

OMAHA: CITY OF PROGRESS AND ENLIGHTENED EFFORT



PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE BUSINESS SECTION OF OMAHA EAST OF SIXTEENTH STREET AS PHOTOGRAPHED FROM THE TOP OF THE CITY NATIONAL BANK BUILDING.

CITIES of importance are not merely incidents of chance or the creations of an autocrat. They are the logical result of location and environment. The metropolitan Omaha of today is but the natural evolution of the Omaha of yesterday. That yesterday's Omaha was a crude, roughly hewn frontier river town, but from the very day back in the '50's, when the St. Nicholas hotel, ugly and glaring with its shiny log walls, came into existence as the first house built in the "settlement," the destiny of future achievement in city building was a certainty. There had to be, in the very nature of things, a city somewhere along the Nebraska shore of the Missouri river. It might have been Bellevue or Florence instead of Omaha, and the advantage of location would have still been preserved, but it so happened that the early settlers of Omaha were endowed with the "get-what-you-go-after" spirit to such extent that they outdistanced other aspiring buds.

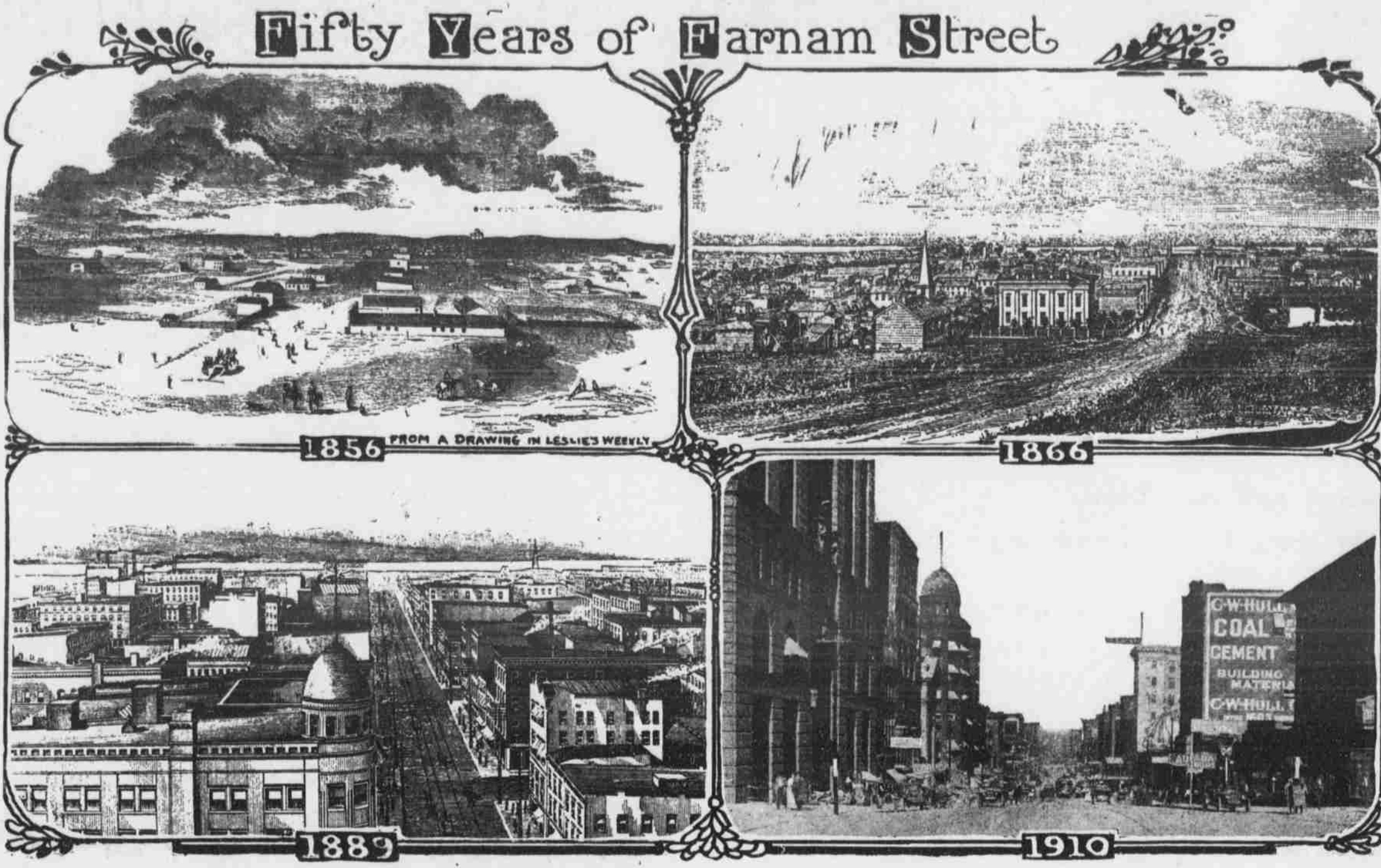
So there is a reason for Omaha's existence, and a reason for Omaha's greatness as a commercial, industrial and financial center. If you would acquaint yourself in further detail take a map of the United States and study the strategic location of Omaha. Note the vast territory for which Omaha is the natural supply point. Note the rich western half of the peerless agricultural state of Iowa, which is Omaha's next door neighbor. Ponder a moment over what this means and you will understand clearly, if you do not already understand, why Omaha is the City of Fulfillment. Omaha's trading territory extends over an empire that is but now being developed, and in the great west and northwest of the United States, a region of untold wealth of mine and farm, of orchard and range, the future of this city is secure. As this wonderful country develops, Omaha must grow because it is the natural market town for all of the most rapidly growing of any section in the United States.

