

HIVES OCCUPIED BY THE BEE--From Small, Humble

Shanty to the Present Palatial Bee Building

Forty years ago the first Omaha Bee was issued from a pine frame house. The issue of today goes out from a palace of granite, iron and marble. Then the Bee was no more pretentious than its habitation. Now the imposing structure that bears its name is typical of its pre-eminence among the great newspapers of the west. In the successive changes by which the Bee rose from its obscure birthplace to its present palatial surroundings is chronicled the history of its trials and victories. The necessity for more commodious accommodations grew with the development of the paper and each change of quarters indicated that another forward movement had been achieved.

The first home of the Bee gave no indication of its subsequent progress. It stood on the southeast corner of Twelfth and Dodge streets, a point then in the business center of the city. The building was two stories in height, rough and unpainted. It stood close to the sidewalk, and as the street was brought to grade the basement was rendered useless. It was owned by the Redfield Bros., who ran a printing establishment that was fairly well equipped according to the ideas of the period. From this structure the unassuming sheet which was destined to develop into a great newspaper went out to sink or swim. While it was soon deserted by the Bee in favor of more convenient quarters the old Redfield building continued to occupy that corner until the spring of 1889, when it was torn down to make room for the brick building which succeeded it.

Second Home of The Bee.

After the Bee had been issued from the Redfield office for three months Edward Rosewater leased the building which occupied the adjoining lot on the south, and here the paper flourished until the building was burned down in June, 1872, about a year after the first copy was issued. The building was scarcely more pretentious than the former quarters, but it existed in a front porch and a wooden basement. It had previously been used as a fourth rate hotel under the name of the Cedar Rapids house, and it now served for the first business office and composing room of the Bee. The press work was still done by Redfield Bros., but the Bee was now fairly launched on its career as a permanent establishment, with a building devoted to its uses. At the same time that this building was occupied Mr. Rosewater purchased the Heobachter Missouri and the Pokrok Zapadu, of which he had also been the founder, and which were all issued from the same office.

Third Home of The Bee.

When on June 11, 1872, an incendiary fire destroyed the entire building, with all its contents, the establishment was moved to a two-story and basement brick building, located on Farnam street, between Ninth and Tenth. This building had been erected by Mr. Rosewater in 1869 and it now afforded abundant space for the three papers. An entirely new plant, including news and job type for all three papers, was purchased at Cincinnati and St. Louis, and, as the revenues of the office were still limited, the purchase was largely a matter of credit. This building answered all purposes for six years, and during that time no particular improvements were added to the facilities of the establishment. In 1879 Mr. Rosewater leased the wooden structure on the lot east of the Farnam street building and eventually the lot was purchased from Milton Rogers for \$5,000. This gave the Bee a frontage of forty-four feet on Farnam street, one-half of which was occupied by the original brick building and the remainder by the two-story frame which stood on the Rogers lot. An entrance cut in the east wall of the brick afforded communication between the two buildings, and together they answered all purposes for another period of six years. In 1885 this building was reconstructed and merged into the four-story brick which now occupies the property. The counting room was then the most elegant in the city. The floors were tiled with marble, the walls were handsomely frescoed and an expensive cherry counter separated the counting room proper from the lobby.

As the Bee continued to flourish additional space was secured by leasing the upper story of the Strang building on the west, so that the plant practically covered forty-four front feet in addition to the one-story brick on the east.

The Great Bee Building.

The building at Seventeenth and Farnam streets, now occupied by the Bee, situated upon the highest point of the business district, will remain for generations to come a magnificent monument to the success of a great newspaper and to the enterprise of its proprietor.

The distinguishing feature of the Bee building is the impression of solidity and durability which it gives to all beholders. Its broad foundations, massive pillars and imposing superstructure promise to resist the encroachments of time until long after the Omaha of today has become a memory.

As an office building it has long been conceded to be unequalled. While the general plans were worked out by the architect, they were designed after the personal ideas of Mr. Edward Rosewater, and during the period in which it grew into its finished grandeur no detail was too unimportant to command his personal attention and supervision. The minutiae of its construction was as carefully planned as its most imposing feature. Nothing was overlooked and nothing slighted, and the result has abundantly justified the additional expense and labor involved in such an undertaking.

