

House Moving Has Become a Fine Art of Boundless Possibilities



RESIDENCE OF SENATOR MILLARD AT TWENTY-FOURTH AND HARNEY, THAT ONCE STOOD AT SEVENTEENTH AND FARNAM.

THE moving of big buildings has become an art and ought to be recognized as such, declare those who have made a life study of the matter. To pick up a huge brick structure, hoist it high in the air and let it down again at the desired spot without so much as disturbing the people who are living in it requires something more nearly approaching natural talent than the mere application of scientific rules and formulas.

So the connoisseur in the handling of buildings will maintain that it is not every man who can reach anywhere near perfection. Those who attain that high standard must be born with certain characteristics that cannot be educated into a man. For the art of house moving has reached such a high state of development that very nice distinctions are drawn between a successful job and a bungling failure.

If after you have hoisted your building up on stilts in midair, pushed it hundreds of feet and then lowered it to the point you want it to occupy, the fastidious housewife should find so much as a dustpanful of plastering knocked off the ceiling or if it should be discovered the heavy brick chimney had settled a fraction of an inch, you might as well go out of the house moving business, for you have made a failure of a comparatively easy job. A decade ago you might have been able to maintain a reputation, but not in this day when house moving has reached so near a state of perfection.

Limitations Slowly Giving Way.

Of course there are limitations to the possibilities of even a born house mover, but they are being enlarged all the time and even now it is largely a question of the size and strength of the tools they use. When factories are able to give them bigger and more powerful jack screws and heavier beams they will be able to increase in proportion to the size of the buildings they can handle. It is a fact that house movers are able to transport large buildings great distances with practically no danger to the structures that has given importance to the work. Years ago when to move a house a few blocks practically meant that it would be wrenched and strained until it was of almost no value to the owner without the expense of reinforcing the studding and joists, it was about as profitable to tear the building down and sell it for old junk and construct a new one on the new site.

Today a large number of landlords make it a practice to buy up old houses occupying sites that have to be cleared, move them to lots in the suburbs and fit them up to rent. One man recently bought eight of these buildings, had them transported to many lots in the suburbs and is now getting from \$12 to \$14 a month out of them, and the cost was so small these rentals yield him a big interest on the money in-

vested. The houses are practically as good as new and the purchase price and the expense of moving them was much less than the cost of building new houses would be at the present prices of lumber. The houses are frequently bought at sacrifice prices because the sites they are occupying have to be cleared for building operations within a limited time.

House Movers Work Wonders.

So the very perfection of the house mover's art brings him more and more business as people realize what he is able to do. It is now a rare thing to see a house torn down. Instead it is sold as it stands and a part at least of the original cost of the labor is secured. The fisherman who replied in answer to a question as to how he liked his new job: "Folks; I'm tearin' down a Protestant church and gettin' paid for it," will find his pleasure spoiled. Nowadays the trustees would find it more profitable to sell the church and have it moved.

"The business of house moving has reached such a perfection that we can move buildings long distances and keep them on a foundation as firm and rigid as their permanent resting place," said H. F. Petrie of Petrie Bros., who move several hundred houses from one part of Omaha to another every year. "Presently we moved fifty houses off the Great Northern right-of-way and scattered them all over town, and after we got through you couldn't find a scap shovel full of loose plastering in the whole fifty."

It is one of the indications of the development of the craft that large contracts are frequently handled by single firms. The same firm is now moving 100 houses from the Great Western right-of-way in Omaha. Railroads let contracts for the clearing of buildings from their right-of-way through the country also. This goes to show how well organized the business is getting to be. This same firm keeps about twenty-five buildings on the move all the time.

Samples of Their Work.

One of the most interesting exploits in this line was accomplished several years ago when what is known as the old Sharp building at Eighteenth and Douglas on the site now occupied by the telephone building was lowered thirty-eight feet. The reduction of the adjacent streets to grade left the building way up out of reach. It was a large brick building, but it was decided to be possible to lower it without injury. The building was jacked up and the hill cut away under it, the graders with their teams working constantly under the cribbing that supported the house. As the earth under it was excavated and carried away, the house was lowered until at the end of the job it was left thirty-eight feet below its former position and in as good condition as it was originally. It must be

remembered that in order to do this precautions must be taken to prevent the chimneys and those parts of the building bearing especially heavy weights from settling.

