

Old Timers Who Helped to Make The Bee



THOMAS J. FITZMORRIS.



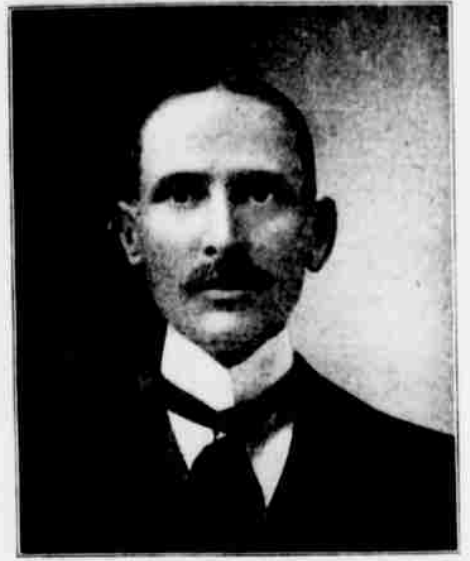
A. J. KENDRICK.



EDWIN C. HARDY.



HENRY A. HASKELL.



PERRY S. HEATH.

The man who originates an enterprise and directs it from infancy to robust maturity rightly is accorded the credit and the honors that wait upon success. In the public eye he is the central figure in the undertaking, the master mind directing its affairs, responsible for its conduct and obligations. This is particularly true of the man who is both editor and publisher of a newspaper. He formulates the plans and directs the policy of the paper and his personality is inseparably identified with its growth and prosperity. Success, however, is not wrought wholly by the responsible manager. It is rather the work of many minds and willing hands directed in a common groove. The commander of an army or the captain of a battleship does not work out all the plans of battle or do all the fighting. He cannot rely wholly on his own strength and energies. He directs the forces at his command and his success depends, not only on the plans of battle, but also upon the loyalty, the courage, intelligence and fighting strength of "the men behind the guns."

It is fitting on this occasion to glance backward and recall the activities of the men behind the pencils who worked for and fought for The Bee during its infancy and its boyhood years, when quartered in its early home on lower Farnam street. In that period of time, about seventeen years, The Bee fought the hardest battles of its career and likewise achieved many notable triumphs. For the first seven years the modest staff consisted of two men—the editor-in-chief and the city editor. In 1879 an associate editor was installed. Two years later independent morning and evening editions were inaugurated and the reportorial staff was increased to two, the luxury of a telegraph editor was indulged in and in the fall of that year an exchange editor was installed. Year by year the paper continued to prosper and expand and at the time of removal to its present palatial home the staff had grown to metropolitan proportions, with a managing editor, two associate editors, two city editors, eight editors, exchange editor and about half a dozen reporters. Bright, active, pugnacious young men, full of life, vigor and ambition, loving a fight as heartily as their chief and as eager for a scoop as a hunter for big game. There were no drones in the hive, because there was no room for them. At all times Edward Rosewater was the mentor and motive power of the establishment. He was always on the go. His energy and capacity for work seemed without limit and his example was a stimulus for every one in the shop to keep moving. Hustle never had a truer exponent. Necessity was a hard taskmaster then, but even now, long after necessity has taken flight, the same irrepressible spirit, slightly toned down, remains and permeates every department of the paper.

Hoster of Bee Veterans.

Taking them in the order of their connection with the paper, the men who helped to make The Bee and impressed their individuality on its columns are Alfred Sorenson, Willis Sweet, W. E. Annin, Will H. Kent, A. J. Kendrick, Edwin C. Hardy and James B. Haynes. Not more than two of them worked on The Bee at the same time, for the staff was very limited in the early days. Three of the number are still residents of Omaha and one continues a member of the staff. Two have become publishers; one is in the postal service; one is lost in the vast ocean of humanity.

Alfred Sorenson held a "case" on The Bee in the fall of 1871 and graduated from that post to the reportorial staff. The "staff" in those days, from '71 to '79, never exceeded a pair—the editor and proprietor and the city editor. Mr. Sorenson filled the latter position for eight years and made a splendid reputation as a rustler for news. The task of covering the news field made large drafts on leg power, and as Mr. Sorenson was well equipped in that respect he experienced little difficulty in distancing his rivals in the race for the joyous "scoop." He was equally rapid in turning in copy. Possessing the two necessary talents for reportorial work in those days, he succeeded in making the local pages of The Bee the best in the city. He had no lasting rivals in the evening field. On the two

