

# Early Day Fire Fighters of Omaha and Some of Their Experiences

LIVING now in Omaha are a few scores of citizens who can look back over the years which marked the growth of the city from a village of the frontier type to a city of the metropolitan class, and picture in their mind's eye the development of the city's fire department from a small corps of eight volunteers to the present paid department of 130 men, with equipment which would have made the fire ladders of its olden days think they were seeing things. In those days long since gone, but of which the old guard loves to talk of when they gather every three months in Chief Satter's office, or at their annual banquets, the firemen were, in a way, a privileged character, by an especial act of the legislature he was allowed from jury duty and poll taxes; was prominent in social affairs and a cynosure of all eyes on gala days.

Notwithstanding the fire fighters of the early days volunteered their services, they were inspired with a pride which was notable. They took pride in the maintenance of their equipment and quarters and were heroic when the town bell called them to a fire. As the city grew and the needs for better fire protection became necessary the volunteer department received recruits, disbanding as an organization on May 25, 1885, after just twenty-five years of service. That the old associations and memories might be kept alive members of the old volunteer company organized in December, 1887, the Veteran Firemen's association of Omaha, which still exists, and which meets quarterly in the fire chief's office in the city hall.

**Omaha's First Fire Company.**  
The early volunteer fire department was known as the Pioneer Hook and Ladder company No. 1. Along in 1850, when the little colony of people making up the village was agitating the establishment of a fire department, Ben Stickles, James W. Vanstrand and W. J. Kennedy constituted a committee to circulate an agreement, the signers of which pledged themselves to support the proposed volunteer fire department. In a few hours the committee secured thirty-three signers. On the second day of May, 1850, Mr. Stickles called a meeting at the office of J. S. McCormick, on Farnam street, where the Postal Telegraph office is now located. The company was organized two days later under an especial charter from the legislature, which empowered the company to own \$2,000 worth of apparatus. The certificate of incorporation was signed by the late J. Sterling Morton, then territorial governor. The leaders in the organization of the Pioneer company were Ben Stickles, W. J. Kennedy, J. C. McCormick, Henry Gray, Henry Z. Curtis, M. H. Clark, A. J. Simpson and P. W. Hitchcock. Among those joining the company during the first five years were Fred Krug, J. E. Marked, Joseph F. Sheeley, P. Windheim, Samuel Burns, J. G. McGeath, L. S. Reed, W. L. May, George Glacolini, Frank Murphy, John M. Sheeley, W. P. Wilcox, P. J. Karbach, D. C. Simpson and Henry Pundt. Many of those mentioned are still living in Omaha, while not a few are active in the community. A. J. Simpson, who constructed the first fire truck used in Omaha, is still in business.

**Parade on July Fourth.**  
The completion of that truck was quite a news item in those days. The vehicle was finished in time for the appearance of the company on parade July 4, 1850. The occasion was one that it is still cherished

in the memories of those members still living. There were thirty-three men in red shirts, white duck trousers, black belts and small glazed caps. On the truck were ladders, hooks, axes and wooden buckets. The buckets were important implements in the life of a fireman in those stirring times. The appearance of the Pioneer boys on that bright Fourth of July day, with their glazed caps gleaming in the sunshine and their pretty wooden buckets, nice enough to hold lemonade at a Sunday school picnic, was such as to draw nearly every woman, man and child to the route of the parade, which was nearly all on Farnam street. The brand new apparatus was placed in a building on the west side of Twelfth street, between Farnam and Douglas streets, after the parade, and the thirty-three members of the Pioneer Hook and Ladder company No. 1 went to their evening meal with the feeling they were real firemen and ready for any case of combustion which might come along.

**Some Early Experiences.**  
The method of giving an alarm of fire in the very early days was by ringing the bell on the Methodist church, then located on the present site of the Omaha National bank. The church bell was of such an elevation that the bell could be heard all over town. Later the Congregational church people sold the firemen their old bell. The chief water supply those days came from cisterns which were located at convenient places. Wells and creeks were often drawn on, as the occasion arose. During the month of February, 1861, the volunteers used up a large snowdrift while putting out a fire in the home of Fred Krug at Eleventh and Harney streets. Not long after that fire the city council was induced to build cisterns with a capacity of 1,000 gallons each, at various intersections.

