

# Beginnings in the Magic City that Grew Mightily in Time

In the Hog Pens at South Omaha the Porker Finds Solid Comfort

Any man or woman of the comparatively tender age of 33 years is older than the South Side, once called South Omaha. It is almost impossible to believe that the thriving busy community to the south is only that old. Thirty-three years! In the annals of eastern cities that is merely a step and in those of cities of the old world it is a small period that marks almost no change at all.

Yet in thirty-three years South Side, the "Magic City," has sprung seemingly by magic from the cornfields.

The topography of the site played a part in the beginning of the city. It is high and rolling, the grounds sloping toward the river. A valley runs from northwest to southeast, thus making the drainage ideal.

As early as 1856 John A. Smiley of Omaha organized the Union Stock Yards company for the purpose of erecting stockyards.

In 1877 the live stock committee of the Omaha Board of Trade reported that it was impressed with the very generally expressed views of the businessmen of Omaha and the stockraisers and shippers of the importance of stock yards and packing and slaughtering houses being erected and maintained here.

The Omaha stock yards was organized in April, 1878. In May of the same year the Union Stock Yards company, taking the same name as the concern organized by Mr. Smiley in 1874, was organized by William A. Paxton, J. I. Lovett, W. J. Broatch, W. C. B. Allen and Herman Kountze.

From this the present great yards have grown. Then for several years there were prophesies, theories, reasonings, which finally resolved themselves into firm resolves in 1883 when men who were ready and willing to venture upon an undertaking which seemed at the time to be extra hazardous, fixed on the farming lands there for a plant.

John F. Boyd was the first superintendent of the yards and did the first actual labor toward organizing the work and building the yards. Arthur Shriver was one of the first men and was followed in June, 1884, by Frank Boyd, Ed Cullen, D. R. Scott and "Ker" Brayton. Ed Hulet was the first weighmaster and was succeeded by Ed Stearns in 1885. James Paxton, a nephew of "W. A.," was the first timekeeper. Mr. Hutchins was the first foreman of the yards.

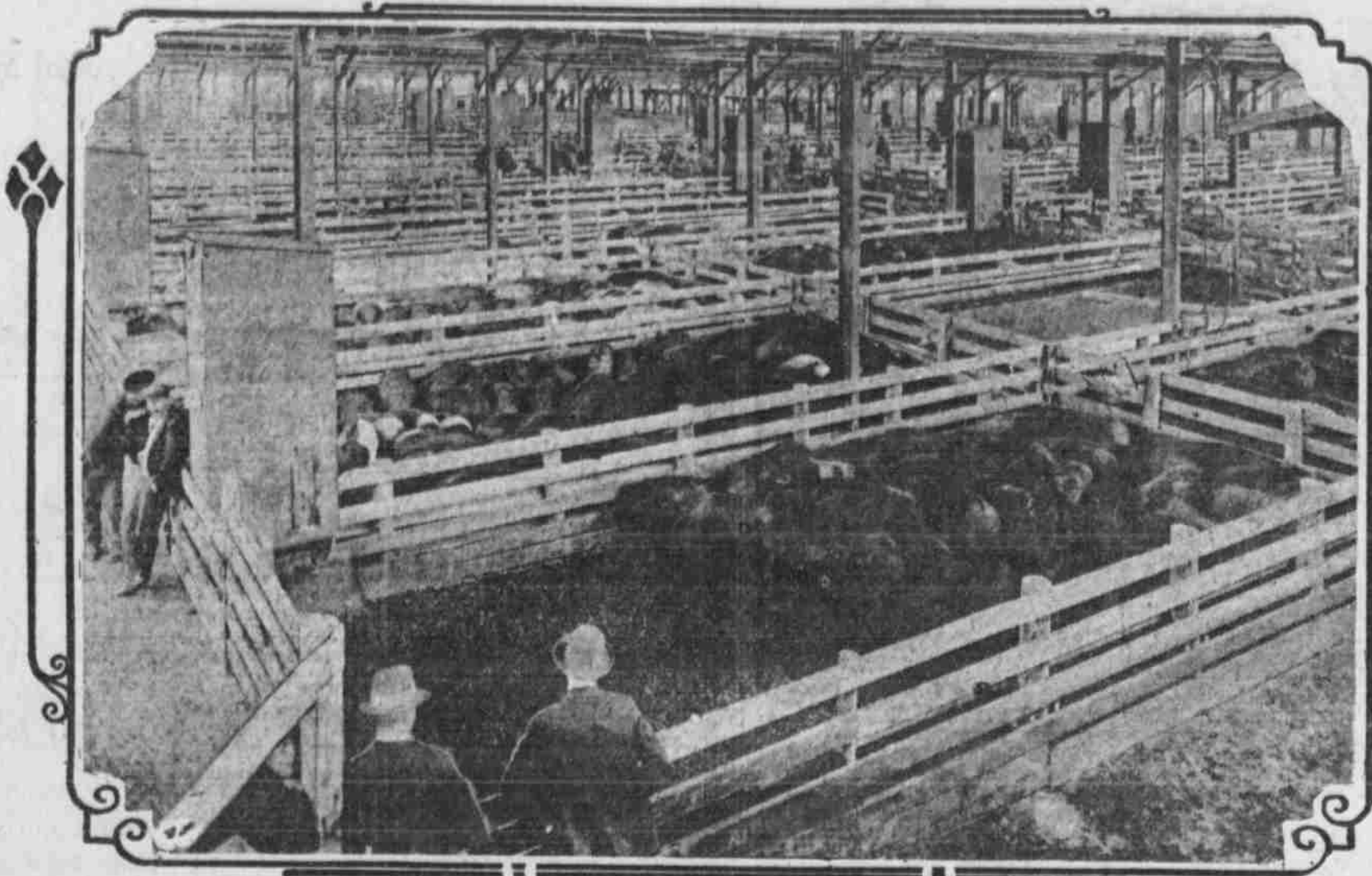
At the time of opening the yards there was no exchange building and so the old Fred Drexel house, a two-story frame structure, twenty-eight by forty feet, was purchased and used for the purpose. The building stood just a little east of the southeast corner of the present exchange building. It had four rooms on the first floor and six upstairs.

