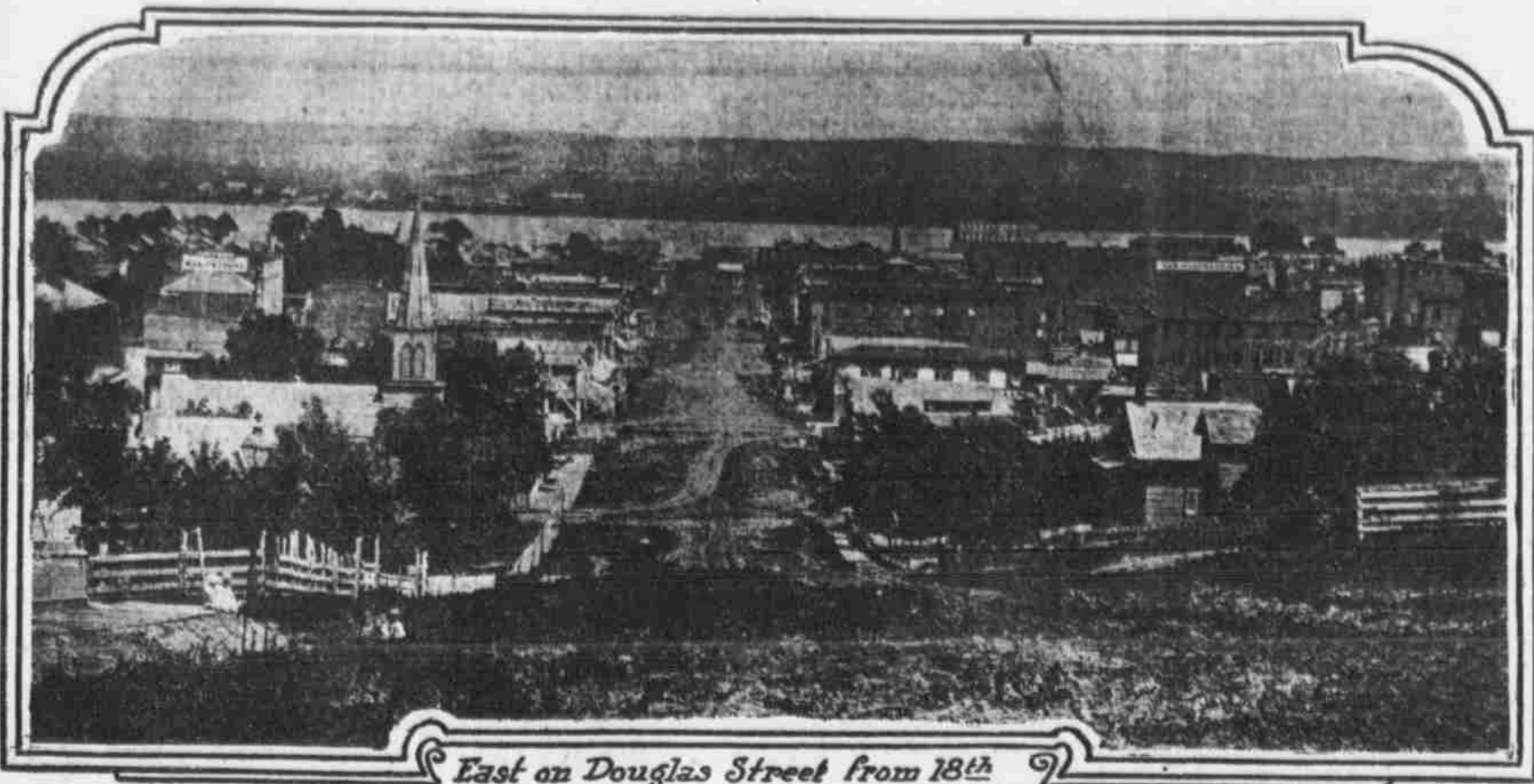


View of Omaha from Present Site of Hotel Fontenelle Thirty Years Ago



East on Douglas Street from 18th

HOTEL ON COW STABLE SITE

Fontenelle Corner, Now Worth a Million, Was "Far Out" Fifty Years Ago.