Bond Between City and State. State and city are linked by common bond, and the highest tribute that can be paid to the agricultural worth of the Omaha territory is statement of the fact that the farm implement jobbing trade of Omaha for the year 1909 aggregated \$12,000,000. Think of the significance of such a vast outlay in tools for farming. Think of the crop output that must come from a district that has use for such an array of implements. Many other elements of Omaha's triumph as a city, yet agriculture is the cornerstone, and it should be remembered that no country as a whole ever flourished where agriculture languished, and no country try ever languished where agriculture flourished.

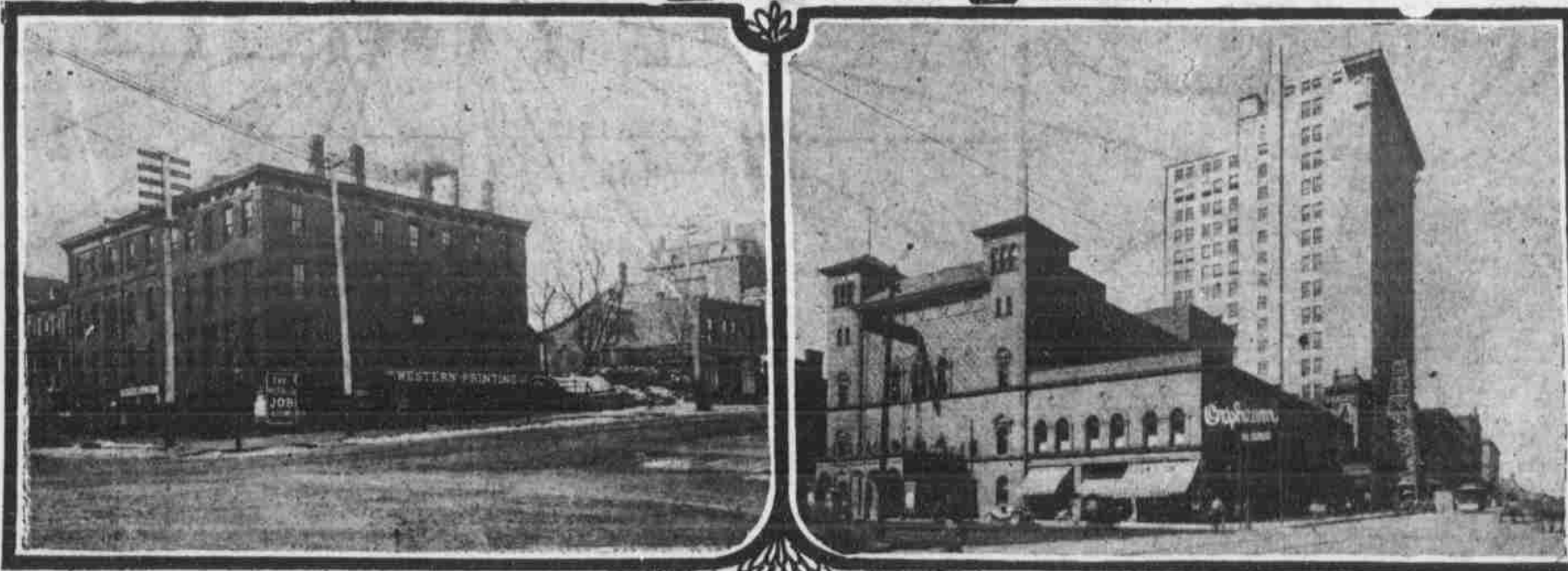
The entire jobbing trade of Omaha for 1909 totalled \$115,133,000, and present indications denote that when the figures for 1910 are cast up next January a substantial increase over last year will be shown.

