

GENIUS THAT TURNS ITS DREAMS INTO REAL WEALTH

Eight Omaha Men Who Have Lightened the Labors and Increased the Happiness of Mankind by Inventions



T. F. STROUD.



GUSTAVE ANDREEN.



GEORGE H. LEE.



EMMETT SOLOMON.



COURT CARRIER.

PERPETUAL motion machines have ever and always been the standbys of inventors—but not the kind who get somewhere with their brain babies. Resting on a shelf in the office of D. O. Barnell, machine designer and patent attorney in the Paxton block is a perpetual motion machine that does not move at all. It is a wooden contrivance of the roughest workmanship, about eighteen inches square. "When I was working with the Sharp Machine company some years ago," said Mr. Barnell, "a man came in with an order for some gear wheels he wanted made. Like every man who has tackled perpetual motion, he didn't want to tell anyone what he was working on, but after awhile he did. Then he wanted a half horsepower spring made. No one had ever heard of a spring rated by horsepower, but on a description we ordered what he thought he wanted. When it came by express in due time and was thrown on the office floor the foreman got a long window pole, put a hook in one end and carefully pushed the spring to one side. It was fastened with a clip, but if it ever got loose it would be more dangerous than dynamite. When the inventor came we asked him if he knew how to take off the steel clip and loosen such a spring. He said he did and took it away. He never showed up again and I always have wondered if the spring killed him when he tried to handle it."

So the old wooden model stands today as a memento of the man who may have been killed. Its wheels were sawed from the ends of logs and poles and are far from being true; the teeth were cut in the wheels with a knife and altogether the thing looks like it was cut out with a dull saw, a left-handed cleaver and an italic jack-knife. It still lacks the one spring that was to make it perfect. Unlike some other inventors, the tribe in Omaha has devoted its energies to real conveniences for use in the home, on the farm and in commercial life. Little things that everybody will want prove the most successful, and on this line a Milwaukee inventor secured a patent in October, 1907, for a back scratcher. It is very simple, too. You get a long wire handle with a tin clamp on one end, into which you fit a segment of corncob. Then you unloosen your collar and shirtband, presumably, and run the itch eradicator down and up over the spot where the itching bacillus lurks. Old Scotchmen tell of a simpler contrivance at the crossroads in ancient Scotia, where a person might back up and rub his shoulders hard against a scratching post, and murmur, "God bless the duke of Argyll," thus completing the charm.

Inventors Are Seldom Fleeshy

Aside from Gus Andreen and Tom Stroud, there are no fat men among the inventors of Omaha. County Comptroller Emmett Solomon, "Court" Carrier and C. O. Michaelson are typical inventors, lean, keen, smooth-faced, vigorous and optimistic to a degree that would please even President Taft. Solomon has been of a mathematical turn of mind all his life; and even when he was driving his old-time pacer, Ed Rosewater, to a record he was mechanically ticking off the seconds so that the nag should not go a second too fast to bar him from eligible races. As an accountant having to do with tax figuring for a number of years, it was the most natural thing in the world that he should turn out a calculating machine which will figure percentages and mills simply by moving a pointer on a celluloid face which is marked off in tens, hundreds and thousands. It is called the Modern Calculator, and is in use in a good many tax offices of this and other states. It wipes out the need for endless multiplication by substituting therefor simple addition.

The county comptroller is also the inventor of a folding chicken coop that has appealed to poultry shippers. For awhile it was made at Bennington, in this county, but is now being made and handled from St. Joseph, Mo. A third invention by Mr. Solomon is a rear-end fender for street cars, designed to prevent folks getting off one car and running in front of another. He is certain that if the contrivance is ever put into use generally it will prevent many a person from being maimed or killed.

One of the oldest and best known of the mechanics of Omaha, who is also employer and inventor, is Gustav Andreen, proprietor of the Omaha Safe and Iron works. Mr. Andreen has weathered all storms, industrial and financial, for thirty years, and hundreds of examples of his faithful workmanship are to be found in the city today. Andreen's principal invention is an automatic fire shutter, which is in general use. It can be opened from the inside without raising windows, singly or in a series up to fifty windows. Firemen can open the Andreen shutter from the outside simply by directing a strong stream of water against it. Mr. Andreen has four patents on his shutter. He is also the originator of the Nebraska fire escape, so-called, which for strength, durability and simplicity so commended itself to state officials that when the Nebraska specifications for fire escapes were being drawn up some years ago Andreen's escape was used as the basis. At one time Mr. Andreen had a combination vault lock about perfected, but got to dealing with some eastern lock-makers, and soon they had the patent. "That's an old story and of no interest to anyone now," says this old-world master workman, "and such things are in the history of every man who has engaged in the task of inventing."