The first building erected on the stock yards site was a boarding house. Here, before the yards were opened for business, graders and other workmen were boarded and lodged. It was known as the "Canfield House" and afterwards as the "Union Stock Yards Hotel."

After cattle began coming to the yards, not only those who had charge of the pens, but the "knights of the good pole," who came in with stock, found accommodation there. In 1885 several commission firms took offices in the hotel. Subsequently it was torn down and remains only in history as South Omaha's first hotel.

The brick exchange building was built in the fall and winter of 1885. The South Omaha Globe describes this epoch-making building thus:

"The building will be four stories in height, surmounted by a tower eighty feet high. The ground floor will contain the public offices, and private parlors



of the Union Stock Yards company, large dining room and accessories (kitchen, laundry, refrigerator room, etc.) lunch room and bar room. The banking room will be on the second floor directly over the stock yards company offices and occupy exactly the same amount of space. This floor, which is also the main one, will contain also fifteen handsome office rooms for the use of commission men. A wide corridor runs through the center of the building on each floor. The third floor will be divided into twenty-six sleeping rooms, stock room and parlor. The fourth (or Mansard roof floor), will contain thirty sleeping rooms.

The original building as erected, remains today substantially the same, but the rapidly increasing business has made additions to the structure necessary.

A vivid picture of pioneer days in South Omaha has been painted by J. H. Erlon, once publisher of the Eagle. He says: "In 1885 there were no street cars or paved streets and Thirteenth street was the route between the yards and the city. South Omaha was itself a mud-hole the greater part of the time, the streets not graded, no sidewalks and all supplies had to be brought down from Omaha."

"W. G. Sloan was the pioneer storekeeper. He came in 1884 and built a small frame business house in the midst of a wilderness of cornstalks and jimpson weeds. His stock consisted of drugs and medicines, groceries and provisions, butchers' jackets and overalls and other things too numerous to mention. "Often the space between the counters

was so blockaded with barrels of potatoes, sacks of beans, sides of bacon and cowboys as to make it extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, for a modest man or woman to get farther than a molasses barrel.

"Yet, in spite of all this, the storekeeper often took in as high as \$400 a day. Mr. Sloan was also the first postmaster and the records show that the first day's postal receipts were 23 cents and at least a dozen pieces of mail were handled.

"Later he got competition when J. C. Carroll started another grocery store in a patch of cornstalks, jimpson weeds and dog fennel at the corner of Twenty-sixth and N streets. His sister was the first school teacher, and in vacation time she took a position as clerk in the Carroll emporium.

"During 1885 the population of the city increased rapidly and things began to come its way. From Chicago came a large number of commission men and things began to look like business, indeed. The opening of the Hammond packing house, though it was a small affair, brought several hundred butchers, which sent the town on a lively boom.

"There was no police, no local authority, no organization, no legal restraints except those of county and state. So things were lively and it was considered a dull evening when there weren't at least half a dozen fist fights and a shooting scrape or two."

In April, 1884, a mayor and councilmen were elected under provisions of the statute as a city of the second class, with more than 1,000 and less than 5,000 population.

The following April, 1883, a full set of city officials were elected for a term of two years under statute provisions regulating a city of the second class with more than 5,000 and less than 25,000 population.

