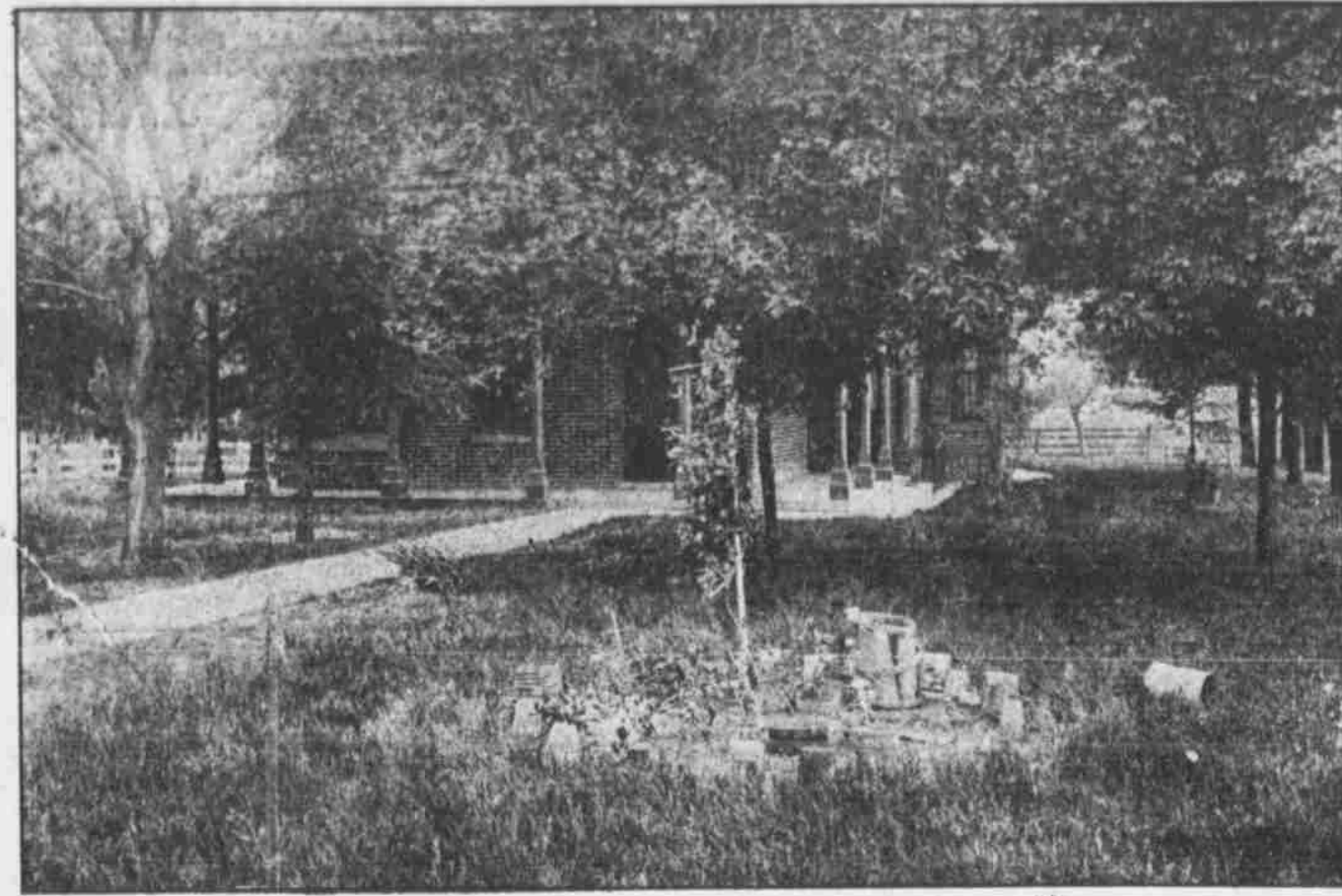


# Henry Sprick of Fontanelle and the Dream That Was Not Realized



RESIDENCE OF THE LATE HENRY SPRICK AT FONTANELLE.



