

Swirling Stream of Shoppers on City Streets During December Days



THE NEBRASKA CLOTHING COMPANY'S BUILDING, THOUGH NOT ON SIXTEENTH STREET, LOSES NOTHING IN ATTRACTIVENESS WHEN DAYLIGHT GIVES WAY TO ELECTRICITY.

HAYDEN'S AND OTHERS NEAR DODGE SHOW A BLAZE OF ELECTRIC LIGHT WHEN THE SUN NO LONGER SHINES.

INSTEAD of remaining Sixteenth street, Broadway why not recognize the eternal fitness of things and call it Santa Claus Street, St. Nicholas Avenue or Kris-Kingle Highway? By day this street, the heart of the Omaha shopping district, is thronged and by night it blazes with electric lights to even greater throngs. The photographs, from which the cuts illustrating this article are made, were taken after nightfall recently.

For a month preceding Christmas old Santa has his secret agents trading openly and brazenly up and down the five blocks between Dodge and Howard streets with mysterious bundles in their arms and tired but happy expressions on their faces. From December 1 until after Christmas day the sordid matter-of-fact business of the street is subordinated to romance of Christmas shopping. The people who have to buy their meat and potatoes and breakfast food in the Sixteenth street shops have to do it the best way they can so as not to interfere with these thousands of shoppers for the reindeer monarch of the north. For their shopping excursions are the important things of early winter commerce and must not be interfered with.

From the time the big display ads begin to be headed by legends of "Xmas," with pictures of a fat man with whiskers and a smile, as the centerpiece, Sixteenth street takes on an unusual air of prosperity. During the rest of the year, of course, it is crowded uncomfortably during special sales and on Saturday nights especially, but compared with the throngs that tramp up and down its sidewalks in early December its ordinary crowd of shoppers looks like the standing army of a Central American republic.

Even Samson with his proclamation can draw the crowds to Sixteenth street only a few evenings and then business takes on its customary grind. But the edict of St. Nick has the power to bring out the multitudes in such numbers the streets are black during the busy part of the day for weeks at a time.

This year, when it was found necessary to do business with cashiers' checks and clearing house certificates, some people thought the Christmas crowds on Sixteenth street would dwindle and grow small, but they were mistaken. People seemed as willing to let go of clearing house certificates as greenbacks and the scraggly image of the eagle on the new gold money made them anxious to get rid of it because it offended their artistic temperament. So the crowds on St. Nick's favorite street did not dwindle, but grew as they never did before. The throngs swing back and forth and up and down the sidewalks and in front of the big show windows as in the good old days when no one had to bother with clearing house certificates or cashiers' checks.

