

History of the Den-- Many Stirring Scenes

During the annual visits of the royal pageant to Omaha the king and his courtiers are entertained at the den of the prime minister, the mighty and powerful Samsen, in which the solemnities of the Ak-Sar-Ben ritual are exemplified during the summer by the grand mufti to the loyal vassals of the realm. It is here that the preparations are all made for the annual carnival of splendor and magnificence, even the boats being all manufactured therein, under the supervision of Gus Renze, the wizard.

This is the largest building in Omaha and has a history that is interesting in itself. It has been the birthplace of many a sensational fad, as it was born itself out of a fad. In 1888, when the

promised to put in enough to wipe out the indebtedness. I was easy in those days and finally wrote out the check for \$3,000 and gave it to them. They made me president of the organization, which was known as the Coliseum Building association. It was promised that the money necessary to pay the debts of the concern would be paid upon the strength of my subscription and that they would have enough over to put in a steam heating plant, as Lindsey, who represented a loan company, promised to loan us a considerable sum. I remember that for my \$3,000 they gave me \$6,000 in stock. Well, we fixed up a note of the company and it was discounted and sold, but I soon found out that the debts were not being paid. I became uneasy about this, and

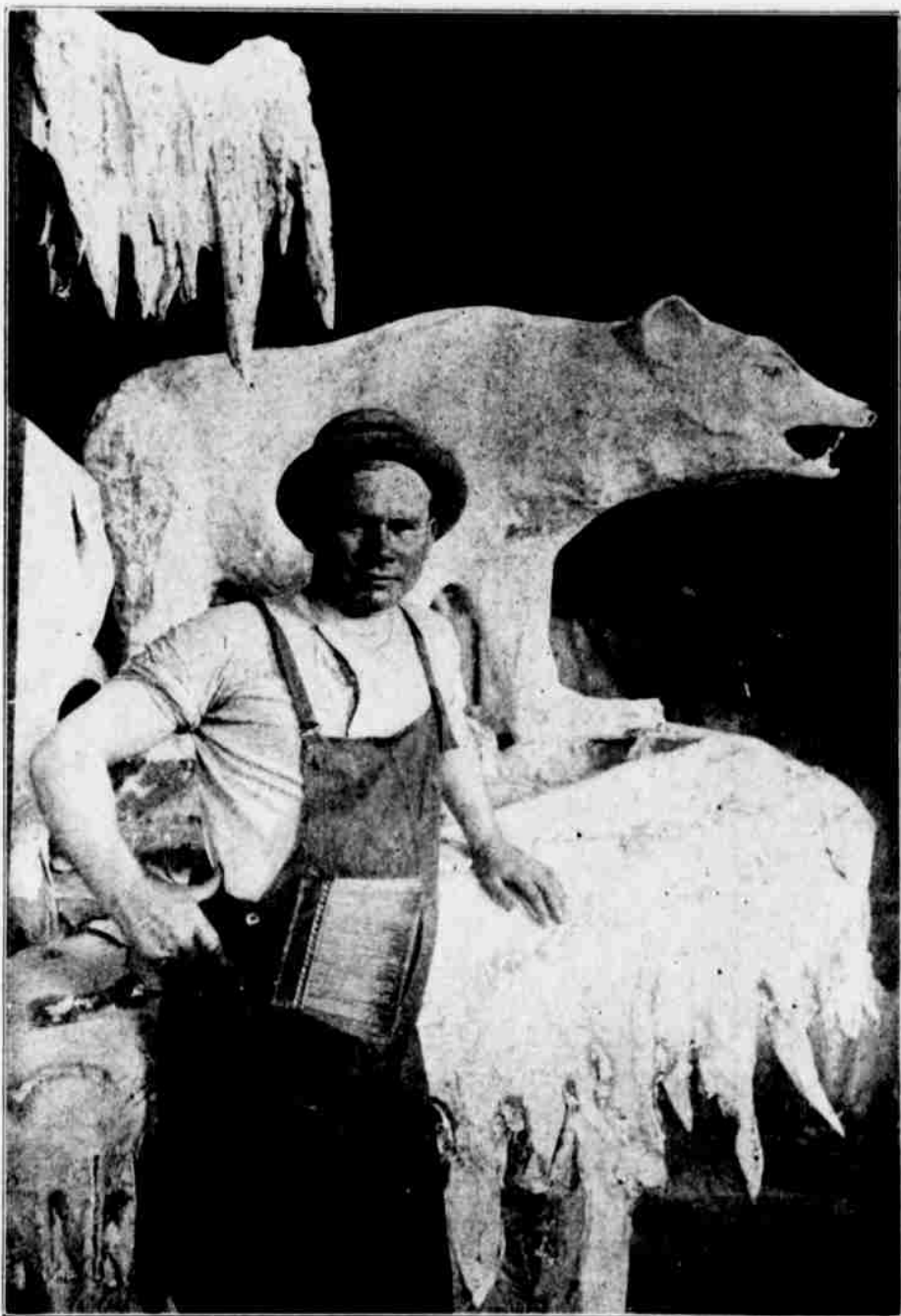


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An unsolicited, unbought and unpaid-for testimonial from The Omaha Daily News, September 10, 1900.



