

OMAHA IN 1871--When The Bee First Made Its Bow

UPPER FARNAM STREET WHEN THE BEE WAS BORN AND NOW



WEST FROM FIFTEENTH STREET IN 1871



SAME STREET TODAY

At the time The Bee made its initial bow before the local public as a little two-page evening paper Omaha had outgrown the village stage. As the gateway to the far west through which the great horde of transcontinental pioneers, settlers and tourists made their way to the mountains and the Pacific coast Omaha had achieved a recognized place on the map and was enjoying the results of an increasing trade, fostered by its geographical position and the recent opening up of new transportation routes of which it was the terminus. The traveler who came to Omaha in 1871 would therefore have found a thriving, bustling little town of about 17,000 inhabitants. The census of 1870 had given it a population of 16,083, and the whole state of Nebraska a trifle less than 125,000.

Our traveler might have made his way up the river by steamboat, as the steamboat lines had not yet been abandoned. During the season of navigation, so we are told, it was by no means an unusual thing to see each day at the landing several boats receiving their freight for the mountains and others the products of the state for consumption at the south. He would, however, likely have made use of the newly built railroads which had thrown their iron tracks about Omaha like spokes in a wheel. Stimulated by the construction of the Union Pacific, finally completed in 1869, four roads constituting through connections with the east had rapidly pushed their way up to the Missouri river. The Chicago & Northwestern had been the first completed, then the Hannibal & St. Joseph, then the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, and next the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy. Even at that time the project for the Omaha & Southwestern was afoot, soon to be carried into successful execution. The controversy over the use of the Union Pacific bridge at this point was just at its height and the business men of the town were energetically engaged in a fight to prevent the threatened location of the Union Pacific terminals on the Council Bluffs side of the river.

Bird's-Eye View of the Town.

The first impulse of our traveler would naturally have been to take a brief survey of the place. The whole area of the town in 1871 was but a shadow of what it is now. The streets had been laid out only from Twenty-third street on the west to the river on the east, and from Nicholas on the north to Pierce on the south. The inhabited portion was, of course, much smaller. For administrative convenience the town had been divided into six wards, the first ward comprising the district south of Farnam (then spelled Farnham) and east of Twelfth; the second, that south of Farnam and west of Twelfth; the third, that between Farnam and Davenport; the fourth, that between the same streets and west of Fourteenth; the fifth, that north of Davenport and east of Sixteenth, and the sixth, the remainder.

The streets, even in the business center, were unpaved. The sidewalks and cross-walks consisted, for the most part, of wooden planks, though the pedestrian esteemed himself fortunate to find continuous sidewalks at all. There was no street railway, no electric lights, no telephones, no sewers, no water-works. The people drew their water from wells and cisterns, and water for fire protection was stored in public cisterns at the intersections of certain streets. In one thing the town pointed to an up-to-date that paced it head and shoulders above its competitors—that it was its gas works and gas lamps, which had been introduced two years before. Still the use of gas for illuminating stores and dwellings was a luxury afforded by exceedingly few.

Panorama From Capitol Hill.

Let me quote a pen picture written shortly before this very time: "Commencing near the river on the south attention is attracted by several substantial brick buildings used as breweries, while the heights which bound the city in this direction are crowned by handsome private residences. Passing west we notice in succession the gas works, Brownell hall and the Nunnery; thence crossing to the north we reach the old capitol, now rededicated to the city for educational purposes. An ascent to its cupola will well repay the fatigue imposed. Immediately below lies the city, with its wide, regular streets, its lofty ranges of business houses interrupted here and there by churches and lines of pleasant trees; beyond rolls the Missouri with its regal pomp of waters, while in the distant east sleeps Council Bluffs at the foot of the picturesque hills from which it takes its name. Before one four or five busy lines of railroad carry the through traffic of the continent, and a valley unsurpassed for fertility and beauty can be traced for miles as it stretches away to the north.

