

# Officials of the Progressive City of Omaha



**J. Dean Ringer**  
City Commissioner

Supt. Police,  
Sanitation  
and Public Safety



**Harry B. Zimman**  
City Commissioner

SUPT. FIRE  
PROTECTION



**DAN B. BUTLER**  
City Commissioner

Supt. of Street Cleaning  
and Maintenance



**THOS. B. FALCONER**  
City Commissioner

Supt. Parks and Public Property



**W. G. URE**  
City Commissioner

Superintendent of  
Accounts and Finance



**ED. P. SMITH**  
MAYOR

CITY OF OMAHA

## Omaha at the Time The Bee First Made Its Bow to the Public in 1871

### Up and Down Old Farnam Street With Visions of the Past

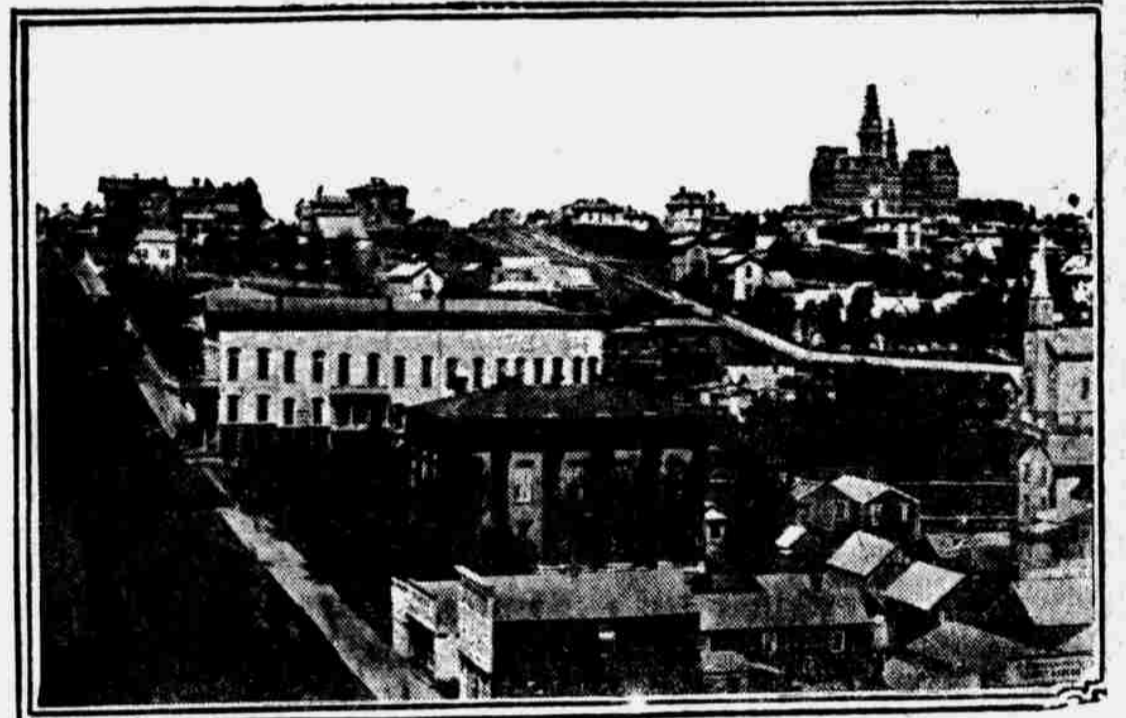
Article from a Previous Anniversary Number Reprinted by Request

At the time The Bee made its initial bow before the local public as a little two-page evening paper Omaha had outgrown the village stage. As the gateway to the far west through which the great horde of transcontinental pioneers, settlers and tourists made their way to the mountains and the Pacific coast Omaha had achieved a recognized place on the map and was enjoying the results of an increasing trade, fostered by its

each day at the landing several boats receiving their freight for the mountains and others the products of the state for consumption at the south. He would, however, likely have made use of the new built railroads which had thrown their iron tracks about Omaha like spokes in a wheel. Stimulated by the construction of the Union Pacific, finally completed in 1869, four roads constituting through connections with the east had rapidly pushed their way up to the Missouri river. The Chicago & Northwestern had been the first completed, then the Hannibal & St. Joseph, then the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, and next the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy. Even at that time the project for the Omaha & Southwestern was afoot, soon to be carried into successful execution. The controversy over the use of the Union Pacific bridge at this point was just at its height and the business men of the town were energetically engaged in a fight to prevent the threatened location of

