During the Year by More Than Seven Thousand Volumes.

During the past year the shelves of the Omaha public library have been used more generally than ever. In the twelve months ending December 7, 593 more volumes were loaned to patrons than during the same period one year ago. The attendance at the reading room and referred to as the Byron Reed room on the other hand shows a slight decrease over the two preceding years owing to the number of visitors in the city during the two exhibitions.

In addition to the books in home circulation the number of books loaned to the public schools on the order of teachers. This plan was inaugurated December, 1898, and has proven a success. Of the books in general circulation 59,737 were used by juvenile borrowers. The table showing monthly comparative circulation is here given:

Table with columns for Month, 1898, 1899. Rows for January, February, etc.

The following figures show the mortgages that have been released or satisfied during the year:

Table with columns for Month, 1898, 1899. Rows for January, February, etc.

The number of visitors in the other departments, compared with one year ago, is as follows:

Table with columns for Department, 1898, 1899. Rows for Reference room, Reading room, etc.

The following miscellaneous information connected with the library will be of interest:

PAST YEAR IN LABOR'S FIELD

Increased Prosperity Enjoyed by the Men of Bone and Sinew. STEADY AND ACTIVE DEMAND FOR HELP

Organized Labor Has Grown Stronger During the Year—Gaining Every Point of View, Bettering Its Condition and Wages.

Nothing better attests the prosperity of the last year and the bright promise for the year just opening than the decided growth in the ranks of organized labor. The year 1899 is recognized as one of encouraging growth among the labor unions, but 1899 has witnessed the building of the Omaha Central labor union, which has employed at least wages, and even unskilled laborers have been scarce and the demand active.

No serious industrial troubles occurred during the year. Strikes were threatened or declared by the painters, carpenters, leather workers, job printers, pressmen, press feeders and bookbinders, but all were settled satisfactorily for the workmen with but slight interruption of work.

The painters, in April, demanding better pay, and within a month all of the principal employers but one had signed the settlement.

In August the carpenters demanded an increased wage schedule, to take effect September 5. At the end of three weeks the controversy was settled in their favor.

October 1 the leather workers, comprising the harnessmakers and saddlemakers, submitted demands for better pay. All the shops met the increase except one without demur, and after a strike of only one week the protesting firm acceded to the demands of its sixty workers.

During the same week the printing trades moved for the nine-hour working day, and a brisk season of negotiating with the employers, carried the day, although the situation for a time looked decidedly threatening. The settlement was effected without the loss of a day's work.

The Waiters' union has had several sharp encounters during 1899. In the course of which they have carried on a number of court and other embarrasements, but they have terminated the year with a laborer to their credit.

Material strength has been gained by organized labor during the year. Six local unions withdrew from the Omaha Central Labor union and assisted in the organization of the Trades and Labor assembly of South Omaha. The hole left in the ranks was soon refilled, however, by the organization of the wood workers, gravel roofers, bricklayers, bricklayers, and plasterers (tenders, masons, barbers, electrotypers and stereotypers, Federal Labor union and by the reorganization of the bookbinders and bookbinders' unions, making altogether forty local unions, representing a membership of close to 8,200 workmen, an increase of nearly 3,500 during the year.

A strong fight was made during the summer for Saturday night early closing, and during the hot weather there was no buying anything in the line of merchandise after 6 o'clock. This was effected by an agreement between a committee from the Central Labor union and the respective merchants. The early closing lasted for about two months, when it came to a sudden termination and since that time only one of the big stores has observed the agreement. It is said that the others have not done so because of a misunderstanding. The Central Labor union is still at work on this movement and it is expected that the bookbinders, bricklayers, plasterers, etc., will be able to effect a renewal of the early closing.

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