

Many Landlords Try the Merchants Hotel

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It and in 1891 Paxton, Hüttel & Davenport took it and conducted it until 1896.

Skip Dandy as Landlord.
Then for a short time it was managed by Dundy & Bittinger. This was "Skip" Dundy, who later went to New York and built the hippodrome and Luna Park at Coney Island.

They expected to make a fortune out of the hotel during the Trans-Mississippi and Greater America expositions, but were disappointed, and when the expositions came to a close they decided that there were black days ahead for Omaha. They displayed a desire to get out from under the Merchants' and lost no time in doing so.

Alas for them! They were like prospectors who have dug a hole and finally have become discouraged and sold their claim just as their picks were about to bring up the yellow gold nuggets.

It was true that the expositions were over. But why did it follow necessarily that Omaha was to suffer from that fact? Events showed that the very reverse was the case.

At any rate Dundy & Bittinger gave over the hotel to H. H. Hake and on November 1, 1899, Herman B. Peters came to Omaha as manager of the Merchants'. He didn't come quite voluntarily. He was an experienced hotel man and the Merchants' didn't look to him very promising as a money maker.

However, William Paxton, the elder, persuaded him to take hold of it because he knew of his work in the Hotel Koehler in Grand Island. This is getting ahead of the story a little, for Mr. Peters was not proprietor at once. He managed the hotel for Mr. Hake for a while, several months, and then in 1900 he took full charge.

Hotel Finds Itself.
"With him the Merchants' found itself." Up to that time it had struggled along somehow with very indifferent success. Mr. Peters' methods and management set it off on a marvelous career of success. It is said that in his fifteen years of management he made half a million dollars.

In fact he made so much money and acquired so much property, chiefly in the shape of farms, that he sold out the hotel on December 1 to Dan Gaines because he didn't have time to look after it—he was so busy going around looking at his farms and other property.

Up on the second floor in a pretty suite of rooms, Mr. Peters lives now. He is a guest instead of a proprietor, but he occupies the same rooms and lives very much as he did while he was the landlord and Boniface. He could afford a marble palace, but he, like the other guests of the Merchants', cares more for the solid comforts than for the showy things of life.

Mr. Peters was born in Holstein, northern Germany. When he was a well-grown boy his parents looked about them and took an invoice of the family. They saw that they had four sturdy boys, who would soon be reaching the age when the Kaiser's minions would demand them to contribute three of the best years of their lives to the glory of the German army.

Getting Away from Mars.
"Three times four is twelve," said his parents. "Twelve years in the army! We let you yell. We love our Germany, but oh, you America!"

So Father Peters went down to the steamship office and inquired for excursion rates to a first class part of America. The agent evidently knew from this request that he must want to go to Nebraska. So Father Peters bought the necessary number of tickets and the Peters family got permission to leave while the recruiting officers probably cast longing looks at the four sturdy youths and marveled at the kindness of the Kaiser.

In due time they arrived in Nebraska, gaining twelve years of time at once by this movement and at least one of the sons destined to gain more property and wealth in this land of the free than he could have gained in the old country in several lifetimes.

Mr. Peters' mother is still living on the farm out near Grand Island and he displayed with pride some letters in neat German script written by his mother, who is now a well-preserved lady of 85 years.

Herman Peters, who first found the combination to the Merchants' hotel gold mine, declares there was nothing very wonderful or mysterious about his success. Nor is he keeping it a secret for future use in making another fortune.

Feeding Well He Wins Success.
"I just started right in feeding the people," he said. "I knew what our people wanted to eat, and I knew how they wanted to have it cooked. I spared no pains or expenses in putting up a meal that tasted like it had been cooked at home by the wife or mother, and it was served in the same way. There was always good table ware, but nothing of the too fancy of fancy stuff. A man could go into my dining room and sit down and find all that was necessary in the way of eating utensils, but none of the trills that have been invented by would-be swells."

"Also, I gave my guests good clean beds to sleep in. I refurbished the place pretty thoroughly and still I did not change the general look of it. I put in steel ceilings in a number of places."

"I soon began to notice that trade was flowing in very rapidly. The news of those good meals and good beds and honest prices soon spread out through the state and other states and the business came nearly faster than I could take care of it."

Hil Paxton Helps.
"Hil Paxton had a hard time to convince me that I should take hold of the hotel, but after I had it I was mighty glad. I can tell you, for I saw it was a gold mine. He staked me to half of the money, too."

