

# Life Story of Ak-Sar-Ben and Enterprise of Hardy Men Who Conceived Project

### Times Were Bad in 1895—Papier Mache Figures Bought in New Orleans and Floats Made Here—Historic Omaha Incidents Were Depicted—Band Wore Col. Cody's Uniforms.

It is interesting to take a retrospective glance and ponder on what has occurred in the world's affairs since Omaha witnessed its first Ak-Sar-Ben parade, held Wednesday evening, September 18, 1895, during the week of the state fair, which at that time was held here.

This was the occasion of the beginning of the great organization known as Ak-Sar-Ben, which has grown to be of nation-wide fame, for it may be said in truth that Omaha's electrical parades and the Ak-Sar-Ben initiation are known in every city in the land.

#### How It Got Started.

Times were hard in 1895, when a group of enterprising business men turned their faces to the rising sun and ventured upon this great enterprise which has grown so strong during the passing years. W. R. Bennett, Walter Jardine, Edgar Allen, Vance Lane, the late Emil Brandeis and a few others got together and talked it over. They conceived the idea of holding a fall festival in connection with the state fair.

#### The First Parade.

It is interesting to turn back to the files of the newspapers of September, 1895, and read the accounts of the first Ak-Sar-Ben parade, and

ball. Tuesday afternoon, September 17, of that year a civic parade was held. The decorations of the town were red, green and yellow, which have been and now are the official Ak-Sar-Ben colors. In that parade were roughriders, led by Rattlesnake Pete. Long-haired Burke and Kid Nuckolls.

Sergeant Iler and a platoon of mounted police headed the column. M. H. Collins and H. J. Penfold were marshals of the first division and Max Meyer and J. C. Colt had charge of the second division. One of the floats was a model of the sod house occupied by Daniel Freeman at Beatrice, he having been the first homesteader in the United States. On the Union Pacific float were Tom McGovern, since city councilman and passed to the great beyond; George Everett, P. E. Cusick and Fred Busch. The Durant Hose company of 18 men appeared in command of Chief John Reed.

The Douglas county float was designed by E. G. Solomon and Oscar Pickard. E. R. Tauszer of Council Bluffs was marshal of the third division.

#### Presentation to King.

The following evening, September 18, "The Feast of Mondamin" electrical floats were shown, with Maj. R. S. Wilcox as grand marshal and the following as aides: W. H. McCord, Warren Rogers, Thomas Fry, E. E. Bryson, R. E. Wilcox, W. R. Bennett, Max Meyer, William Paxton, jr., and W. S. Jardine. When this pageant reached Eighteenth and Farnam streets, Lieutenant Governor Moore sat in review, and Mayor George F. Dennis presented the keys of the city to the king, who pledged the city's prosperity. The mayor broke a bottle of wine, which was a form of beverage in those days, and then handed the elixir to the lieutenant governor, who in turn handed it over to the king. The king held fast to the wine, which he took to the Den, where the coronation ceremonies were held. At the Den he was given a golden goblet for use by himself and the queen.

# Fat Girl and Some of Her Side-Show Friends In a Moment of Repose at Carnival Grounds



"You should see my big brother; he's bigger'n me," said Jolly Nellie, the fat girl of the King's High, when she was being photographed with some of her show friends.

### Cannibalism Prevails In Armenia, Says Nurse

Uhrichsvile, O., Sept. 27.—"It would rot and we're starving," is what some Armenian children told Miss Blanche Knox, a Uhrichsvile nurse, when she saw them eating the heart of their dead mother. Miss Knox is doing work in the Russian Caucasus. In her letter Miss Knox said the acts of cannibalism caused by starvation are indescribable. In many shallow graves, she said, she saw bodies from which the trunks had been removed for meat.

### Wheel-Mounted Dog Sled Used by Alaskan

Snow and ice are not perpetual in Alaska, popular belief to the contrary, and while dog sleds are commonly used during the colder months, they are of no value in the summer, when the ground lacks its covering of white. This latter fact led a resident of the territory to invent a conveyance to be drawn by his dog team during the warm season. A sled of Indian design was

mounted on four small bicycle wheels, and a steering column and wheel from an automobile were connected to the front pair. Five dogs, hitched in the usual manner, draw the wheel-mounted sled. The interesting vehicle is illustrated in the October Popular Mechanics Magazine.