THE LATE HENRY SPRICK, FOUNDER OF FONTANELLE.



PRESENT APPEARANCE OF THE SITE OF THE FIRST BUILDING AT FONTANELLE.

**T**HE death of Henry Sprick at the village of Fontanelle, Washington county, last week, recalls the life of a sterling type of Nebraska pioneer. Mr. Sprick passed away at the ripe age of 79, rich in the happiness that usually comes to well ordered and honorable endeavor and the will to make the best of circumstances, no matter what they may be.

He had dreamed, when he came to Nebraska in 1855, of founding the metropolis and capital of the state. With others he had planned such an enterprise before departing from Illinois. Every precaution, in selecting the site of Fontanelle, was taken to insure its geographical advantage for such honors. But destiny held another fate for the village of Fontanelle. Instead of tall buildings, paved streets and many people, most of the townsite was to be the location of profitable farms in one of the most fertile sections of Nebraska. Of the band who saw its hopes go to pieces, only Mr. Sprick remained. He quietly did what lay to his hand and passed his declining years in comfort and ease, secure in the possession of a sufficient competence.

**Patriarch of the Community.**

Representing the only resident remaining of the original company that laid out Fontanelle, Mr. Sprick for years was regarded as the patriarch of the community. He was a man of strong fiber, entirely capable of subduing the natural difficulties of the virgin plain and surviving the vicissitudes of the first settler. He was always more or less of an active leader in politics and affairs in Washington county and the townsite of Fontanelle. His lifelong political affiliation was with the republican party, carrying among his convictions a strong hatred of monopoly and uncontrollable power by mere wealth. He was elected to the lower house of the legislature in 1873, 1877 and 1881, and to the state senate from Washington and Dodge counties in 1887. He was recognized as a leading force in all of these bodies and served with credit.

Mr. Sprick had two political hobbies which he pressed at every opportunity. One was the firm belief that all good government must come from the proper education of the masses of the people, and the other that it is the plain duty, under all circumstances, for every citizen to cast his ballot whenever an election is held in his community. Carrying out these plainly conceived theories, he was a power in providing an excellent public school system in the township. From 1855 to the day of his death he had never failed to vote at an election whenever it was possible for him to do so.

**Some History of Fontanelle.**

When Mr. Sprick first settled in Fontanelle he and five young men who were his companions in the expedition to a new land, built a log cabin, the first house erected in Fontanelle. Some remains of the cabin still exist, but in 1864 a more comfortable frame dwelling was built, proof of the fruits of Mr. Sprick's labors. In 1862 the brick home which he tenanted the remainder of his life was constructed and the trees and shrubs about it were planted at the same time. The pictures show Mr. Sprick as he sat on the porch of the house some six years ago and the place at that time. The other photograph shows the second house he built in Fontanelle. The three domiciles well illustrate the three phases of his experiences in Nebraska: the first of hardship and rude usages, the second of humble comfort and the third of ease.

There is more historic interest to the village of Fontanelle than the mere fact that it set out to be the biggest town in the state and possessor of the capitol. So well were its claims pressed that Fontanelle lacked but one vote less than Omaha in the race for the location of the capitol of the territory of Nebraska. At that time Omaha and Fontanelle had about

the same population. Possession of the capitol then meant the impetus that would make a metropolis.

Omaha secured the prize, relinquished it when it was no longer indispensable and in the principal city of the state with 25,000 inhabitants. On the other hand, not more than 150 persons live in Fontanelle. These, without exception, are in good circumstances. No poverty or want is known there. The claim is made, and with a good deal of reason, that the townsite is

the most productive of the soil of any in the commonwealth. No one is inordinately rich, but a satisfactory abundance exists which blights envy and life-wracking striving.