In 1862 the citizens began to feel the need of more fire protection so A. J. Simpson was delegated to go to Davenport, Ia., where he bought a hand fire engine, known as the "Fire King." The engine was received by steamboat and was welcomed with much acclaim. Colonel Lerin Miller, the mayor, took much interest in the fire department. He requested the citizens to assemble at the town hall and view the new engine. The bells of the town gathered in their best bills and tuckers, while the beaux wore their best. Speeches were made and a test of the machine was witnessed. About a hundred feet of hose was attached to the engine and Chief Simpson was at the nozzle. The mayor was twenty feet away in his white trousers. When the water was forced through the hose the nozzle became uncontrollable and the mayor's immaculate garments were bespattered with muddy water. W. J. Kennedy made a speech of apology on behalf of his comrades and the mayor promised to forgive and forget.

"Fire King" was placed in the fire house on Twelfth street, between Farnam and Douglas streets. The first members of that company were A. J. Simpson, Charles Goodrich, Martin Donahue and Fred Kennedy. During 1867 the first steam engine, the "Nebaska," was bought and located at Twelfth and Iard streets. In 1870 the apparatus consisted of two steamers, one hand engine and one hook and ladder truck.

The first sensational fire to be recorded

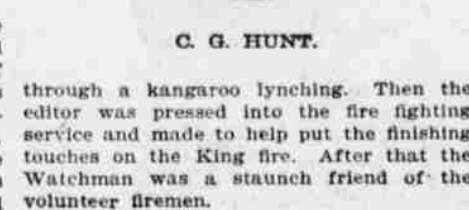
in the annals of the early fire fighters was the burning of the W. R. King grocery store at Thirteenth and Farnam streets. While fighting the flames the men came across the dead body of a clerk, said to have been murdered by a porter named Baker. Baker was said to have hidden \$5,000 of the firm's money in an oyster can and then killed the clerk before setting fire to the building. While the fire was yet raging the Watchman, an evening paper, came out with a story roasting the firemen. Editor McDonough was located on the street by some of the men, who frightened him by getting a rope and going



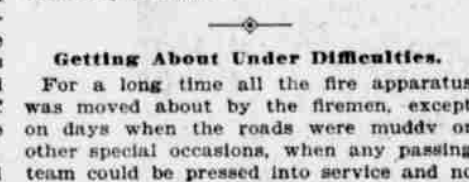
WILLIAM A. ALTSTADT.



JULIUS TREITSCHKE.



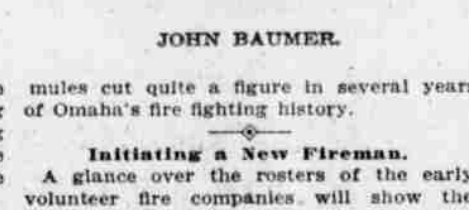
F. H. KOESTERS.



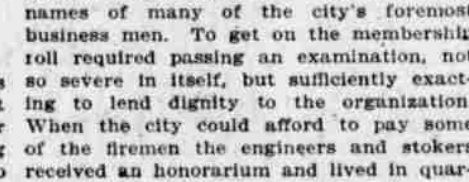
C. G. HUNT.



JOHN BAUMER.



J. E. BEHM.



JOHN BAUMER.

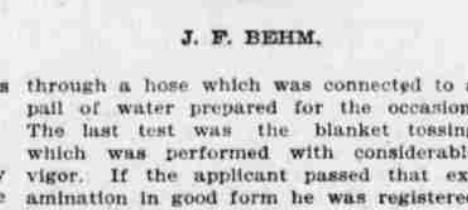
questions asked. The firemen had police authority and occasionally pressed bystanders into the service, although the rule was there were many willing hands about whenever a fire was on.



