

1871---FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEE---1911

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 2, 1911.

My dear Mr. Rosewater:

I write to congratulate you on the 40th anniversary of the Omaha Bee and to express the hope that it may continue to prosper and exercise the useful influence good which has characterized it in your respected father's time and your own.

Sincerely yours,

Hon. Victor Rosewater,  
Omaha, Nebraska.



PRESIDENT W. H. TAFT

GOV. CHESTER H. ALDRICH

The Bee Receives Greetings and Congratulations from the Chief Executive of the Nation and the Governor of the State on Its Fortieth Anniversary

STATE OF NEBRASKA  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE  
LINCOLN

June 10, 1911.

Hon. Victor Rosewater,  
Editor of The Bee,  
Omaha, Nebraska.

My dear Sir:

Let me offer greetings and congratulations for the coming fortieth anniversary of The Bee. It has been a great thing for Nebraska to have a big metropolitan daily like The Bee working for the upbuilding of our state and the west, and battling for the people against monopolistic oppression, and I hope The Bee will always continue the vigorous policy of its founder, which has been carried on by you as his successor.

With best wishes for future success, I am,

Very truly yours,

HOW did you come to start The Bee? That question has been frequently asked, but never before answered by me in print. In the winter of 1870 I held the position of manager of the Atlantic & Pacific Telegraph company. Omaha was then a town of about 15,000 population, with two daily papers, the Omaha Herald and the Omaha Republican, each representing one of the two great political parties. The Republican was a prosperous concern with a lucrative party patronage, but its proprietor, Major St. A. D. Balcombe, was not a practical newspaper man, and although the republican party was in the ascendant in Nebraska and growing stronger from year to year, the paper had been greatly disorganized by its democratic competitor, ably edited by Dr. George L. Miller. Among the rank and file of the republicans there was much dissatisfaction, and party leaders who had endeavored to induce the owner of the Republican to infuse more vitality into the paper finally decided to start a wide-awake republican daily unless Major Balcombe would sell his paper, or a controlling interest. His refusal to part with the property except at an exorbitant price left no other alternative than to establish a rival to the Republican.

At that period, and for some years previous, I had been the telegraphic correspondent for the New York Herald, Chicago Tribune, Cincinnati Commercial and St. Louis Democrat, now the Globe-Democrat. During the six years ending in 1869, while acting as the local manager of the Western Union Telegraph company, I had also been agent of the Associated Press. My practical experience as a telegrapher and news gatherer placed me in close contact with the press and afforded me an excellent opportunity for journalistic training. Incidentally it is pertinent to state that I was an ardent republican, trained in the abolition school, and had passed through the fiery ordeal of a union man living in the heart of secession at the outbreak of the war, and participating in several campaigns with the union armies.

Connection With Omaha Tribune.

At the urgent request of a large number of prominent republicans, I ventured upon the task of organizing a stock company having for its object the establishment of a first class republican daily. After three months of the hardest of hard work I succeeded in securing \$30,000 in subscriptions to the stock of the Tribune Printing company, \$2,000 of which was subscribed by myself. I had not the remotest idea of ever becoming an editor or of seeking any position in connection with the paper. My plan was to induce some man with a national reputation to come to Omaha and establish a name for it that would insure its supremacy in this section. With this end in view I addressed letters to several of the most noted editors of the country, and among these were Horace Greeley and Samuel Bowles. The autograph response of Horace Greeley, which is preserved by me as a memento of the greatest of American editors, deciphered into plain English, reads as follows:

NEW YORK TRIBUNE, NEW YORK, March 17, 1870.—Dear Sir: I have yours of the 13th inst. In my judgment, Mr. Beeman Brockway of Watertown, N. Y., would make such a paper as you want. He is able, honest, well informed and temperate. He was formerly editor of the Reformer at Watertown and has been one of our republican canal assessors until he was turned out. If you write him, ask the P. M. to forward in case he should be absent. Yours,

HORACE GREELEY,  
E. Rosewater, Esq., Omaha, Neb.

Sam Bowles had been across the continent only a few years previous and had described the country in his great work, "Beyond the Mississippi." I endeavored in my letter to impress upon him the advantage of locating in one of the future great cities of the west. Mr. Bowles made the following response:

THE REPUBLICAN, SPRINGFIELD, Mass., March 23, 1870.—My Dear Sir: Your suggestions are very flattering. I should like on many accounts to share in the upbuilding of a good journal at Omaha, but I fear it is altogether out of the question. I am pretty strongly anchored here. It is a very difficult thing, nay, impossible, to improvise either a journalist or a journal. I cannot at this moment put my thought upon a man worthy of your consideration, but I may be able in a day or two to suggest one for you. What you should do is to buy out the present republican paper and then get better men into it. I advise this most earnestly. It is a great deal better and easier than to undertake to oust a rival. I am, yours truly,  
SAM'L BOWLES.

Arrangements Completed.