Area and External Architecture.

The Bee building occupies one-fourth of the entire block, with a frontage of 132 feet on Farnam street and the same on Seventeenth street. While its erection had long been contemplated by Mr. Rosewater, no active steps were taken until June, 1887, when S. S. Beman of Chicago, famous designer of great office buildings, was directed to prepare the plans. Several months were occupied in deciding on the details of the undertaking and in letting the contracts for the work, and it was September before the excavation was begun. Work on the foundations was commenced a month later and from that time the building was vigorously pushed to completion.

The general structure of the building is of rough-faced brick. It rests on an impregnable foundation, the walls being from three to five feet thick at the base, with assisting piers eight feet thick. From this point they gradually decrease to a thickness of twenty inches at the parapet. Their strength is augmented by iron columns which are enclosed in the brick piers above the first story. The granite which composes the walls of the basement and first story is from Wau-paca, Wis., and in color and texture qualities it is considered fully equal to the famous Scottish granite. It is a brilliant red in color and the effect is heightened by the rough rock finish. The granite is buttressed at the corners of the building and above each a beehive is suggestively carved in the pilasters. The main front on Farnam street is supported by eleven polished pillars of the same material. Beginning with the second story, the granite gives place to the brown brick. This is trimmed with terra cotta of a



THE PALATIAL BEE BUILDING--FARNAM AND SEVENTEENTH STREETS.

similar color and brown stone, moulded brick and carved terra cotta serve to relieve the severity of the vast stretch of masonry. At the top of the walls at the seventh story a frieze of obsidian brick delicately carved is in simple but effective relief.

On the Farnam street side an eighth story extends for sixty feet along the center of the building. Aside from adding two or three very pleasant rooms to the capacity of the building, this addition serves to break the effect of the long lines of windows which stretch across the main wall. Above the eighth story two small turrets rise to a height of 115 feet above the sidewalk and between them the inscription, "The Bee Building," in plain Roman letters graces a terra cotta panel.

Striking Central Court.

The most remarkable feature of the building is the great central court, a comparison to which is scarcely to be found in any office building in the country. Whether it is seen in daylight or by the combined radiance of the numerous incandescent lamps that line its walls, it presents an unparalleled vision of architectural magnificence, and has been pronounced one of the finest examples of interior treatment known to architecture. It is based on the ground floor at a level with the street and its walls rise in unbroken white to the skylight 120 feet above. The court is forty-three feet square and in the center a handsome fountain, with a fish pond, adds an appropriate touch to the simplicity of the design.

A series of pilasters which extend to the third floor divide the court into three bays. In the basement story these pilasters are crowned with an entablature of a severely classic design composed of architrave, frieze and cornice. The frieze is ornamented with circular and diamond-shaped panels, while a simple dentil design adds to the effect of the cornice. The pilasters, which extend through the first and second stories, rise from this entablature and are surmounted by a semi-circular arch around the third story. The whole is crowned by a hand-somely moulded modillion cornice, underneath which the spandrels are wrought in an interlaced Moorish fretwork. The capitals which bear the arches are beautifully moulded with a delicate French detail ornament.

The decorations of the fourth and fifth stories consist only of simple lines of moulded cornices and still courses which are in architectural harmony with the more elaborate ornamentations of the lower

stories. A double set of pilasters surround the upper or sixth story. One set forms a continuation of the main pilasters below, while the other serves the purpose of mullions between the windows. These are crowned by capitals of the same style of ornamentation as those below and the openings are surrounded by semicircular arched heads with a label molding. The whole is overhung with a deep frieze and dentil cornice which displays the same rich architectural sentiment that pervades the entire interior of the court.

Access to the upper floors is afforded by means of two modern fast passenger elevators of the latest type, and an elegant stairway, which is constructed independent of the building. In the rear of the building is a huge freight elevator and another iron stairway, also constructed independent of the building.

The lighting and plumbing are features in which the Bee building excels. The greatest care has been taken to afford the best possible sanitary arrangements, and such a thing as an unclean odor has never been known in the building. All offices are supplied with running water and Italian marble basins. Each floor is provided with separate toilet rooms for men and women. The entire building is provided with combination fixtures for gas and incandescent lights, and the current for the latter is furnished by a separate plant in the basement.