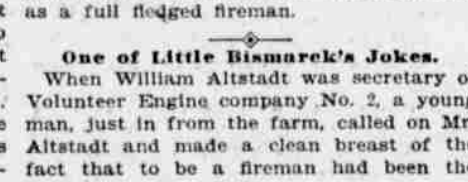
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JOHN BAUMER.



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ters over the houses. The paid hands devised an initiation which consisted of taping a heavy iron wheel up a flight of steps and to the center of a room. If that feat was performed without steps on the way the applicant was recorded for strength. The next test was climbing a ladder, which lacked some of the rounds and with some rounds as frail as match boxes. The applicant would then be required to slide down the ladder. The third number was to blow long and hard and try to fill a small bag which contained a tiny hole unknown to the candidate. Then the applicant would be requested to draw

**First Paid Fireman.**  
J. F. Behm, now president of the Veteran Firemen's association of Omaha, returned from the war in 1862, and immediately became identified with the "Fire King" company. He fired the first steamer used for fire purposes in the city. That machine was located on the present site of the Board of Trade building. Mr. Behm received \$25 a month for his services as fireman, and was the first paid fireman in the city. He stayed at the fire house all the time, and received an additional income by repairing harness. Mr. Behm, who would about as soon talk of the old fire days as he would play a game of croquet, told the other day of a long run his company made one night to Council Bluffs. It was in 1868, when a big fire, for those days, broke out in the Bluffs. Behm's company went over to help. Nearly 100 Omaha men took hold of the towline and pulled the steamer to the ferry boat which was quickly fired up in the dead of night, and the steamer quickly placed on the other side of the river. The men hurried for five miles and reached the fire in time to be of assistance. Council Bluffs citizens had dammed the Levey creek and so vigorously did the firemen work that the dam was pumped dry several times during the fire.

**Fun with Charles Goodrich.**  
While Mr. Behm was stationed at Sixteenth and Farnam streets some of the town ways would give a false alarm of fire, particularly on Saturday nights. Charles Goodrich lived near the firehouse in question, and it was the delight of many to watch Mr. Goodrich rush down the Farnam street hill with the small hose cart which could be pushed by one man on a dry day. It is said of Goodrich that sometimes the cart would get away from him going down the hill and he would hang on although his feet might not touch ground for 100 feet at times.

One Saturday evening Behm heard the boys talking down at Windheim's inn, and expected a false alarm before the evening was half spent. Mr. Behm then hurried back to the fire house and secured the bell rope in a manner so that the alarm could not be given unless he would give it. Sure enough some of the boys dropped around and tried to ring the bell, but the "curfew did not ring that night."

**One: When Altstadt Settled.**  
To refer to the time William Altstadt

was left dangling to the upper side of a hand pump is to make any of the old firemen laugh. In the days of the hand pump one side of the mechanism went up while the other went down. After a fire at a barrel factory at Sixteenth and Chicago streets John Butler, then chief of the department, and a few others got up a joke on Mr. Altstadt. By some hook or crook the judge was left alone, hanging by his hands from the raised side of the long and high handle of the pump. As Fireman Altstadt was not "very pig oop unat down" his plight caused him some consternation and his comrades much merriment. To drop from the handle to the "gallery" was not easy, so Mr. Altstadt closed his eyes and released his hold to land in a tub of water. Then Little Blamark took the boys around to Fred Heitzke's place, where they gathered around the stove and warmed both the outer and inner man.

**Company With Good Record.**  
Going back again to the beginning of things, it is a matter of record that during the twenty-five years of the Pioneer hook and ladder company's existence not one member was killed, although the company attended every fire during the quarter of a century from May 2, 1840, to May 1, 1885. A. J. Simpson was the first chief of the fire department to perform that service without pay. He served from 1850 to 1858 as chief of the volunteers. J. E. Marked, while conducting his bakery, was the first chief to receive a salary, which was at first \$300 per year. Then as the city grew the fire department grew and the "good old days" passed away as a dissolving view, to be recalled only in memory's halls.