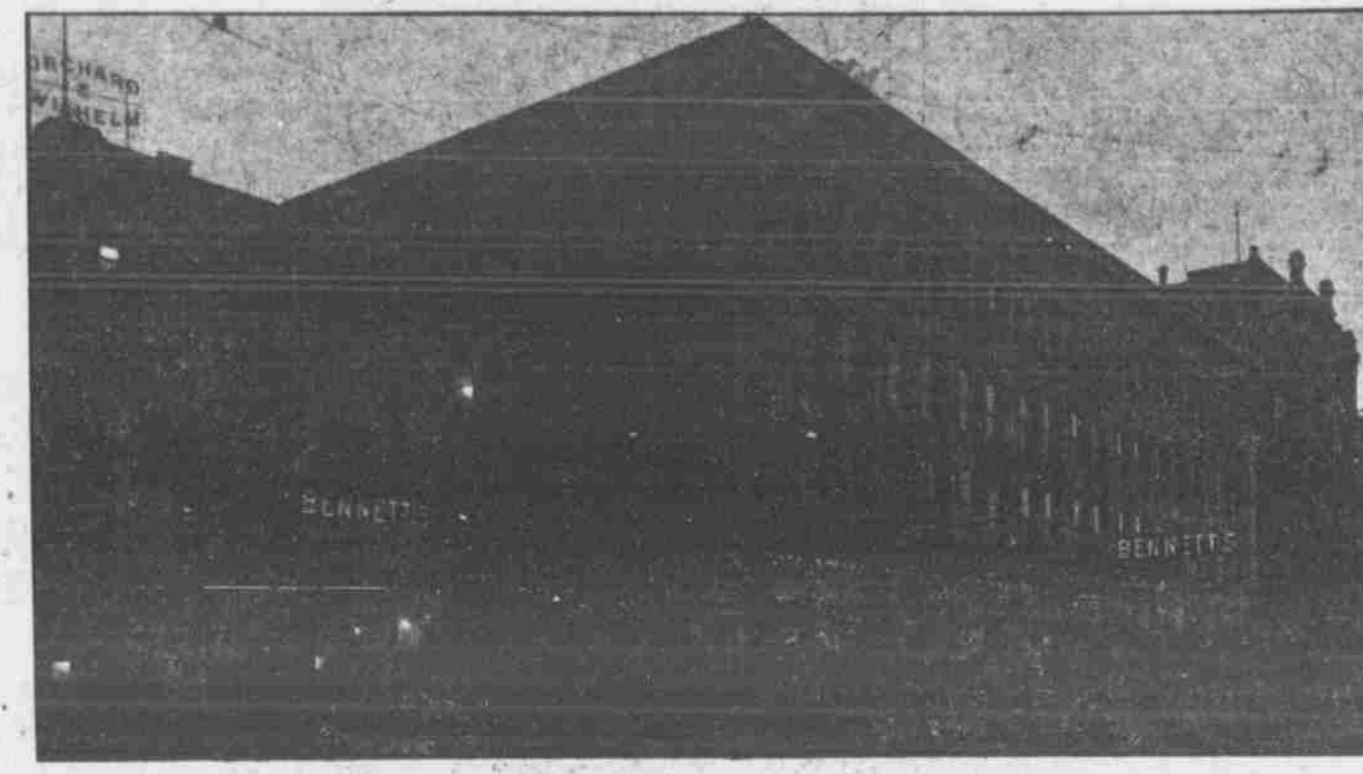
So the steady stream of people weighted down with bundles moves up on one side of the pavement and down the other, moving at the uniformly sluggish pace of the sightseer and the uncertain shopper. At more or less regular points little knots of people mark the places where interesting window displays are attracting attention. These knots show by their size and the individuals composing them what particular kind of a Santa Claus exhibition is the cause of it. Here in front of this window is a little group of men critically examining an exhibit of pipes and Christmas cigars with a fringe of other smokers' goods. Down the street a short distance is a crowd of women looking in ecstatic wonder at a show window full of hand bags,

and other beautiful creations in leather. But neither of these groups represents the real Christmas crowd. This will be found in open-eyed wonderment in front of the big window containing the mechanical toy, representing a landscape with engine pulling trains through the valleys and over the hills, and the imitation river covered with moving steamboats and old Santa Claus backed up in a corner watching it. In this crowd there are men, women and children, principally children, who stand with their eyes glued to the moving machinery or try to clamber up on the sill of the window to get a better view. After all it is the window made up for the children that attracts the crowds, even the big folks, during the Christmas shopping season. The old folks may take a passing interest in the exhibits intended for them, but their real sympathy is appealed to by the one that carries their thoughts back to the time they were dressed in knickerbockers or short dresses.

This army of shoppers begins its march early in the morning and keeps it up until after the stores are closed at night. The advance guard arrives on the scene while the air is still frosty and the sidewalks are white. They are the working men who have to do their shopping before they go to work. Gradually the throngs increase as the day advances and by 10 o'clock the sidewalks are filled with shoppers whose undivided attention is given to the show windows. Here is mamma with little Will trudging along by her side. She has come down early in order to avoid the rush and she gets into a jam on the corner as soon as she alights from the car. By noon she has one arm filled with packages piled up like a small boy carries wood for the woodbox. Thus handicapped she has hard work keeping her enthusiastic offspring under control. Together with hundreds of other mothers, who are forced to undergo the joy of taking their small sons and daughters with them, she finally gets on a car and sinks, tired but thankful, into a seat.

