

THIRTY-NINE BUSY YEARS OF ONWARD MARCH

Each Succeeding Milestone in Career of The Omaha Bee Reveals a Story of Advancement in Newspaper Making



JUNE 19, 1871, The Bee made its first appearance. It is more than mere coincidence that on June 19, 1910, The Bee celebrates its 39th birthday by inviting its friends and readers to attend its house-warming party in the magnificent new building, in which its home was then established. It is more than another coincidence that today it celebrates its 39th birthday in extensive, equipped and still more modern quarters for its steadily increasing mechanical facilities and equipment in the new building which has joined to it as an annex to the Bee building, immediately across the alley on the north. These successive moves of the Bee reflect the growth of the paper as an institution quickly emerging from its swaddling clothes and requiring constantly larger outfits to enable it to keep the place it has always occupied at the head of the journalistic procession.

The Bee was the first paper in Nebraska to be printed on power presses equipped with automatic folders. It was the first paper in Nebraska to bring in a perfecting press fed from a continuous roll of paper. It was the first to discard hand composition and install typesetting machines, and it is now the first to modernize its stereotyping plant by introducing moulding tables operated by compressed air and casting boxes fed by metal pumps. It has also just added a complete photo-engraving plant of its own, and in every way continues its position of leadership in the newspaper field.

The origin of The Bee and its subsequent evolution into one of America's greatest newspapers, is a romantic chapter long since written into the ever-fascinating and optimistic story of western development. How the late Edward Rosewater poured his talent, his energy, his very life into the fulfillment of his mission, and how he left as an ever-enduring monument to his work on earth, a vast publishing concern housed in its own magnificent home—how he built all of this despite obstacles which would have extinguished the fire of ambition in a man less resolute, has been told from ocean to ocean by way of illustrating possibilities in free America.

Forethought, it must be agreed, was a strong faculty in the making of the founder of The Bee, for it was forethought that led him away back in the eighties—a quarter of a century ago—to look beyond the

horizon of that era and foretell with unerring accuracy that the present site of the Bee building would some day be in the very heart of things commercial in Omaha. There was a time when optimistic vision was required to foresee the crowds of busy men and women which now swirl like the equines of a river around the corners of Seventeenth and Farnam streets. Wagons strewn in mud then, where gusting automobiles now speed over asphalt pavement, deaved pedestrians passing upwards on Farnam street stumbled along in darkness then, while now their way is pointed clear by myriads of scintillating electric rays. Ground values were talked of in squares of feet then, but now they have been figured down to inches. Verily, a day of fulfillment came out of Mr. Rosewater's prophetic decision, as the city in its onward march has mounted the Farnam street hill and passed beyond.

But the best foresight could not see everything ahead twenty years, and strange as it may appear not a single department of The Bee today occupies the location that was assigned to it when the transfer was made into the present Bee building. At that time, when all of the type was set by hand, the composing room was put on the top floor to be next to the editorial rooms, and thus widely separated from the press room which was on the first floor. The later tendency has been to draw the mechanical departments closer and closer together and to eliminate time and distance between the successive processes which gather in the news from the street and from the wire, put it into type from which the impression is finally imprinted on the huge rolls of paper that feed the presses from which the finished copies are delivered and quickly distributed to subscribers.

The new building, construction of which was begun last July, is generally designed by outsiders as "The Bee Building Annex," because it is directly north of the Bee building, connected to the main structure by an enclosed bridge. Editors, printers, artists, engravers, stereotypers and other employes dropping into craft vernacular generally speak of the new home as "The Bee Workshop," while one of the janitors who is noted for originality of expression describes it as "The Bee building's hip pocket."

This work shop, if you please, makes no pretensions to archi-

tectural grandeur. It is simply a pressed brick, fireproof building 100x200 feet, two stories and high basement, designed especially for newspaper construction. The plans for this building did not come by chance, but on the contrary every detail was carefully thought out to take advantage of all the opportunities presented.

Early in the morning that you are on a tour of sight-seeing through the Bee establishment. You begin at the business office naturally enough, because of the fact that you walk right into it either from Farnam or Seventeenth streets. It is a ground floor location on a "ground floor" corner, there being no business houses in Omaha offering more easy access to the public. In the business office you see groups of stenographers busily operating typewriters, clean cut young men doing clerical work, advertising men mixing ideas with printers' ink, and over all, a veteran here and there directing things in general. In the rear of the main counting room is the private office of the general manager.

Leaving the business department, you walk by the pretty fountain which has long stood as a beauty spot in the Bee building court, and mounting a flight of marble steps wide enough to grace a state capitol you turn down a hallway leading to a reception room wherein is stationed the exchange editor and the private secretary of the editor. From out of this room, there is a door opening into the editor's private office. The walls are literally lined with books, piles of pamphlets are here, there and everywhere. In short, this place is a typical editorial sanctum permeated with that bookish atmosphere which indicate research in public problems.

Opposite the editor's private office and across the reception room, is the entrance to the managing editor's office. Speaking of work shops—here is a real one. Just why, perhaps no one can explain, but it is none the less a fact that no successful managing editor was ever known to keep a tidy desk. Some who have tried it found unceremonious exit from the newspaper game and landed behind department store ribbon counter where tidiness is an asset. It is no part of this story to essay description of the managing editor, what he is, who he is and what he does. Suffice it to say that everybody in The Bee establishment is aware of his presence, both night and

day, and even when he is temporarily absent there seems to be an unseen hand directing his work, which is merely another way of expressing the fact that in The Bee editorial department, as well as in all other departments, perfect organization exists.

Across the hall from the editorial reception room, ensconced in solitude befitting the man who must think, and thinking, then write, is the file room which is also the den of the editorial writer. This office is a prosaic place, littered with newspapers, congressional records, reference books and other things of like nature.

Back down the hallway at the head of the big marble steps, the tourist comes to a door upon which is inscribed: "City editor and reporters." The first thing inside that door is a telephone exchange where a bright young woman when installed will patiently answer "number please" to the hundreds who constantly keep The Bee's telephone a-jingle. From out this room, you leave the original Bee building and cross the bridge which spans the alley, to the first floor of the annex. But there is nothing to indicate that you are in a viaduct, for it appears to be a properly walled and plastered hallway or arch, which it really is. At the end of this passage, you enter the composing room, where the largest and most modern battery of linotypes in this part of the west, and one of the largest in the entire United States, is found. There is nothing in the way of Mergenthaler invention which is not a part of The Bee equipment. Linotypes, like woman's headgear, must ever be abreast of progress, and in its mechanical equipment The Bee has not spared expense in the purchase of everything that makes for a more modern newspaper. The Bee was one of the first newspapers in the United States to abandon the old-fashioned hand composition and take up the linotype. That was sixteen years ago, and since that time the linotype battery has been kept strictly up-to-date.

At the entrance to the composing room is an iron stairway which leads to the second floor, where is located the night editor, the telegraph editors, the city editor, and his staff of reporters, the Sunday editor, the sporting editor, the art department, the new engraving plant, the society editor, the club editor and the editorial sanctum

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