morning papers, however, he had at different times such rivals as Will L. Visscher, Billy Edwards, W. J. Cuddy, Homer Stull, Sam Donnelly, Will Kent, Fred R. Giles and others, and the writer can affirm from personal knowledge that he was frequently complimented by having his news transferred in part or bodily to the columns of morning contemporaries. Early in 1879 the canker of political ambition took root in Sorenson's mind and developed into a race for office in the fall of that year. The republican county convention tendered him the nomination for clerk of the district court, a position particularly inviting from a financial point of view. His opponent was W. H. Ijams. Ijams won the office and Sorenson the experience, the details of which, written by himself, covered nearly two columns of The Bee of November 6, 1879. Soon after his defeat Mr. Sorenson left The Bee for a desk on the Republican. He did not find there the constituency he had grown up with. Literally he wrote for "empty benches," and as soon as opportunity offered returned to The Bee and held the responsible position of managing editor until the spring of 1888, when he accepted a like position on the Omaha Herald. A year later he was foot-loose and for ten years worked on Salt Lake, Portland and San Francisco papers. Now he is a publisher himself—the editor and proprietor of the Omaha Weekly Examiner.

Willis Sweet was a member of The Bee staff in the middle '70s, both as editorial writer and correspondent. During the senatorial campaign of 1876-7 he distinguished himself as a correspondent and his letters from Lincoln, covering the progress of the senatorial contest which resulted in the election of the late Alvin Saunders to the United States senate, were a notable feature of The Bee's news service. Later on Mr. Sweet followed the tide of immigration westward and settled in Idaho. When the territory became a state Mr. Sweet was honored with a seat in congress.

First Associate Editor.

William E. Annin came to The Bee in 1879. He had graduated from Princeton a few months before, the intervening time being spent with a college expedition in the fossil fields of Wyoming. The latter experience proved particularly useful in reaching the eminence he attained in Omaha journalism. There was then as now quite a bunch of animated fossils in town who tolled not, nor would they lend a helping hand to public enterprises, but dili-

gently nailed down the dollars that rolled into their coffers from the energy of others. These proved an unflinching subject for expert dissection when the usual activities took a day off. Mr. Annin was first initiated into the mysteries of editorial and scissors work. It was quite a task to "catch on" to the "old man's style," as the boys say, and many a weary day's toll in the glass cage, which then served as the editorial den, reposed peacefully in the waste basket when the shades of evening fell. Time and patience, however, made amends. Mr. Annin was quick of mind and eye, possessed a copious vocabulary, a ripe imagination and soon mastered not only the policy and style of The Bee, but the caustic phraseology of the editor-in-chief. In local news rustling, an assignment he frequently covered, he was even more successful, for in that field his imagination and diction had freer rein, and many a weird sensation enlivened the routine items of a day's run. Mr. Annin remained with The Bee until called to Washington as private secretary to Senator Paddock. Now he is comfortably quartered, filling the position of chief of the western division of the rural mail service, with headquarters at Denver.

Will H. Kent became city editor of The Bee in 1880 and held the position almost continuously for five years. Kent was a remarkable newsgatherer, as well as a rapid, entertaining writer. His capacity for work was enormous and his prolific pen was always equal to the space available. He had the rare tact of making a favorable impression on first acquaintance, and this faculty, coupled with a studied policy of dispensing sugar in print, made him a host of friends who assisted him substantially in catching the elusive item. When the morning edition of The Bee was started twenty years ago it afforded Kent an opportunity to put in practice an absurd theory of life.

The Pace that Kills.

Kent argued that if a man remained awake say twenty out of the twenty-four hours at work or play, or both, he would in fifty years have lived as long as the man of 65 who slept the regular number of hours. For many months he did the entire local work on both morning and evening editions, snatching sleep at off moments or stretching on his desk after the night's work was done. On one notable occasion his plan of sleeping enabled him to score one of the greatest "scoops" in the annals of Omaha journalism. Kent was curled up on his desk in the frame annex to the old Bee building. The forms for the morning edi-

tion had just gone to press, when word was brought to the office of the finding of the body of a murdered man in the postoffice building. Kent was awakened and hurried to the scene. Before dawn of that November morning the second edition of The Bee appeared with the first account of the tragic death of Watson B. Smith. But the physical man rebelled against the pace, as Kent soon discovered. He burned the candle at both ends, lost the necessary strength for steady work and became a journalistic wanderer in the west.