"Coming down into the city and reaching Farnam street we notice the Congregational church, military headquarters and the court house; east of these Kountze's bank; next Shoaf Brothers' billiard hall and the offices of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railroad. At the foot of the street are several hotels and the offices of the Union Pacific railroad. Passing up Douglas street, the Metropolitan hotel is the first object of interest; then on Twelfth, but a few steps from the main thoroughfare, the rooms of the Young Men's Christian association, a credit to the zeal and devotion of the young men of Omaha. Just beyond Twelfth, the Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran church and Vischer's block. Next come the Omaha National bank and the offices of the Herald and Republican. On Seventeenth we see the new Presbyterian church with its conspicuous spire and the Methodist church, but partly built. On the corner of Fifteenth and Davenport the new Baptist church is approaching completion and promises to be one of the finest architectural additions to the city. Following east on Davenport we reach an open space overlooking the river bottom, and the eye is at once arrested by the extensive shops of the Union Pacific railroad. The barracks to the north of the city also will repay a visit, though at present the Indian troubles west have drawn away most of the troops."

City Government in 1871.

If our traveler should have happened in at the council rooms in Hillman's block some evening when the council was in session, he would have found advising that body as mayor Smith S. Caldwell, one of the leading bankers and most prominent citizens. In front of him he would have seen ranged as councilmen E. A. Allen and W. J. McKelligan from the First ward, G. W. Homan and J. S. Gibson from the Second ward, Henry Luhan and John Campbell from the Third ward, John A. Horbach and Byron Reed from the Fourth ward, James Creighton and J. B. Bartlett from the Fifth ward, and George Smith and Thomas Martin from the Sixth ward. The other city officers

were: C. L. Bristol, city clerk; John Steen, treasurer; John R. Porter, police judge; Andrew Rosewater, city engineer; Jerry Dee, street commissioner, and G. W. Gratton, gas inspector.

At the head of the police department was William G. Hollins, city marshal and chief, assisted by Rodney Dutcher, captain; A. P. Saunders, lieutenant; C. P. Paulsen, turnkey, and three policemen appointed from each ward, making a total of eighteen men in the entire force.

The fire department was still a volunteer organization. Steamers Omaha, No. 1, organized July 10, 1866, was housed, together with the Pioneer Hook and Ladder company, on the southwest corner of Sixteenth and Farnam, where the Board of Trade building now stands. Fire King, No. 2, organized September 14, 1868, was housed on the east side of Tenth street, between Farnam and Douglas, where No. 2 engine house is still located. Durant Engine and Hose company No. 1, organized February 1, 1869, then, as now, constituted the special service of the Union Pacific car shops.

County and Federal Officers.

Wandering into the somber, square, brick court house that had been erected on the northeast corner of Sixteenth and Farnam streets, our traveler would have found George B. Lake conducting the district court, with George Armstrong as his clerk. The other county officers who were supposed to make their headquarters in the building were Henry Eicke, W. A. Purchase and E. H. Sherwood, commissioners; Thomas Swobe, clerk; W. J. Hahn, treasurer; Louis von Froben, surveyor; Dr. J. C. Denise, physician; John C. Cowin, prosecutor; E. Estabrook, attorney; Jacob Gish, coroner; Henry Grebe, sheriff; Jeremiah Behm, superintendent of schools, and L. B. Gibson, probate judge.

The United States postoffice was located on Douglas, below Fourteenth street, and was presided over by J. H. Kellom as postmaster. By the time The Bee had been well started Postmaster Kellom had given way to Postmaster Joel Griffin, who was soon forced to retire by the exposures of this paper. The postoffice was advertised to be open from 8 a. m. to 8 p. m. daily, except Sunday, when it was open from 8 to 10 a. m. The mails arrived and departed daily, except Sunday. No mails were due Sunday afternoon or Monday forenoon and no departures Saturday afternoon or Sunday forenoon. And the postoffice patronizing public was specially informed that way stations on the Chicago & Northwestern and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railroads were supplied by railway mail clerks on the morning trains.

The other names on the list of United States officers located in Omaha in 1871 were: Hon. John F. Dillon, judge of the circuit court; Hon. Elmer S. Dundy, judge of the district court; Watson B. Smith, clerk of the circuit and district courts; Silas A. Strickland, United States attorney; Thomas J. Majors, internal revenue assessor; Charles K. Coutant, assistant internal revenue assessor; Joseph E. Lamaster, internal revenue collector; Milton F. Lamaster, deputy internal revenue collector; C. P. Storrs, liquor gauger; J. T. Hollie, marshal; S. B. Caldwell, pension agent, and James H. Peabody, M. D., pension surgeon. Brigadier General Ord was commanding the Department

of the Platte with headquarters in the building at the corner of Fifteenth and Harney streets

Omaha's Excellent Schools.

