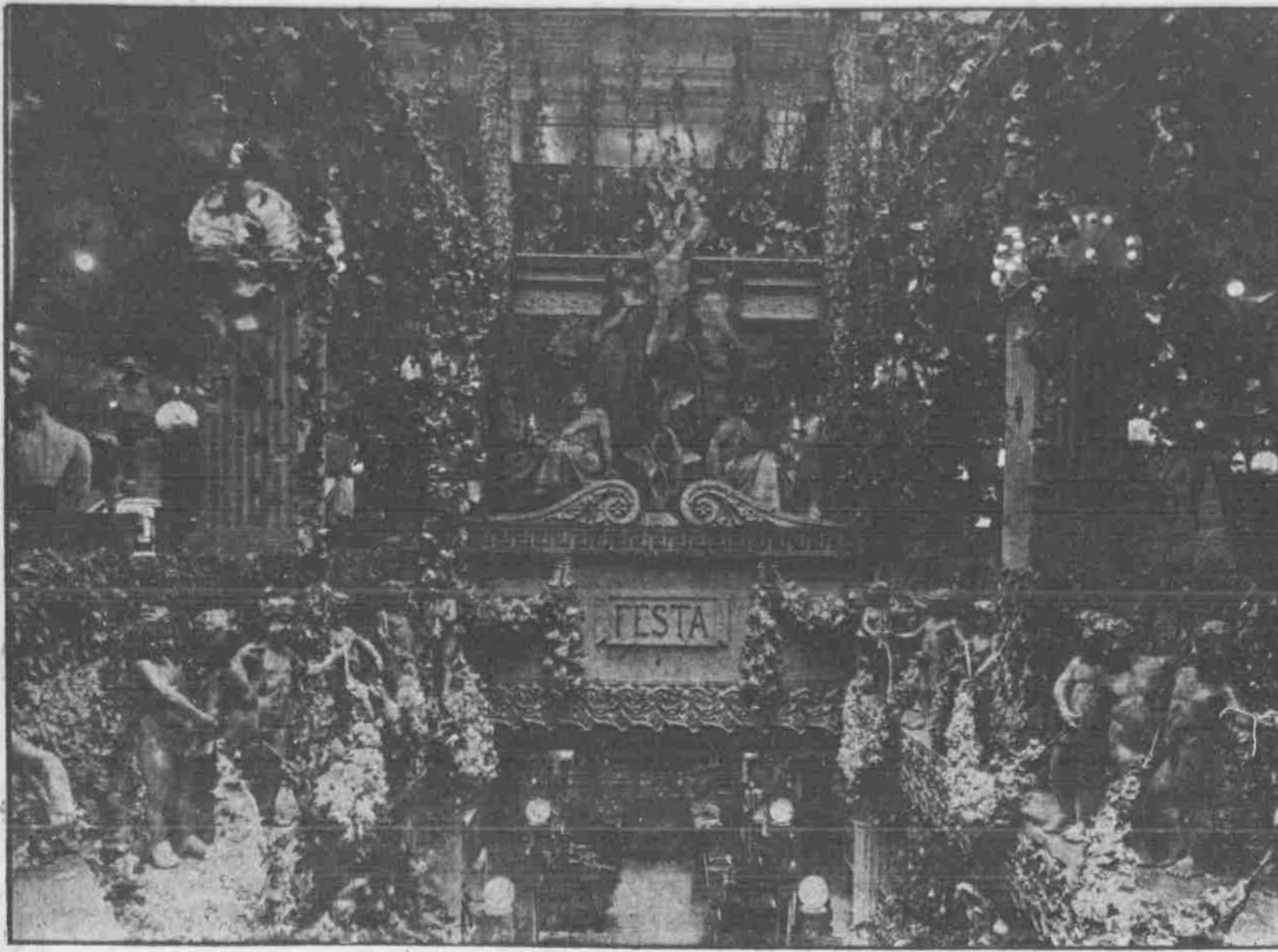


Inside Great City Stores Where Santa Claus Holds Undisputed Sway



FRAGMENT OF THE BEAUTIFUL DECORATIONS IN THE BRANDEIS STORE.