### Hot Water Supplied Free In a Canadian Park

Hot drinks can be served at picnics in a recreation park at Toronto, Canada, without the troublesome operation usually necessary to obtain boiling water in such places.

# SEVEN CITIES OF CIBOLA AND THE LAND OF QUIVIRA

### Omaha Is Chief of Historical Metropoli and Capital of the Kingdom.

Do you know that Omaha is in the kingdom of Quivira, and that the Gate City of the West is the chief city of the seven cities of Cibola?

In carrying out the mythical associations of the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, the story of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, Spanish explorer, was used to suit the occasion.

#### Bread Basket of World.

King Ak-Sar-Ben is supposed to rule over the land of Quivira, being this great "bread basket" of the world, the great corn belt of Omaha's trade territory.

Following the conquest of Mexico by Cortez, Coronado was appointed to command the northern province of the land where Carranza and Villa now abide. Coronado, early in the spring of 1540, started out with 1,500 of his men to find the fabled seven cities of Cibola. This adventurer and his men believed that these seven cities contained vast quantities of wealth and were of gorgeous splendor.

The party was unable to find the seven cities of fabled wealth, so they returned, and during the spring of 1541, started out on another journey. Historians believe that Coronado made his second start from Pecos, on the Pecos river. Coronado and his band marched 700 miles to the northeast, reaching what is believed to have been the Arkansas river. The intrepid explorer pushed on which 30 of his brave followers, making their way to present the southern boundary of Nebraska. This country was known as the realm of Quivira.

Located at Columbus. If one of the cities of Cibola actually existed near Omaha, the historians state that Columbus, Neb., was the location, this being determined from records left by the early Spanish explorers.

Evidences of early habitation have been unearthed in various places of this state by archeologists.

This story of Coronado and his associate travelers is the foundation for the fanciful kingdom over which the king of Ak-Sar-Ben reigns.

### Thumb Print Protects Auto From Thieves

Professional automobile thieves may cease to reap their regular harvest and find real cause for worry in a system for protecting and recovering cars by means of thumb prints, one of which is placed on the instrument board of the machine by a process that prevents its removal without noticeable defacement of the board. A card bearing a duplicate of the thumb mark is carried by the owner of the car, while other cards of a similar nature are placed on file with the police.

### Ocean Bottom to Be Dredged for Diamonds

To supply the world's undiminished demand for diamonds a strong company is reported formed for the purpose of dredging the bottom of the Atlantic ocean, according to the October Popular Mechanics Magazine. This method of mining the sparkling stones is unusual, yet may meet with some measure of success, as a "chimney" has for years been known to exist off the southwest coast of Africa.

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### Honor Marine Corps Drum With Stripe

Glory was not won by men alone on the battlefields of the world war. To illustrate, there is the bass drum which returned from France recently with a regiment of the marine corps, decorated with a wound stripe and four service chevrons. These marks of honor were painted on one head of the instrument. The wound stripe was considered appropriate after the drum had been damaged by a bursting shell.

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# Mediaeval Venice Never Beheld Such Gorgeousness

Judge E. M. Bartlett was the king and Miss Meliora Woolworth was the queen. Miss Lynn Curtis and Miss Grace L. Himebaugh served as maids to the queen.

The names of the first floats were: "The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben Celebrate the Feast of Mondamin," "Ak-Sar-Ben, the King," "The Harvest Festival," "Mondamin's Castle," "War of the Elements," "Samson's Arrival in Omaha," "Fountain of Youth," "Water Witch Opening the Flood Gates," "Grand Vizier Heralds Return of Prosperity," "Queen of the Rose Fairy," "Quivera Fairies Before the King," "Revelries of the Court," "Ak-Sar-Ben's Counselor," "Lord of the Exchequer," "Ak-Sar-Ben in the Chrysalis State," "At the Shrine of Mondamin," "Ak-Sar-Ben's Fisheries," "Mondamin Preparing for the Feast," "Enchanted Forest."

