

THE EDWARD ROSEWATER SCHOOL--Address of

Victor Rosewater at Dedication Exercises June 3

For the members of the family of Edward Rosewater, I cannot adequately say how deeply we appreciate the honor conferred upon his memory by the dedication of this magnificent school in his name. We are scarcely less gratified by the sentiments expressed and tributes paid to him by those who have spoken here today. We know the achievements of his lifetime and the notable record he left as a heritage to us all, set an example of lofty purpose and patriotic citizenship which it will require our best efforts to emulate, and we hope that the name inscribed across the front of this school building will be an inspiration, not only to us but to all who may year by year pass under it and through the portals to higher levels.

To this dedicatory program I believe that what I can best contribute is a brief account of my father's own schooling and his educational equipment, together with his ideas and ideals of public school education. This will, perhaps, lead up to and explain how he came to choose the public schools as the channel for his principal public bequest. In recognition of which, at least in part, the naming of this school building was prompted.

Early Educational Achievements.

It is wonderful--almost unbelievable--to contemplate what in other days would be regarded as next to a miracle--that by force of his own personality a poor boy, born in a small village in a distant country across the sea, where a totally different language is spoken, should here be acclaimed with a memorial more highly valued than tablets of bronze or shafts of granite, because this school is one of our living, growing institutions that shape the lives of rising generations. When he was born, seventy years ago, there were no public schools with compulsory attendance such as we have today, but even then there were schools in Bohemia open to those who wished to take advantage of them. Edward Rosewater was born in a little village called Bukowan, about fifty miles south of Prague, which then did not even possess a school building, and I believe does not possess one to this day. His father had been left an orphan at the age of seven and had been apprenticed to a butcher, but in spite of that, by pursuing studies in German and Hebrew on his own account, had secured a fair education so that at fourteen he served as a private tutor as a side pursuit in addition to his regular duties. The mother was a woman of keen intellect and superior education, to the extent that education of women at that time went, so that the development of the boy's talents was not neglected. He had lessons at home in all the elementary branches with occasional exhibitions to prove his father's full acceptance of the old rule that to spare the rod would spoil the child, with the result that before he was five he could read and write Hebrew, and had soon added the groundwork of Bohemian and German. Whether it was due to an extraordinary aptitude for languages, or to the thoroughness of his early home training, he never lost, even through years of disuse, his familiarity with these three languages. I shall refer to his peculiar linguistic abilities again.

As soon as he was able he was sent to a school corresponding to our grammar grades, a school which taught both German and Bohemian. This school was in the neighboring village of Plesek, and was maintained by the government as a public school, although probably not as a free school. I have lately come across a document that may be of interest to you, as it is to me, being the school record, duly attested, of my father in this school for the year 1852. He was then eleven years old and had finished his first year and was promoted to the highest class which was there taught. The certificate shows that he ranked "sehr gut," very good in German in the three branches of conversation, spelling and composition; in his Bohemian lessons he was marked "very good" in reading; and "right good" in geography; "good" in history, and "very good" in arithmetic, geography, science, drawing, natural history and penmanship.

The probable reason why this certificate was made out and preserved was that in the following year he was sent to Prague to attend the Real schule there, living with relatives in the interval, studying under teachers more competent and experienced than those in the small village schools. He was still in school in Prague when, in his thirteenth year, his parents having decided to emigrate to America, he was called home to help get ready for the trip across the ocean to the fabled land of liberty and plenty, to which they all looked forward with great expectations and many misgivings.

Migration of Family to America.

The family, which then consisted of father, mother and nine children, landed in New York on Christmas day in 1854, not one of them able to speak a word of English or having the slightest knowledge of the country beyond what had been conveyed to them in letters from immigrants from their own village and had gone ahead of them. They settled in Cleveland, O., where Edward, as the oldest boy, and the next younger brother, had to be put to work at once at odd jobs to help out with the household expenses. He soon succeeded in securing a place in a tinware and stove store, where he picked up a command of English rapidly, and then obtained a position as clerk, first in a grocery and then in a dry goods and notion shop.