GOOD FOR POULTRY RAISING

The site of a cow stable, far remote in the outskirts of a frontier country village fifty years ago; today the location of Omaha's \$1,000,000 modern and palatial hotel, in close proximity to the business heart of a city that is reaching on close to a population of 200,000 persons is something of a stretch of imagination. Such, however, is the case with reference to the ground on which is located the Fontenelle hotel.

This land was a portion of the original plat of the city of Omaha, but for years it was looked upon as being so far out in the country that it never would be desirable for purposes other than truck gardening, or poultry raising. In the 50's, Thomas B. Cummins, territorial governor, bought practically all of the south half of the block and on that portion on Eighteenth street, north of the alley and close to Dodge street, erected an unpretentious cottage, where he resided for several years.

Used as Cow Pasture.

That portion of the ground now occupied by the hotel proper, Governor Cummins used as a cow pasture for a couple of years, after which he plowed it up and set it out to fruit trees and shrubbery. Upon his death it passed to his widow and until sold to Arthur D. Brandeis and John L. Kennedy, the title remained in Mrs. Cummins, or the Hamiltons, relatives.

The portion of the Fontenelle hotel site, now occupied by the annex, facing Douglas street for years was the site of the Oscar F. Davis home, a large frame structure and in its time was looked upon as one of Omaha's best homes.

Charles W. Hamilton of the Merchants National bank is one of the Omaha men who calls to mind much of the history in connection with the site of the Fontenelle hotel. Mr. Hamilton and his brother, Frank T. Hamilton were both born in a home occupied by their father and located north of the block on which the hotel stands. Being relatives of Governor and Mrs. Cummins they were at their home frequently and the old orchard that is now the site of the hotel was one of the favorite playgrounds for themselves and the neighbor boys.

Mr. Hamilton calls to mind that for a

number of years while Governor and Mrs. Cummins lived in the little cottage they had a cow and horse barn on the back end of the north lot on which the hotel is located. There they and the other boys of suburban Omaha hunted eggs, played hide-and-seek and enjoyed themselves as only young boys could.

In the old days when Omaha was in its swaddling clothes, the site of the Cummins home was the most beautiful that could be found in miles around. It was thirty to forty feet higher than the present street level and as there were but few buildings on the east, between there and Thirteenth street, it commanded a magnificent view. From the front yard could be seen the Missouri river and the steamboat landing in the vicinity of the foot of Douglas street. Both up and down the river, as far as the eye could see was a broad expanse of vacant prairie and woodland, dotted here and there with the cottages of pioneers who had gone out into the wilds to establish homes.

To the west there were a few scattering houses along Nineteenth and Twentieth streets, as far south as Leavenworth and as far north as Cumming street. Beyond there was nothing but a vast uninhabited wilderness, the home of wild animals and Indians.

City Moves West.

In the condition described the site of the Fontenelle hotel remained until well along in the '60s and until the trend of settlement had started west and reached the portion of the city to the south and west of the high school grounds.

However, improvements did move very rapidly in the vicinity of Eighteenth and Douglas streets. Beginning just west of Seventeenth, there was a barrier on Douglas street. This was a steep hill, one up which loaded wagons could hardly climb and, in fact, it was too steep for pedestrians unless they sought to make a wearisome journey by making a short cut.

As time moved on it became necessary to improve Douglas street from Sixteenth west. The first cut left the houses in and around Eighteenth street some fifteen feet above the street and a subsequent cut placed them fully as much more above the street level. The apex of the hill was reached at Twentieth street.

Great for Coasting.

And, by the way, the boys who knew Omaha during the period of its infancy assert that there was no hill in or around the city that quite came up to that on Douglas for coasting. In those days they could start their sleds at Twentieth and coast east as far as Ninth street, and

there was not enough traffic to interfere with the sport.

The present site of the main portion of the Fontenelle hotel has been the scene of some stirring events in the years that have passed, especially during those of pioneer times.