Omaha sold nearly \$5,000,000 worth of automobiles last year—\$4,500,000, to be exact, and the trade thus far in 1910 shows a strong uplift over last year. Grocery sales for 1909 amounted to the enormous sum of \$13,500,000, which fact bears witness that Omaha provides food for a wide circle of good eaters. Dry goods trade to the extent of \$6,000,000 last year compares favorably with the same trade in many a larger city and proves that Omaha is rapidly gaining as a dry goods supply point. In fact, there has within recent years been a remarkable growth in Omaha's dry goods trade, the improvement in that line being more marked, perhaps, than in almost any other, with the possible exception of automobiles. There was a time when the western retailer, quite content to buy his grocery stock in Omaha, felt that his dry goods must come from New York, Chicago or St. Louis. But along came the Omaha dry goods jobbers with stocks so immense, with prices so favorable by comparison, and with massive buildings to house these stocks—buildings that would do credit to Chicago or any other city of the giant class. Mr. Retailer, seeing all of this, is rapidly coming into the habit of marking Omaha down as the eastern terminus of his dry goods buying tour.

Strong on Hardware. Hardware is another line in which Omaha is well to the forefront, the trade last year running up to \$6,600,000. It seems strange at first glance that the people of Omaha's territory would indulge themselves in sweets to the extent of a million and a half dollars' worth in a single year, yet that



EXAMPLE OF CHANGE IN OMAHA



15TH & HARNEY IN 1890

15TH & HARNEY IN 1910.

figure represents the 1909 volume of candy trade.

While Omaha has never from house-tops or other vantage points claimed greatness as a manufacturing center, the fact registered \$12,000,000. Think of the significance of such a vast outlay showing in this line is indeed gratifying. The total factory output for 1909 was \$192,872,000. Of this \$121,000,000 represents packing and house products. Next in volume comes the smelter, with a record of \$30,843,000 last year. Other items on the list are clothing, \$2,375,000; beer, \$2,700,000; flour and feed, \$1,400,000; cars and locomotive repairs, \$2,250,000; bread and bakery products, \$1,300,000; boilers and tanks, \$1,000,000.

Gradually, not with a rush and with presaging early decay, but with a steady, safe and sane growth, the manufacturing scope of Omaha is enlarging and each year sees additions to the ranks of the dinner bucket brigade. As the vast and as yet somewhat undeveloped country to the northwest fills up with settlers—and it is filling rapidly—there will, as a natural consequence, be an ever-increasing demand for factory output, and Omaha in time will doubtless be a city of factories that will class alongside of eastern manufacturing centers.