On May 1, 1885, the Pioneer company met for the last time. The paid department having been well established it was deemed wise to muster out the old guard with due honors. The disbandment was marked with exercises of a civic character, John M. Thurston being the orator of the day. The Pioneer company's books with \$3,000 in the treasury and 123 members on the roll of honor.

**Birth of the Association.**  
As a living monument to the old days, the Veteran Firemen's association of Omaha was organized in December, 1887. Frank H. Koesters, who was the secretary of the Pioneer company, became secretary of the Veteran association at its organization and has held that position to date. He has been one of the chief mainstays of the Veteran association and was one of the active ones in the days of volunteer fire fighting. Julius Treitschke, the present treasurer of the Veteran's, is another of the old guard, who was always on the hose line when the bell rang. D. P. Beard, who owned those white mules, is now first vice president, while Charles Hunt is second vice president. Hunt and Beard are both in active business at present and remarked the other day they believed they could make another run with the old machine if Fred Behm would pull the bell.

John Baumer, who has lived for forty years at his present address, Nineteenth and Cumings streets, was in close touch with the old fire house at Twentieth and Iard streets. For years he was an officer of that company and can recall hitching up many times with Beard's mules for a trip down town.

And after the organization of the Veteran association came modern history.

## Americanization of British Northwest Outcome of Present Movement

(Copyright, 1906, by Frank G. Carpenter.)  
INNIPUEG, Feb. 22.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—Are we to have an Americanized Canada in the British northwest? Will these vast territories now settling some time be a part of the United States?

Or will they, as they grow, rise in their might and make a live, up-to-date Canada of their own?

They are now the tall of the dominion. Will the tall not wax fat, like that of an angry cat, and wag the body at the other end?

Shall John Bull, that great grown-up golden calf, have the worship of the millions to come as he has had that, of the eastern Canadians, in the past; or will the latter also unite with these new men of the west to cast him down from his altar on this North American continent, and install there the Goddess of Liberty instead?

These are some of the questions which are slumbering here in this fast growing country above our international boundary.

**An Americanized Canada.**  
As for me, I have no doubt but that western Canada will eventually be American. It has already 150,000 of our citizens who are old enough to vote and there are some thousands more who are very close to the years of age. Eighty thousand new United States citizens are expected to settle in the wheat belt during the coming year, and American influence is everywhere growing. The population of western Canada, including Manitoba, is probably now just about 1,000,000, so that these Americans if they become naturalized will more than hold the balance of power. They are, moreover, the live element of the Canadian west, that which is bound to control things and do things.

Indeed, our institutions are in many respects the ideal of the Canadians. Nothing succeeds like success. We have taken a raw country and made a great nation. Canada hopes to do the same. The people here believe in the American tariff and in American business methods.

The opening up of this new country is largely due to our citizens, and the other immigrants who are coming in look up to and model their ways after them. As it is now one-third of the new settlers are composed of slow-acting eastern Canadians, who lack initiative and push. A second third is made up of Europeans who are largely ignorant and must be educated and assimilated before they will make good farmers or citizens, while the last third is composed of bustling, energetic, pushing sons of the United States, the most of whom have come here with money in their pockets and constitute the cream of the country. The native-born western Canadians are like his American brother as one pea is like another, so that the native westerners and new Americans will work together. Both are united in their desire to build up a new country and both care so little for the old that they will smash the images at the slightest provocation. If it pays them to stay with eastern Canada they will do so. If it seems advisable to separate and have an independent west they will do that, and if the time comes when their pocketbook interests are with the United States they will drop Great Britain and the east and go for annexation. These are possibilities which may be realized in the future, and the natural conditions are such that they will probably bring about striking changes within not many years.

**Eastern vs. Western Canada.**  
It is doubtful whether eastern and west-

ern Canada can pull together. The controlling political influence in the east is French. The premier, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, is a Frenchman, the party now ruling is based by the French and the French hold the balance of power in the federal legislature. The west is Anglo-Saxon and the French are comparatively few.