His ambition, however, did not let him rest in that sort of work. Wishing to perfect himself for a more responsible vocation, he quit his job and put in three months at a commercial college, taking a course designed to fit him to be an accountant and bookkeeper. He engaged in this capacity in a wholesale house just as the panic of 1857 broke, which left him again unemployed. With no prospects at home he seized upon this opportunity to start out and see the country on his own resources, taking up with a companion named Warren, who had been a telegraph operator. Without going into detail into the vicissitudes of that period, suffice it to say that with his companion's assistance Mr. Rosewater in a few weeks mastered the telegraphic code, and with some further preliminary practice became an expert telegraph operator, able to hold a position almost anywhere that the railroad and telegraph had penetrated.

When the war broke out he was pounding the key at Stevenson, Ala., and when it became impossible for a northerner to stay there, he moved up to Nashville, where he remained until the union forces took possession. Shortly afterwards he, himself, went into the army as a member of the Military Telegraph corps, making the Rappahannock campaign with Pope, and sending all the commander's dispatches from the field at the second battle of Bull Run. For nearly a year he was assigned to duty in the War department telegraph office at Washington, where the official dispatches for the

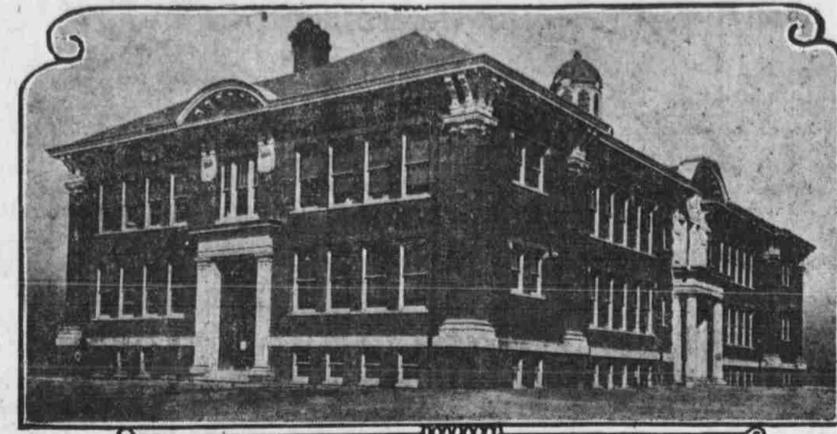
president, secretary of war and general of the army were handled, and in that capacity transmitted over the wires the original Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863.

I should have said that all this time he was an intense student and constantly endeavoring to expand his knowledge, particularly of languages and science. While he was in the south he boarded with a family of French people for the particular purpose of learning French, and succeeded so well that in later years he was able to read French and converse in French. This made the fifth language he had at his command, and still later he by a little self-practice succeeded in acquiring a reading acquaintance with Italian as his sixth language. In four of them--English, German, Bohemian and French--he was sufficiently at home to make public speeches.

Association With Scientists of Note.

During his year in Washington Mr. Rosewater also utilized his opportunity to get in touch with a number of eminent scientists engaged in government work, especially Professor Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian institution, the co-inventor with Morse of the electric telegraph, with whom he afterwards corresponded. All the years that he was in the telegraph service my father was constantly observing the phenomenon of electricity, and making practical experiments, and to his last days by his reading and contact with distinguished scientists, kept abreast of modern electrical progress. Indeed, as those who discussed these subjects with him know, he worked out independently for himself many of the advanced theories of electric energy that later came to be generally accepted. After he had moved to Omaha in 1863, an outgrowth of his association with Professor Henry made him instrumental in the inauguration of the weather bureau by inducing the operators at various points to note with him the thermometer and barometer readings daily so that he could transmit them by wire to Professor Henry at Washington.