Even in those early days the citizens of Omaha prided themselves upon the excellence of their schools. The public school system was under the control of the Board of Trustees, comprising A. J. Simpson, moderator; B. E. B. Kennedy, director; John Evans, treasurer; and Ezra Millard, J. H. Kellom and W. R. Bartlett, trustees. There were at the time eight public school buildings—the Pleasant school, which had cost \$8,000, the Pacific school, which had cost \$23,000, the Izard school, which had cost \$25,000, and five frame buildings. About twenty teachers were employed to instruct the pupils in attendance. The state had granted the city the site of the old capitol for school purposes, but the magnificent High school building which has just been torn down to make way for completion of the present new structure on the crest of the same hill, was only commenced in 1871 and not completed until 1872.

Omaha's private schools were also numerous and of recognized standing twenty-five years ago. Brownell hall was already being conducted as a boarding school for girls and young women under the auspices of the Episcopal church. It was located in a commodious structure on Sixteenth and Jackson streets for its home, and was under the principality of Miss Elizabeth Butterfield. The Catholics maintained St. Mary's academy on the north side of St. Mary's avenue, west of South avenue, and a parochial school on Eighth street, between Howard and Harney. Finally a German school association supported a private German school, housed in a building on Howard, between Eighth and Ninth streets.

As a supplement to the schools the Omaha Public Library was established in 1871 by an association formed in December of that year. Its management was in the hands of eleven directors, the first directors being: A. J. Poppleton, John Patrick, George L. Miller, S. S. Caldwell, John P. Edgar, St. A. D. Balcombe, Henry W. Yates, J. W. Gannett, Nathan Shelton, A. Swartzlander and A. M. Henry. The nucleus of the library consisted of 600 to 700 selected books, purchased from Mr. E. O. Crosby of Fremont. It was this library that was later turned over to the city to be made a free public library, and which has developed into Omaha's present substantial free circulating library.

Fraternal Societies. Social Life.

In the way of fraternal societies and social organizations the Omaha of 1871 was well supplied. There were the lodges of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, which met in Odd Fellows' hall on Farnam street, with John Evans as grand secretary. There



Busy Life of the Present Editor of The Bee

The present editor of The Bee, Victor Rosewater, counts his years in exactly the same number that The Bee does. He is a native son of Omaha, having been born in a small cottage standing on the site of the Bee building, February 12, 1871, a little more than four months before the birth of The Bee.

Victor Rosewater is the eldest son in the family of Edward Rosewater, the founder of The Bee, and his educational training was from the first inspired with the idea that he would eventually take up newspaper work. When 5 years of age he entered the public schools and has the unique experience of having passed from the lowest class of the first grade to his graduation at the age of 16 without attending classes in any building but the old Omaha High school which has just been torn down.

The winter following the completion of his public school course was spent in Washington, where he served as page without pay in the United States senate to acquire familiarity with the methods of government and acquaintance with the men foremost in public life.

His college career embraced two years of study in Johns Hopkins university in Baltimore and three years at Columbia university in New York City, from which he received his degrees, specializing in political science, economics and constitutional law. In his final year at Columbia he held the university fellowship in political economy and his doctor's dissertation entitled "Special Assessments—A Study in Municipal Finance," not only received approving comment and commendation from the leading economists of the world, but was forced by the demand for it to a second edition, a distinction enjoyed by only two or three of the publications in the college series.

Even while still a lad at school Victor Rosewater began indulging his bent for writing. His first published articles appeared in philatelic magazines, reflecting his boyhood enthusiasm as a collector of postage stamps. Later, in association with James Wallace Brootch, he founded the Omaha High School Register in 1885 and was his editor-in-chief for the next two years. While at college he acted as correspondent for several of the big metropolitan dailies and contributed articles to magazines and scientific

publications. He has been a member of the American Economic association, made up of the foremost political economists in this country, for more than twenty years and has frequently figured in the discussions at its annual meetings. He has written articles, too, on invitation, for a number of encyclopedias, and even now, in the midst of the pressure of daily journalism, finds time occasionally to write on current topics for the magazines.