One of the old reliables of The Bee local staff was Andrew J. Kendrick, who served as city editor from 1884 to 1887. These years embraced the boom era and there was news to burn. The local staff had grown in numbers, but there was an abundance of work for all. Like his predecessors Kendrick had the energy and ambition of young manhood as well as the "nose for news," supplemented with greater self-restraint and steadiness of purpose. While his associates on rival papers blew off steam on the slightest provocation Kendrick screwed down the safety valve and kept the pressure nearly even. He maintained a steady-going pace on his daily rounds, exercised good judgment and accurately gauged the value of current news. A vein of quiet humor occasionally enlivened his recitals and was particularly noticeable in his headlines. One instance is recalled in which a famous dry goods merchant figured exclusively in a two-column notice. The merchant prince was an extensive advertiser, using printer's ink lavishly, besides orchestras and brass bands. Kendrick's headline introduction to the merchant prince's departure between days simply announced "Smith's Special Sail," and the delicate hint it conveyed spread a smile over town. After leaving Omaha in 1887 Mr. Kendrick secured a responsible position on the Chicago News, which he held for several years. About eight years ago he settled in Fort Smith, Ark., and started the News-Record, a daily publication. There as elsewhere he has earned success, having built up a good newspaper property and acquired a moderate competency.

The Man from Cleveland.

The growth of The Bee had reached such proportions by 1886 that a second associate editor was employed. Edwin C. Hardy was given the desk. "The Major," as he is familiarly called, is a Cleveland product, having advanced from the printer's case to the top round through all departments of newspaper work. Few men in the harness in Omaha have had such wide experience in

the profession. While setting type in Cleveland during the war he conceived the idea of a commercial review for the market page of the Cleveland Leader. Financial and commercial problems were at that time seriously perplexing the business world. Mr. Hardy's idea was welcomed by the publisher and he was given the assignment. From a meager beginning it became one of the most important features of the paper. In developing it Mr. Hardy studied not only the practical side of finance and commerce, but read and reread all standard publications, and to this systematic training he owes his thorough knowledge of both subjects, which has been abundantly shown in the editorial columns of The Bee during recent presidential campaigns. His experience runs the gamut of dramatic criticisms and descriptive writing, from speeches for congressmen to toast responses and he has been known to "write up" a prize fight as entertainingly as he thunders about the grand old party. Mr. Hardy is the oldest member of The Bee editorial staff and holds the record for continuous service.

