

BEGINNING AND GROWTH OF BRANDEIS FAMILY IN OMAHA

Faith of Jonas L. Brandeis and the Works that Accompanied It Exemplified in Beautiful Buildings of Solid Construction and a Mercantile Institution Whose Magnitude is Increasing Every Day



BOSTON STORE
1894



BOSTON STORE
1896



EMIL BRANDEIS



JONAS L. BRANDEIS
FOUNDER OF J. L. BRANDEIS
AND SONS, MERCHANTS.



ARTHUR D. BRANDEIS



H. HUGO BRANDEIS

FAITH, accompanied by works, is the cornerstone of success. It begets confidence and brings achievement, and endows its possessor with the ability to go forth and do still greater things. And this was the sort of faith that imbued the late Jonas L. Brandeis, who came to Omaha a little more than twenty-six years ago and established himself in retail trade on lower Farnam street. Mr. Brandeis had carried on business in a small way in a small town in Wisconsin, but he did not there find the room to grow. In Omaha he sought an outlet for his ambitious energy, and here he founded a house that has grown far beyond even his hope for success. It was not sheer luck that led Mr. Brandeis to Omaha at the time he came, nor mere chance that aided in the development of his small business into the immense mercantile establishment that now bears his name under the management of his sons. He had faith in Omaha, just as he had faith in himself, and he accompanied this faith by such perseverance in works as finally achieved his determined purpose.

But more than mere faith is essential to success in business. Something else is needed to accomplish. Many firms have come and gone in the years since the name of Brandeis first appeared on the business record of the growing city. Character is one qualification needed for business success, and integrity of character, as well as purpose, is most of all required. Then foresight and prudence and the ability to see and seize an opportunity and to turn to good uses the chances that come in the ordinary course of business. All these qualifications were embodied in Jonas L. Brandeis. They are generally summed up in the vocabulary of business in the single word "Enterprise." He was enterprising, and he has left his name and his business in the hands of his sons, who are also enterprising. It was in a small room on Farnam street, between Twelfth and Thirteenth, that J. L. Brandeis & Son began business in December, 1883. The family came from Wisconsin, where the father had come up from a most humble beginning to the position of owner of a small store. It modestly but persistently pushed its business, until the store on Farnam street was outgrown and new quarters were found at Thirteenth and Howard. Here "The Fair" was established, and another son was added to the firm. The new business soon expanded beyond the original corner room, and then another was added, until The Fair occupied half a dozen small rooms on Thirteenth street, extending south from the corner of Howard. In the

early '90s The Fair outgrew its quarters entirely and nothing was left for the firm of J. L. Brandeis & Sons but to build. The corner at Sixteenth and Douglas streets, then occupied by the Donaghy hot house, was purchased and the Boston Store was born, to flourish in a handsome four-story building, occupying the south end of two lots. Here the general character of the business began to develop even more rapidly than when The Fair was making its greatest strides. The Boston Store was soon one of the busiest centers in Omaha and the name of Brandeis was beginning to loom large on the business map. Then came the first great calamity.

On Saturday evening, February 3, 1894, to be exact, at 6:45, the firm of J. L. Brandeis & Sons got its literal baptism of fire. It was during a busy selling season, and just about such weather as has been served out to Omaha during the present month. The store was crowded with customers and a steady stream of people was pouring in and out of the big doors on the corner, when a spark from a defective electric light wire in one of the Sixteenth street show windows caught the drapery of the window and almost instantly communicated with the goods hung on display in the store room. No one who did not see it can form any idea of the incredible speed with which the flames rushed through the building. The greatest marvel in connection with the affair was that no one was burned to death. So furious was the



