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THE OMAHA SUNDAY BEE

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SOCIETY
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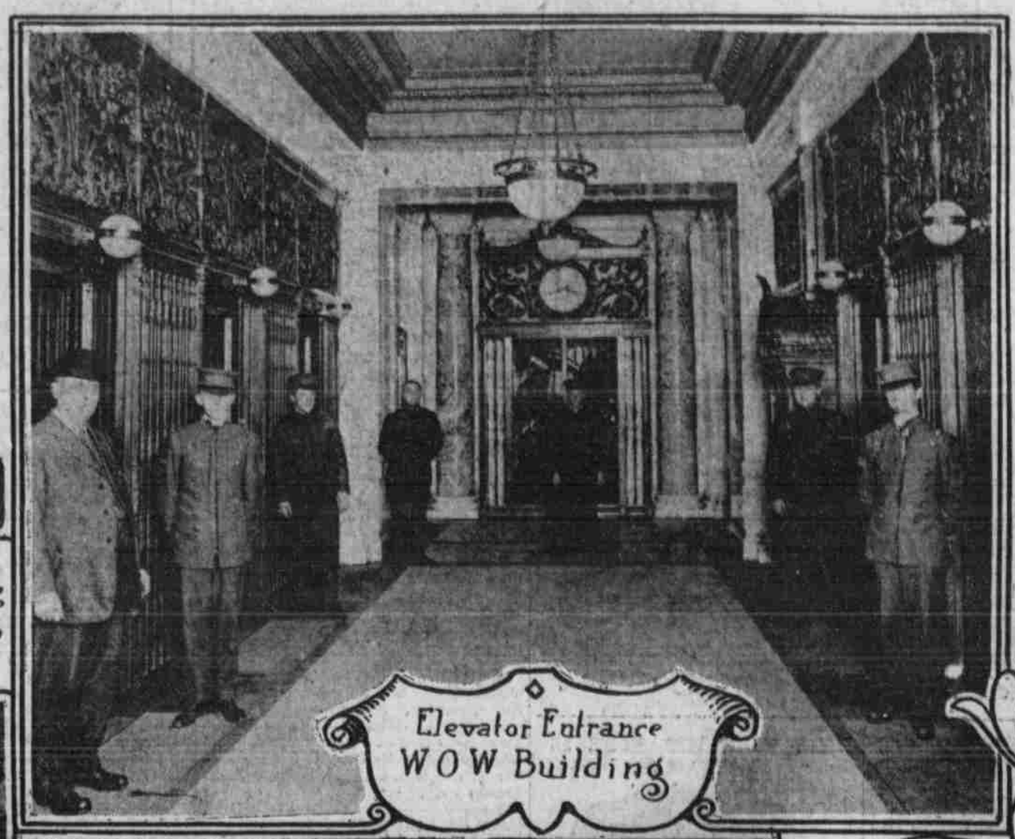
Hoist Omahans Heavenward Two Thousand Miles a Day

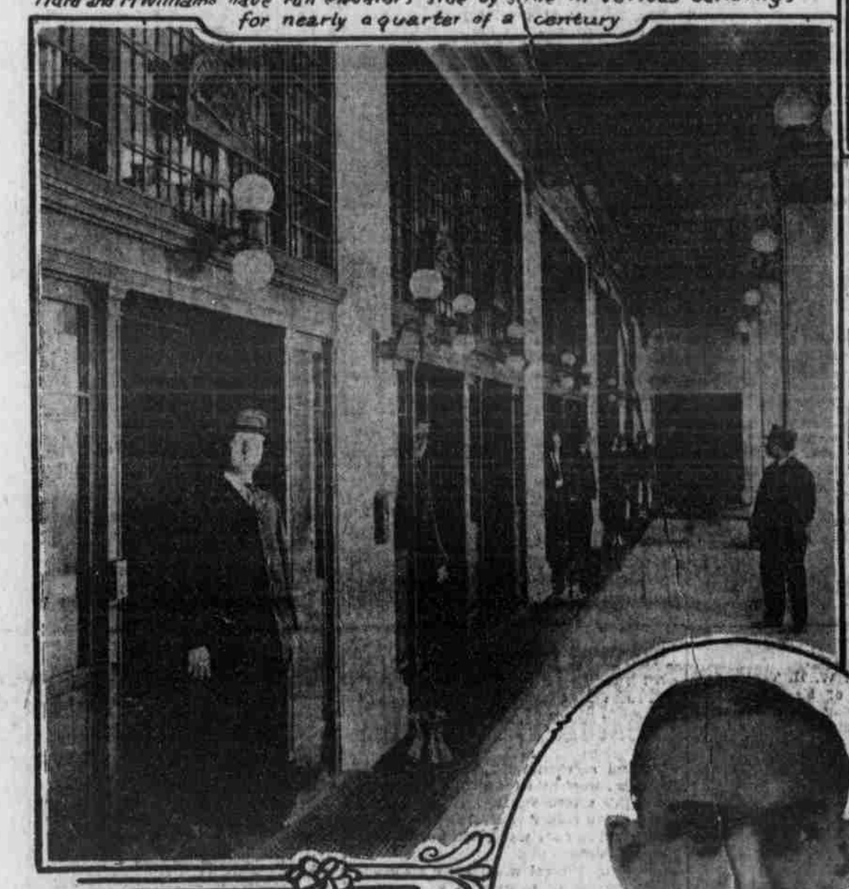
Scott McWilliams THE ELEVATOR TWINS George Hurd