I have narrated all this to show you with what laborious persistence and perseverance my father acquired the groundwork of his own education and by constant study and application built a substantial superstructure in spite of meager resources and many obstacles. It was the realization of what his own education had cost him, and of the difficulties he had to overcome, that made him such a firm believer in the public schools, and made it his conception of real philanthropy to help some worthy boy or girl to a practical higher education which he, himself, had had to secure unaided. I know of quite a few instances during his lifetime where he provided the means for needy boys or girls to take a course in a business college or in some trade school teaching



THE NEW EDWARD ROSEWATER SCHOOL

practical accomplishments, to make them self-supporting.

So when Mr. Rosewater was elected to the legislature in 1871, now forty years ago, the principal measure of legislation on which he centered his efforts was one to reorganize the schools of Omaha and centralize their management in a single elective board of education. Those who opposed this bill sought to nullify it by attaching a proviso, which he accepted, that it should not become operative unless ratified by popular vote--a sort of anticipation of the referendum of today. Strangely enough it was this very proviso that changed the whole current of his career, for in order to crystallize public sentiment in favor of the proposed board of education he started The Bee, at first for free distribution, and only afterwards as a permanent business enterprise. The overwhelming vote endorsing the school law was a vote of popular confidence in its sponsor and his newspaper. It goes without saying that by voice and pen he was a constant champion of the free public schools, advocating and promoting everything which, in his judgment, promised to increase their efficiency, to raise their standards and to make their pupils better citizens. At great sacrifice of time and money, he fought the enemies of the public schools who would degrade them into agencies of intolerance or religious bigotry. He opposed the application of political tests, equally with religious tests, to the teaching force, and was a strong factor in pro-

curing for the teachers merit appointment and promotion, permanent tenure, adequate pay and retirement pensions. He was particularly opposed to the misuse of the schools to further selfish schemes or private business enterprise, and to wasting the precious opportunities of the children through incompetent instruction or diversion of their attention to inconsequential matters. Moreover, he insisted day in and day out that the school buildings be made safe, kept clean, well ventilated and properly heated, and that the comfort and health of the children in school should be a prime consideration. He was especially outspoken against every species of abuse and ill-treatment of the school child, as well as against every injustice to the teacher.

Motives Back of Public Bequest.

In the resolution reciting the reasons impelling the School board to name this school "the Edward Rosewater school," reference is made to the bequest in his will to provide for a scholarship to give some deserving boy who has gone through the High school manual training department a complete course in a school of technology of first rank. I cannot say just when this idea was conceived, but I know that for many years before his death my father was determined to make some public benefaction in the interest of education to the extent that his means might warrant. He executed several wills, the one modifying the other, and the plan grew in definiteness

until it took its final form. What I wish to call your attention to is the broad scope of this bequest, and the self-effacement of the donor. The fund is established, leaving the expenditure of the income by the Board of Education absolutely untrammelled except for the few conditions stated. The award of the scholarship is to go to "sons of Omaha mechanics." What he had in mind was to provide a higher education in technology or applied science for boys whose fathers belonged to the working classes, who were in their own field of labor thoroughly identified with the city, and who would be unable to give their sons a costly education. The selection of the school and the manner of award is left entirely to the school authorities. It was the object to be accomplished rather than the method of accomplishing it that was in his mind. It was the good that the bequest might do and no purpose of self-assertion or self-laudation that prompted him. The school board has seen fit to designate this scholarship "the Edward Rosewater scholarship," but that plainly was far from his thought, for he could easily, had he so desired, have stipulated in the bequest that it should be so designated.

Neither was the commemoration of his name in a school building like this ever dreamed of by him, although I know he would have appreciated it more than any other honor that ever came to him. And if he had been consulted he would probably have indicated a preference for this very school, because it is a school to which many children are sent who, like himself, are foreign born or of foreign born parentage, and who will have to work their way up in the world by their own efforts. He would have been attracted by this school because the children taught here come from the families of wage-workers, and he always preached the nobility of honest toil, and also because they value the privilege of the public school more than those who would not greatly miss it if it did not exist. Knowing that he, himself, would feel that no more appropriate tribute could be paid to his memory than the dedication of this school after him, "the Edward Rosewater school," I naturally take real pride in it, and wish for all who may drink at the fountain of learning within these walls the fullest measure of success, and that they may always look back to the days spent here as the happiest and the most profitable time of their lives.