BRANDEIS BUILDING
1906



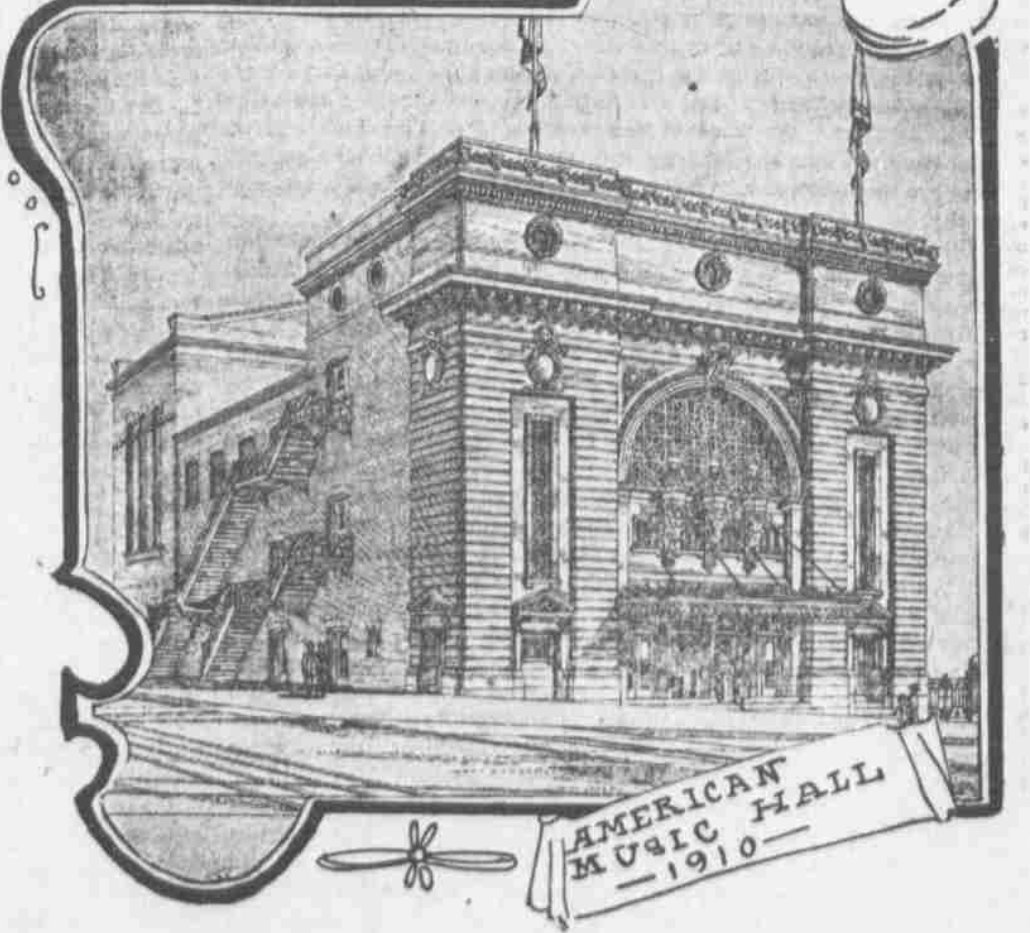
WISE-MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



BRANDEIS THEATER
1909



Murphy 10



AMERICAN MUSIC HALL
1910

A Tribute to Good Citizenship

THIS tribute to the members of an Omaha family is inspired, not because they are the most extensive advertisers in Omaha; not because they are good neighbors; not because of a friendship extending over many years, but because this family has done more than any other in the substantial improvement of this city. It is because it is due them to know that their good citizenship is appreciated by their fellow citizens in Omaha, that this tribute from The Omaha Bee is offered.

It is a far cry from the little two-story store on South Thirteenth Street, to the great mercantile establishment, occupying more than two-thirds of a city block. Yet it is less than thirty years ago, that a father and three sons, with a very limited capital and a meager stock, opened a little store in a very unattractive part of town. While the cash capital was small, there was an unlimited fund of resource in the enterprise and energy of the father and his three boys. Thus the steady growth of their business is easily accounted for.

It is not the intention to tell the story of how they grew from a small beginning, or to point out what can be accomplished within

comparatively a few years, by hard work, liberal use of printers' ink, rigid economy and strict honesty, nor will we do more than mention that they are responsible for the buildings, the pictures of which are here displayed.

Many of our citizens have grown prosperous from small beginnings; many of our citizens have achieved success, many of our citizens have amassed fortunes, but few, who have grown prosperous in our midst, have paid the debt they owe the community in which they have developed their fortunes, by paying it back in the substantial up-building of the city. It is so much easier, when a man has reached the point where he has obtained all in a material way that he desires, to sit back and refuse to take part in the further up-building of a city.

Good citizenship is not rare in Omaha. None the less it is a virtue which should not be passed by without cordial approval and applause. The flowers in praise of the virtue of good citizenship are too often withheld until the obituary is written. Therefore this wreath of appreciation is offered as a tribute to Emil, Arthur and Hugo Brandeis, even before their heads have been frosted by the fullness of years.

fire that the customers and employes of the firm had to literally flee for their lives, and within an hour from the time the spark leaped from the defective wire to the goods in the window the store was a heap of ashes. Several other buildings were burned, the total loss being set down at \$225,000. None of the employes nor any of the customers were injured. But here was where the character of Jonas L. Brandeis shone. Before the bricks were cool he was planning for a new building. Within ten days the firm had rented a building at Fifteenth and Dodge—soon to be torn down to make way for the Union Pacific headquarters—and business was resumed. As soon as possible the ruins of the burned building were cleared away, the debris removed and work of erecting a newer and handsomer structure was under way.

The new Boston Store was on a scale just double the size of the one that burned. The north half of the lots was secured by purchase and the new building was made 132 feet on the ground by four stories high, and was most substantially built. It was at the time of its erection the most pretentious home of a retail store in Omaha. For that matter, it still stands one of the city's really substantial business blocks and is still occupied by the firm of J. L. Brandeis & Sons. Within a year from the time of the fire the new store was opened and the firm was fairly launched on a career of enterprise and prosperity that seems now to have no limit. The same methods that made the success of The Fair and the first Boston Store contributed to the success of the second Boston Store, and before the decade was out the question of larger quarters was presented in a serious way. Efforts were made to purchase the lot to the west of the building, occupied by St. Mary Magdalene's Catholic church, but these were without avail, although the lot west of the church had been secured. Unable to secure the entire half block on the north side of Douglas street, the firm turned to the south side and bought from the several owners, including the Young Men's Christian association, the property now occupied by the handsome Brandeis building. Early in the

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