In the matter of fireproofing, every precaution has been taken that modern skill can suggest. All the partitions, furring, floors, arches, etc., are of fire clay tiled, and all the structural work is of the heaviest iron. The result is that each room in the building is for all practical purposes a fireproof vault, but a additional protection for books and documents is provided by seventy-four separate vaults in various parts of the building.

For many years the business office and counting room of the Bee was on the main floor of the main building, while the editorial rooms and composing room were on the top floor. This arrangement was looked upon as excellent at the time the building was completed, but the later growth of the business of the paper, as well as the exigencies of modern methods of publication demanded that both publication and editorial offices be brought closer to the public and closer together. To achieve this, the editorial rooms were removed in the fall of 1904 from the upper floor to the main floor, contiguous with the business office. At the same time the composing room was removed

from the seventh floor to the ground floor, being installed in the space originally occupied by the press room and mailing room, which had to be removed to the basement in 1898, at the time of installing a new press room equipment. This arrangement was soon found inadequate for the proper handling of a steadily increasing business, and the publication office of the paper was removed to quarters on the ground floor, at the corner of Seventeenth and Farnam streets, where the office force is now installed in one of the most commodious and adequately equipped offices known to the newspaper world. At the time this move was made plans were laid and later carried out for the erection of a workshop building, in which the great operations for the publication of a modern daily newspaper are going steadily on, day and night.

Later Growth of The Bee.

Across the alley from the main building an annex was erected, in which were installed the city editor and his forces, the night editor, the telegraph editors, society and club editors, sporting editor, the editors of the Twentieth Century Farmer, the great agricultural paper that succeeded the Weekly Bee; the staff artists, the photo-engraving department, the composing room, with all its costly equipment of special machinery, the stereotyping and electrotyping department, equipped with the very latest of mechanical appliances, and the boiler plant. In this great annex is the manufacturing plant of the Bee, with the exception of the press room, the dynamo room and the mailing room, which are yet maintained in the main building. The office of the editor-in-chief and the managing editor are still on the rear corridor of the ground floor in the main building, and the quarters left by the local and telegraphic news forces are now occupied by the advertising manager and his staff. The whole disposition of the working forces is planned to achieve a maximum of result in a minimum of time. A central telephone exchange, together with a "house" system provides instant communication between the many departments, and permits each to be instantly connected with the world outside. In this way the publication of the several editions of the Bee is possible without the disturbance or annoyance of any tenant, the only knowledge they may have of the operations being gained from the bulletin board in front of the business office.

That the experiment began in 1871, admittedly as

Henry D. Estabrook's Experience as City Editor

I presume every American boy, normally constituted, with perhaps an extra literary kink in his mental makeup, has had an ambition to become an editor, and has indulged this ambition whenever and wherever opportunity offered. From the eruptive, semi-occasional periodical published at the age of 10—appropriately printed on foolscap with the aid of a lead pencil and a protruding tongue; for which publication, I may add, his immediate relatives were the only subscribers, and of which his darling mother was the only reader—from this earliest manifestation of the symptom, I say, up to the age of 16, and his first anonymous communication to the city press (over the quaint and curious nom de plume of "Vox Populi") he has simply been pluming his wings and preening himself for the glorious career of a full fledged editor.

At the age of 16 I sent to the editor of our daily paper, The Omaha Bee, an item of news over the nom de plume of "Vox Populi"—of course. I was proud and happy when it appeared in print the following morning. It was considerably altered as to language, to be sure; still, the central idea—the great and luminous thought expressed—that is to say, the item of news, was there in all its glory; my manuscript had been accepted. Later on, when I fell in love, I tackled the editor on poetry. But that manuscript, for some occult reason, was not accepted.

Finally there was presented an opportunity of a lifetime. Mr. Rosewater's city editor, who was also his only reporter—for a newspaper man in that time played many parts—had been given a vacation, and previous to his departure had visited the high school to engage one of the larger boys to assume his duties.

