



PRESIDENT SANBORN LAYING THE STONE.

Scenes at Laying Cornerstone of Omaha Auditorium

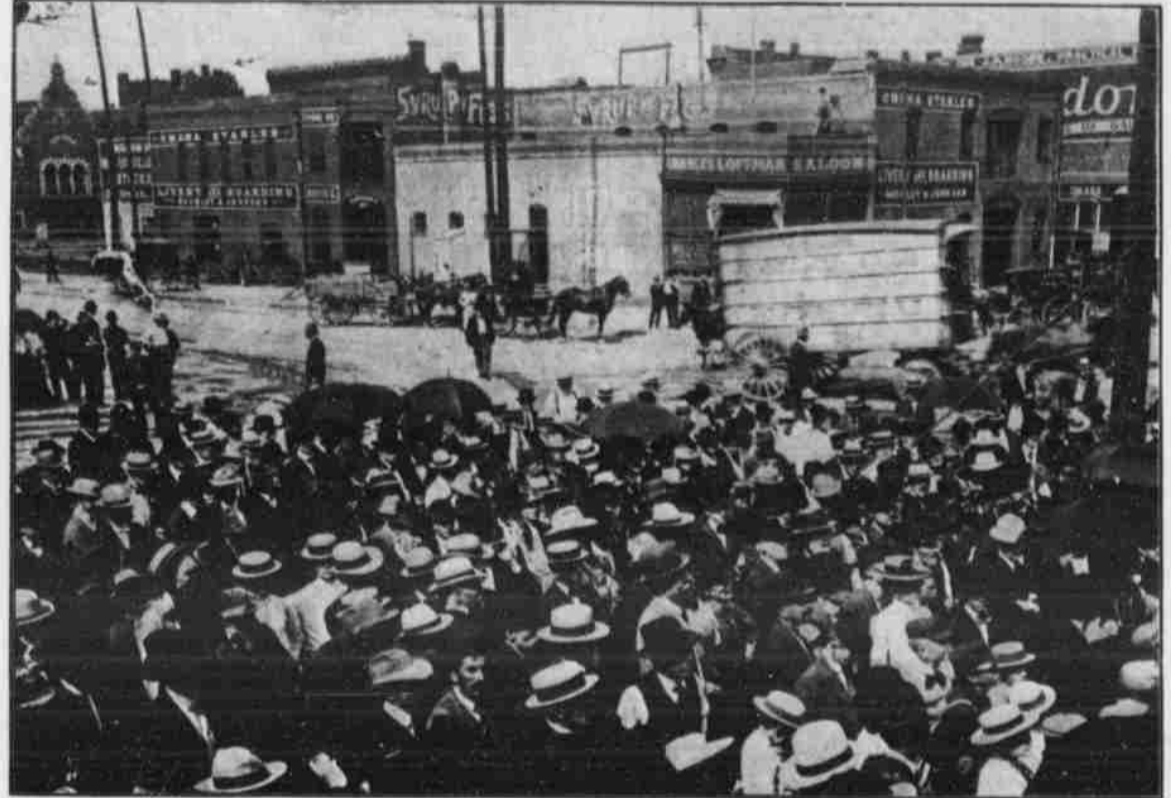
Photographs by a Bee Staff Artist



SENATOR MILLARD READING HIS ADDRESS.



ASSEMBLAGE ON PLATFORM DURING CEREMONIES.