**Colony That Didn't Grow.**

The idea that resulted in Fontanelle had its origin in the Quincy Colonization society, organized at Quincy, Ill., in 1854. The society sent a committee to Nebraska to select a site for a town, it being the

avowed intention to make this town the selfsame valley when the railroad was built—if it was built. This bit of foresight seems to have been good, though defective, for the Union Pacific did run up the valley, but on the opposite side of the river.

The colonization society had fifty members and most of them came to Fontanelle, along with others. With a mighty eye to the future and sound intentions, ample plots of ground were set aside for a col-

lege, for a court house and for the capitol that never came. The streets were made broad and regular, which was very easy to do on blue prints and clean prairie. It was asserted with truth that the place was ideal for a city to build on, and there is today no gaining that the place is wholly beautiful and attractive.

**Sprick in the Vanguard.**

The first settlement was made in 1855 and Mr. Sprick was in the vanguard. With

him were Henry Breakman, William Luning, Henry Stork, Frederick Hasbrook and William Moscha. The township is now practically all settled by these six men and their descendants and friends. As showing the spirit of the community, which grew rapidly for a while, it is to be remarked that soon after providing themselves with shelter, the task of insuring education for the generation to come was undertaken. A college was contemplated by the society, and an organization formed, which erected a building in 1859. It was called the University of Nebraska and was doubtless the first school anywhere to have this name applied. The original buildings were burned, but were replaced. It was necessary for Mr. Sprick and three other trustees of the college to secure the lumber bill. After Fontanelle had lost out on the capitol proposition the four paid the bill out of their pockets. The school was controlled by the Congressional church and was removed to Crete. It is now the flourishing Doane college.

**Knockout for Fontanelle.**

The territorial legislature, which planted the solar plexus on Fontanelle's ambition, met at Florence. Losing the capitol Fontanelle fell back on its possession of the seat of Dodge county for prestige, but another legislature spoiled that plan. Fremont had jealous eyes on the county seat and determined to have it. Washington county was a small strip along the Missouri river. A plan was evolved to detach the part of Dodge county in which Fontanelle lay and attach it to Washington county. As the people of Fremont wanted the county capital and the people of Washington county wanted more territory, the deal was put through the legislature, not, however, without protests of fraud in presenting petitions from voters, the allegations coming from the vicinity of Fontanelle.

The last blow at the little hamlet was struck when the Union Pacific failed to come up the right side of the Elkhorn valley. With other towns having a railroad and Fontanelle off the line, the last legs of its glorious aspirations were knocked out from under. Years later the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley road built up along the Elkhorn river valley, Fontanelle had subsided into a peaceful, rural calm, scarce desirous of whether a railroad came or not.

**Back to the Land.**

The successions of misfortune caused the founders to abandon the village, one by one, taking up and developing farms in the vicinity, until only Mr. Sprick remained. He purchased the town lots from the owners when they wished to sell and the tax titles of others who had abandoned their property. Later he hunted them up and secured quit claim deeds and contrived to make his arrangements so there was never any litigation or trouble of any kind. He secured the consent of other owners and had streets and alleys not needed for highways vacated and the greater part of the townsite turned into revenue producing farm land. Thus passed the metropolis and capital of Fontanelle. The village has a store, a school house, blacksmith shop, creamery, two churches and the dwellings of the small population, which includes a number of retired farmers. The buildings are well painted, the gardens and lawns neatly kept, the pastures sleek with fine stock and the fields well tilled. There are no signs of despair or blasted hopes, as neither was there in the life of Henry Sprick. In the simple annals of the village lies a story of profound truth, namely, that fate cannot wring happiness from those who have strength of will to be content.