The firm mentioned is about to begin the moving of a house from Thirty-seventh and Dewey, avenue to Thirty-sixth and Dewey. The special difficulty to be



MOUNTED AND READY FOR A CROSS-TOWN TRIP.

encountered in the building is the fact it is two and a half stories high, 55x36 feet in dimensions and contains five heavy chimneys and seven fire places. Unusually heavy supports will have to be placed under the chimneys and fire places, for if they should settle a half an inch in the

moving the plastering would be badly cracked and loosened. In addition to the strain that would be put on the front of the house.

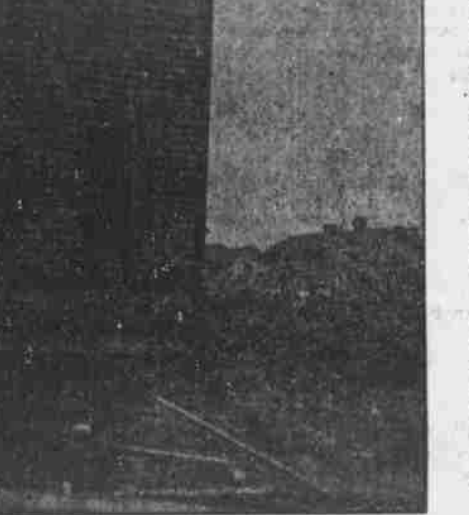
Hardly less remarkable than the moving of the Dewey avenue house was a job done by the firm at Woodbine, Ia., not long



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ago. A large hotel building standing on a side hill was pushed out 30 feet on cribbing and left standing fourteen feet in the air. A basement was then built up under it Chinese fashion. All this was done without disturbing the occupants of the building. During the time work was in progress the hotel was in operation, and as it happened to be a busy

houses were pushed out on false work and then lowered to the street and after the hill on which they had formerly stood was dug away were pushed back to positions just beneath that they had occupied. The highest part of the roofs of the houses are now about on a level with the lower part of their basement as they originally stood. During the moving process and while the buildings were on stilts they were occupied by families as if nothing unusual were happening to them.



MOUNTED AND READY FOR A CROSS-TOWN TRIP.

Distance is no longer a hindrance to the moving of buildings. Houses can be carted for miles without injury, though of course, in the case of heavy structures the progress is slow. Buildings are frequently moved from the business part of the city to the suburbs. In one instance a sixteen-room flat was moved seven blocks without damage.

In line with house moving, but still of a entirely different nature, was a job recently completed at the electric light plant in Omaha. The roof of the plant, tiled and trussed with steel beams and estimated to weigh 300 tons, was raised ten feet and the walls of the building built up under it was raised foot by foot. All the time the men were at work the plant continued to run and the men climbed around among the wires and over the machinery. This is held to be one of the

most remarkable feats ever accomplished in that line in Omaha.

Special Timbers Are Required.

In order to bear the weight of the monster buildings that are moved beams of unusual size and of perfect grain are required. For an ordinary building the main beams used will be 14x16 inches and fifty feet long. For large buildings the beams are sixteen inches square and sixty-eight feet long. In the rest of the frame work on which the building rests smaller timber is used, but perfection of grain in order to guard against the breaking of an important piece is necessary.

The raising and lowering of buildings is an interesting proceeding to those who can stand off to one side and look on. In order that the frame may be kept perfectly level the jackscrews must be operated uniformly. In large jobs as many as 100 of these jackscrews are required, but in ordinary cases the number is much less. It is necessary that the threads of these screws be absolutely uniform in pitch. The men work by count, the foreman of the gang calling a number at each pull of the levers. With the ordinary jackscrew seven pulls or counts means an inch in the raising or lowering of the building.

Houses Turned End for End.

Another part of the work of the house mover that requires special care is turning buildings around in small spaces. The twisting motion is likely to injure the walls unless great precautions are taken. One of the feats of this kind accomplished was a job in which a frame building with a brick basement was turned so that it faced Seventeenth avenue instead of Eighteenth street and all of this accomplished within the space of one lot. At Forty-first and Dewey avenue a church measuring 41x15 feet was turned around, though the length of the building added considerably to the difficulty of the job.