Corn Crib of the Nation. The story of Omaha's supremacy as a packing center and live stock mart is a matter of world-wide circulation. The vast packing houses and stock yards have built up the city of South Omaha, which, although a separate municipality, divided from Omaha by an imaginary boundary line, is in reality, so far as all practical purposes go, a part of Omaha proper. Official figures show that 5,458,125 head of live stock were received in South Omaha last year. Of these over 2,000,000 were hogs. In a numerical sense cattle came next, with 1,124,618 head. Naturally, being the center of the richest agricultural region in the world, Omaha is a first-class grain market. "Corn crib of the nation" is a nickname that has often been applied to Omaha, and facts render that appellation most timely, for last year there came to the Omaha markets 22,059,490 bushels of corn. Next in the line of grain came wheat, with a

total available for the small home builder.

Essentially a Home City. Omaha is especially inviting as a home city, because of the many pretty building sites that abound on every side. Omaha, in fact, is a city of wide areas and charming landscapes, and the man of modest means may obtain as fine a view for his home as though he had millions, for nature made these beauty spots, and man is the beneficiary. In many cities all of the pretty places are hand-made. In Omaha the condition is exactly reversed. Of course, the handiwork of man is in evidence, but nature wrought the greater part of the beautifying.

Getting back to the commercial side of Omaha, when the figures have been made along all of the different lines of activity, comes as a climax to conclusions, the bank clearing statistics. The banks are the arteries of commerce, because, in a figurative sense, they carry the very life blood of trade. Omaha banks are among the strong ones of the nation. Within the last year one Omaha savings bank became a national institution and has just moved into a magnificent sixteen-story home of its own, while another Omaha bank within the same period has purchased and is remodeling for its own use a million-dollar building, formerly known as the New York Life—one of the most ornate and substantial structures to be found in any western city. Figures recently published in the daily newspapers told the story of how the bank clearings for the first seven months of 1910 make the best showing ever recorded in Omaha's financial history, and with several months of 1910 yet to come, indications make

safe the prophecy that 1910, taken in the aggregate, will eclipse all other years so far as total bank clearings are concerned. The total clearings for the whole of 1909 were \$735,225,568. For the year 1908 the clearings totalled \$297,443,370, making a gain of 247 per cent in ten years. The year of 1909 showed an increase of \$138,000,000 in total clearances over 1908. It is estimated that bank clearings reveal about 70 per cent of business actually transacted, consequently, according to this estimate—and it is held good by accepted financial authorities—Omaha last year reached the billion mark, for there is official record of \$735,225,568 in clearings, and if this figure represents 70 per cent of the whole volume it is a matter of easy calculation to see where the billion mark has been reached.

Growth of Postoffice. Another phase of Omaha growth which is highly gratifying is the increase in volume of postoffice business—not only an increase in dollars and cents, but also a material improvement in the organization for dispatch of the mails. Omaha now has a strictly modern postoffice system, including trolley cars for the collection of mail from city boxes, and all else that goes to make up the real metropolitan post-office. By way of illustrating the rapid strides Omaha's postal business is making consider the fact that the total money order figures for 1909 reached the sum of \$9,629,170.51, a gain of \$972,283.32 over the previous year. In round numbers \$900,000 worth of stamps were sold during 1909, an increase of approximately \$100,000 over 1908. Surely a million dollars' worth of postage stamps—and it will be up to the million mark

and beyond when 1910 figures are brought forward—tells the story of a busy, prosperous community, also attesting the fact that where so many stamps are sold there must be much activity. No review of Omaha would be complete without reference to the railroads, for Omaha, as gateway to the west, is one of the chief railway centers of the United States. A feature of the year's progress in railroad expansion is the new Union Pacific headquarters building, which is now undergoing preliminary incident to the beginning of actual construction. No other midwest city has been given greater recognition as railroad headquarters, Omaha having the general offices of several roads. With office forces, trainmen and shop employees numerically strong enough to comprise a city of itself exclusive of all other population, Omaha's railroad pay roll aggregates a large sum. Omaha is really three cities moulded into one, for so far as all practical purposes are concerned Omaha, South Omaha and Council Bluffs are one great city. While these are separate municipalities, they are linked by a common bond of interests, and in going from one to the other the traveler has no way of knowing when he crossed the boundary line, except that in going to Council Bluffs he is reminded by the Missouri river that he is entering another city, so classed for governmental purposes, in another state. Then, besides South Omaha and Council Bluffs, there are Benson, Florence, Dundee, Bellevue, Crook City and Ralston, each a promising suburb—really a part of Omaha, but each maintaining its own system of government, and therefore being counted separately in census enumeration. If all of these were added to Omaha's census rating a surprisingly large showing would result, but under existing conditions each of the eight municipalities stands alone in census figures.