The French-Canadian wants no change. He loves Canada as an annex to Great Britain, and he would fight for it as such. He looks upon the Anglo-Saxon almost as a foreigner and prides himself as being the real Canadian who antedated him and is indigenous to the soil. His element is not confined, as some suppose, to Quebec. There are French in every eastern province. Seventy per cent of the citizens of Montreal are of French descent, there is a large French element in Toronto and in every town east of the Great Lakes. The largest newspaper in Canada is French, and there are towns in Quebec and Ontario where French is better understood than English.

**Manufactures and Farmers.**  
Another wedge which sooner or later must split apart eastern Canada from the west, is the tariff. Just now the sentiment is in favor of high protection and a wall of duties against the United States. This is so because eastern Canada, which contains about five-sixths of the population, is largely devoted to manufacturing. It is naturally fitted for a great industrial empire, and the tariff is bringing American plants from across the boundary and adding to the working population of the towns and cities.

Western Canada, on the other hand, is to be composed almost altogether of farmers. The wheat belt, which at a low estimate comprises something like 100,000 acres, is to be one of the granaries of the

world, and the men who work it will naturally be free traders. They will have to buy what the people of the east make to sell, and they must now pay, not only the high prices caused by the tariff, but also the enormous tariff in freight to the railroad which must carry these goods to them, a distance of thousands of miles. The time will come when such things can be more cheaply furnished from the United States, and when our great factories of the west can supply them at nominal freights over the roads built north and south.

Politics is generally supposed to be a matter of sentiment. There was never a greater mistake. Politics is based on self-interest; and whenever the western Canadian finds he can add a dollar to his pile or an extra pound of feathers to the pillow on which he rests his weary head by joining the United States, he will do it. In this I speak not of the conditions of today when there are 5,000,000 in eastern Canada and only 1,000,000 in the west. I speak of the time, soon to come, when there will be an equal number here, and of that, a little farther on, when western Canada will have its 10,000,000 or 20,000,000 and eastern Canada, in all probability, but little more than now.

**Reciprocity Sentiment Growing.**  
As it is now the manufacturing east claims there is no reciprocity sentiment in Canada. This is not so. I hear frequent complaints here in the west against the high tariff, and there are some things in which both countries could be benefited if a reciprocity treaty were made. One of these is coal. There are big mines in Nova Scotia and also in the Rockies of Alberta and British Columbia, but practically nothing between. The Nova Scotia coal is largely used in London, and our Boston consumers have to pay, I think, 67 cents per ton as a tariff on all they consume. In Ontario the Canadian manufacturing establishments are dependent on our Pennsylvania coal, and they are charged a tariff of 53 cents a ton on all that they buy. The same is true in the far west. Our copper smelters at Anaconda and Butte bring down their coal and coke from western Canada and British Columbia coal is largely used in Washington, Oregon and California. It all pays a tariff. On the cold prairies of Manitoba and Saskatchewan it is almost necessary to have anthracite coal, and that from Pennsylvania best suits the requirements. It is brought up the great lakes and over the railroads and furnished the settlers at \$11 and upward per ton. In Winnipeg every householder uses Pennsylvania anthracite at a cost of \$10.75, of which 53 cents is charged for the tariff.

There is a great north and south trade here in the west. The most of the fruit comes from the United States. The orchards of Oregon, Washington and California are now run by British Columbia and the Canadian prairies, whereas the most of the tropical fruits used in the dominion are exported by us. As it is now Canada is buying about \$12,000,000 worth of our agricultural products every year.

**Canucks Like Our Goods.**  
Even with our own manufactures these people cannot get along without our specialties. They buy more of us than of any other country, and far more than they do of Great Britain. In 1904 the trade between Canada and the United States amounted to \$224,000,000, while that between it and Great Britain was \$45,000,000 less. There was so notwithstanding the bulk of the latter

trade was made up of sales to Great Britain, while the large bulk of the former was composed of American goods bought by Canadians.