VISTA DOWN AN AISLE ON THE MAIN FLOOR AT THE BRANDEIS STORE.

Away to the north where the snow loves to linger. Inside of a mountain old Santa Claus dwells.

THAT is the way we learned it in childhood and that is the way one loves to think of it still when the last touches have been put to the Christmas tree and the coals burn gray on the hearth behind the row of stockings. What a marvelous place that Santa Claus land was all glistening with frost and a-twinkle with millions of candles; and peopled with that busy army of fairies that spun the wonderful tinsel ropes and with deft fingers tended the magic garden where the trees and plants and shrubs yielded wonderful toys for the boys and girls and just the right things for the grown-ups. And what a wonderfully busy place it was just before Christmas, when all the treasure boxes are unpacked under the direction of Mrs. Santa, who keeps the record book, and the things stowed away in that magic "back" just where old Santa can put his hands on them without losing a minute as he dashes from one housetop to another in his reindeer sleigh—the night before Christmas. It was a beautiful old myth.

But down in the heart of the city there is another Santa Claus land more familiar to the men and women and to many of the boys and girls of today than the old nursery version. To even the prosaic it requires little stretch of the imagination to recognize in the lavish decoration of almost all of the stores at this season the source of the inspiration and the scheme, for the tinsel ropes, the glittering frost, the twinkling lights, the holly and mistletoe and all the wonderful toys for the boys and girls and the things for the grown-ups are there—yes, and the busy fairies too, only they look a little different to the mature eyes. But one wholly new element has entered into this modern version, the throng of men and women and children that surge through the aisles looking, handling, comparing, and, for the most part just mingling. And as the

holidays grow nearer there comes a change in this crowd and with every day there grows an intensity that toward the last becomes almost appalling. Nowhere in all the great world is the selfish departure from the beautiful traditions of Christmas more apparent than in the holiday rush in the big stores. Feverishly the shoppers elbow their way through from one counter to another, taking every possible advantage, seemingly unmindful of all but their own desire to get what they want and get it quickly. The very atmosphere of the big stores is charged with this intensity until the crush becomes suffocating with something besides the close contact and the warm air. All day long the busy clerks have "waited on trade," answering a thousand questions, showing goods they know they will not sell, taking down and putting back, straightening out the tangle again and again and always with the crowd passing before them until it is little wonder that before the day is gone their enthusiasm becomes forced and their smiles like their movements become automatic. But there is not a minute to stop and rest. Even the stools that the law has placed behind the counters for the women employees, are pushed aside to make room that they may move more quickly.

But this is not the only aspect of the Christmas shopping crowd; it has its bright spots and its cheery side, for in the main the people are happy. With a persistence irresistible, because it is born of love, the Christmas spirit pervades everything and unconsciously the better nature of men and women asserts itself. Everywhere it is evident. It gives to the intent face of the shopper something that is not seen in an ordinary crowd and it even steals into the wistful faces of those whose portion it is only to look on. And there are many such in this throng; such extremes as it represents. In her warm furs and trim tailored suit the woman of means makes careful selection over the counter of such finery as her taste may suggest, often with careless extravagance and absorbed to the point of forgetting that other woman who,



ONE OF THE AISLES OF THE THOMPSON, BELDEN, & CO. STORE.

poorly clad, timidly fingers the bits of finery as she passes from one bargain square to another or stands in undivided wonder and admiration before the marvelous fabrics in the showcases—those things

that are only for the few. It is at least her privilege to look, however, and as she stands and contemplates these things she knows well she may never possess the wistful look fades from her face, giving

place to one of utmost satisfaction that she permits her to stand and admire. And so the crowd moves on, the women of fashion, with time to look, the little

woman with the baby who has but little time, the little company of "foreigners" in their picturesque but undeniably attractive head shawls in pleasing contrast to the bargain counter hat, and many others that bear the stamp of the pattern room—the bewildered man who has strayed or been sent into this throng and occasionally the hurrying young woman just released from behind the counter of some other department or some other store who has a few moments over the time allowed for luncheon. As she pushes her way to the counter the face of the "saleslady" on the other side brightens perceptibly. "Did you say that aside for me?" or "Here is my sample, now what shall I use with it?" she inquires confidentially across the show case.