SOUTH OMAHA, THE MAGIC CITY.--Nothing But a Farm Forty Years Ago--Marvelous Changes.

Forty years ago there was no South Omaha, the six and one-half miles of territory now covered with business blocks, residences, packing houses and stock yards were cultivated farms. The farm houses were thinly scattered over the prairie and the cornfields were plentiful.

In the spring of 1833 the score of farmers in this portion of Douglas precinct planted their corn on land worth, as they believed, \$50 an acre. Right where the Transit house now stands was a little log school house, presided over during the winter of 1879 by M. O. Maul of Omaha. Among the children who attended school that winter were Henry and Herman Drexel, Tom Hoctor, Patrick Begley and Balthas Jetter.

In 1834 the building of stock yards was commenced, the place having as early as 1833 been named by the parties most interested "South Omaha."

The Union Stock Yards Company of Omaha (limited) was formed and incorporated under the laws of Nebraska on the 1st day of December, 1833. The capital was \$1,000,000. Business was not to be commenced until \$600,000 of stock had been subscribed, but as that amount was at once taken it was stipulated that operations should commence on that day and continue until the 1st day of December, 1850. The company organized by electing W. A. Faxton, president; A. H. Swan, vice president; John H. Donnelly, secretary; James M. Woolworth, attorney. The following gentlemen constituted the first board of directors: W. A. Faxton, A. H. Swan, Frank Murphy, B. F. Smith, P. E. Her, John A. McShane and Thomas Swobe.

On April 8 work on the stock yards was commenced under the immediate direction of William A. Faxton. The first point of attack by the workmen was the low swamp or marshy slough that extended from the present west end of the stock yards to what is now the Hammond Packing company's plant. Work was continued without interruption until August 13, when the first shipment of live stock was received. The shipment consisted of twenty-five cars of cattle from F. Wolcott of Medicine Bow. Next day the cattle were reloaded and shipped on to Chicago.

"What are they doing in South Omaha?" asked The Bee about the middle of May, 1836. "Does the business there amount to anything? Are they getting much live stock at the yards? Will it ever be a great cattle and hog market? And will it ever amount to anything as a slaughtering point? These and many other similar questions are daily asked by citizens of Omaha who do not realize that, just south of our city limits, a business is growing up that in the near future will surpass, in point of capital employed and business importance, the entire wholesale and manufacturing interests of Omaha in 1836. It was only a short time ago that a few enterprising men met on the open prairie, set their stakes and said: 'Here we will build packing houses that shall have a capacity sufficient to handle all the live stock of the northwest; here we will lay out town lots to be built upon and occupied by our employes and by others having interests here.' That something more than talk and cheap advertising are necessary to make a showing was at once realized by the stock yards company, and it is to be doubted if any enterprise in the west has been pushed with greater vigor, or if any company has been more ready to take advantage of the opportunities presented it than the Union Stock Yards company of Omaha. They have worked quietly and without any display, if anything they have been too quiet and should have made more noise in the world.

"The town of South Omaha is building up rapidly and hundreds of men are finding there pleasant and agreeable homes, while town lots are increasing in value at a rate which promises to rival the boom in Omaha city lots. It is not surprising that those who are posted on the affairs of the stock yards are enthusiastic over the outlook and future prosperity of the business enterprises established there."

On October 16, 1836, the village of South Omaha was organized. E. P. Savage was elected first chairman of the village trustees.

Today South Omaha is the third largest packing center in the world and the stock yards company is increasing its facilities for handling stock every year.



William E. Annin, Former Associate Editor

I am asked to give my recollections of The Bee of 1879. The picture of the great paper of today, housed in its palatial quarters with its score of editors and reporters and its 200 newsgatherers in different parts of the state, the west and the great eastern capitals, rises before me as I attempt to sketch the institution on that August morning when I first presented myself as an aspirant for a place on its staff. The time which has elapsed makes the contrast none the less vivid, despite the many changes which have taken place in the interval.