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Not Without Spice.

It would require more than ordinary keenness to discover much romance in the business of house moving. Those who follow it are attracted largely by the fact it is a profitable business when conducted properly. Exciting incidents are not rare, however, and the employees are always in more or less danger from the breaking of the apparatus or the carelessness of a fellow employe. An incident is reported in which a house on stilts dropped down upon a man who was working under it and doubled him up in a very painful manner. Owing to the fact most of the apparatus was under the house it was found quicker to dig him out than to raise the house again. The breaking of the taut hawser used in connection with a windlass may also result seriously to whoever happens to be in the way.

One night last week one gang worked all night moving a building off the proposed right-of-way of the Union Pacific cut-off. The haste was caused by the fact an injunction to prevent the work being done was feared and the men worked all night with one eye out for an irate woman with a shotgun.

Like all other crafts in which great skill and nicety of judgment is necessary, men who engage in the business show considerable pride in their ability to do a skillful job. This feeling shows plainly when they talk about their work and they explain the makeup of timber work under a building much as an artist might talk of a skillful piece of sculpture from his hand.

Wolf Hunting on the Nebraska Plains an Exciting Winter Sport

PREDATORY animals are the pest of the ranchman's life, and annually cost him a pretty penny in the way of damage done to small stock. During recent years the wolves and coyotes have multiplied until they have become a serious proposition even among the older settled communities of the west. Bounties offered for their destruction have not had the desired effect. Indeed, it has more than once been proven that wolf-raising was practiced as a source of income. But the farmer whose chickens, lambs, calves and pigs have been raided again and again, that the hunger of a pack of prairie wolves or coyotes might be appeased, soon loses sight of the humor of the situation, and goes after the pesky critters in real earnest. The cunning of these animals has not been exaggerated in the stories told of them by magazine writers and naturalists credit them with being exceedingly shrewd. The farmer who has tried to exterminate them by ordinary means knows how wise the beasts become,

and is moved at times to resort to heroic means to achieve the results he seeks. The ancient battle or trench is one of the plans that has been adapted to the war on wolves and is popular, for it affords some sport as well as serving a useful end. One of these wolf drives was recently held in Hall county, Nebraska, and has been described by a correspondent for The Bee.

Central Nebraska Wolf Hunt.

During the last few years—and especially the last fall and present winter—coyotes and prairie wolves have become very numerous throughout central Nebraska. Not many of them are seen, but soon after nightfall their hideous "ki-hi-yoo-lie," repeated at intervals through the night, is enough to make one unacquainted with them, think some lost soul has returned from Hades to warn his fellow men. I have known people just from the east to declare that "a lot of children are screaming, shrieking, just down the road a bit," when the wise westerner knew it was only a lone coyote

calling to his mate. It is not their horrible noise that the people most dread. Many chickens, turkeys, little pigs and sheep disappear every night. Sometimes the big prairie wolves attack calves and small children. Hundreds of dollars worth of small stock have been taken from the farmers by these sneaking night thieves.

Two varieties are known here. The coyote is about the size of a small shepherd dog, rusty, grey-brown in color, very sly, and a coward. The prairie wolf is larger, a cleaner grey color, with long, bushy tail. Nose and ears something like a fox and much bolder than the coyote. Both are about the same color as dry grass, therefore only an experienced eye can detect them, even when running.

The coyotes are usually the more numerous. They are very difficult to trap, especially the big wolves, and almost impossible to shoot, as one cannot get near enough with a gun. They seem to be able to smell danger in the gun, for a man with only a stick can sometimes get within a few yards

of them. Their hair is very thick, so that only coarse shot at close range will kill them. Only one effective way of hunting them is known, and that is by rounding them up in the manner I will now attempt to describe.

Planning a Wolf Drive.