Like magic every trace of weariness vanishes from the face of her friend and with an enthusiasm that lingers long after the little shopper has gone back to her work, produces box after box, making suggestions or trying effects with an interest she has not felt for many a day. But down in the basement in the toy department the crowd changes. The tenderness and the selfishness are little in evidence here. It is the children's department and the very atmosphere is different. If modern commercialism has trespassed dangerously upon the sacred preserves of St. Nicholas the dear old fellow has not been crowded out of business. He has followed it up even into the crush of the big stores, and he is there in reality overlooking his own. For proof one needs only to look at the crowd, for his cheery smile is reflected upon the face of every one who has ever loved him. Of course this is he who comes down the aisle with the merry laugh, his pack on his back and his sleigh bells jingling, pushing his way through the swarm of eager children that surround him laughing excitedly, the bolder ones crowding close and the more timid content to remain at a distance. Perhaps the dear old fellow has grown a bit thinner or a

little taller than he used to be in the pictures, but it is he without doubt, else how could there be so many toys? As for Santa Claus land, Mrs. Santa is up there taking care of things.

To be sure the big price cards stationed so conspicuously about the toy tables occasion some doubt and the clerks are very positive in their injunction not to touch things. But, after all, what boy or girl ever solved the mystery of Christmas? Things are always there when we wake up in the morning; that is, nearly always. Rich and poor, big and little, dirty and clean, the children troop in and with them the grownups, who confess to attractions quite independent of any small son or daughter, nephew or niece. Up one aisle and down the next they move. Here a little knot of youngsters stop for an excited whispered discussion of some particularly attractive toy and over there a group of little girls go into ecstasies over the merits of that beautiful jointed doll that opens and closes its eyes. In the meantime the real purchasers carry on whispered negotiations with the clerks, not alone concerning the price, but the time and place for the delivery of the purchase. It is here in the toy department that some of the most pathetic incidents of the holidays occur. While joy is commonly counted synonymous with childhood, it is not the only emotion that the child heart knows and one needs but to look about at the little faces for proof of it. The legend of Santa Claus is one of the most beautiful inheritances of childhood, but it is responsible for heartaches such as only a child can experience. Few indeed are the children who are unfamiliar with the story of Santa Claus, but there are many who fail to understand his apparent dismission. Like the woman in the shabby clothes upstairs, however, they are at least privileged to look at and admire the toys, and so the great annual display fulfills the beautiful mission of making the forgetful for a time at least, and after while they come to understand.

Men Who Built and Managed the Great Omaha Exposition of 1898

ALMOST a decade after the Transmississippi and International exposition a movement is taking shape to publish in some way a history of the great patriotic jubilee held in Omaha during the summer of 1898 and of the men who organized the enterprise and guided it to the most successful close of any exposition of recent years.

Of the fifty members of the board of directors but thirty-one remain in Omaha, ten having died since the close of the exposition and nine left Omaha for other fields of endeavor. Of the six members of the executive committee but one would fail to answer to the roll call if the old board should meet—Edward Rosewater, who passed away Thursday, August 29, 1906.

If there is a thirty-third degree for boosters, conferred after a sufficient lapse of time for younger men to appreciate the works of the men whose places in business and community life they are taking almost daily, the degree should be conferred on the fifty men of Omaha who gave days of their time to the promotion, organization and executive work of the Transmississippi and International exposition.

Ask an Omahan why the exposition at Omaha in 1898, held during months when the country was at war with a foreign foe, was such a success in every way, when almost every exposition since has been a "frost," to use an expression applied to shows which fail, and the answer comes quick. "Because of the magnificent business organization behind the enterprise, because every man of the fifty was a success at his own business, and because they were specialists in the lines of work which they did for the big Omaha show."