Hurd and McWilliams have run elevators side by side in various buildings for nearly a quarter of a century

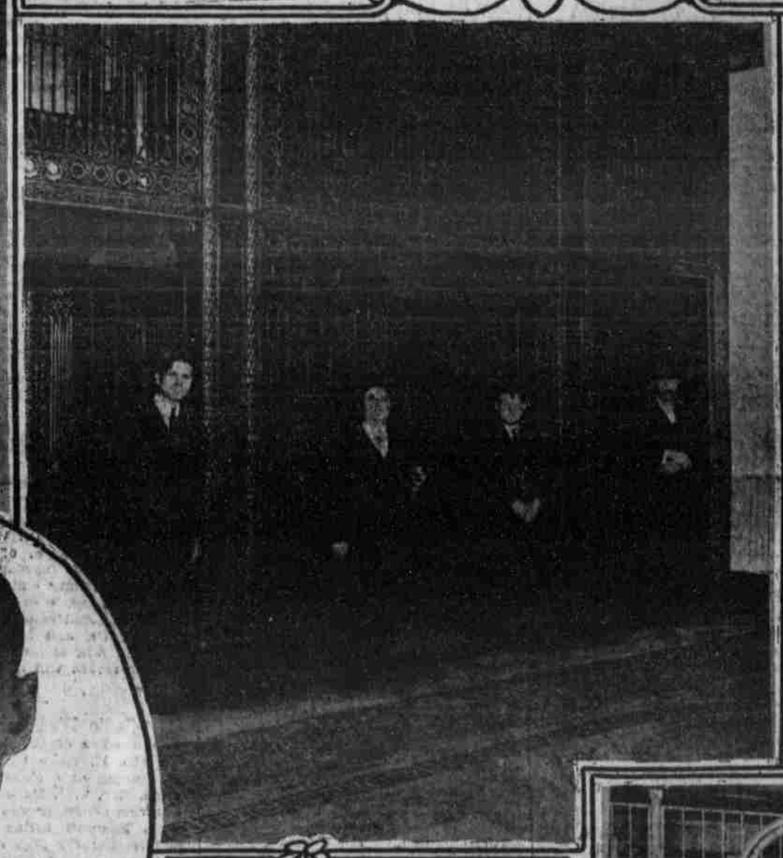


Elevator Entrance WOW Building

J. N. Silver U. P. Building Second oldest man in elevator service



Main Corridor of Union Pacific Bldg

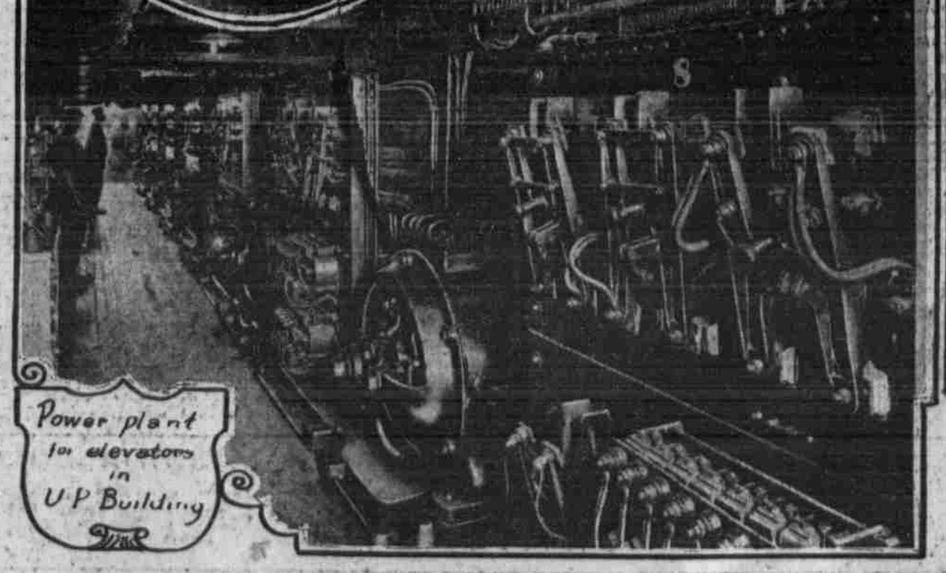


Elevator Corridor City Nat Bank Bldg.