"He appreciated what I had done for the place in the way of improvements, also, and he was the kind of man that didn't let his appreciation show (that merely in compliments). He was in the hotel one day and he was looking over the steel ceilings that I had installed."

"That looks pretty nice, Herman," he said. "Come over to my office. I want to see you a minute."

"I went over with him and he said to his clerk, 'Make out a check for \$1,000 to Mr. Peters.' The clerk did so and he handed it to me."

"That was old Hil Paxton for you. His son, after the old gentleman's death, was pretty much the same way. I had made some more improvements then and young Hil Paxton set of apologized for giving me a check for only \$500, when, of course, he didn't have to give me anything. They were fine landlords."

"Another thing that helped the Mer-

chants' was its location, which was and is the finest imaginable. "And another thing that helped to make it a great success was the rule which I made—never to raise my prices. Even during Ak-Sar-Ben, when everything everywhere was crowded I kept my prices just the same as other times. Of course, we had to crowd up a little closer, but people got their beds and meals at the same cost as they did when there was nothing going on in the city. This exerted a great influence in our favor. A man doesn't mind sleeping on a cot at a time like that, but if you charge him half a dollar more than usual he gets a grudge against you and that hurts your hotel a whole lot more than the additional money can ever pay for."

Not All from Scotland.
Which dissertation on the art of cornering and capturing the nimble and fleet-footed dollar merely proves that not all the money comes from Scotland. The transfer of the lease and management of the hotel by Mr. Peters after his remarkable reign of fifteen years, to the new proprietor and his personal friend, Dan Gaines, is chronicled elsewhere together with a sketch of the interesting and extraordinary career of that young man up to the present time.

Mr. Peters can't throw off the hotel habit nor get rid of the associations of the old Merchants', where he has spent so many happy and profitable years.

Gets Ease by Keeping Busy.
As stated, he keeps his old rooms, but takes life easy, as a successful man can. He is always up bright and early in the morning—about 11 a. m., thus again proving the correctness and profound truth of the old adage:

"Early to bed and early to rise
Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."
He has a big automobile and his own chauffeur. This is the fifth car he has owned. And every day shortly after noon he takes a long ride in the fresh air.

When it was suggested by the interviewer, a disciple of ozone and exercise, that he should walk, he said he would much prefer that method of taking air, but didn't like the idea or practice of walking alone and most men are too busy to walk much.

Yes, Mr. Peters is gregarious, a mixer, as good landlords are always. And he can be found around the lobby of the Merchants' now as much as when he was there greeting his guests.

**Silas Johnson Has
Been at Merchants
Twenty-Two Years**

Silas Johnson, head waiter for twenty-two years, enjoys his work. He declares that the successful head waiter must have a knowledge of human nature, must have some idea of system, must have lots of patience and tact and, above all, must be endowed with everyday common sense.

Mr. Johnson started at the Merchants' in 1893, when Hüttel & Davenport were proprietors. He has been with this hostelry ever since, except a period of a year and a half, when he was head waiter for Roma Miller at the Her Grand. He worked under William Paxton, Skip Dundy and Ralph Bittinger, H. B. Peters, and the new proprietor, Dan W. Gaines.

"It has been my endeavor during my long service in the dining room of the Merchants to make the department homelike, and I can say that many have commented on this feature of our service. I can recall that Colonel W. F. Cody, for instance, for years would always call for his salad dressing the first thing when he came to Omaha. I have catered particularly to westerners, although we have many easterners as well," declared Mr. Johnson.

Must Watch the Grouches.
This veteran of the dining room said that a waiter or head waiter must place himself in the position to do what is right, to make allowances for persons who have a grouch and to strive to please even under the most trying circumstances. He says he always works a little harder when he encounters a contentious patron.

"If a patron is out of humor, that is no reason why the person serving him should be out of humor, also," was an observation he offered.

Getting the right class of help is an important feature in the success of this head waiter, and knowing how to drill those under him is another matter to which he has given careful attention. He brought a green waiter here from Cheyenne a few years ago and, after careful training, that waiter went to the Omaha club and became head waiter. Mr. Johnson says he has never had a fight between his help during all his service as head waiter.

Caring for the traveling public is not a hammer and tongs proposition, he says. "Not, rather, an intense business, calling for the best thought and effort if continued patronage is desired. There are many who bear testimony to Mr. Johnson's painstaking methods and his success as a caterer to hotel patrons who patronize the dining room."