In April, 1870, negotiations were entered into with Hon. Joseph Hall of Portland, Me., proprietor of the

Birth of The Bee Described by Its Founder

Monitor Printing company, by which the job printing plant of the Monitor company was acquired by the Omaha Tribune company. Mr. Hall had been secretary of state for the state of Maine and was reputed to be a man of good business capacity. Under the agreement made with him, the machinery and printing materials which were to be brought to Omaha, were upon appraisal to be exchanged for Tribune company stock. In those days a job office was considered an indispensable adjunct of every newspaper and our acquisition was considered most fortunate.

Shortly after I had received the letter from Samuel Bowles, declining to assume the editorship of the new republican daily, an application for the position was received from Mr. C. B. Thomas, accompanied by a recommendation from Mr. Bowles, which endorsed Mr. Thomas as a polished writer and experienced journalist. Mr. Thomas hailed from Duxbury, Mass., had received a collegiate education, and for a number of years had been editor of several New England papers, notably the Worcester Spy. After considerable correspondence we engaged Mr. Thomas for the position of editor-in-chief of the Omaha Tribune.

In June, 1870, the prospectus of the Tribune was issued and the announcement made that the paper would be published every afternoon, except Sundays, and its first copy was to appear on Monday, July 25.

In due time Mr. Joseph Hall, with his Monitor job printing plant, landed in Omaha and was installed in very commodious quarters in what was then the most central portion of the city, on the west side of Fourteenth street, near the corner of Farnam. By the middle of July everything was ready to begin publication of the Tribune.

Experience as Temporary Editor.

About that time a literary genius by the name of Harry Gerald drifted into Omaha and was added to the editorial staff. Harry Gerald was an Irishman by birth and had held a lieutenant's commission in the British army in India. He was a polished writer and had served an apprenticeship with William Cullen Bryant on the New York Post and with Horace Greeley on the New York Tribune.

The 25th day of July dawned upon us, but Mr. Thomas had not reached Omaha. The high-sounding prospectus had set everybody on tip-toe to see what

a swath the great New England editor would cut, and a great dilemma confronted the board of directors. A council of war was held and my offer to edit the paper in conjunction with Harry Gerald until the arrival of Mr. Thomas was accepted. Promptly at 3 p. m., on Monday, July 25, the Omaha Daily Tribune made its appearance. It was a handsome sheet in its typographical make-up, in fact, too costly for a town of the size of Omaha. For a whole week the editorial columns were filled by myself and Gerald, and no one in Omaha had discovered that the great Massachusetts editor had not yet arrived. It goes without saying that I felt flattered by my first editorial experience. Within thirty days from the appearance of the Tribune it dawned upon me that the paper was sure to be a great sink-hole. Its expenses had by far outrun its receipts, and its circulation was less four weeks after it had started than it had been on the first day. As a member of the board of directors I requested information from the manager concerning its financial condition, but he declined to go into details. My resignation from the board was thereupon tendered, and I was fortunate enough to induce other members to take my stock without loss.

Campaign Sheet

The campaign of 1870 was intensely exciting, as it involved the election of a United States senator. The stalwart or Grant wing of the republican party was marshaled to the support of General John M. Thayer, who was then serving the last year of his term. Thayer was a very popular party leader, and in spite of the most bitter opposition succeeded in carrying the republican primaries and nominating a legislative ticket pledged to his support. A rival legislative ticket was put in the field by the faction opposed by Thayer, and this bolters' ticket was supported vigorously by the Tribune. With unparalleled imbecility and pusillanimity, the Omaha Republican remained neutral in the fight for fear of offending the leaders of the bolting anti-Thayer faction. The Thayer stalwarts were therefore compelled to issue a campaign sheet, edited promiscuously, in several languages, by a dozen active republicans, including myself. This campaign

sheet was issued from the job office of Redfield & Bros., where The Bee was subsequently ushered into life.

The regular republican legislative ticket, on which I had accepted a nomination for the lower house, was triumphantly elected, and I was thus launched into the political arena, in which I have since played a more or less conspicuous part.

The re-election of General Thayer to the United States senate would have been a death-blow to the Tribune, but it was decreed otherwise. A coalition of all the democrats with the anti-Grant independents, cemented together by a large amount of boodle, resulted in the retirement of Thayer and the triumph of the faction of republican renegades that had supported Andy Johnson and his policy.

Influence of Politics.

The outcome of the senatorial election, followed by the impeachment of Governor David Butler, in which I had taken the initiative, had a far-reaching influence, not only upon Nebraska politics, but Omaha journalism. The ascendancy to power of the anti-Grant bolters' faction infused new life into the Tribune, which had by that time nearly swamped the men who had embarked in the venture. The Republican was correspondingly weakened. In March, 1871, the Tribune changed from an afternoon to a morning daily, thus forcing the fighting which culminated in the consolidation of the Tribune with the Republican. The controlling interest in the mammoth consolidation, as the paper was then called, was in the hands of the new senatorial dynasty, with C. E. Thomas as editor-in-chief and St. A. D. Balcombe as manager. The part I had taken in the impeachment of Governor Butler and my pronounced hostility to the man who had suddenly come into power, subjected me, very naturally, to constant attacks from the Tribune and Republican. Dr. Miller's Herald was not very friendly, either, although it had expressed preference for General Thayer as his own successor in the senate, and had endorsed the course of the Douglas delegation in the legislature in voting for the impeachment and removal of Governor Butler, and in purging the state house of corruption.