## Recent Progress Made in the Field of Electricity

**Electricity Supplanting Steam.**

**T**WO of the huge electric locomotives ordered by the New York Central for terminal work in New York City have been ordered to the metropolis to begin service. Weighing each 175,000 pounds, they are the first of the order for thirty-five electric locomotives given by the New York Central railroad to the American Locomotive company to be delivered. There are eighteen more nearly completed and due to arrive before September 1, the day set for the opening of electrical service on that railroad from the Grand Central station to Highbridge on the main line and Wakefield on the Harlem division. While the big electric locomotives are to draw the through trains to and from Highbridge until the main line service is finally extended to Croton, the motor cars, running in five and seven-car trains together with steel trailers, are to care for the suburban service. Fifty-five trailers have been ordered from a St. Louis car building company, and the first lot will soon arrive.

The electric locomotives are capable of making the regular trip from the Grand Central station to Croton, a distance of thirty-four miles, with a total train weight of 485 tons, in forty-four minutes without a stop. The heaviest of these trains will be 575 tons and will be drawn by two locomotives. Maximum speeds of from sixty to sixty-five miles an hour are to be attained, but undoubtedly this will be largely increased as the curves are straightened and the roadbed further improved.

The designers have secured the best mechanical features of the high speed steam locomotive, combined with the enormous power and simplicity in control made possible by the use of the electric drive. The locomotive has four driving axles, on each of which is mounted the armature of a gearless electric motor having a normal rating of 550-horse power. The total rated capacity of the locomotive is 2,200-horse power, although for short periods a considerably greater power may be developed, making it more powerful than the largest steam locomotive in existence.

According to the electrical experts the electric locomotive has many advantages over the steam locomotive. All danger from fire and explosion, which is always present in a steam locomotive carrying fire under a forced draught and a boiler charged with high pressure steam, is eliminated from the electric locomotive. The experts also say that the substitution of a simple rotating member in the electric locomotive for the cranks, slide rods, pistons and other parts connected with reciprocating motion in the steam locomotive diminishes the possibility of accident.

**Preventing Collisions.**

For twenty-five minutes the other night the power was turned off on the division of the Utica and Mohawk Valley Electric railroad extending from New York to Frankfort in order to avert a head-on crash between a couple of crowded trolley cars traveling toward each other at a sixty-miles-an-hour clip.

West of the village of Frankfort, reports the New York Sun, the electric railway

company is repairing its tracks, and for a section both eastbound and westbound cars have been using the same track. To protect the car in the block watchmen are stationed at either end of the single track and permit only one car in the block at a time.

While the watchman was absent the other night an eastbound car dashed past the danger point. For a second the watchman contemplated the horror of a collision which appeared unavoidable, and then, rushing to a telephone, he directed that the power on that division be shut off.

This was done. At brief intervals the current was sent through the wires, enabling the two cars to move ahead slowly and show by their headlights that they were approaching each other. Had the watchman not acted promptly in having the power turned off nothing could have saved the cars from collision.

**Electrical Supplies.**

The discussion in England aroused by the

plans of the London county council to engage in the electrical supply business elicits an interesting comparison of the output of electricity in the British metropolis and in New York. It is calculated that, whereas New York, with a population of 3,500,000, produces 21,000,000 units of electricity per annum, or 232 units per capita, London, which has a population of 6,000,000 within the area for which the county council legislates, has an annual output of only 23,000,000 units, or only 4 units per head. This illustrates two things: The immense advance of the American development of electric energy over the British and the enormous field for supply in London yet untouched.

**A Transatlantic Telephone.**

While it might never pay to lay a telephone cable across the Atlantic, it would undoubtedly pay, and pay well, to lay a cable which, while being effective for tele-

phone service, would also give much better results than are now attainable in telegraphy. This rather breath-catching suggestion is made in an interesting study of Prof. Pupin, Columbia's electro-magnetic expert, contributed to the current Harper's Weekly by Charles Johnston. The difficulty at present, says Mr. Johnston, is not an electrical one, but a simple question of construction. The cable has to be sunk in two miles of water. It must, therefore, be able to bear a pressure equal to two miles of water, every thirty-four feet of which is equal to one atmosphere, or fifteen pounds to the square inch; this amounts to some two tons to the square inch at the bottom of the Atlantic, and it is a difficult problem to devise coils that will stand that enormous pressure. But this is simply a mechanical difficulty, not an electrical one. The electrical part of the matter is complete and perfect. Messrs. Siemens and Halske are hard at work on the mechanical problem; they are at present

## Quaint and Curious Features of Current Life

**Never Saw a Railroad.**

**ELMER FROY,** 35 years of age, Carroll county, Virginia, long and lean and as innocent as a tell, spent a night at the Central police station in Cleveland.

