

Omaha Fell Into Position As Midwest's Jobbing Center By Odd Turns of Fortune

Notes Seemed Arrayed Against Little Trading Post In Early Days When President Lincoln Declared Council Bluffs Should Be Western Terminus of U. P. Then They Made Strange Shifts.

By A. E. LONG. Omaha, the mighty jobbing heart of the middle west, throbbing with industry, and with every throb forcing streams of merchandise from its wholesaling center along arteries of rails to a hungry surrounding empire...

Who was there who had the courage 60 years ago to say that Omaha was destined to become a great jobbing center...

Did not the great Lincoln himself stand on a spot in Council Bluffs, dig his heel into the earth and declare, "This shall be the terminus of the Union Pacific railway?"

Dozen Trading Posts. At that early date there were a dozen trading posts along the Missouri river...

A business man from whatsoever corner of the globe, scanning the two hemispheres for opportunity, had said "Council Bluffs."

Omaha Fools 'Em. But Omaha was destined to arise and overthrow the wisest judgment in this respect...

History then leaves us the facts that in the very early period Council Bluffs was the real jobbing center for the early development of this empire...

Cross On Ice. When they had business in that "little place" they ferried across the river in summer and crossed on wheels in the winter...

True the trappers and hunters from the upper Missouri river country and the Platte valley...

Gradually across the river in Council Bluffs a distributing center was growing up. The lands in Iowa were being settled...

Pay Heavy Tolls. As the population of Nebraska and the territory west of the river increased its demands on the jobbing center increased...

Many and many a time, and often two, three or four times a day I have ridden the 'dummy' across and back at 50 cents a fare...

That 50-cent fare for each trip across the river grew tiresome to the Nebraskans and they began more and more to cry for distribution arrangements on the Nebraska side...

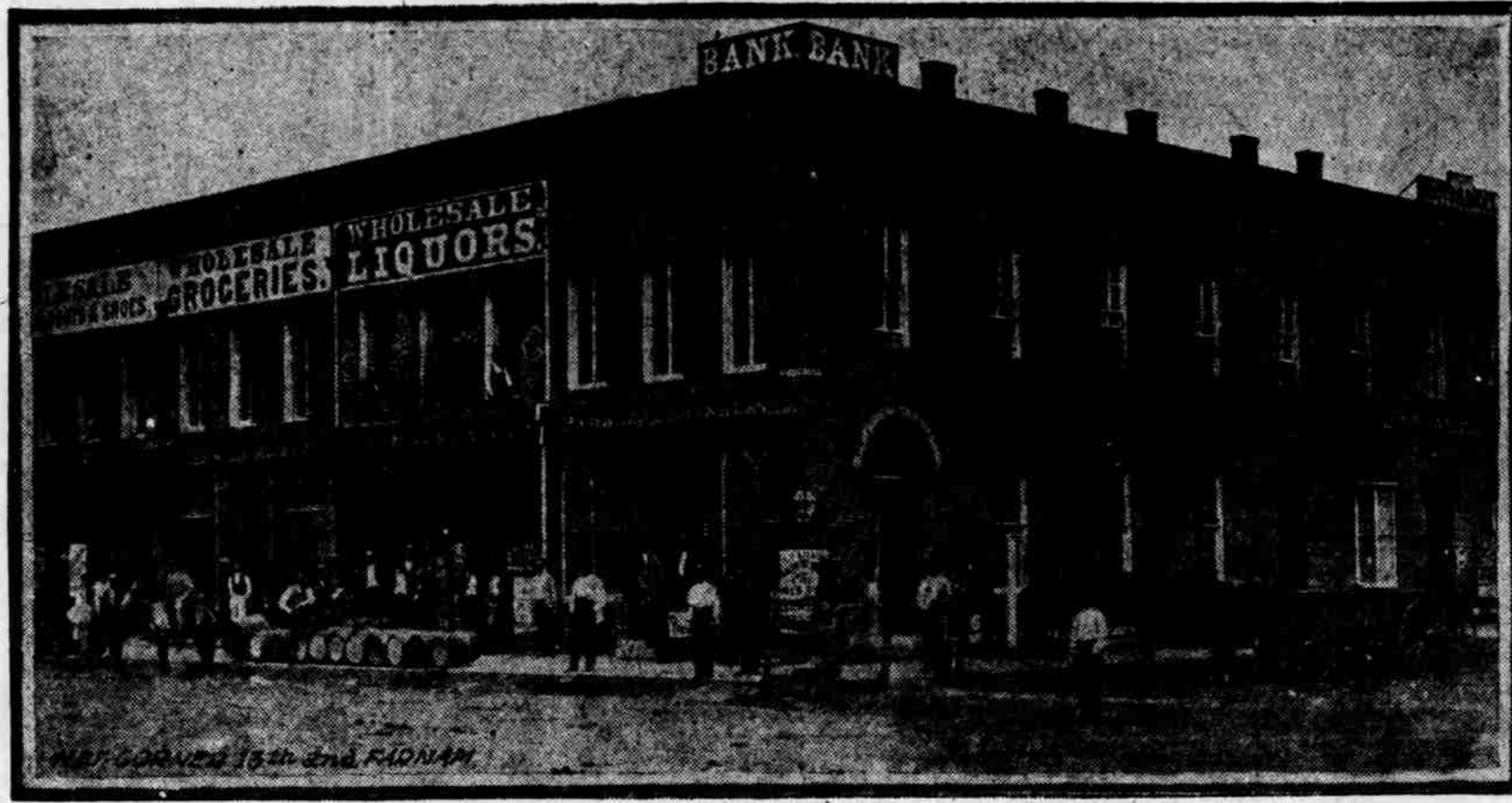
Grocery Jobbers Early. Groceries were among the first and prime necessities, and it may safely be said that the grocery distributing business was among the first to spring into existence on the Nebraska side...