Which saying of Andreen's recalls the fact that the late Albert Sjoberg is credited with many of the ideas that were finally worked into the United States voting machine which is used in this city and county at elections. Sjoberg never realized anything on his inventive bent.

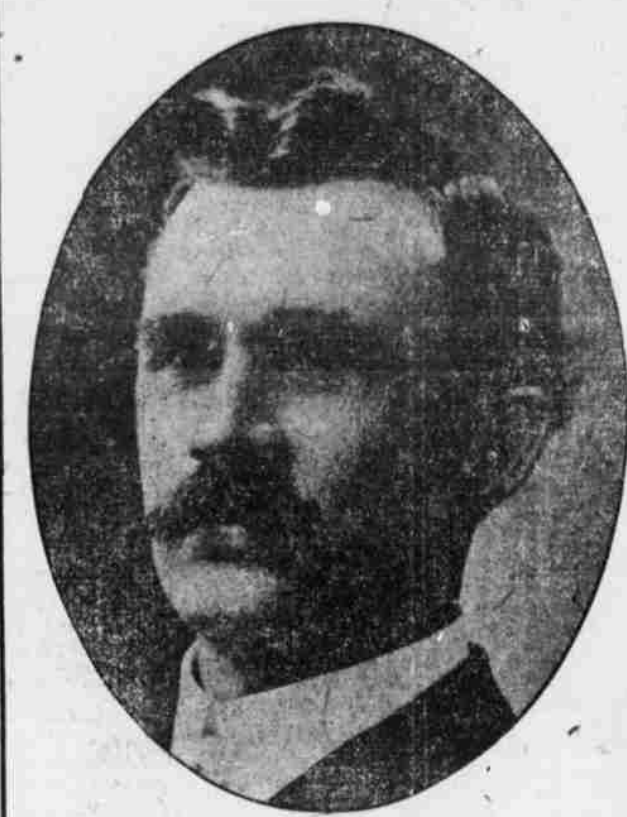
George H. Lee is an Omaha manufacturer who makes machines that take the place of natural mothers, chickabiddy mothers. Incubators are his long suit, and the perfection of the operation thereof



C. O. MICHAELSON.



M. B. KENDIS.



J. HUFFMAN.

engages the thought of his brain day and night and Sundays. Having the eggs, three things are necessary, says Mr. Lee, to make them hatch, and these he names in order: Proper amount of heat, just the right ventilation and moisture refined to an exact degree. By having these three essentials properly under control, Lee will almost undertake to make china eggs give up the fluff, ridiculous little strutters that grow into most delectable "springers," and occasionally into most execrable rubber-like things suitable only for table decoration, not for tooth use. Mr. Lee, for instance, had to invent a hygrometer of his own before he was satisfied that he had become intimately acquainted with the almost defunct duty of hens, to hatch chickens. What is a hygrometer? Why, it is one of the twenty-five inventions credited to Mr. Lee and his associates on the books of the patent office in Washington; concretely, it is the automaton on an incubator that determines the amount of moisture. Lee and his company do not brood much any more, but they do furnish brooders, with some little fancies of their own attached that make the machines in demand.

T. F. Stroud & Co. send the name of Omaha far and wide on a line of dirt moving tools, wagons, scrapers, dirt elevators, excavators and the like. The merit of the Stroud machines lies more or less in certain little wheels, cams, levers and other parts that have from time to time been invented, changed, modified and made better by Mr. Stroud himself and Pete Reinhardt, his right-hand man. The Stroud machinery is in use on the Panama canal, and some of it has been shipped to Germany. Every big railroad job is also a gathering place for what this factory turns out.

Railroad men are generally clever enough to do anything, and not infrequently they do inventorial stunts. C. S. Carrier, ticket agent at the city office of the Milwaukee, is the inventor of what is known as a check and ticket protector, and the same is being put on the market by a responsible eastern concern that handles such things. Carrier's invention stamps on a check the exact amount and on a ticket the exact date, in such a way that, it is claimed, there is absolutely no possibility of changing the sum or the date and getting away with the bogus thing. Similar machines put out by earlier inventors are very costly and have proved in some ways inaccurate; but Carrier's is cheap, costing about \$20, and is unbeatable and eternally correct. He worked on it for years, and is pardonably proud of his star performance.