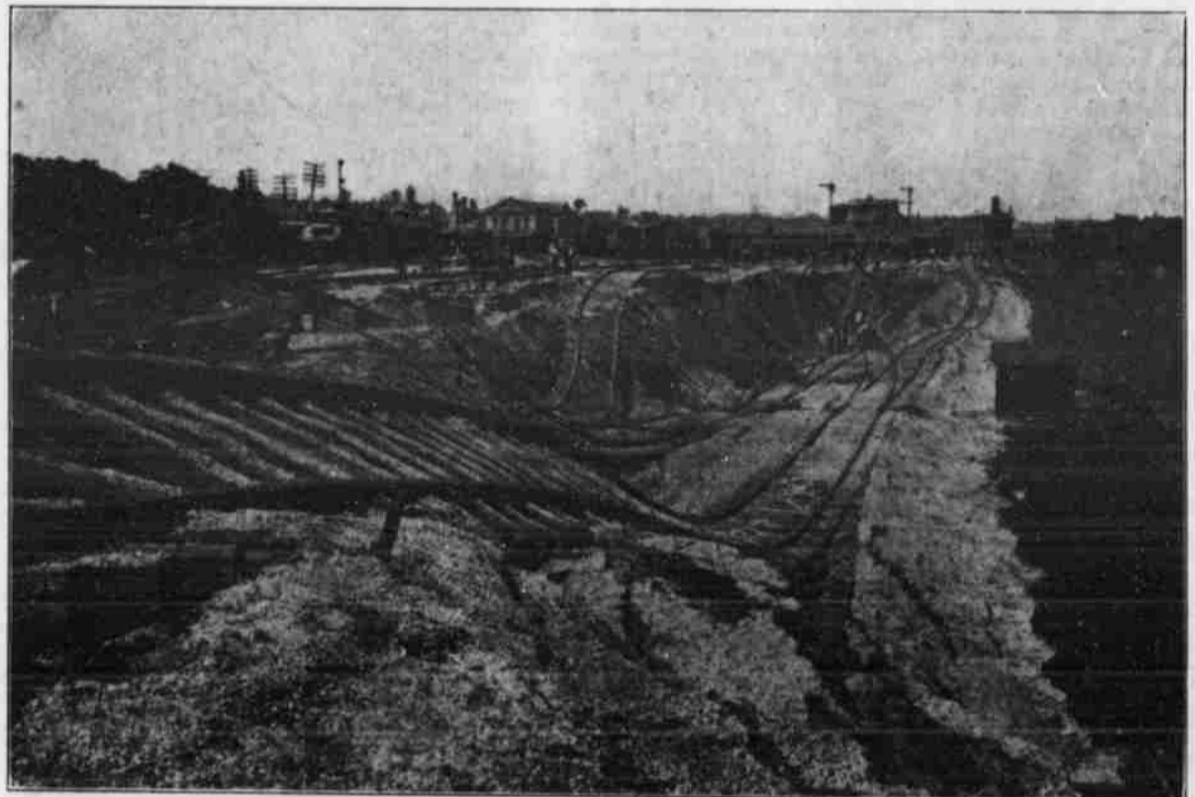


PART OF CROWD IN FRONT OF SPEAKERS' STAND.

Land Slide on the Approach to the Union Pacific Bridge



AT WEST END OF SLIDE, SHORTLY AFTER TRACKS WENT DOWN.—Photo by a Staff Artist.



VIEW OF THE TRACKS SHORTLY AFTER SUBSIDING.—Photo by a Staff Artist.

THE COLLAPSE of the Union Pacific railroad embankment near the west end of the Missouri river bridge Monday, though far less serious in results, recalls the terrific storm of August 25, 1877, which swept away two spans of the bridge at the eastern extremity. The accident Monday displaced probably 14,000 cubic yards of roadbed, destroyed three sets of tracks on the north side of the embankment and necessitated improvisations in trackage to obviate interference with traffic, thus avoiding any suspension of train service whatever. In all the loss and inconvenience is considerable, but insignificant as compared with the great disaster of twenty-five years ago.

The accident Monday did not interfere with the passage of trains a minute, while that of August 25, 1877, shut off traffic over the bridge for several months. There is one feature alike in both, however; there were no lives lost in either case, though in the former one narrowly escaped.

John Pearson, a watchman at the entrance of the Union Pacific bridge on the Nebraska side, was a witness to the miniature avalanche of Monday, as he likewise was of the calamity a quarter of a century ago. He was acting in the same capacity for the railroad company on the morning when the tornado wrested from the bridge its pair of spans as he is today, that of watchman. But his service in this posi-

tion goes back even farther. He helped build the first Union Pacific bridge across the Missouri river in 1872, and he has been the faithful vigil at the river's edge ever since.

