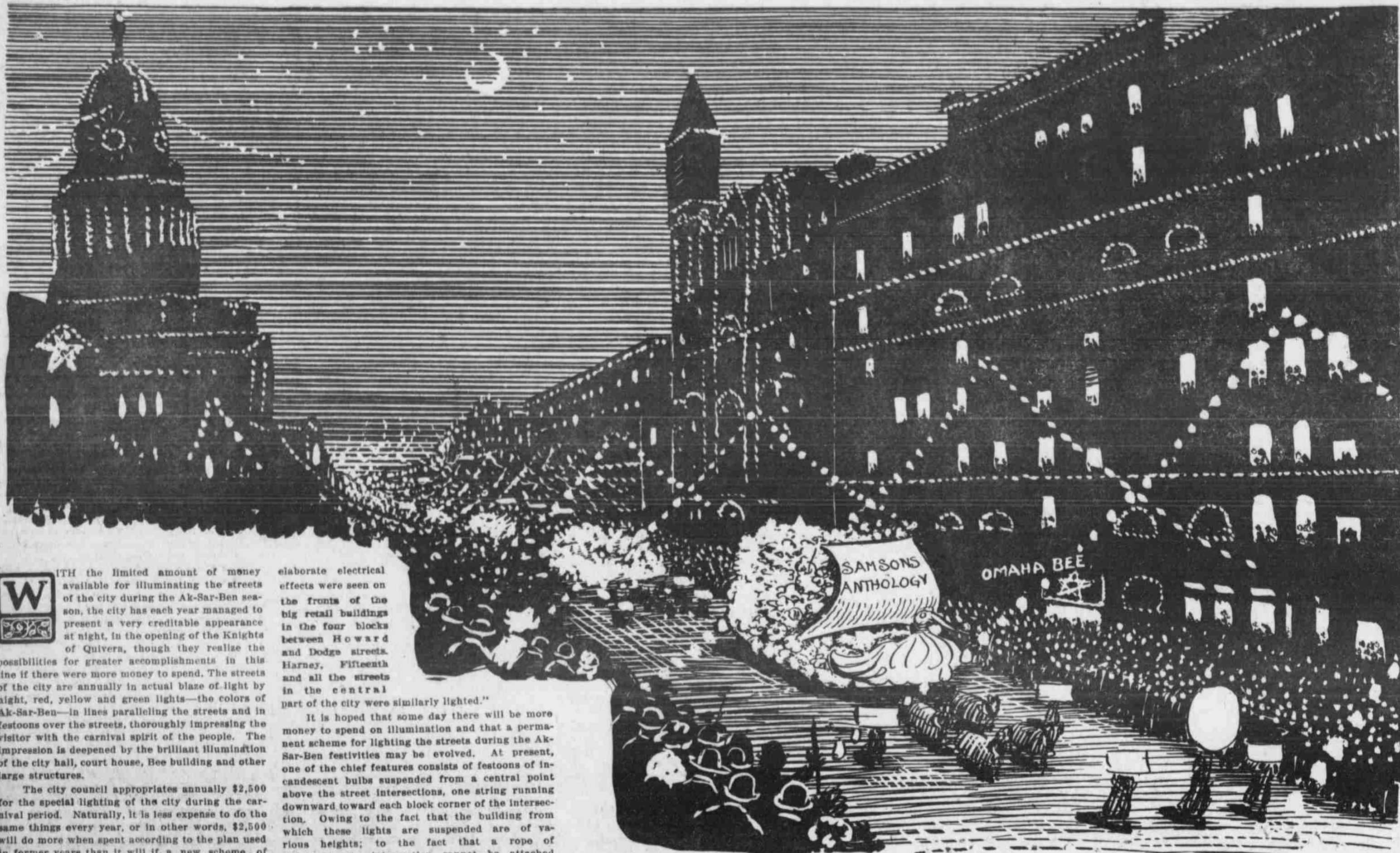


# Night Retreats and Darkness Flees From the King's City



**W**ITH the limited amount of money available for illuminating the streets of the city during the Ak-Sar-Ben season, the city has each year managed to present a very creditable appearance at night, in the opening of the Knights of Quivern, though they realize the possibilities for greater accomplishments in this line if there were more money to spend. The streets of the city are annually in actual blaze of light by night, red, yellow and green lights—the colors of Ak-Sar-Ben—in lines paralleling the streets and in festoons over the streets, thoroughly impressing the visitor with the carnival spirit of the people. The impression is deepened by the brilliant illumination of the city hall, court house, Bee building and other large structures.