Martin Myers' Inspiration

Going home on a car some two and a half years ago, Martin Meyer saw a woman who was overly anxious to alight. He endeavored to stop her, but in vain; and another death was added, within a day or two, to the list of people killed in Omaha through street car accidents. This accident, with its fatal termination, gave Mr. Meyer a heart shock and a brain shock. The result was a study of the possibility of preventing such accidents, and later on the completion of a model, application for a patent and the granting of same by the government. Today Mr. Meyer's invention is being tested on cars of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company and is making good, so far as can be judged from its operation. The Meyer guard covers the front and rear platforms of closed cars, each guard being operated independently by the conductor or motorman. It can also be used on open cars, and can then be operated by the conductor from any point in the car. It works easily, automatically fastens when let down, is rigid and can be instantly raised or lowered. On the open cars the conductor can pass along inside the guard to collect fares, or any other person standing on the footboard is held from a possibility of falling unless he deliberately drops downward. Soon, if this device comes into general use, Omaha street cars will be talked of by travelers passing to and fro across the country as having a distinction worthy of mention.

Oscar A. Albrecht is an Omaha inventor who is in line, as his friends predict, to make a fortune. He will shortly be turning out flat and tubular shoe and belt laces with tips attached. He is not ready to go into details as yet, for the reason, as he says, that he has had to invent a material from which to make his machine after perfecting the machine itself. Mr. Albrecht says he now has this ma-

terial about perfected. It will be made by molds, and the inventor asserts that the different parts will not need any attention from a machinist after being taken from the molds. Heretofore the attaching of tips to shoe laces has been a tedious and time-wasting process.

John Huffman of the Neville block is one of the busiest among the local geniuses. His most fruitful piece of work is a wagon end-grate, now being marketed by Paxton & Huffman. He has also secured patents on a saw-filing machine, a rotary street car advertising device, a self-working water elevator, a car ventilator, a trailing fender for street cars, a horseshoe in which caulks can be renewed without removing the shoe and a policeman's club. The latter seems to be just what the coppers have long been seeking. Made of sole leather on a steel spiral, it is strong, resilient and its maker says will grow better as it gets older.

Richard C. Taylor of 2462 South Seventeenth street holds patents on advertising strap hangers and an anti-neck thief garment-holder, that will also hold umbrellas against unknown borrowers.

Helps for Automobiles

O. W. Hanson has secured patents on a speed gear for automobiles, the point of which is that two gear wheels will serve all the purposes of many now in use. In this connection it will not be violating any confidence to say that County Comptroller Solomon is awaiting a patent on a contrivance for automobiles that will enable them to pull out of any sort of mud hole, no matter how desperate in character, by their own power. "It is so simple a thing that it seems ridiculous no one ever thought of it before," says Mr. Solomon. Thomas B. Kimball, the architect, is associated with Mr. Solomon in the development of this invention.

M. D. Houck has developed and secured the right to make and market a mechanical toy that he feels will add greatly to the gaiety of juvenile play.

Two men named Lukle and Wolf are the inventors of a five-horse hitch for plows, by the peculiar construction of which five horses hitched to a plow can all walk on the land and the plow will still run straight in the furrow.

Paxton & Mitchell of 2322 Harley street are the holders of patents on a metallic packing for engines. A man named Bateker is also the inventor of a metallic packing, but as in all things of this kind, where large corporations have to be dealt with, progress in getting a profitable market is slow. Every purchasing agent of a railroad or similar large user of packings is from Missouri, and they originally lived at the center of the "show me" district.

Dr. H. W. Allwine holds patents on a swaging machine to be used by dentists that is said to be not nearly as fearsome as its name would indicate.

John Haarmann of the Haarmann Vinegar and Pickle company turned his attention successfully to a steam boiler and excavating machine built on somewhat unique lines; so much so that he was granted a patent.

George A. Lang of the Monarch billiard hall has not walked about his tables in vain, since he has perfected a cushion rail, the merit of which made it patentable, and it is in use in his own hall and elsewhere.

Charles O. Michaelson, who does his work in the Sharp plant at Tenth and Howard, has the Omaha flavor all over him. He is saturated with it, inside and out. "I have been a newsboy here," says Mr. Michaelson, "and I own owned Omaha real estate too heavily at the wrong time. I served my apprenticeship in the old Union Pacific shops, have mined and made money and lost it; but for a lifetime almost Omaha has looked good to me."

Mr. Michaelson owned at one time the Omaha Machine shop, well known in the days before the panic of 1893, when he was hit hard, in common with others. Afterward he went to mining in the Cripple Creek district, and the money he made he spent largely in developing mining machinery. To this line he now devotes his attention exclusively, working at the lathe himself and giving the most minute personal care to every piece of every machine. His hopes are now based on a rock crusher that, as he puts it, "is a dynamite gun working on rock, and street paving stones are not too hard

to be crushed like egg shells." Mr. Michaelson is also the inventor of a placer mining machine, and of concentrators and crushers for use at mines, and today he faces the prospect of being again rich, with as much equanimity as he accepted the wrong turn of fortune's wheel in the trying days. He has had flattering offers for his rock crusher, but insists on perfecting it and holding it himself.