The eventful storm of August 25, 1877, came early in the morning, about 3:30. It was the culmination of a series of strong winds which had prevailed for several days. Tremendous rains had distorted the old Missouri then as now, and it was leaping its banks in many places. Excessive tides caused the treacherous stream to form a cut-off, and for days the railroad company, fearing damage to its bridge, kept forces of men at work throwing in riprap on the east side, as indications were that the channel would sweep against the Iowa approach. Thus the destruction of the eastern extremity of the bridge had been anticipated.

Mr. Pearson's shanty was situated at that time on the Iowa side of the river instead of on the Nebraska side, as it is today. He saw the fatal storm coming, in a few seconds heard the tremendous roar and splash as the two spans of the bridge were twisted from their pillars and hurled into the water.

It was a thrilling experience for him, and came near being a fatal one. His little shanty went down with the last span of the bridge, which rested with one end on the Iowa bank, while the other end was in

the river. The other span was sunk entirely and the piers left standing.

The wind which did the mischief was preceded by rain and hail from the north, accompanied by thunder and lightning. Suddenly the wind shifted a little to the south, and it was at this juncture that the catastrophe occurred. One man claiming to be an eyewitness declared the bridge was struck by lightning and went down a sheet of fire. There has always been more or less difference in opinion on this point. It was Mr. Pearson's first impression that lightning struck the bridge and that the two spans were torn from their places covered with flames.

Mr. Pearson's shanty, with him inside, was caught under one end of the bridge and among some brush on the river bank. He was cut about the face and for some time was imprisoned within his narrow cell. Realizing that a Union Pacific train was due to cross the bridge at 5:10, less than two hours after the terrible accident, the faithful watchman became desperate in his anxiety to get out of his battered shanty and make his way over the river to give the alarm and keep the train from plunging off the wrecked bridge into the river with its human freight.

He finally succeeded in tearing his way out of the shanty. Fortunately a small canoe was at hand. Into this he jumped and soon rowed himself over to the Nebraska

side of the stream. Leaving his boat at the bank of the river he ran as fast as possible to the train dispatcher's office and reached there barely in time to prevent a more terrible disaster. The train was just ready to start for the river and might have rushed across the bridge without the destruction being noticed until it was too late.

The loss of these two spans represented a capital of about \$180,000 or more, as the bridge was built at a cost of about \$2,000,000, and it was composed of eleven spans, 2,750 feet in length. Several months were consumed in the work of reparation. In the meantime there was a heavy freight and passenger blockade, as it was necessary to carry both across the river at Plattsmouth and Blair ferries. Telegraphic communications were cut off with the east for some time and there were other serious losses to Omaha and surrounding country.

The narration of the bridge disaster brings up two other serious accidents which occurred at or near the same fatal scene. On July 6, 1887, General Terry, one of the old-time steamboats of the Missouri, collided with a pier of the bridge and was sunk. Its remains are still in the bosom of the old stream. The boat was carrying about seventy soldiers from Fort Keogh and had considerable cargo on, but all the men escaped. During the fol-

lowing summer the steamer Milwaukee was partially wrecked at the same place, but was not sunk. Like Terry, Milwaukee also had on board a number of soldiers.

Pointed Paragraphs

Chicago News: If the wife is untidy the husband may try to get untied.

Truth is mighty enough to become more prevalent than it is.

The average man imagines that he inherited Job's troubles.

No man is half as good as he expects his daughter's husband to be.

One way to avoid disappointment is to seek something other people don't want.

Crops may come and crops may go, but the annual crop of sweet girl graduates never fails.

It is easier to get a man to tell you how a thing should be done than it is to get a man to do it.

The man who is always calling for the fool-killer would be the first to hide if he saw him coming.

After making his first public speech the average man cannot understand why he isn't famous the next morning.

A word to the wise may be sufficient—yet doubtless you have observed that most of the letters you receive are written at length.