At noon the office buildings pour out a deluge of shoppers, most of whom make a rush for a quick lunch counter and after a few hastily masticated mouthfuls have been swallowed they rush out onto the street again with their noses pointed toward Santa Claus avenue. It is fortunate that most of the forenoon shoppers have to get back home for lunch, or the big thoroughfare would be blocked during the hour dear to the clerks, stenographers and office men who have all their Christmas things to buy. So the crowd on the street instead of growing smaller at noon merely changes its individuality like a quick change actor and mamma and little Willie are replaced by Mame, the stenographer, or Mr. Penenink, the office man.

The noon crowds surge back and forth from Dodge street to Howard in much the same way that the forenoon crowd does. There is the difference, however, that there is a noticeable hurry in the action of the noon crowd. They do not linger quite as long in front of the show windows and they glance uneasily at the clock as they rush back to the office in order to check off before their hour is up. It is the afternoon crowd that shows the true spirit of Christmas, however. The morning crowd is distinctively a buying crowd. Women who hurry through with the morning work in order to make a trip down town before lunch, have something more serious on their minds than mere sight-seeing. They know pretty well what they want and they go after it. The noon



AS NIGHT FALLS BENNETT'S LOOKS UP BIG AGAINST THE SKY.

crowd with a limit on the time it can spend at the bargain counter is also a buying crowd. But the afternoon crowd is both a buying and a "rubbering" crowd. It is after the duties of the day are done that fond mamma brings their children down town for the express purpose of seeing Santa Claus. A trip like this to be enjoyed must not be too full of sordid business cares. Too many purchases cannot be made then, because the children have to be watched, and the worry of caring for a Santa-Claus-crazed child is sufficient without the added burden of selecting presents or carrying big bundles.

It is during the middle of the afternoon that the Santa Claus spirit is at its height. Then old Sixteenth street throws off its appearance of mere money getting and begins to look like the grounds of a huge carnival, at which Santa Claus is the monarch of all he surveys. Children scamper here and there from one window to another or tug at the hand that restrains them. Gaiety is everywhere, and the snatches of talk one hears in passing is all of gift-making. Here and there on the busiest corners are Santa Clauses in red, with long, gray whiskers, tinkling a bell to attract attention or knocking their heels together to the rhythmic clatter of nickels, dimes and quarters and the coins drop into little kettles to cheer the Christmas of someone whose purse is empty. Between curbstones the street is filled with wagons piled high with Christmas things in boxes on their way to the stores. The spirit of giving is in the air and it is then that one plans the gifts he intends to buy when the crowds thin out and he has more time.

Saturday night the throngs, which during the day may be numbered by the hundreds, are counted by the thousand, if counted at all. It is the off night for everybody but the clerks, and everyone who has not had the opportunity during the daylight hours or who has spent the week laying elaborate plans for gifts for all the family and friends. Then the shoppers and sightseers mingle on the



THE BRANDEIS BUILDING IS ALMOST AS BEAUTIFUL ON A CLEAR NIGHT AS BY DAY.

sidewalks and press themselves into so compact a mass that one must follow the stream and keep moving. This has been the holiday history of rouse the sleepers hundreds of miles away. But the crowds of Christmas shoppers principal retail thoroughfare of Omaha, do not all stay on Sixteenth street. While

and the story will be repeated every year until some other street farther out usurps its position in the hearts of shoppers.