An idea of the grandeur and splendor of the first Ak-Sar-Ben ball may be gained by reading the following excerpt from an account of that function:

"Only Ak-Sar-Ben, of all the world, could have produced such a symposium of sweetness, of color and merriment as were diffused at the ball last night. It was a befitting close for the autumn festival, brilliant and gorgeous, like the splendid carnivals of mediaeval

Venice, when that city of passion laughed through endless mirth and music. Such a riot of radiance and pleasure, such a succession of lovely faces and fairy forms, such a flood of light and wealth of flowers never before challenged society's criticism or extorted appreciation from pessimistic cynic.

"No shadow of lycere rested upon those mad, merry hours. It was a Nebraska show of patriotism and beauty, of gracefulness, color and harmony, and alone represented what Nebraska can do as the queen of a great west and the garden of the earth. Never was there held a more royal fete, and thus weeks and months of busy and anxious preparation found their fruition in the bewildering and beautiful social function of last night.

"All previous events of the week were as straw in the balance compared with the vast outpouring of the smart people of the town, and the visitors from the north and the south, to testify to the loyalty awakened by the gaudy balls of Mondamin. Stereotyped balls and parties there have been before, comprehending all the requirements of swell and belledom, but a ball combining so many glories as that of yesternight comes closer to the heart of manly men and womanly women, and is understood and enjoyed without alloy."

# Master Conjurer of the Den and Electric Floats

The piece de resistance of the Ak-Sar-Ben fall festivals is the electrical parades, which have been held without interruption for 24 years, and the one scheduled for next Wednesday night will be the 25th pageant of the kind in Omaha.

Gustavus Adolphus Renze (he likes to have his name spelled out in its fullness) has had charge of the float construction for a quarter of a century and never has he failed to have this great spectacle out on time. Precisely at 8 o'clock, on the appointed evening each year, the large doors of the Den are swung open and this mighty pageant of color and light comes out as if some mighty conjurer had commanded "air" and to open and reveal its hidden beauties.

#### Work in "The Den."

The general public has little concern of what occurs out at the Den, which is a great workshop for several months prior to the appearance of the floats. When the theme of the floats has been selected Mr.

Renze then proceeds to draw his plans as carefully as an architect draws the plans of a house or a large building. He gathers his workmen together and then, without a stop, they address themselves to the task of fashioning these marvels of the creative art.

#### Has Built 500 Floats.

Mr. Renze has designed and constructed 500 electrical floats during his 25 years with Ak-Sar-Ben, and he has built as many more floats for daylight parades of various kinds. He has seen the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben grow from an original membership of less than 500 to its present strength of 5,000 members.

There will be more than 600 men appearing on and with the electrical floats next Wednesday night. Of that number there will be 216 local business men in costume, most of whom will appear as characters on the floats. The others will be in the bands or will serve as torch-bearers and trolley holders. Nearly 10,000 electric lamps will be used on the floats this year.

times not contained in official documents. A request has been made that such items of interest be sent to the historical section of the department for examination. Description should accompany photos. — From the October Popular Mechanics Magazine.

An Englishman is the inventor of a greenhouse weighing several tons and so mounted on tracks that it can be moved from one flower bed to another as needed.

### Navy Office Collects Pictures and Letters

Photographs taken by private individuals in naval camps or aboard ships, personal letters written by sailors, and any other similar material that pertains to the activities of the navy during the war, are to be placed in permanent files at Washington, D. C., by the Navy Department. They will form a historical collection intended to preserve a viewpoint of the hostile

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25th YEAR OF  
**Ak-Sar-Ben Fall Festival**  
Omaha, September 24th to Oct. 4th, 1919

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**Grand Electric Parade**  
WEDNESDAY NIGHT, OCT. 1

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**Grand Auto-Flower Parade**  
THURSDAY AFTERNOON, OCT. 2

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**Coronation Ball**  
FRIDAY NIGHT, OCT. 3

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