Executive Board Transmississippi and International Exposition Association

From Photographs Made During the Exposition Year



GURDON W. WATTLES, President of the Exposition Company.



Z. T. LINDSAY, Chairman Executive Committee, in Charge of Amusements.



F. P. KIRKENDALL, Department of Building and Grounds.



E. E. BRUCE, Department of Exhibits.

the following lines of business: physician and surgeon, president of a hotel company, president of a telephone company, extensive farmer and grower and a presman who represented organized labor. With such an organization, covering the entire range of human endeavor, the Transmississippi exposition could scarcely have been a failure from a business standpoint. Then the board of directors was assisted by hundreds of patriotic men and women from Omaha, from Nebraska, states of the union and foreign countries.

The preliminary organization which adopted the articles of incorporation in January, 1896, and elected officers for the exposition, which was to do the first work for the big show, consisted of the following: President, Gurdon W. Wattles; vice president, Jacob E. Markel; treasurer, Herman Kountze; secretary, John A. Wakefield. The directors were: W. R. Bennett, John H. Evans, Dudley Smith, Dan Farrell, Jr., George H. Payne, Charles Metz, Isaac Carpenter, Henry A. Thompson and C. S. Montgomery.

Just eleven months after the temporary organization was effected, the officers reported that subscriptions amounting to \$48,720 had been secured and stockholders meeting was held in the Board of Trade rooms and fifty directors elected. The vote was to incorporate all the members of the old board, which was done, but W. R. Bennett resigned when the board was made permanent.

Gurdon W. Wattles, who became president and an ex-officio member of the board of directors was then president of the Union National bank. Mr. Wattles is one of the thirty-one members of the exposition board who has remained in Omaha, and became more closely identified with the business interests of the city since the big enterprise "which put Omaha on the map." Besides many other interests Mr. Wattles is president of the consolidated street rail-

road companies, vice president of the United States National bank, president of the Omaha Grain exchange and president of the great Ak-Bar-Ben Board of Governors.

John A. Wakefield, who was elected secretary of the exposition, was a retail lumber merchant, but stepped into the "show business" as though he had been born in a circus wagon, and has since been

engaged in many departments of the various expositions throughout the country, though Omaha is still his home. For the last few weeks Mr. Wakefield has been in Jamestown, where he was suddenly needed, and his friends in Omaha say "If John had been secretary of the Jamestown show he would have certainly made arrangements for an attendance," and not allowed the big enterprise to fall.

W. N. Babcock, director, member of the executive committee and in charge of the transportation department, was the general manager of the Union Stock Yards company while in Omaha, but is now general western freight agent of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad company, with headquarters in Chicago.

George F. Bidwell, director, was general manager of the lines of the Northwestern railroad west of the Missouri river, but still makes his home in Omaha, but has been retired from active service of the company.

J. L. Brandeis, director, now dead, was president of the firm J. L. Brandeis & Sons and founder of the Boston Store, the great store which now occupies a new eight-story building of steel and marble, covering a half block at Sixteenth and Douglas streets.

J. J. Brown is another of the directors of the exposition who has passed away since the enterprise closed. He was a real estate dealer, a director in the Omaha National bank and the street railway company. Mr. Brown created the Brown block.

Thomas R. Hoyer, present mayor of South Omaha, got his early training for public life as a member of the board of directors, which exceeded in value the correspondence schools of parliamentary practice as a yielder of knowledge.

G. W. Holdrege, general manager of the Burlington railway company, was a member of the board of directors and still holds his position with the railway company.

Walter Jardine of the Omaha Transfer company, still claims Omaha as his home. John A. Johnson of Johnson Bros. Transfer company served as a director and has since been active in pulling the Ak-Bar-Ben parades when the king does stunts.

Thomas Kilpatrick, president of the Kilpatrick Dry Goods company, was one of the seven retail merchants on the board of directors. He is still at the head of the big dry goods house on Douglas street.

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