The city council appropriates annually \$2,500 for the special lighting of the city during the carnival period. Naturally, it is less expensive to do the same things every year, or in other words, \$2,500 will do more when spent according to the plan used in former years than it will if a new scheme of lighting is evolved each year. Consequently, the illumination of the streets has been much the same each year and is this year just like it has been for the last four years, except that there possibly is a slight different arrangement of lights on the public buildings and the large buildings which are decorated individually by their owners, and that the lighting is extended on Farnam to Twenty-fourth street.

For a description of the present system of lighting, that printed in The Bee on the day of the king's advent in a former carnival season, fits pretty accurately. It runs:

"Out of the hills across the river the moon rose last night, dim through the intervening haze, but round and rich red, looking wonderfully like a glowing ball suspended across the street by the hand of man in honor of the king. It hastened to climb upward, for through the lower atmosphere it could not begin to outline the electrical splendor which illuminated the highways of the chief of the Seven Cities of Cibola.

"The whole city was ablaze along the sides of the streets and festoons of lights hung across the streets from the poles of the street lamps, hung over the windows and on signs and in every conceivable place where lights could be hung, made the whole range of vision one sea of glory.

"By far the most beautiful place was the hill in the middle of the city, where the people gather each year to view the noble pageant of their king on his triumphal entry into his capital. Resplendent above all the buildings of his capital were the city hall and court house, between which King Ak-Sar-Ben passed in glory.

"A big, fiery horseshoe crowned the high dome of the court house, while down the sides of the dome and tower and along the eaves of the upper story hung the lights in myriads. On each of three sides of the tower was a huge star, while on the side where passed the king and his retinue was a bright shield in red, white and blue. From each of the four corners of the court house brilliant Chinese lanterns hung on wires stretched across the street.

"The city hall was beautiful with lights on every parapet and tower and on every arch from top to bottom of the big building. Surmounting all, the Statue of Liberty, with a torch in her hand, bowed the justice on the court house across the way.

"Looking east from Eighteenth street, one saw Farnam street flanked on both sides with rivers of light, the red, blue and green of the street signs relieving with pretty effect here and there the white blaze of the incandescents.

"The New York Life building (now the Omaha National bank building) was decorated on its first two stories and at its very top. Out of respect to the memory of Edward Roosevelt, The Bee building, one of the most beautifully lighted in past years, was undecorated.

"Sixteenth street was almost as brilliant as Farnam. Lights hung over the curbing in thousands, and

elaborate electrical effects were seen on the fronts of the big retail buildings in the four blocks between Howard and Dodge streets. Harney, Fifteenth and all the streets in the central part of the city were similarly lighted."

It is hoped that some day there will be more money to spend on illumination and that a permanent scheme for lighting the streets during the Ak-Sar-Ben festivities may be evolved. At present, one of the chief features consists of festoons of incandescent bulbs suspended from a central point above the street intersections, one string running downward toward each block corner of the intersection. Owing to the fact that the building from which these lights are suspended are of various heights; to the fact that a rope of lights at one intersection cannot be attached to a building at exactly the same distance from the center of the street that the rope at the next corner is attached and to the fact that the festoons cannot be made always to run in exactly the right direction, the lighting system is not as symmetrical as it might be. One standing at a point on lower Farnam and looking westward up the street will note, if he is disposed to be critical, and especially if he is possessed of an artistic temperament, a lack of symmetry in the arrangement.

A plan for permanent Ak-Sar-Ben lighting, which would insure symmetry, but which, however, would require a large initial expense on the part of somebody, is suggested by I. B. Zimman of the Omaha Electric Light & Power company. Mr. Zimman has made no definite proposition in the matter either to the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben or to the city, but he believes the electric light company could and would work out the problem if the knights were disposed to consider it.

Mr. Zimman's idea is to have the lights suspended in rope from metal poles which can be placed not only at intersections, but at regular intervals between the intersections. The system

would be entirely independent of the height and exterior contour of the buildings along the streets and would insure regularity and symmetry. The lights would then give the effect of a canopy over the entire street, would give an impression of continuity to a degree not possible under the present plan.