Indeed, Canada is one of our best customers. We sell it more goods than we do to almost any country of Europe, with the exceptions of the United Kingdom and Germany, and it is buying more and more every year. Its foreign trade is three times as much now as it was a generation ago and it has increased more than \$90,000,000 in five years. The country has on its seven-league boots commercially as well as industrially, and every atom of its body politic is increasing in a geometrical ratio. The people are growing richer and richer as the years go on. They are today worth \$56 more per head than ourselves of the United States, and the volume of trade per capita has more than doubled since the days when Grant was president.

**Canada and American Trade.**  
Indeed, Uncle Sam can afford to pay considerable attention to his Canadian trade. He is sending embassies to Africa, special commissioners to South America, and is getting down on his knees and kowtowing to the old empress dowager to get rid of the boycott in China. The trade of all these countries is a bagatelle compared with that which lies across our northern boundary. Canada's foreign commerce now amounts to almost \$500,000,000. She bought \$250,000,000 worth of goods abroad in 1904, and during that year she paid us \$200,000,000 to give \$50 to every man, woman and child in the United States and leave \$24,000,000 over for good measure. As it is now her trade is worth five times as much to us as our trade with South America. It is worth five times as much as our trade with Japan, and ten times that of our sales to China. Indeed, the Canuck is one of the richest men on the

face of the globe. He lives well and does on luxuries. He knows what he wants, is quick to buy and he always pays his bills.

**What Canada Sells.**  
I do not wonder that the eastern Canadians are strong for protection. Under the present high tariff its industries are everywhere growing. There are now more than 200,000 workmen employed in its factories and the goods made sell for almost \$500,000,000 a year. All the large cities are growing. Montreal has now about \$60,000,000 employed in manufacturing and is paying out \$15,000,000 annually in wages. Toronto has \$25,000,000 worth of capital so invested and other large manufacturing centers are Hamilton, Quebec, Winnipeg, London and Ottawa. In Quebec there are more than 500 manufacturing establishments of one kind or another and the town of Hamilton has 230 small, but some large. Canada now sells abroad more than \$15,000,000 worth of minerals and manufactures every year. The country is going into the cotton business, and it now has twenty-two cotton mills. It has \$10,000,000 invested in wood pulp factories and is doing a big business in the manufacture of provisions. It is a big dairy country. It sends butter to England and it is exporting cheese to the amount of \$15,000,000 a year. It sells millions of dollars' worth of eggs and in the shape of fish it draws more than \$10,000,000 out of its oceans and rivers every twelve months. Talk about your gold in sea water! Canada gets it.