Of the editors, reporters, foremen, clerks and "prints" who in 1879 helped to make The Omaha Bee, scarcely a half dozen remain. The rickety old desks, tables, cases and filing stones are replaced by new and handsome furniture. The single cylinder Hoe press which we thought then a marvel of speed and watched in youthful rapture is replaced by monster web machines throwing off their thousands of papers an hour. The little corner in which the wheezy Baxter engine threatened with instant death the surrounding neighborhood has given way to an acre of boilers, dynamos, monster Corliss engines, elevator pumps, switchboards, wetting machines and the innumerable pieces of paraphernalia with which the modern newspaper structure is equipped. Let me ask some of the sprightly young gentlemen connected with that newspaper today, and who glide up through seven-story space in the cabs of handsome elevators to accompany me on a visit to The Bee building and The Bee establishment as it was ten years ago.

First Impressions.

The dusky two-story red brick structure in which The Bee was then printed was scarcely less inferior to the office from which it has lately moved than its late quarters are to those it today occupies. A large bee-hive painted on its front warned all applicants for positions that work and not style was what was required of inmates. Inside, on the ground floor, the counting room divided with the job office the honors of gloom and dirt. A semi-circular counter, surmounted by a hideous cast-iron railing, kept at bay employes dunning for advances on their salary and a public not too impatiently rushing to get in advertisements. At the rear, a dozen type cases, a battered proof press, and three or four imposing stones on rickety stands announced the presence of the job office, and pointed the way to the editorial back stairs. They were dark and crusted with dirt; and, as I climbed them and entered the editorial rooms, I thought that I had never seen such a dingy set of quarters as those into which I stepped. The editor's den was situated in the center of the building, with no light except such as straggled in through a glass sash partition which divided it from the composing room in front. The windows were thirty-five feet distance from the desk, and the sunbeams were forced to dodge a score of stands, cases and imposing stones before they could reach Mr. Rosewater's table. On the other side was the city editor's room, similarly situated with respect to the rear of the building, and cut off from its windows by the job office and editorial rooms of the Pokrok Zapadu, that exciting Bohemian journal, then as now edited by sturdy John Rosicky. The combination of smells and noises, the odor of printing ink, roller composition, turpentine and old clothes, the calls of "Slug Five, does A 2 and even," and "Pull out," the clanking of the proof press, the unintelligible jabber of a party of Bohemians in the rear room consulting the editor about a marriage license, joined to an acrid controversy be-

tween the city editor and an angry subscriber, made a scene which left an indelible impression on my mind.

The Editor-in-Chief.

There were no drones on The Bee of old days. Each man was expected to do six men's work, was willing to do four's, and generally compromised on five. Mr. Rosewater and Al Sorenson constituted the staff before my arrival, the first bearing the title of editor and proprietor and the latter carrying the burden of the city department. Mr. Rosewater was par excellence the all-round man of the establishment. He seemed to have obtained the secret of two of the attributes of Deity; he was omnipresent and apparently omniscient. He wrote heavy editorials and pungent editorial paragraphs; contributed local political news to the city page, clipped selections for the news columns, selected items for those startling chestnuts dubbed "Connubial Bliss," "Peppermint Drops" and "Honey for the Ladies," regulated the business office a dozen times a day, and took subscriptions on the streets and advertising contracts from the merchants. I used to think his only sorrow was that he had not in addition been born a steam engine so he could run the presses. They were about the only thing in the establishment that he did not move. In addition to his ordinary duties above named, he constantly developed strong interest in local politics, and always had a dozen fights and twice that number of ward politicians on his hands. On city or county election days The Bee office was usually depopulated and every man, from editor down, after rushing in copy, early took a whirl at the polls. After a hard day's work on election day, followed by an all night session in collecting returns, the editor would bob up serenely at 9 o'clock the next morning with his arm full of exchanges and his mouth full of suggestions about the paper, the last always pertinent, but not as uniformly agreeable. His indomitable energy, his uncompromising persistency and his invincible pluck were at once the wonder and admiration of the office. Carrying the heavy financial burden of a paper depending alone upon its excellence for popular support, and fighting his battles single-handed, in the darkest days he never doubted its ultimate success, and hopefully increased expenses with every increase of receipts. Overworked himself, he took his own high tension as the norm of work, and found it difficult to understand why all of his employes could not endure cheerfully the same racking. This made him often very unpleasant as an employer, but it disciplined his employes, who found no difficulty elsewhere in more than attaining the level of work of other offices.