During the twenty shopping days before Christmas it is estimated that 45,000 people pass up and down Sixteenth street in quest of Christmas things every day on an average. This would make an army of 900,000, though of course some shoppers are counted two or three times, as the buying cannot all be done in a single day. If these 900,000 agents of Santa Claus pass up one side of Sixteenth and down the other once each day they shop they will have taken 1,350,000,000 steps.

If some magician-inventor could contrive a mechanism that could harmonize the steps taken by these shoppers and throw them out from a sounding board in regular cadence it would sound like the measured tread of a great army. If all the force expended in these 1,350,000,000 steps could be concentrated into a single step by a monster foot representing the combined muscle and bone of all the 1,350,000 feet, the impact would jar the retail stores from their foundations and clerks would suddenly find the walls tumbling down around them.

If all the "ohs" and "ahs" of little children as they admire the wonderful things in the windows could be combined into a single one it would be loud enough to

the big show windows there are attractive and tend to draw the multitudes like magnets, the other streets have attractions as well. Up and down Dodge, Douglas, Farnam and Harney streets the people surge back and forth and the cross streets from Thirteenth west also catch their share of the Christmas traffic.

On these streets the people go who are in quest of something in a specific line. At the department stores they have an opportunity to paw over everything from a pin to a piano. When they get specific ideas as to what line of goods they want to invest in they turn naturally to some of the smaller single line stores, most of which are located on streets other than Sixteenth.

It is in this section the crowds turn when they want to dazzle their eyes with brilliant diamonds and admire the clear redness of rubies. The show windows of the jewelry stores are always attractive to the Christmas shopper. Besides the precious stones they find joy in the windows filled with hand-painted pottery and china-ware.

So, too, the young man who wants to send a remembrance in the form of a box of flowers finds unusual interest in the elaborate displays of beautiful blossoms and fresh green ferns in the Farnam street show windows. When the Christmas trade is on these windows become perfect bowers of loveliness and they make a beautiful contrast to the scenic displays of typical Christmas in which snow and ice and bleak crags are the leading features.

Then there are hundreds of people who are looking for a present for a young man of dressy tastes. These in their wanderings sometimes leave the bigger crowds on Sixteenth and hunt out a furnishing goods house with which the other parts of the shopping district are dotted. The crowds that are drawn to these places are distinguished by the number of young people in them. The youth who is about to treat himself or a boy friend to a gift naturally thinks of something dressy to wear. The young woman who is buying something for her best boy friend knows she cannot miss it if she invests in some fancy wearing apparel. Of course there is a sprinkling of old folks in the furnishing goods house shoppers, but they are comparatively rare.