Oelrid had never seen a railroad train until three days before. All of the eighteen years of his life had been spent on a farm in the back part of Carroll county; but after Oelrid's father died and his mother became ill, four years ago, things began to break bad at the farm and soon there was a heavy mortgage on sight.

A chance seemed to offer itself in the way of a job proffered to Oelrid by his cousin in Ohio, and it was then that Oelrid made the long journey from his home to the nearest railroad station and started on his still longer journey to his cousin's home in Ohio.

As near as Oelrid could remember, that cousin lived in a place called Rich Hill, somewhere in Ohio; but he lost the card bearing the address and is not sure where his cousin lives. Oelrid had spent his last cent on street car fare and was wandering aimlessly about the streets, his baggage under his arm, when a kind-hearted citizen's attention was attracted to his forlorn appearance. The man brought the boy to the station and Oelrid was glad to stay there all night.

**Officially Dead, Though Living.**

For an officially dead man Henry Pancoast, a livey-man of Vineland, N. J., manages to enjoy his meals and surroundings fairly well, and his is one of the oddest of records. Pancoast enlisted in the civil war from Atlantic county and was discharged from the Echington hospital, Washington, D. C., on January 7, 1862. Somehow the dates got mixed and he was reported as dead by the surgeon, and so the records state today. It took him twenty years to prove he was alive enough to get a pension.

**Strange People in New Guinea.**

Sir Francis Winter, acting administrator of New Guinea, has recently been exploring the recesses of the great island territory over which he presides. He fell in with several unknown tribes. By far the most remarkable of these are the Aghalambos, a race of swamp dwellers.

For past ages these people have lived in a huge morass, dwelling in houses raised on piles twelve feet above the surface of the water. They travel in canoes dug out of logs, and, as they never by any chance leave their native swamps, they have practically lost the art of walking.

The result of this strange existence has been that the whole tribe is deformed. Their legs have atrophied so that none of them can walk properly on hard ground. Their feet have become short, broad and flat, excellently adapted for swimming, but the skin is so thin that they bleed on firm ground.

The legs are very thin and the usual muscles above the knee missing, the skin hanging in loose folds. The shin muscles are developed, those of the calf almost absent. Into the bargain the leg of an aver-

age man of this tribe is three inches shorter than that of any other New Guinea native of the same height.

The Aghalambos make up for the deficiencies in their lower extremities by having fine chests, thick necks and powerful arms. Around their waists are folds of thick muscles. They are fever proof.

In November last they arrived at Dr. Turry's hospital at St. Petersburg five or six miles from the coast, where they were amply of another race which suffers from a peculiar deformity. They are Cossacks from the transcaucasian territory. While their heads and bodies are perfectly normal, their hands and feet are only partially developed. They have the appearance of grownup people with feet and hands of the size of 12-year-old children.

These patients are descendants of Russian Cossacks who emigrated to the other side of the Caspian and it appears that more than half of the community suffer from the same strange deformity.

**Hero of Many Battles.**

One fault of a certain extremely popular general is that he, being rather deaf, is apt to come to wrong conclusions.

Returning from a campaign, one of the first men to greet him was an old acquaintance. "Ah, my dear fellow," said the general, "so glad to see you again. Hope you have prospered and had good fortune these years."