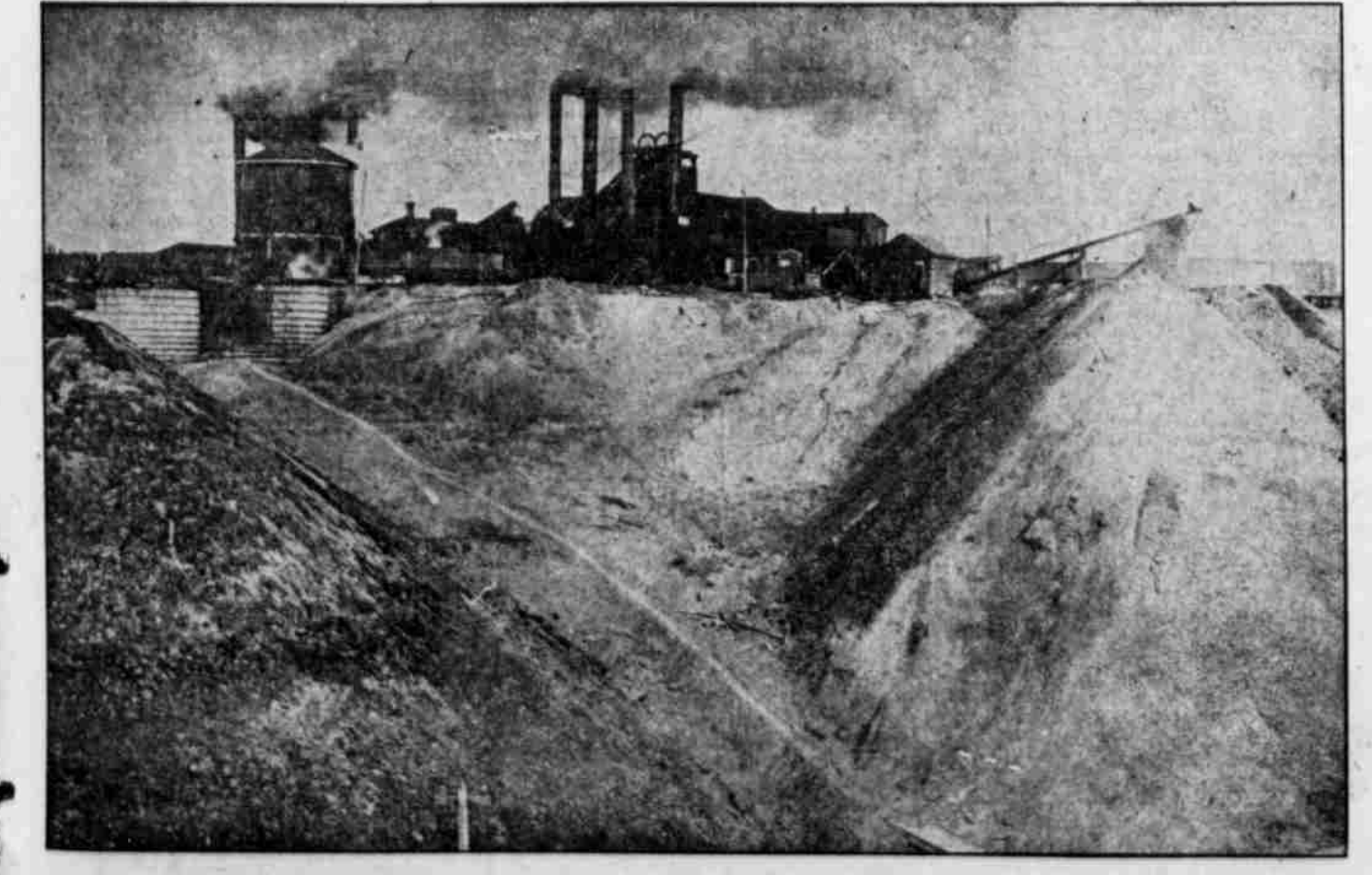
**Uncle Sam vs. John Bull.**  
In the meantime, notwithstanding this, Canada continues to coquette with John Bull, throwing bouquets at him in the shape of preferential duties. When it comes down to real business it buys of Uncle Sam. The truth is we make better and cheaper goods than the English, and the

Canadians like our fashions and novelties. Our people understand the market and, with a little courting on our part, the trade might be greatly increased. I have before me the items of Canada's foreign commerce in 1904. They show how we compete with Great Britain in the markets of the dominion. Of the goods covered by the tariff 52 per cent came from the United States, and only 30 per cent from the United Kingdom, notwithstanding the preferential rates. As to articles which paid no duties we furnished 71 per cent of them and Great Britain only 16 per cent.