**Gus Anderson Has
Held the Same Job
for Eighteen Years**

Gus Anderson had charge of the immense stock room at the Merchants' hotel for fifteen years under Herman B. Peters and for three years before that time, and when Dan Gaines bought the hotel he kept Gus at the old job. In fact, Dan Gaines did not attempt to make any changes in the personnel of his staff when he took over the hotel.

Paul Stanton has been day clerk at the Merchants' for the last twelve years and Dan Gaines proposes to keep him in that position, as he has a wide acquaintance with the clientele of the hostelry.

O. E. Carney has been chief clerk and booker of the hotel for the last seven years, and "his smiling countenance is still on hand to greet those who wish to register or get a check cashed."

Hotel Decisions.
Out of the roar of blatant war and all its hurly-burly, a clarion call for one and all is, "Do Your Christmas Shopping Early!" A cow out in Indiana is reported to have eaten twenty-five hens. This sounds extraordinary, but, after all, it is simple reciprocity. The world has been consuming milk-fed chickens for years, and we see no reason why there shouldn't be a little chicken-fed milk now and then.

Talk about the high cost of living! It now costs a member of the house of representatives \$2 to take a day off.—Judge.

MERCHANTS HOTEL

AMERICAN PLAN

\$2.00 A DAY

DAN W. GAINES PROPRIETOR

The new proprietor extends greetings to the many friends of this famous hostelry and invites all former patrons to continue to make this their home as in years gone by.

No effort has been spared in making this hotel home-like and the large sums which have been expended have been with the one idea of giving better service to the guests.

The management wishes to call attention to the many improvements which have been made at the Merchants:

- New Brass Beds have been installed in every room in the house.
- The new Barber Shop of marble is the finest in the west.
- New Carpets are found in all the rooms.
- Many new Baths have been installed.
- A Grill Room has been added, where men may secure a lunch.
- Huge easy Leather Chairs have been placed in the Lobby.

Dan W. Gaines' Policy

Although I have spent thousands of dollars in remodeling the Merchants Hotel the charges will remain the same all the way through as they were under the former management. All classes will find they feel at home at the Merchants. The American plan, so successful in years past, will be continued.

No Changes Have Been Made in the Personnel

of the employes of the hotel who cater to the wants of the guests, and former friends will find the following at their old places at their service:

OFFICE.

O. E. Carney.
P. E. Stanton.
E. E. Sweet.
J. T. Daniel.
Harold Becroft.

The Merchants Hotel is proud of its Sunday dinners, which are served for 50 cents, the regular price for a meal at this hotel. Following is the menu for Easter Sunday, with no increase in the price. Similar meals are served each Sunday:

Table D'Hote Dinner, Sunday, April 4, 1:00 to 3:00 p. m., 50 cents.
DAN W. GAINES, Proprietor.

MENU

Baltimore Oyster Cocktail
Potage a la Macedoine
Consomme Krusel, En Tasse
Pale Celery en Branche Queen Olives
Fried Tenderloin Sole, Tartar.
Pommes Duchesse
Choice Prime Cuts Beef, Au Jus
Stuffed Domestic Chicken, Malaga Dressing
Small Filet Mignon, Mushrooms
Nutmeg Bell Fritters, Cream Glace
Potatoes, Mashed or Hollandaise in Cream
Escalloped Tomatoes June Peas
Waldorf Salad, Mayonnaise
Fruit Jello, Sweet Cream
Frozen Punch, Roman
Apple Pie Banna Cream Pie
American Cheese Wafers
Wheat, Rye or Graham Bread
Coffee T a Milk

ITALIAN MUSIC

GENERAL HOTEL

A. A. Gaines, Steward.
E. E. Jones, Chef.
Nellie Gorman, Housekeeper.
Silas Johnson, Head Waiter.
Preston Hieronymous, Head Bell Man.

CIGAR STAND.

Emma Jensen.
Evelyn Foster.

Rates:

American Plan

\$2.00

a Day

BARBER SHOP.

J. A. (Jerry) Conlin.
Tony Polan.
Al. Clouse.
Joe Allen.
Harry (Tex) Curry.
Lon Brundage.
Daisy Widener, Manicurist.

BUFFET.

Fred (Burley) Burlingim.
Gus Anderson.
F. G. (Doc) Lewis.
Gene Lorenz.
Harvey Burr.
Louis Soukup.