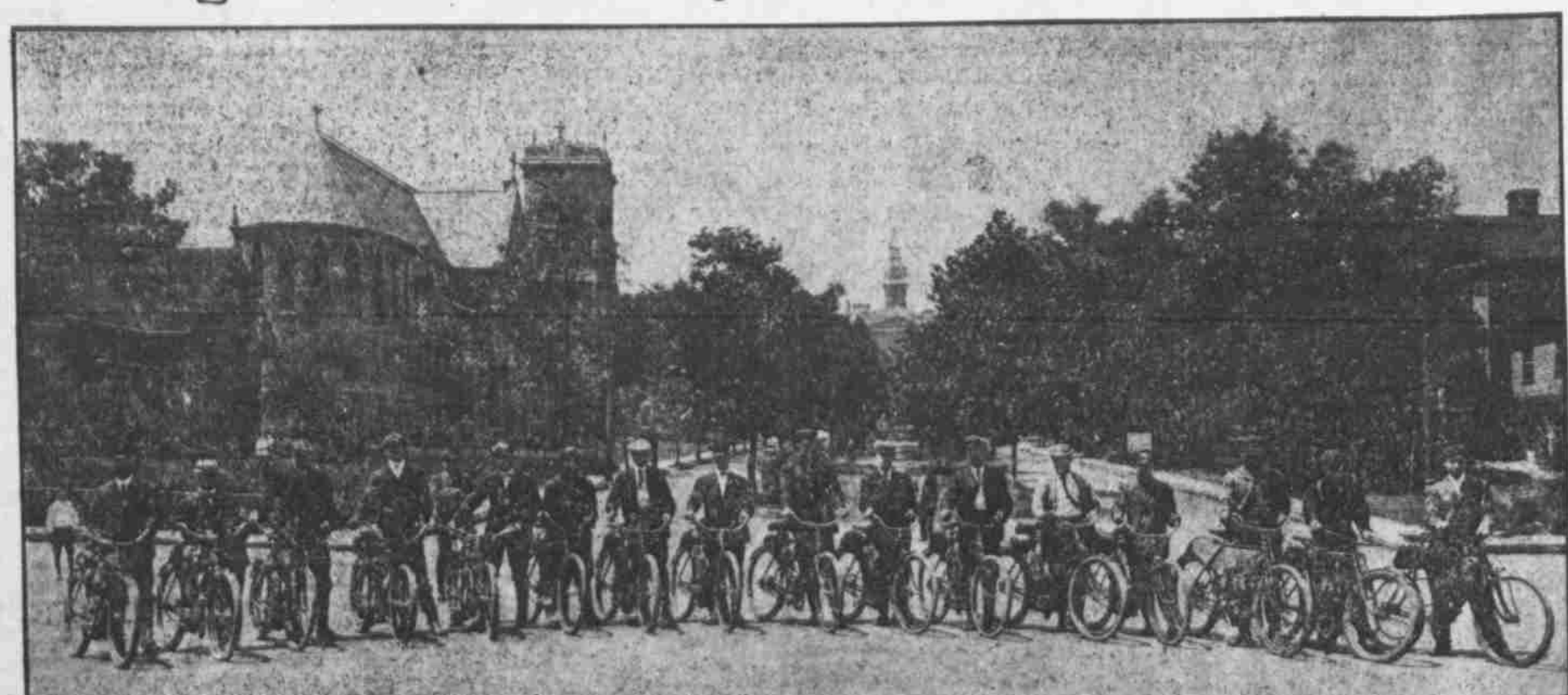
"Yes, general, yes; but I have had the great misfortune to lose my wife since I saw you."