This would require an initial outlay of perhaps \$35,000, thinks Mr. Zimman, but he believes his company would be willing to incur the expense if the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben or the city, or the knights and the city together, would make a long-time contract with the company for installing and operating the system at a rate under which the company could get its money back. There would be no initial expense for the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, whose expense would be distributed through the years of the contract at a given figure per year. The entire lighting system, poles and all, could be taken down and put up again at will.

Mr. Zimman, however, believes in a better system of permanent lighting for Omaha—a system that will be in evidence not only during the carnival season, but throughout the year. He does

not favor the plan adopted by Des Moines and Philadelphia, consisting of cluster lights set on short standards along the curb, much like those on the 500 block on South Sixteenth street in Omaha, but powerful arc lights hung from the arched top of much higher ornamental poles, set at the curb. These lights, he says, should be not only at intersections, but at the middle of the block. They would then make a light that will be as brilliant at one point on the street as at another and will be strong enough by which to read a newspaper.

City Electrician Michaelson also has some ideas for a more elaborate system of lighting which he admits would require a large initial expenditure of money.

"Instead of the strings of lights paralleling the streets," said Mr. Michaelson, "I should like to construct metal arches, to be placed over the streets, four or six of them to the block. When these are lighted up, they would give the appearance of a canopy over the street. The arches could be taken down after the carnival season and be put up again each successive year.

This way now if we had the money. The electric light company, I am sure, would be willing to buy the arches if a contract could be made whereby it could be sure that its money would be returned within a given term of years. The company cannot be expected to do any more than it is now doing under its present contract, for I am satisfied that it is doing the business at a loss. It may get an indirect return through encouraging the use of more electricity in store windows through the carnival season, but certainly does the street lighting at a low figure. The company started out in 1897 by giving us 3,000 lights for \$2,500, and this number has been increased year by year until this season it is about 7,000.

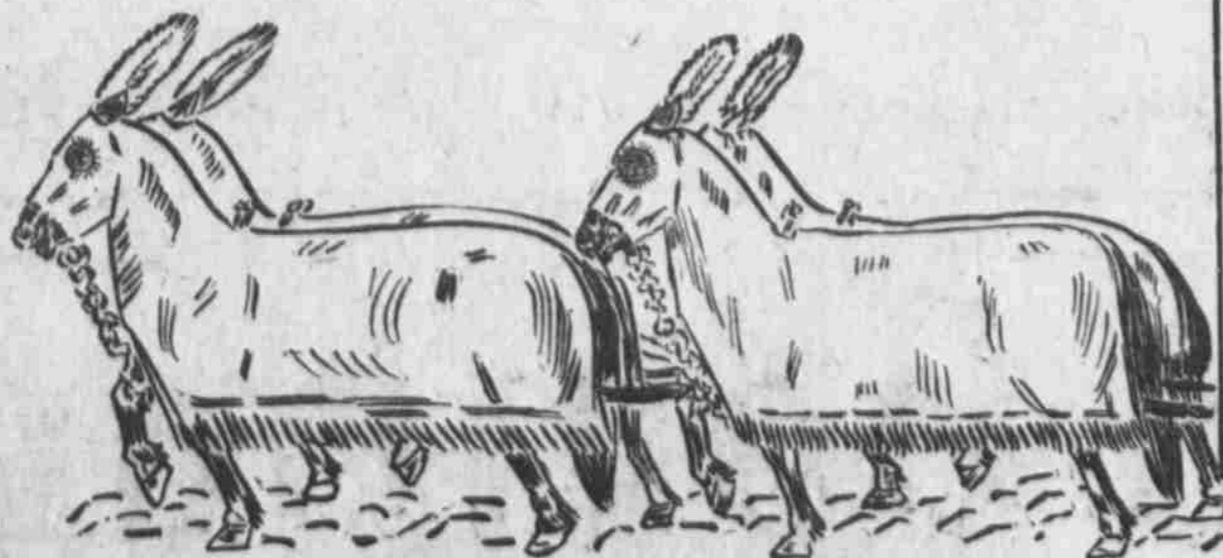
"It is not an easy matter to put up the lights under the present plan, and it is not easy to induce owners of property to allow us to go on top of their buildings to anchor the wires.

"Our aim of electrical decorations for Ak-Sar-Ben has always been to light as large a portion of the city as possible, instead of concentrating the lighting in a few places. This gives a greater num-

(Continued on Page Seventeen.)

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