In 1890 South Omaha became a city of the first class, with more than 5,000 and less than 25,000 inhabitants, in which class it remained until 1900, when it became a city of the first class with more than 25,000 and less than 40,000 population, under which it operated until consolidation with Omaha in 1915.

All told, South Omaha has had ten dif-

ferent mayors, one acting mayor and one chairman of a village board. Following the village organization the mayors were as follows: 1857, Ezra P. Savage; 1859, William G. Sloane; 1862, Charles P. Miller, who only served half his term; 1868, O. E. Walker, for one year, to fill Miller vacancy; 1864, Ed Johnston; 1866 to 1868, Dr. T. H. Ensor; 1869, A. R. Kelly; 1902, Frank Koutsky, who was re-elected in 1904; 1906, Thomas Hector; 1908, Frank Koutsky; 1910, Patrick J. Trainor; 1912, Thomas Hector, who was re-elected in 1913, a special election having been called under provisions of the new law.

## MAKING A STUDY OF SUNDAY

Psychology Students Have Purpose in Going to Tabernacle Meetings.

AUDIENCE MOST ATTENTIVE

Students of psychology, or the science of the mind and mental phenomena, are paying considerable attention to the "Billy" Sunday meetings. Whether or not the psychologists are endorsing the evangelist's campaign and are joining in the work, they take keen interest in his meetings from the standpoint of their science.

A well known student of psychology, who teaches in one of the colleges of the state, came to Omaha for the express purpose of studying Mr. Sunday and his psychological effect upon his audiences. Finding the tabernacle meetings a rare opportunity for the pursuit of his subject, the psychologist attended all three of the meetings Sunday, and then decided to remain in the city several days longer for that purpose.

An Omaha doctor, well known for his contributions to original research, is also making a close study of the psychology of "Billy" Sunday's preaching. The doctor secures a seat of vantage at every opportunity, and carefully studies the effect of the revivalist's efforts upon the minds of his listeners. "Every word," says a sympathetic doctor, "comes from the audience," the doctor says. "Mr. Sunday aways the great crowds just as if he was a wireless sending station and the listeners were wireless receiving stations. His influence over the audience is wonderful, and furnishes a rare example of psychology."

## Some South Omaha Firsts

Catherine Rowley, daughter of Patrick and Annie Rowley, was the first female child born in South Omaha; she was born on Railroad avenue between N and O streets, August 3, 1884.

The first boarding house was started in May, 1884, by "Bill" Jones, in a small frame building on the east side of Twenty-fifth street, between M and N streets.

"Jack" Howe had the first blacksmith shop, located on Twenty-fifth street between N and O streets.

The first Catholic service in South Omaha was the celebration of mass the first Sunday in November, 1885, in the Ryan school house on Twenty-seventh street between M and N streets, by Rev. John Jeanette, pastor of St. Patrick's church, Omaha.

The first livery stable was started by Jesse Hogate at Twenty-fourth and N streets.

The first town lots sold in South Omaha after the town was laid out and the list price set, were purchased by Martin Scofield and William Kerr, on June 4, 1884.

The first marriage was that of John F. Ritchhart and Mrs. Anna Williams on August 22, 1884, the ceremony being performed by Rev. Dr. Patterson, rector of St. Mark's Episcopal church, Omaha.

The first death was that of Thomas Kerr, infant son of William and Onie Kerr, July 4, 1884.

The first butcher to locate permanently in this city of wholesale butchers, was Charles Akofer, who came August 23, 1886. Henry Wordeman was the first male child born here, his birthplace being a house at Twenty-fifth and M streets and the date, July, 1885.

## Beginning of Stock Yards

First actual work was started on what is now the great stock yards of Omaha on April 4, 1884, under the immediate direction of William A. Paxton, president of the company, a man known for his big purse as well as his big heart. A large force of men and teams was employed and soon a remarkable transformation took place in the fields.

A low swamp or slough extended from what is now the west end of the stock yards to the Hammond company's plant. By the first day of August the yards were so far completed that they could accommodate live stock. They covered about ten acres and could handle 5,000 cattle daily. John F. Boyd was superintendent.

At noon on August 11 the first shipment of cattle came in and it was such as to encourage the men interested. It was a whole trainload of cattle, twenty-five cars, with 100 head, over the Union Pacific, from F. Wolcott, Medicine Bow.

## What He Used Them For.

Customer—I want another fire-extinguisher. Used the last one all up last night.

Clerk—Glad to sell them to you, sir, but aren't you rather careless at your place. That is the third one I've sold you for weeks.

Customer—O, I don't use them for fire. They are the greatest things on earth for chasing out your daughter's late callers.

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