Catching the word "wife" the other guessed at the idea of a recent marriage, and, patting his old friend affectionately on the shoulder, he exclaimed:

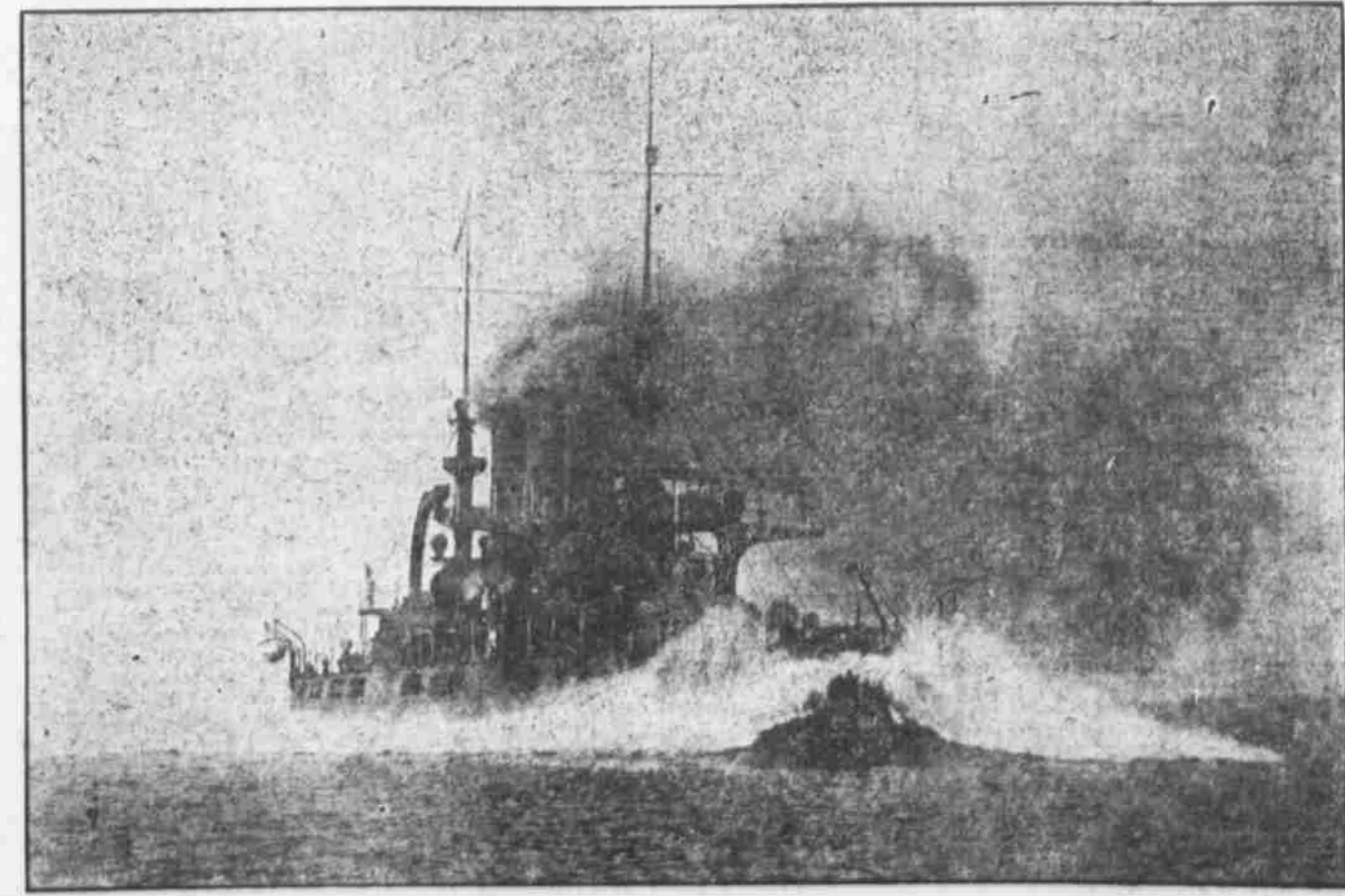
"Happy man! happy man!"

## Majesty of a Battleship Under Headway

## Reign of the Motor Cycle Established in Omaha



SIXTEEN ENTHUSIASTIC MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL CLUB LINED UP ON CAPITOL AVENUE READY TO START FOR A RUN.



U. S. B. NEBRASKA AT FULL SPEED DURING OFFICIAL TEST.