A. L. Stonecypher, one of Omaha's most progressive printers, has been in the business since he was a wee bit of a chap—when he came to the case first it was by standing on a soap box. He started in Omaha on a very small scale and now has one of the best equipped plants at 1201 Howard street in the city. He is a progressive citizen and always ready to help public enterprises with his time and money.



SUPERINTENDENT RENZE AT WORK IN THE DEN—Photo by Louis R. Bostwick.

athletic world was enrapt with ecstatic raptures over the bicycle riding fad, John S. Prince, a champion, was domiciled in Omaha and was a furious advocate of the great possibilities of that sport. In those days, not seemingly remote, bicycle riding was an accomplishment that qualified its experts as showmen. The utility of the vehicle was at that time an unsolved problem, and the commonest feats of riders of today were marvels that inspired beholders with wonder and admiration. Prince conceived the idea of erecting in Omaha a vast stadium, wherein should be enacted athletic tournaments that would outshine the Olympic games. By dint of perseverance and enthusiasm he interested a large number of Omaha gentlemen and capitalists in his project and a syndicate was formed to carry out his dreams of wealth. W. W. Lowe was president of the corporation that was formed, John M. Thurston vice president, Milo S. Lindsey, an Omaha lawyer of that day, was secretary. The company of which they were the officers, spent \$54,000 in erecting the present Coliseum, which covers an area of 300x160 feet, practically all of it in one great hall. The oval-shaped stadium is surrounded by tiers of seats, like the Circus Maximus of ancient Rome, and all is under a great roof resting on central wooden columns. It was a well built structure, and is today in a remarkably good state of preservation. For a time it served its purpose as the resort of athletes and their admirers, and some successful tournaments were held there during its early history, in bicycle racing, foot racing and kindred athletic diversions.

When the great structure was completed its promoters found themselves something like \$8,000 in debt, and the entertainments given there did not seem to produce the material with which to fill the cavity. After it had been in operation about a year the debts began to become pressing and W. I. Kierstead, then estimated to be worth something like \$100,000, was appealed to among others to preserve it from its creditors.

"Prince, Lindsey and others came to me," says Mr. Kierstead, "and urged me to put in \$3,000, saying that if I did so others had

when I spoke to Lindsey about it he still insisted that they would all be paid except some of the claims which he proposed to fight, as they were, he said, unjust. At length I got afraid of Lindsey and applied for a receiver, but he went into court and showed that he proposed to fight some of the claims and my application for a receiver was denied. Then Lindsey started out to fight some of the claims and finally came to me, saying that we would have to put up a bond of about \$900 in one of the suits, which he wanted me to sign. I was, as I said before, easy, and signed it, with the result that I had it to pay with all costs. I think my \$3,000 subscription to the concern cost me something like \$6,000 in one way and another.

Great Musical Entertainment.
"It was in the winter of 1896, I believe, that through the existence of this structure, the energy and enthusiasm of Edward Rosewater and my own easy circumstances at that time Omaha enjoyed probably the greatest musical entertainment that ever came this way. Mr. Rosewater came to me and presented the fact that it would be possible to get the Patti operatic aggregation in Omaha for two entertainments at the Coliseum. It was then in Mexico and was coming north by way of California and Salt Lake. In the company at that time were, in addition to Patti, Nordica, Albini and Tomagno, then the greatest tenor in the world. We communicated with the company and the manager, Marcus Mayer, came to Omaha to arrange for the event. We found that the only way to secure an appearance here was to put up a guaranty of \$13,500 for two entertainments, a matinee and evening concert. We did not have time then to do as they do now in getting up an entertainment that costs less money, go out and solicit subscriptions for a guaranty. We had to act, and the result of the negotiations was that I went to the National Bank of Commerce and gave Marcus Mayer my note for \$13,500 and backed it up with a certified check for that amount, to be delivered upon the completion of the contract.

"Well, we opened the sale of tickets in

(Continued on Twelfth Page.)

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