the district south of Farnam (then spelled Farnham) and east of Twelfth; the Second, that south of Farnam and west of Twelfth; the Third, that between Farnam and Davenport; the Fourth, that between the same streets and west of Fourteenth; the Fifth, that north of Davenport and east of Sixteenth, and the Sixth, the remainder. The streets, even in the business center, were unpaved. The sidewalks and cross walks consisted, for the most part, of wooden planks, though the pedestrian esteemed himself fortunate to find continuous sidewalks at all. There was no street railway, no electric lights, no telephones, no sewers, no water works. The people drew their water from wells and cisterns, and water for fire protection was stored in public cisterns at the intersections of certain streets. In one thing the town pointed to an up-to-dateness that placed it head and shoulders above its competitors—that was its gas works and gas lamps.

Farnam Street West from Fifteenth in 1871



geographical position and the recent opening up of new transportation routes of which it was the terminus. The traveler who came to Omaha in 1871 would therefore have found a thriving, hustling little town of about 17,000 inhabitants. The census of 1870 had given it a population of 16,083, and the whole state of Nebraska a trifle less than 125,000. Our traveler might have made his way up the river by steamboat, as the steamboat lines had not yet been abandoned. During the season of navigation, so we are told, it was by no means an unusual thing to see

the Union Pacific terminals on the Council Bluffs side of the river. Bird's-Eye View of the Town. The first impulse of our traveler would naturally have been to take a brief survey of the place. The whole area of the town in 1871 was but a shadow of what it is now. The streets had been laid out only from Twenty-third street on the west to the river on the east, and from Nicholas on the north to Pierce on the south. The inhabited portion was, of course, much smaller. For administrative convenience the town had been divided into six wards, the First ward comprising

which had been introduced two years before. Still the use of gas for illuminating stores and dwellings was a luxury afforded by exceeding few Panorama from Capitol Hill. Let me quote a pen picture writer, shortly before this very time: "Commencing near the river on the south attention is attracted by several substantial brick buildings used as breweries, while the heights which bound the city in this direction are crowned by handsome private residences. Passing west we notice in succession the gas works, Brownell Hall and the Nunnery; thence crossing to the north we reach the old capitol, now rededicated to the city for educational purposes. An ascent to its cupola will well repay the fatigue imposed. Immediately below lies the city, with its wide, regular streets, its lofty ranges of business houses interrupted here and there by churches and lines of pleasant trees; beyond rolls the Missouri with its regal pomp of waters, while in the distant east sleeps Council Bluffs at the foot of the picturesque hills from which it takes its name. Before one four or five busy lines of railroad carry the through traffic of the continent, and a valley unsurpassed for fertility as it stretches away to the north.

"Coming down into the city and reaching Farnam street we notice the Congregational church, military headquarters and the court house; east of these Kountze's bank; next Shoaf Brothers' billiard hall and the offices of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railroad. At the foot of the street are several hotels and the offices of the Union Pacific railroad. Passing up Douglas street, the Metropolitan hotel is the first object of interest; then on Twelfth, but a few steps from the main thoroughfare, the rooms of the Young Men's Christian association, a credit to the zeal and devotion of the young men of Omaha. Just beyond Twelfth, the Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran church and Visscher's block. Next comes the Omaha National bank and the offices of the Herald and Republican. On Seventeenth we see the new Presbyterian church with its conspicuous spire and the Methodist church, but partly built. On the corner of Fifteenth and Davenport the new Baptist church is approaching completion and promises to be one of the fairest architectural additions to the city. Following east on Davenport we reach an open space overlooking the river bottom, and the eye is at once arrested by the extensive shops of the Union Pacific railroad. The barracks to the north of the city also will repay a visit, though at present the Indian troubles west have drawn away most of the troops."

City Government in 1871. If our traveler should have happened in at the council rooms in Helmman's block some evening when the council was in session, he would have found advising that body as mayor Smith S. Caldwell, one of the leading bankers and most prominent citizens. In front of him he would have seen ranged as councilmen E. A. Allen and W. J. McKelligan from the First ward, G. W. Homan and J. S. Gibson from the Second ward, Henry Luhnens and John Campbell from the Third ward, John A. Horbach and Byron Reed from the Fourth ward, James Creighton and J. B. Bartlett from the Fifth ward, and George Smith and Thomas Martin from the Sixth ward. The other city officers were: C. L. Bristol, city clerk; John Steen, treasurer; John R. Porter, city engineer; Andrew Rosewater, city engineer; Jerry Dee, street commissioner, and G. W. Gratton, gas inspector. At the head of the police department was William G. Hollins, city marshal and chief, assisted by Red

(Continued on next page)