Quality Ranks High. Another distinguishing feature of Omaha is the fact that there is less of city riff-raff, less of the slum element, less of all that goes to make up undesirable citizenship than in any other American city of equal size. In Ne-

braska the percentage of illiteracy is less than in any other state of the union, and this happy status is reflected in the quality of the inhabitants who comprise the Nebraska metropolis. Obviously, when Omaha can produce official figures attesting the fact that Omaha bank clearings are in many instances of greater volume than the clearings in cities twice as large, the percentage of producers must be remarkably large, and the percentage of undesirables correspondingly small. Omaha is yet but an infant as to age, when the years of its existence are matched up alongside of other cities of equal commercial importance. The organization of Omaha as a municipality dates from the spring of 1857, at which time the first roster of city officers were elected. This roster follows: Mayor, Jesse Lowe; recorder, H. C. Anderson; assessor, Lyman Richardson; city marshal, J. A. Miller; board of aldermen, A. D. Jones, T. G. Goodwill, G. C. Bovey, H. H. Visscher, Thomas Davis, William U. Wyman, William N. Byers, C. H. Downs and Thomas O'Connor.

The first meeting of the city council was held on the afternoon of March 5, 1857. It was a crude municipality and required much of the time of the officers and aldermen, because obstacles were numerous and resources were limited. At one time back in the late '50s the city government was without funds and a system of city scrip was used. But those hardy pioneers, ever guided by that "get-what-you-go-after" spirit, kept faithfully pegging away, working for the interests of Omaha as faithfully as though the municipality were a private business enterprise of their own. Nebraska was a territory back in those days, and it frequently became necessary for the city government to send representatives to the national capital to appeal to the powers there for action.

Not Timid in Asking. Many occasions arose where the territorial pioneers felt it necessary to call upon the "great father" in Washington for action in favor of the future Nebraska metropolis. For example, on March 30, 1859, in the midst of a money stringency that would have discouraged a less resolute lot, Dr. George L. Miller was elected to proceed to Washington for the purpose of asking congress to reimburse Omaha as a municipality, for money expended on the first Nebraska capitol building. Incidentally, while on the trip, the city council instructed Dr. Miller to also ask that the surveyor general's office be located in Omaha; that Omaha should be made a military depot for the Utah war; that an appropriation be made for the removal of snags from the Missouri river; that the city of Omaha should be made a port of entry; that the Omaha postoffice should be made a distributing office and, by way of conclusion, just as Dr. Miller was starting on his mission, the city fathers slapped him on the shoulder and, by way of parting injunction, said: "Also, while you are there, you might get through any other measures you may think of that may be for the welfare of the city of Omaha." Thus there is found in history ample evidence of that "get-what-you-go-after" spirit. Sometimes the pioneers fell short of their aim, but even so, they were persistent, and by keeping everlastingly at it they brought to Omaha many institutions and many things of various kinds, all of which formed a nucleus around which the Omaha of today has grown up.

Those pioneers who initiated the "get-what-you-go-after" spirit have, a majority of them at least, passed away into the great beyond. A few still linger—their work done, they are merely awaiting the summons. But, in the place of those who have gone and those who are on the verge of going, there has come forward a younger generation and installed into this new generation even more deeply than in the older ones, is the idea that Omaha must get what it goes after. Therein lies the secret of the metropolitan supremacy of Omaha, 1910.

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