During the first part of February some of the leading farmers near St. Libory, Neb., planned a big wolf hunt. It was to cover from twenty-five to thirty square miles. Near the center of the area a level, close cut meadow land was selected for the meet. Then every man and boy for miles around was notified of the time and place selected for the hunt. About fifteen men were mounted on tough horses. There were the captains, whose duty it was to post the men at regular intervals of several rods and see that they advanced evenly when the time to start arrived. Wagonloads of hunters were taken to each corner of the area to be hunted and there given over to the orders of the captains. At a certain time agreed upon the men on the opposite corners start, for they have the farthest to go. About ten or fifteen minutes later the men on the sides start, thus forming a huge circle of advancing armed men. Now it's "Hurrah, boys! The hunt is on."

The men steadily advance, beating the brush and tall grassy places, the captains shouting their orders. Occasionally some one shoots a rabbit or a bird. Hawks and owls are driven from their hiding places; some are shot, others get out of range only to be shot at by the hunters on the opposite line. Most of the game killed at the beginning of the hunt is left where it falls, as the men have to walk from two to six miles and get tired carrying it. A big jackrabbit weighs from eight to ten pounds and seems to weigh more than twice as much at the end of two or three miles of rough walking. When a wolf is sighted much excitement and yelling ensues. Especially if he tries to break through the line. More often he tries to hide in the thick grass. If he keeps perfectly still the men often pass by him, as it takes an extra sharp eye to distinguish him from the grass so near his own color.

Finish of the Hunt.

When the opposite lines of men come in sight of each other excitement runs high. Men run, yelling and shooting at the frightened wolf or coyote whenever any of them come near enough. The wagons come rattling behind. Nearby haystacks and knolls are occupied by sightseers. Deafened ones are running at the top of their speed, over soft-plowed ground, through cornfields, patches of sandbars, "beggars' lice" and

muddy places. Here is a woman over 70 years old, and two small grandchildren, running and puffing, trying to gain the top of a knoll in time to see the "finish." Over there is a couple running—the woman clad in rich furs—the man looks delicate and is nearly winded. They are evidently from the city and have left their horse in safety, tied to a pole in the depths of a straw calf shed back at the nearest farmhouse. Farmers' wives and daughters appear from various directions. A crowd of rosy-cheeked girls have come to a slough with water and ice in it. They have to hunt a place to get safely over. An old man goes hurriedly on, leaning heavily on a stout stick to aid his tired legs. He started with the other hunters, but had not the strength to keep up, though he is determined to be at the "finish." Suddenly a gap is noticed in the line of hunters, and a wolf is seen sneaking through it. Men shout and point and the nearest ones fire at the slinking wolf. The

captains wheel their tired ponies and make a dash after him, firing as they go. But he is getting away in spite of them. It is astonishing how quickly the long, swinging loop of the wolf takes him out of range. Now he is out of sight in a bunch of tall grass and the men know it is hopeless to chase him farther.

Safety in Shotgun.

Only shotguns are used in the wolf hunt. Perhaps if someone had had a rifle they might have got him, but rifles are not allowed as they carry so far it is dangerous for the men. When the hunters are sure the last wolf is killed a great popping of guns is heard. Each man who has not already fired off his gun fires in the air. This is for the general safety of the crowd.

Now the hunters come together. Over 50 of them. Greetings are exchanged and a great hum, almost a roar, of conversation is heard. The game is minutely examined to see in how many places he is shot and which one really killed him. They discover that eight or ten different wolves or coyotes have been seen during the morning's hunt. Only one was killed—a young one, too, so experienced hunters declare. Two others were wounded, but got away alive. So did all the rest of them. This goes to prove the cunning sagacity of the coyote and prairie wolf. Three hundred and fifty men and boys walking only a few rods apart at first, later only a few yards from each other, over mostly smooth prairie farm lands, carefully beating through the scanty underbrush and tall grass places. The coyotes are seen from time to time, so they know the game is still in the ring. But when the finish comes most of the coyotes and wolves are gone. No one knows when or where. No wonder he multiplies and grows fat, and no wonder

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MOUNTED CAPTAINS AT CENTRAL NEBRASKA WOLF DRIVE.—Photo by Mrs. A. V. Ballman, St. Libory, Neb.



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GROUP OF HUNTERS WHO TOOK PART IN THE WOLF DRIVE.—Photo by Mrs. A. V. Ballman, St. Libory, Neb.