I was the lucky chap to be invited, and I accepted with alacrity. For two whole weeks I was not only to write just what I pleased, but what I wrote was bound to be published. Moreover, I was to have \$20 per week into the bargain.

The first morning I was at the Bee office bright and early. Mr. Rosewater dropped into my 2x4 sanctum to wish me good morning and success in my experiment, and to indicate my route. Incidentally he remarked that a quartet of male voices had serenaded him the night before and it might be well to say an appreciative word about their singing. I did. I said that four roysters had made last night hideous with their catawauls, and had selected the editor of this paper for their especial and particular victim; that men with such voices as theirs ought not to be permitted to run at large, etc., etc. The fact is, I was a songster myself, and belonged to a rival quartet. When I arrived at the office next morning I met Mr. Rosewater going out to post a letter. He gave me a stony glare and hastened his footsteps. I afterwards learned that this letter was addressed to the absent reporter commanding his immediate return. Mr. Rosewater had scarcely made his exit when the second basso called and stopped his paper—stopped it off short never to go again. He also said in his most raucous voice that he wanted to see the responsible editor of that dirty sheet. I told him that the responsible editor had just stepped out, but that he might consider me the irresponsible editor, if he were so disposed. He laughed—a hollow, mocking, blood-curdling sort of a laugh—and vanished.

During the day the remaining members of the quartet dropped in one after the other and cancelled their subscriptions. The cheerful idiot who edited a

column in our "loathsome contemporary," called the "Public Fountain," took up the cudgel on behalf of the quartet, and through the medium of his column intimated that the ad interim reporter of the Bee was not yet dry behind the ears. I retorted that that was because I was in the habit of washing my ears, and thought it would be sanitary if he would occasionally follow my example. "Wash 'em in the Public Fountain," I said, "along with your dirty linen. What an appropriate freak of chance it is, any way, that such a fountain should be run by a squirt!"

On receipt of his chief's letter Mr. Al Sorenson, for whom I was substituting, shortened his leave of absence and hastened home, but not until I had time to be thoroughly licked by a saloonkeeper named Taylor; not until Mr. Rosewater's life had been several times threatened on my account, and not until I had involved The Omaha Bee in a \$20,000 libel suit. Then the editor came out in one of his famous editorials, over his own signature, and explained to a bewildered public just what happened. He commented severely upon my inaptitude for a journalistic career, and attributed his recent sorrows to what he called my "trick-mule performance." And yet I heard him hurl his repertorial thunderbolts indiscriminately at the public, it was more for the fun of manufacturing thunderbolts than for the purpose of injuring those who happened to be in the way of them. But that phrase, "trick-mule performance," stuck in my craw. If the much vaunted liberty of the press would not permit gentlemen to indulge in a little personal badinage without getting mad about it, egad! I'd join a profession which would! So I quit journalism and entered the law. HENRY D. ESTABROOK.

an experiment and not with any intent of becoming a permanent institution, developed into one of the most important of the world's newspapers, a journal of recognized standing throughout the world, is due solely to the persistence of its founder. Edward Rosewater found in his path such obstacles as would discourage a man of unquestioned grit, but in him the greater the obstruction, the greater his desire to overcome it. Within a year of the publication of its first number, the Bee was burned out, fired by an incendiary. Once again it suffered the same way through a similar agency. Its editor was assaulted and a desperate effort made to take his life; he fought against poverty and underwent the severest of hardships, but he would not give over the work he had set about. And inch by inch he fought his way, little by little he made progress, until he got his enterprise on a solid footing, and then he went about to make his paper what he had dreamed it would become, the leading journal of the west. During all this time he did not waver in his policy. He boldly attacked corruption wherever located; he championed the weak against the strong; he set himself against the domination of the affairs of the public by the corporations, and fearlessly opposed the leadership of men who were active in the interest of the moneyed oligarchy that sought to control. His sympathies were always with the people, and his advocacy of their cause never slackened.

In the earlier days of the struggle of the Bee against the many influences lined up against it, its editor felt many times that the life of his paper was trembling by a thread, but he stuck to it. At the end of two years it had grown to proportions where he must enlarge its size, and although the panic of 1873 was at its height, he bought more and better machinery and entered upon the real career of a journalist.

Varying Size of the Paper.