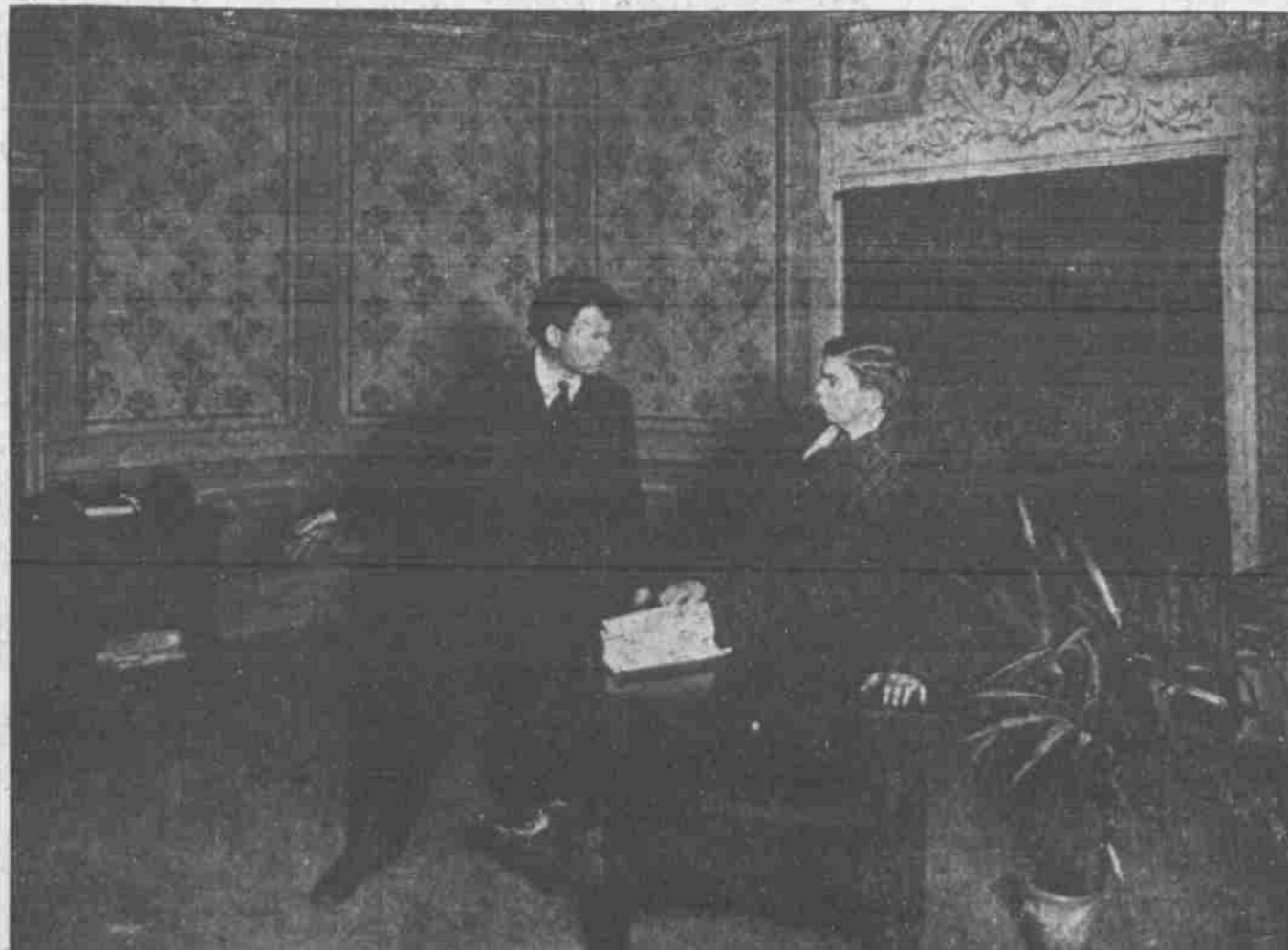
So the tramp, tramp of the secret agents of Santa Claus is heard not only on the street especially dedicated to his interests, but also on the outlying fringe where the windows may be smaller but the inside attractions just as great.

Willis and Johnny and Susie will not plead so hard to go down these streets because they are devoted mostly to the interest of grown-ups, but they, too, contribute much to the attractive power that draws Omaha's army of gift buyers from their homes to the downtown district and the army almost as big that come in from the smaller towns over the state and join the local forces for a shopping jaunt of a day or two. No one Omaha street or block can justly boast of a monopoly of the attention of this grand unorganized organization. The army lacks a visible leader, but this would hardly be noticed as every individual composing it is actuated by the same motive and drawn by the same impulse of giving. For this reason the individuals making up the army are drawn along very much the same lines and their patronage of one street or another depends on their ability to find the place where that can satisfy their desire to give.

Characters from Creighton University Class Play on Monday Night



ARCHIBALD VAN BIBER OF THE "W" - THOMAS P. LANE.



"DON'T YOU GIVE ME THAT BABY STARE." Packingham, Forkpacker. Late of Kansas City - Charles J. Thelen, Charles Packingham, Harvard, '08, His Son - Charles McGrath.



BILL FINERTY, ONE OF THE FINEST - OTIS MORGANTHAUER.