Away back before Nebraska took on the dignity of statehood there were a couple of horse thieves hanged in the woods that then covered a large portion of the city to the immediate west of the high school building. Then the jail was located in a county building standing on the corner of Sixteenth and Farnam streets, now occupied by the Paxton block. A posse of not bad citizens conceived the idea that the court machinery might not work with the desired speed and regularity and so one night they forced the doors of the frail jail, took the horse thieves out, escorted them to the woods and there hanged both to the limbs of the same tree.

On Way to Hanging.

On the way to the hanging, the party went cross-lots, going over what is now the site of the Fontenelle hotel. At that time, as history records it, there was one good sized lone cottonwood tree standing not far from the northwest corner of the present hotel. This tree had wide spreading branches and under it the party stopped and the advisability of hanging the men to this tree was discussed. However, it was abandoned because being so close in, it was argued that the officers in charge of the jail might raise a posse and rescue the men. As the outcome of the discussion, the men were taken away and hanged at the place farther out from town.

In 1865, following the assassination of President Lincoln, outdoor memorial services were held on the high school grounds. The procession, and it was a large one, for practically all the people of Omaha took part, passed over the site of the Fontenelle hotel. At that time there was a road off Farnam street, following Eighteenth to Douglas street. From there it ran diagonally across the Fontenelle hotel block, entering it close to the southeast corner. Then the streets had not been cut, or graded.

Again, when the last spike was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, late in the '60's, marking the completion of a railroad from Omaha to the Pacific coast, the site of the Fontenelle hotel helped to make history. Omaha celebrated the completion of the Union Pacific road at that time and on the high school grounds there was speaking, music and song, but the real noise was made on the Fontenelle hotel site.

On the old Cummins lots at Eighteenth

and Douglas streets a high flag pole had been erected and a cannon located. When the telegraph ticked the taps of the hammer driving the last spike, connecting coast and coast with a band of steel, this cannon boomed forth the glad news. The gun was located there on account of the elevation and because from the great height the sound would echo and re-echo up and down and across the river, carrying the tidings miles into the country.

Such Sample Rooms As Hotel Affords, And Such Fine View

"The traveling men will simply go wild over these sample rooms," said Abraham Bursbank, managing director of the new hotel, as he showed a visitor through the beautiful rooms on the tenth and eleventh floors.

It is to be hoped the knights of the sample grips won't do quite that literally, but that they will do so figuratively, as Mr. Bursbank ment, is as certain as anything in this mundane sphere can be.

Oh, such beautiful rooms, with their thick carpeting, their ample proportions, their beautiful walls and ceilings and lighting fixtures, their telephones and private toilet and bath rooms.

"An view, just look at the view," said Mr. Bursbank. Ah, that view! The traveling men will soon be telling about it from Frisco to Gotham, from Duluth to New Orleans. Here you don't look out upon a cityscape of roofs and chimneys and washlines stretched on apartment house roofs. You do not.

But the eye seems to skip over the

busy city lying as it were at one's feet and takes in the distant Missouri winding his way to the Father of Waters. And over beyond to the fertile Iowa valley with the bluffs beyond. Tiny streaks of steam show where swift trains

are rushing to and from Omaha, the Gate City. The view seems endless in its expanse. Scores of square miles are laid out in bird's-eye view to the guest at the Fontenelle. There is probably nothing to equal it anywhere in the United States.

Of course, guests don't stop at a hotel merely for the view. But when such a view is added to all the first-class advantages of the Fontenelle it is like paying a bonus over and above a 12 per cent dividend.

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Magnitude and Completeness of Electric Service in the New Fontenelle Hotel

The Lighting System in this magnificent hostelry will be the talk of every guest who enters. No effort has been spared to make it the best lighted building in the state. In all rooms and departments the soft, *distinct light of day* will greet the guests.

The Power for operating elevators, ventilating fans, pumps, vacuum cleaners and laundry equipment will be done with electric energy. Electric refrigeration plants will cool the atmosphere in summer, keeping the hotel always at a comfortable temperature.

Absolute Quiet The new system installed assures all electric power operations to be perfectly quiet; no annoyance will be given the guests by noisy raising or lowering of elevators, etc. Service will be safeguarded by the unlimited resources of our electric plant.

Central Station Service The lighting and power contract was awarded to us because the management of this magnificent hotel desired to give its patrons reliable service.

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