One of the measures in which I had taken an active

part was the reorganization of the public schools of Omaha. At that period the graded schools of Omaha were under the control of a common school board, elected in the primitive school house meeting. This board had a salaried treasurer and secretary. There was also a board of regents of the Omaha High school. Chartered by the territorial legislature, this body was entirely independent of the common school board. Its original design was to create an academy on the grounds occupied by the territorial capitol and to make it an exclusive, somewhat aristocratic, educational institution. When the bill came before the legislature authorizing the issue of bonds for the erection of the Omaha High school building I made the proposition that the board of high school regents should be consolidated with the common school board, or that the board of regents assume the management of all the schools. These propositions were contemptuously rejected, as was also the proposition that the directors of the common schools should assume the management of the high school as well as of the graded schools.

Thereupon I set to work to frame a bill for the creation of a board of education for the city of Omaha. The bill was modeled after the laws governing the boards of education in the cities of Detroit, Cleveland and Cincinnati. In conferred upon an elective board of education, the control and supervision of all the public schools, including the high school, and made the city treasurer of Omaha ex-officio treasurer of the board of education. This bill was pushed through the legislature by me in spite of all opposition and remonstrance from the regents. The only concession I was forced to make was that the ratification of the act was to be submitted to the voters of the city of Omaha at the special election called for voting on the bonds for the erection of the high school. I had taken great pride in the measure and felt a deep interest in having my work endorsed by the people. Neither of the existing Omaha dailies were disposed to favor the change. The Omaha Republican vigorously opposed it. It also became apparent that much of the opposition was due to the fact that the control of the \$200,000 to be expended on the high school building was to pass out of the hands of the Board of Regents, several of whom were prominent bank officers.

The Bee Appears.

I was still manager of the Atlantic & Pacific and Great Western Telegraph companies, and could not in the nature of things take an active part in public agitation. There was no way open to exert influence upon the public mind in support of the board of education bill, except by circular letter, pamphlet or paper. It so happened that Harry Gerald, who had so ably assisted me in editing the Tribune during the first week of its career, was then foot-loose. My proposition to him to start a fly sheet for general distribution in the business portion of the city and in the Omaha Academy of Music, then occupied by a theatrical company, was cheerfully accepted by him. I made a personal canvass among my business friends and acquaintances for a few advertising cards, and arranged with Redfield Bros., job printers, for the type and press work of the new daily.

On Monday morning, June 19, 1871, Harry Gerald and myself stood over the forms which made up the new two-page paper, or rather theater program. At the end of the first page, in large, black type, appeared "The Omaha Punchinello."

"What do you want to call it The Punchinello for?" exclaimed Gerald.

"Oh," said I, "what should it be? We can't call it the Gazette, the Commercial, the Chronicle or Intelligencer. It's only a little funnigram and I don't expect it ever to be a newspaper. I can't give it a political name, either. Punchinello is odd and suggestive of pun, wit, sarcasm, and my idea is to punch up some of the old fossils."

"Well," said Gerald, "why not call it The Bee. That would also be suggestive. The Bee gives honey and it stings. It is also an emblem of industry. After all this may become a newspaper and you might want to retain the name after it once is started."

"We will call it The Bee, then," said I. "It matters very little to me anyhow, because I don't expect to have much to do with it after the school bond election."

So the heading of "Punchinello" was taken out and that of The Omaha Bee was inserted in its place.

Another question presented itself: "Who's to be the responsible editor?" I did not want my name connected with the insignificant sheet, which would at best perish within a few weeks and might subject me to ridicule and contempt. So we inserted at the head of the editorial column on the second page, Harry Gerald, editor and proprietor.

June 18, '96.

E. ROSEWATER,



Thanks of Typographical Union

Omaha, Nebraska, Feb. 24th, 1906.

Mr. E. Rosewater, (Editor Omaha Bee)

On behalf of Omaha Typographical Union No. 190, we, the undersigned, desire to thank you for the position taken by The Bee in the present controversy, between the International Typographical Union and the employers of job printers on the subject of the 6-hour work day, and are especially gratified at your course because it is taken by an employer of printers who from years of association with them has come to know them—their strength and their weakness.

That your position in this matter is simply in keeping with your well known policy toward wage earners, renders it more worthy of commendation, as the printer is always anxious to praise his friends.

Frustrating that we may be able in the future to prove the sincerity of our expressed good will, we are,

Yours truly,

Thanks from School Teachers

The Editorial which appeared in the Bee, Nov. 12th, so generously endorsing the teacher's plea for better salaries is gratefully appreciated by

- The Teachers of Pacific School
- Lucretia J. Bradley
- Agnes L. Shapland
- Betta Graves
- Blanche Campbell
- Emma Louergan
- Edith Dehstrom
- Maud Ayers
- B. Marie Mc Ardler
- Blanche Murphy
- Kathryn Harting
- Allie E. Campbell
- Emma N. Parashaw
- Bulah Lee
- Maryaret Wallace
- Frances M. C. Crock