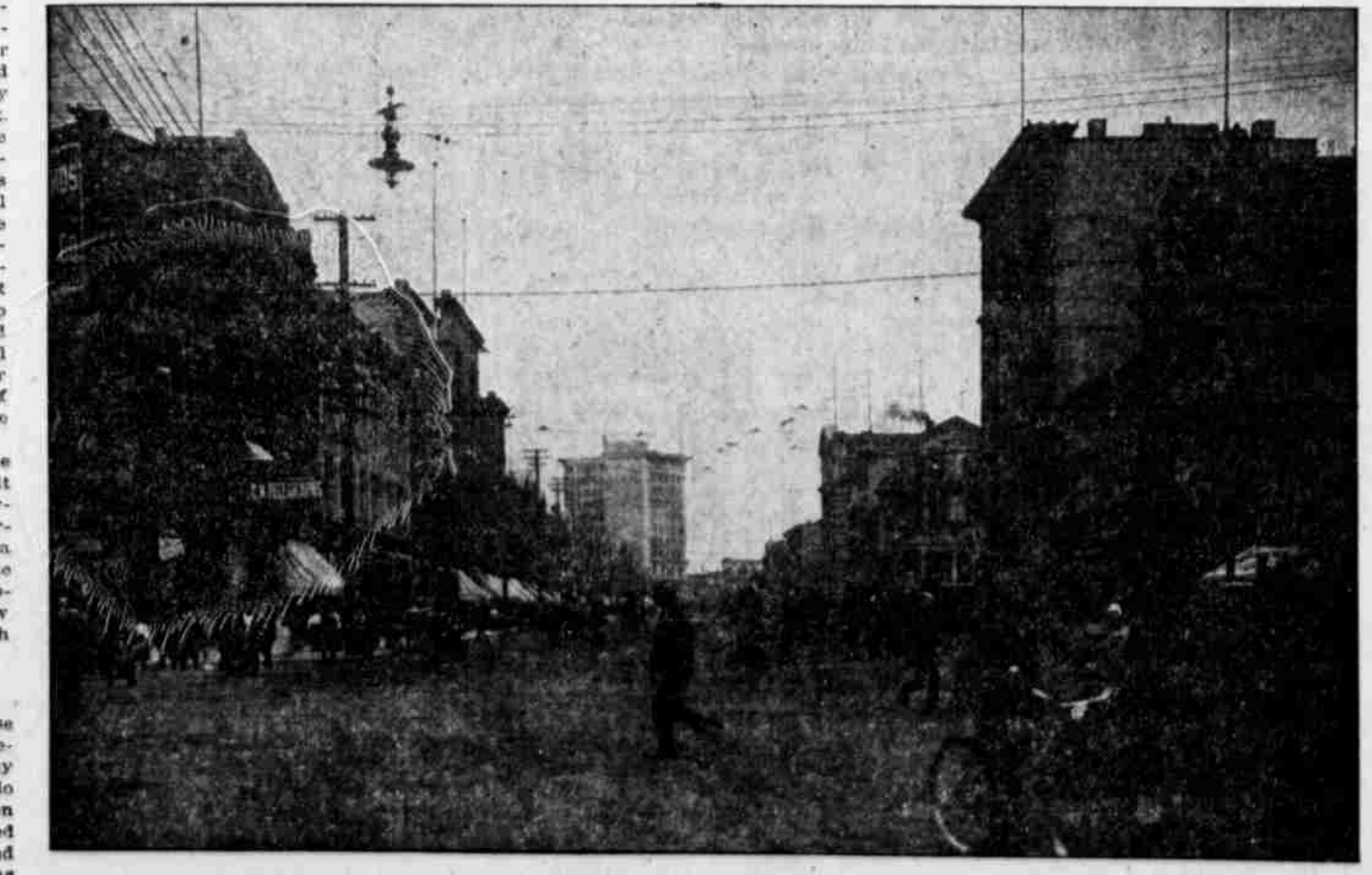
It is interesting to look at the figures. In manufactures of iron and steel Uncle Sam then sold \$17,000,000 and John Bull \$3,000,000. In hardware Uncle Sam \$3,000,000 and John Bull less than \$500,000. In coal Uncle Sam \$2,000,000 and John Bull \$330,000. In farming implements Uncle Sam about \$3,000,000 and John Bull \$250,000. The same proportion exists as to many other items. During that year the United States sold Canada \$2,500,000 worth of electrical machinery, while Great Britain supplied only \$250,000. And in vehicles our sales amounted to \$1,500,000 to Great Britain's \$270,000. Indeed, the percentage is altogether on our side of the ledger.

**American Capital in Canada.**  
The truth is the Canadians like American goods better than English goods. And away down in their souls I believe they like Americans better than Englishmen. I overheard one of their commercial travelers talking to a group of his fellows in the hotel here last night. The subject was the invasion of American capital and of Americans, which had been denounced by one of the papers. Said the drummer: "This opposition to Americans makes me

(Continued on Page Six.)



THE GALT COAL MINES IN ALBERTA.



STREET IN WINNIPEG.