At this time he entered the general field for circulation, and in return found such a welcome from the people outside of Omaha that the next year saw another enlargement of the Bee. In March, 1874, it was issued as a nine column folio, the old "blanket sheet" type, the fifth time it had been enlarged since its birth three years before. On January 1, 1875, the Bee issued the first illustrated number ever published in the west, a review of the city's activities, illuminated with cuts of buildings, individuals and other matters of interest. In 1878 the Bee Publishing company was formed, and the great paper was launched on its wider career. Ample capital, a solid financial basis, provided for new and improved machinery, and a general plan of expansion was commenced. The morning edition had been added some time before, and both editions were enlarged to eight pages. In 1881 a Council Bluffs department was set up, and four years later Lincoln was taken in. From that time continuously the Bee has had its own representatives in both of these cities. A special representative has been maintained in Washington since early in the 80s, and for more than a dozen years a resident staff correspondent has been kept at Des Moines, thus giving the Bee its own representatives in the great news centers of the country and the states it especially serves.

From its very start the Bee found great difficulty in getting its news service from the world outside. The local field was easily enough covered, but the gathering of news by telegraph was accomplished in the face of discouraging conditions. The telegraph companies would do nothing to aid the paper, and for many years it paid outrageous tolls for its telegraphic news. It was denied entrance to the Associated Press, and as a result, while the other Omaha papers were paying but a small sum, around \$75 per month for telegraphic news, the Bee was held up for from \$500 to \$800 for what it got. Finally, in 1888, it was admitted to the Associated Press on the payment of a cash bonus of \$9,600. This exorbitant fee did not seriously affect the splendid system of special correspondents that had been built up, but made it possible to use the force to better advantage, with the result that it made the Bee pre-eminent as a newspaper. Connections were made with the great journals of the east, and an alliance with the New York Herald that continued for many years, or until the Herald became involved in an effort to sustain a rival to the Associated Press, when the connection with The Bee was broken off.

Superb News Gathering Sources.

It may be of interest to recite at this point a fact that is little known, but is of significance as showing the importance of the Bee in the news-gathering function of the great American press. When the United Press was about to go under, in 1896, a conference was held in New York, at the instance of Mr. Bennett, and arrangements were then made for an association of newspapers that would gather the news and serve it to their clients. In this combination were included the New York Herald, the Chicago Tribune, the St. Louis Globe-Democrat and the Omaha Bee. For some reason never explained, Mr. Bennett withdrew overnight from the agreement, and the immediate reorganization of the Associated Press rendered further effort on the part of the others to provide for a central news-gathering and distributing agency unnecessary. The United Press went under and the Herald came into the Associated Press.

In 1885 the mechanical equipment of the Bee was expanded to meet its growth by the addition of a web perfecting press and complete stereotyping outfit. August 1, 1886, the Sunday Bee made its appearance. Up to that time the morning edition of the Bee had appeared on Monday, but not on Sunday. The success of the new venture was in keeping with the enterprise that has marked its career. In 1889 the Bee moved to its present home, and even during the times of depression that came in the 90s, it continued its growth. It was in 1893 that the battery of twelve linotypes, the first in the west, were ordered, and the production of the paper by machine set type was commenced early in the following year. In 1898 the two Potter perfecting presses were displaced by two Hoe presses, each of more than double the capacity of the ones taken out. These in their turn are being displaced by others of still more than double the capacity. The battery of linotypes has grown to fifteen, each working sixteen hours a day, and producing an output that measures far above the average of the country, as shown by the Mergenthaler tabulation.

Not alone in mechanical appliances has the paper grown. Its news connections are the most complete of any in the west. It covers the world every day, giving to its readers the daily story of human activity in all lines, the cream of the news, carefully written and presented attractively and accurately. Its editor long ago solved the question of what is fit to print, and his views on that point are fixed law in the Bee editorial rooms. No item is published in malice, nor to needlessly wound any, nor is ever an item to be published whose reading would offend good taste. In order to meet the requirements of the conditions that have sprung up through unusual hours of closing mails and the like, and to secure delivery of its papers promptly to its patrons, the Bee prints several editions daily, but these are so ordered that each subscriber gets the full news of the day.