Coming back to Omaha in the summer of 1893, Victor Rosewater found a place on The Bee, starting in as police reporter, but quickly moving up to the position of editorial writer. In 1895 he took complete charge of the editorial side of The Bee as managing editor, remaining in that capacity for ten years until he became editor of the paper in February, 1906, when the elder Rosewater relinquished the title and responsibility, as well as the work, just prior to his departure for the World's Postal congress at Rome, after which he did not resume active labors on the paper.

In politics Victor Rosewater is trained in the school of his father, having started at the bottom of the ladder and worked his way through all the various stages of political service. Inheriting republican affiliations, he has been in the political harness successively as member of city, county, state and national committees and delegate to numerous party conventions. He undertook the organization of Nebraska in 1908 in the interest of the candidacy of William Howard Taft for president, and was chosen one of the four delegates-at-large to the republican national convention at Chicago, at which he was made a member of the republican national committee. In the subsequent campaign he was appointed by Chairman Hitchcock on the executive committee and placed in charge of the publicity work for the western



division, embracing twenty-six states and territories. His successful conduct of his part of that campaign brought words of thanks and appreciation from both the national chairman and the president-elect. Although he has never been a candidate for office, Mr. Rosewater has a notable record for public service, chiefly along educational lines. For eleven years he was an active member of the Omaha Public Library board, taking a leading part in the development and expansion of this institution. In 1896 he was appointed by Governor Holcomb to fill out an unexpired term on the Board of Regents for the University of Nebraska, where he devoted his energies to raising educational standards. In 1898 he served on the award jury for the educational exhibits at the Trans-Mississippi exposition. In 1903 he acted as chairman of the Board of Review that revised the tax assessment for the city of Omaha, signaling a great step forward in the movement for tax reform. In 1908 he was one of the delegates representing Nebraska in the first Conservation congress called by President Roosevelt to meet at the White House, and is head of the state council for Nebraska of the National Civic federation. Among other accumulated honors which Mr. Rosewater prizes is the rare novelty of having incurred a resolution of censure by the state senate of Nebraska, voted upon him in 1897 by a bunch of hoodlums exposed and thwarted just as they were grasping a pot of money put up by Omaha gamblers to secure the repeal of the law making gambling a felony.

Mr. Rosewater makes no pretense to oratory or public speaking, but has responded at various times to invitations to deliver lectures on subjects of economics and finance to the University of Wisconsin and the University of Missouri, as well as the University of Nebraska. He is one of the steadiest workers on the whole newspaper force, devoting what little time he takes off to travel for observation or attendance on gatherings of leaders of thought enlisted in various public movements. He was married in 1904 to Miss Katie Katz of Baltimore, and a daughter and son complete the family, the boy being named Edward Rosewater, second, after his grandfather, who founded The Bee.

ing wheat into flour. Two breweries were converting malt into beer. A distillery was in operation manufacturing whisky and spirits. The linseed oil works had just been started. There were two soap and candle factories, a cigar box factory, a paper box factory, a coffee and spice mill, a foundry, a carriage factory and several wagon makers, ash door and blind manufacturers, a shoe case maker and pork packers. There were two establishments engaged in the construction of lightning rods and one which was flooding the west with Nebraska-made hoop skirts and corsets. All this without counting the two thriving lottery awindles which were soon after compelled to retire from business under the irresistible onslaught of The Bee. The principal addition to the industries of Omaha for the year 1871 was the smelting works, which had been organized the preceding year and which completed the construction of its works and began active operations in February, 1871, giving employment night and day to an aggregate of sixty men. Next to the Union Pacific car shops, the smelting works at once took rank at the forefront of Omaha's manufacturing enterprises.

Representation in the Professions.

Among the inhabitants of the town our traveler would have found a fair representation of intelligent professional men. Of the attorneys and law firms then practicing before the courts only a comparatively few are still pursuing the profession in this city. Here, however, are some of the familiar names: G. W. Ambrose, Baldwin & O'Brien, J. C. Cowin, Gilbert & Swartzlander, Neville & Hawes, Strickland & Webster, Savage, Manderson, A. J. Poppleton, C. H. Brown, C. S. Chase, W. J. Connel, G. W. Doane, Luther & Thurston, John I. Redick, E. Wakeley, J. M. Woolworth, D. L. Thomas.