The Local Pooh Bah.

The city editor was another journalistic "Pooh Bah." He had no other copy to edit but his own, and was expected, with the aid of "paid locals," to fill five columns daily on the fourth page. He was religious and society reporter, reflector of the doings of the courts and railroads, dramatic critic and sporting, fire and commercial editor at one and the same time. His duties began at 6 o'clock in the morning when he commenced to turn in copy for the morning edition, then printed at 7:30, and ended when the news gave out for the day. In that interval of from twelve to eighteen hours he was expected to cover, solitary and alone, the twelve scattered square miles of stores and dwellings which ten years ago comprised the ballwalk of Omaha. The early morning round began immediately after breakfast. It comprised a rapid visit to

the coroner's and undertaker's, the district court, the county clerk's office to transcribe the real estate transfers, an interview with all the city and county officials, as brief usually as a society call, and a hasty return to the editorial rooms in order to write up the material gleaned before noon. This little journey was followed at 12 o'clock by a visit to the depot to take in the overland westbound train, to pump the depot officials and to interview distinguished travelers, real or imaginary. After this another flying trip was made before 2 o'clock to the coroner's and court house, when copy was prepared and handed in for the afternoon edition, proof read, visitors received, advance agents of shows entertained, and numerous other minor matters attended to. After the paper went to press he was often at liberty for the rest of the evening, excepting when a fire broke out, or an entertainment presented itself to be reported, in which case he was expected to be on hand. Omaha has never seen a reporter, with the reportorial "legs" of Sorenson, in the years gone by, when he made the local pages of The Bee the despairing envy of all competitors, even when they included such news rustlers as poor Sam Donnelly of the Herald, Edwards, Miner and Cuddy of the Republican and Kent of the News.

Tom Fitzmorris was foreman of the news-room, with seven or eight printers to herd. He added to the duties of cutting up copy, measuring strings and employing and discharging typesetters the responsibilities of editing telegraph, making up the forms for two daily editions and selecting matter for and arranging the weekly. His skill as a head-liner was phenomenal. The most commonplace item or article, under the glow of his imagination, appeared garbed in an attractive hue. On occasions when the editors were out and the calls for copy were loud, he used to rush in desperation into the editorial room, seize the shears and clip miscellany by the column, thus usurping the functions of the news editor. It is only fair to say that the paper never suffered by reason of his incursions. Later Fitzmorris gained a wide reputation for The Bee by his concise and witty handling of the department of state and occidental jottings, which were extensively copied throughout the west.

Characteristics of The Bee Men.

It was a small staff, but I doubt if that of any other newspaper of the country worked as hard, was half as ambitious or more faithful to the interests of the paper which they served. There was an esprit de corps which, in spite of hard times, small pay and the constant contentions in which the paper was engaged, bound together the little band of workers. They were all Bee men to the backbone, tried to make its fights their own and felt that its interests were their interests and its reverses their misfortunes. They fought its battles on "soft paper" and drove in the line of retreat afterward on the streets. Among themselves and in the office they cursed, perhaps, the infernal, driving persistency of the proprietor, but they invariably defended him on the outside. They unselfishly and manfully did five men's work, each man of them, because they knew it was necessary in order to keep ahead of the procession, but they never allowed their grumbling to interfere with the regular outpour of copy. The Bee advanced steadily, primarily, of course, because of the push and the pluck of its editor, who was a man of ideas, but no less because, like a good general, he gathered around him a staff of subordinates who intelligently and faithfully carried out his policy.

W. E. ANNIN.

Omaha, June, 1889.