Theodore Ponsar, a millwright, has been devoting himself in a winning way to the development of alfalfa milling machinery, for which there is a big demand all over the west today, especially in Nebraska.

A patent notebook holder is the child of the brain of F. W. Mosher of the business college bearing his name.

E. Oehrlie is an Omaha mechanic who has been prolific in the line of combination tools, squares, levels and things of that kind. Some of his contrivances are marvels in their way.

H. F. Reed has secured patents on a steel whiffletree that promises well.

C. E. Niece of 2007 Cass street secured letters patent on an envelope which cannot be opened without breaking the seal, just to make trouble for those who pry when they should not.

W. J. McCoy of South Omaha holds rights from the United States for a cement block machine, and R. D. Owens has secured similar rights on a cement fence post.

The bettering of farm machinery appealed to E. O. Orendorff, as it does to many men; so he went ahead and worked out an attachment to open fur-

rows for a corn planter.

M. B. Kendis is musical in his leanings as an inventor, and some practical merchandise of a musical nature bears his name. The thing by which he reckons to be known and remembered, however, has to do with cards, not cards that are called when someone is running a bluff, but just ordinary calling cards. Needing some of the engraved kind one day, and being told he would have to wait until a plate could be made, Kendis grew impatient and determined he would turn out a machine to engrave cards while you wait. After much tribulation and stubborn tussling with the innards that are so complex as to make their achievements look astonishingly simple, when they are set to work by the proper touch, Mr. Kendis has about got to the point where the ordinary man can pass up the hand engraver. He will put on the market shortly a machine three feet long and eighteen inches high. Sighting one, and wanting some cards, you walk up, drop in a cent, spell out your name in the kind of type you fancy, by means of keys or buttons, and in a jiffy you have five cards of neatly engraved character. For 5 cents you can get twenty-five cards. Mr. Kendis says he can sell the machine for \$25, and expects to make a stake from it to buy all the sinkers and jugs he will need for the balance of his life.

Ever put up a clothes line for your wife on wash day, and have a little twitch or two reaching up and tying knots on nails or the limbs of trees? Yes, of course. Well, Kendis has put out an invention to hold the entente cordiale at an easy level between man and wife, even on wash day. He took a little wire, some brain powder, a modicum of patience, a few smiles at putting one over so easily, and today several hundred thousand of the resulting contrivances are in use throughout the country, with Kendis drawing spending money steadily. His musical inventions touch on the easement of bass drums and the instant changing of a cornet tone from A to B flat.

Some Minor Inventions

Harry B. Brown is a kid in years, but the inventive affluence is his. He lives at 4911 Underwood avenue, and his particular pride is an envelope in which the pay of employes is to be placed, with small cards or discs carrying advertising. The trick in this envelope is a slip of paper, with a gummed flap, to be fastened down, holding the advertising matter. The envelopes are then delivered free to large firms, and in the free division they place the pay. As soon as the envelope is torn the advertisements fall into the hand with the money, and perforce, are examined and read. Mr. Brown has refused a substantial sum for his patent.

Charles Trobec of 1105 South Thirteenth street is a railroad baggage man who was made to realize that, if the travelers had seemingly unbearable troubles, the man behind the counter also could lay claim to a bit of aggravation himself now and again. To avoid mistakes and minimize possible "slukes" in delivering baggage, Mr. Trobec produced a machine to cut holes in metal or paste-board baggage checks, and to get the pieces of impedimenta claimed the traveler or expressman must present a check that will exactly match in perforations the house check. Mr. Trobec expects his device to come into general use sooner or later.

B. A. Karr, with the Sunderland Roofing and Supply company, Tenth and Douglas streets, is working on a machine which combines the principles of the loop-the-loop, leap-the-gap, Ferris wheel, scenic railway and switchback all combined. He has been figuring on his invention for over a year, but now expects to have it completed very soon and will place it in one of the amusement parks. Several bids for the contrivance have been received by the inventor, who has patented his work at every stage. Mr. Karr says his machines means a new thrill for lovers who take park outings.

C. A. Wicks is an Omaha man who has devoted a lot of attention to perfecting various devices for advertising in street cars, among others a mobile endless canvas scheme, operated by a small electric motor. It will be turning continually and bringing new advertisements into sight all the time.

In this review undoubtedly some Omaha inventors have been overlooked; but enough have been named to indicate that original
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