The list of surviving physicians of twenty-five years ago is still smaller. Those who are well remembered are Drs. I. Van Camp, O. S. Wood, Peck & Moore, V. H. Coffman, S. D. Mercer, J. C. Denise, J. R. Conklin, George Thiden and James H. Peabody.

None of the ministers of 1871 occupy Omaha pulpits regularly today.

Amusements and Entertainments.

In the matter of amusements our traveler would not have much difficulty to secure desired diversion. The Academy of Music, in the Caldwell block on Douglas street, was the scene of theatrical entertainments by its own stock company under the management of Mr. Corri. Redick's New Opera house had but shortly been completed at Sixteenth and Farnam streets and witnessed a number of performances, both amateur and professional, before it was knocked down as a capital prize in the great Pattee lottery. Scattered about the town were innumerable concert and dance halls, where social gatherings of varying degrees of propriety were the powerful and frequent attractions.

As a hotel guest, our traveler would hardly have fared so well as he might reasonably have expected. The famous Herndon house had been transformed into the Union Pacific railroad headquarters, and the wonderful Cozens hotel, which George Francis Train had built in sixty days, could no longer lay claim to superiority. There were nevertheless, some dozen hostleries ready to receive guests and give them good accommodations, and a host of lesser hotel lights and boarding houses. Among the hotels to which the business man of Omaha would have recommended his friends in 1871 were the American house, Atlantic house, Cozens hotel, Davenport house, Douglas house, Emmet hotel, Metropolitan hotel, Omaha house, St. Charles hotel, St. James hotel, United States hotel, Valley house and Wyoming house.

Every hotel of pretension of course conducted a saloon in connection with it, but if that had been all, there would by no means have been enough saloons to supply the demand. The places where liquor was to be had added up between eighty and ninety and many of them had gambling room attachments for which no effort was made at concealment.

From the Standpoint of Morality.

In contrast with this the organizations of church-going people presented a strong array and Omaha had made good progress in the field of mission, church and Sunday school.

To quote in conclusion from the unknown contemporary author to whom I have previously referred, "with regard to morals, Omaha has suffered from its position as the entrepot for all the west and the resort of professional rogues seeking a respite after a sojourn in the mountains. It was also plagued with a set of newspaper correspondents who delighted in retelling all that was lurid and giving to every street brawl the importance of a first-class tragedy. Hence the impression east is general that life and property are by no means safe in Omaha; upon this subject we say briefly that as in all cities, vice may be found in certain haunts in Omaha, but it does not ply its seductions nor display its vulgarities in public, as it does in many places laying claim to superior virtue.

"As to the state of religion, during the last year, some of the churches have had to endure the trial of witnessing the fall of prominent members; others are divided in sentiment and some are destitute of pastors, but a glance at the city will show that religious activity has been the rule from the beginning. Sabbath schools are numerous and well attended; benevolent associations are sustained, as well as missionary enterprises and should any one test the report of liberality which pervades all classes he will find nowhere in the world a more hearty response to the claims of suffering humanity than he will from the religious portion of the population of Omaha."

THERE ARE OTHER BEES.

Five daily newspapers in the United States bear the name of Bee. The pioneer of the name now in existence was established in New Orleans in 1827. It was originally an Anglo-French publication, but it is now exclusively French, and bears the elongated title, "L'Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orleans." The second in point of age is the Sacramento (Cal.) Bee, established in 1854, and published by James McClatchy. The Omaha Bee ranks third in years, and the Toledo (O.) Bee, now News-Bee, established in 1877, fourth, and the De Queen (Ark.) Bee.

The number of weekly Bees, exclusive of those published with the dailies, approximates twenty. The Columbus Biene, the German weekly paper at Columbus, Neb., was named after The Bee of Omaha, as was likewise the Francisitas (Tex.) Bee, started last year by H. H. Philpott, formerly our staff correspondent at Lincoln. The postoffice at Bee, Neb., also looks to this paper as its namesake.