Charles J Fitz Gerald Treas Local E C and S U

Douglas County Court House Elevators

Passenger Elevators in Bee Building



Power plant for elevators in U P Building

THE "Uplifters of Omaha" are lifting Omaha skyward at the rate of over 2,000 miles a day. No, these "uplifters" are not social service board nor yet the Ministerial union. They are not engaged in lifting the souls of Omaha. They are lifting human avoirdupois. They lift tens of thousands of men and women to the tops of the skyscrapers.

The "Uplifters" are the 225 or more elevator conductors and starters of the city.

There are 162 passenger elevators in the city. They run so smoothly and glide so silently that few people realize the enormous work they perform daily and yearly in the city.

The passenger elevators of Omaha carry passengers no less than 60,000 miles per month. That is only a little over twice around the world. But then they are not traveling horizontally, so they would never get around the world even though they should travel forever.

Very well then. Upward is their course. In a perpendicular direction do these silent carriages speed passengers a distance of 720,000 miles in a year.

Put all this motion into one straight line instead of dividing it among 162 cars, and the carriage would glide to the sun in 125 years, and stop for a summer at each of Mercury and Venus.

With a less ambitious load of tourists, the carriage would travel to the moon three times each year and stop every thirty feet of the way to let passengers on and off.

It would sweep around the world every two weeks and stop six times to every city block of the way.

The steel cable used in passenger elevators alone in the city approximates 180,000 feet. Extended in a straight line it would reach from Omaha to Fremont.

No, there is not so much guesswork about these figures. For the large skyscrapers, such as the Woodmen of the World building, for example, have meters attached to the elevator mechanism on the eighteenth floor that keeps accurate account of the distance traveled by each of the six elevators in the building. Not only does this express the distance in feet, but it expresses it in miles. Not only does it record from day to day, but from week to week, month to month and year to year. You can step into that room, rub your thumb over the glass of the meter and read at any time the total number of miles a given elevator in the Woodmen of the World building has traveled from the day the building was finished to the moment you rub the dust from the glass with your thumb.

How many people daily ride the elevators to their work in the sky is a more difficult problem. Tabulations are made by building managers in some of the large buildings on average days periodically. Even this is indefinite. For one person may ride an elevator up and down in the same building many times in the same day. It is estimated, however, that as many passengers as there are people in Omaha are daily lifted high into the air by these elevators and again brought down safely to earth, where they live.

The elevators in two of Omaha's big buildings each take on between 9,000 and 10,000 passengers in the course of an average day. These are often duplicates, if one takes into consideration the great floor traffic. A man may go up four floors, stop a half hour, step into an elevator and go up some more. Later he steps in and comes down a few floors and again stops, and so on. If he is counted every time he enters an elevator carriage, and every other man that does the same in the city is counted, it is safe to say that the 162 elevators haul perhaps more than the entire population of Omaha in the up-and-down traffic in the course of a day.

This up-and-down traffic came only with civilization. The savage in the jungles moved out to wider and greener fields when he wanted a place to pitch his tent, or a shade tree under which to manufacture his arrow heads. But modern manufacture and industry depends upon railroads to carry its goods from place to place where they can be sold. Railroads center in the cities. So the cities must build and keep as close to the center of these arteries of traffic as possible. It is this that has made it necessary for the civilized men to spread their cities upward as well as laterally. And it is this skyward spreading of cities that has made the skyward traffic necessary.

It takes no little patience to be an elevator conductor. The man who, thinking about the dollars he is going to make, is always forgetting at which floor he wishes to stop. He does not tell the conductor until the car has run past some half dozen feet. Then he calls out in a loud voice:

"Nine—whoa—nine."

Then the conductor, knowing all the swear words in the American vocabulary, but swallowing them down, stops the car, and reverses it gently until he reaches the ninth floor. When the thoughtless passenger, with his mind on the dollars, gets off, the conductor sometimes slams the door a little harder than he ordinarily does, just to give vent to a little of his wrath.

Surely no one should lose his temper at a little thing like that. For it occurs only about fifteen times per trip in a sixteen-story building. Surely no one should get angry at a little thing like that, especially when the conductor makes only a little over 300 trips a day. Three hundred times some eight absent minds is only 2,400

(Continued on Page Eleven)