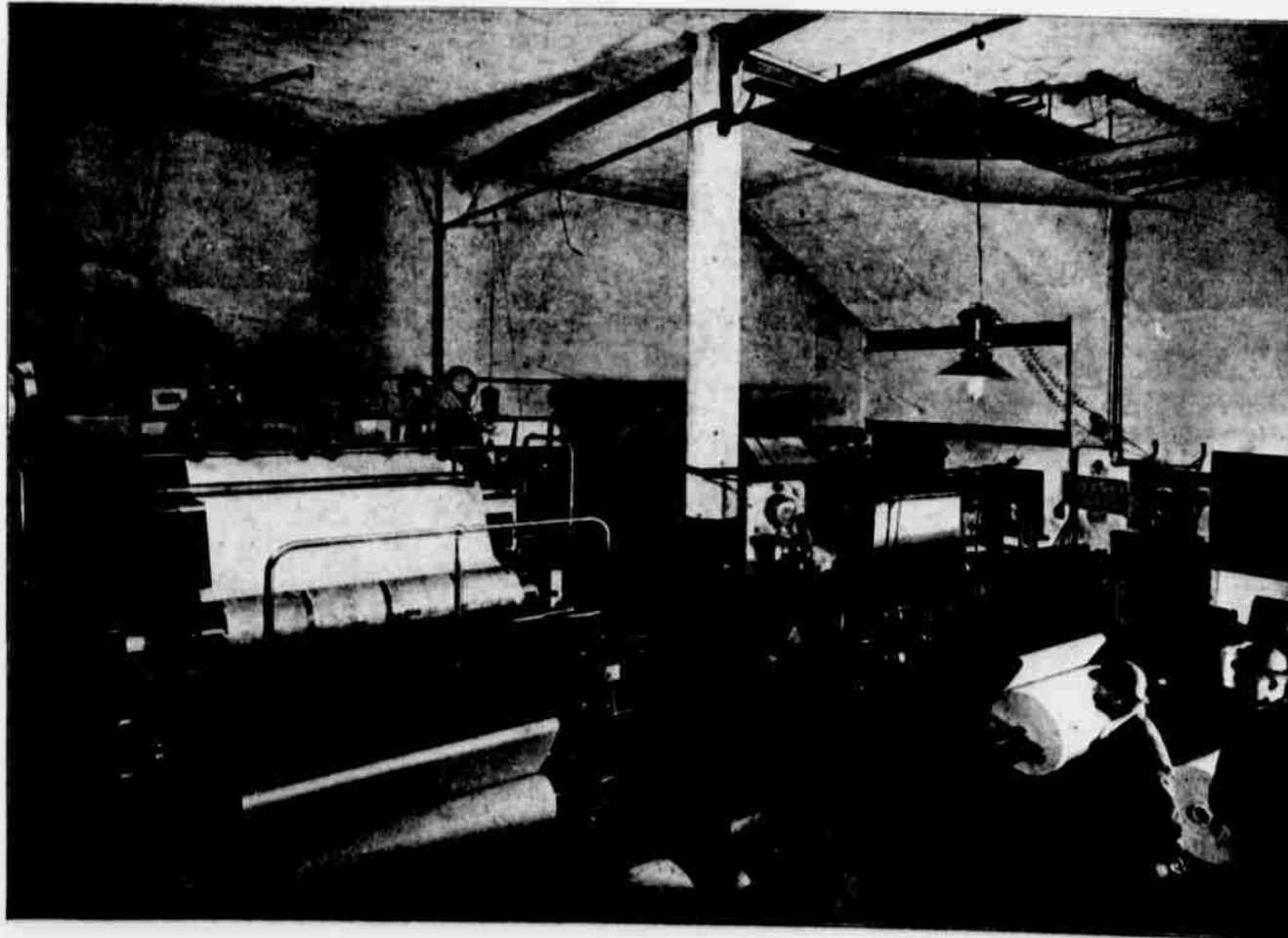
Many other names of men who were on The Bee staff for briefer periods serve to recall the frequent changes that took place on the press of Omaha in the early days. Fred R. Giles, a brilliant, erratic genius, drifted from one paper to another as regularly as the seasons. He struck the pace that kills and long since joined the majority. Frank Allen was another hot boy who rustled news for The Bee, subsequently became press agent for Loyal L. Smith, the merchant prince, and was lost to sight in the confusion following Smith's abrupt departure. "Gabe" Runkles, one of the veteran printers of Omaha, frequently shook the case for the telegraph desk, but as a steady job preferred the independence of the atick and rule. He is a modern edition of Old Plod, and can dig up more errors in a proofsheet than any man in the harness. He has been with The Bee so long that mention of dates would shatter his dreams of perennial youth. Edward A. O'Brien flitted about The Bee for several years, settled on the staff as city editor in 1888 and held on for four years. He is at present on the Oakland (Cal.) Tribune.

The roster of Bee veterans is not an extensive one. The times did not call for numbers, but for many qualities in one. The upbuilding of The Bee, to which they contributed, was a continuous battle against open and unseen foes, powerful competitors and limited resources. Meager as the squad was, the members were loyal to the core and welcomed a scrap as heartily as a square meal. It did not make much difference whether the paper provoked a fight or one dropped in for exercise, the staff was always in an accommodating mood and never turned down the invitation of an anxious rival or political clique.

Old and New Conditions.

It is frequently asserted that the newspaper men of the days under review did a much greater amount of work in a given time than is required of men in like positions today. The conditions are so different that a fair comparison cannot be made. In the early days local men enjoyed the greatest freedom of expression. Each reporter covered the town for his paper, but the news area was limited and the task was largely one of muscle. Each was identified in the public mind with the product of his pen, personally receiving credit for his work, and innumerable favors from friendly admirers. Next to the publisher, the city editor was, to use an expressive phrase, "a large toad in a small puddle." Public acclaim was a constant stimulant and the absence of the restraints of the blue pencil accounts for the greater amount of space filled in the local columns of twenty or more years ago. Now the city work is divided up and men assigned to the several divisions. Occasionally a reporter who is a specialist in his department becomes identified with his work in the public mind, but as a general rule that identity is restricted and wholly lacks the capital "I" which distinguished the early days. Greater accuracy is required, imagination is held in check and editorial observations are rigidly excluded from news matter. In hours of labor and quality of work the city men today fairly rival their predecessors, but the honors and emoluments of long ago perished with the years they flourished in.

THOMAS J. FITZMORRIS.



PRESSES THAT PRINT THE BEE.