The first gun at Sumpter, the opening gun of the great civil war, had not yet boomed when Nave-McCord & Co. first established a business on Farnam street...

Other wholesale grocery houses were conducting business as early as 1860 also. Some have long since vanished from the scene, but others have grown into magnificent institutions...

Implement Business Develops. But while the grocery and dry goods jobbing began to develop early in Omaha the farm machinery business for some years continued to center in Council Bluffs...

Liquor Was Still Plentiful In Those Days



north had to be occupied by few business men in this line conceived ways to accelerate the forward movement of this line of business...

As new inventions came into the field and took their places in American industry, Omaha readily became the jobbing center for any such articles which would be in demand in the tributary territory...

Partners Dissolve. It was predicted at the time that these buildings would be large enough to house the firm for a quarter of a century...

Auto Industry Booms. Ten years ago so few automobiles and trucks were distributed out of Omaha, that no one knew the figures or cared...

Meet Customers. Realizing that many of the merchants who buy their stocks from Omaha year after year, seldom see any representative of the jobbing house except the one traveling man...

Visit Jobbing Houses. Dealers in all lines throughout the territory, recognizing Omaha as their jobbing point, have more and more selected Omaha as the location for their various trade conventions...

New Ideas Introduced. As the jobbing business swelled in Omaha year after year, live business men in this line conceived ways to accelerate the forward movement of this line of business...

Railroads Developed. Coal and coke also found distribution from Omaha, as the railroads were developed and ramified in all directions from the city...

Drygoods Jobbing Moves West. The history of the drygoods jobbing in some degree followed the path of the farm machinery jobbing. An example of this is found in the early maneuvers of what is today M. E. Smith & Co., Inc.

Vast Amount of Business. Grocery jobbing has reached the huge total of \$60,800,000 per year. Hardware jobbing out of Omaha has reached the total of \$9,000,000. Oils and burning devices have touched the figures of \$28,599,000 as against \$2,800,000 10 years ago...

Paint and glass soon became an important item for jobbing out of Omaha, and this business has reached a total of \$4,800,000 annually. Even paper and stationery to the volume of \$7,679,000 is distributed over the territory in a year...

With the advance of building throughout the territory, came naturally along with a lumber demand, also a big demand for heating and plumbing supplies. This pushed the

heating and plumbing jobbing business in Omaha up to the handsome figures of 11,625,000 in 1920. This, too, showed an increase of something like 75 per cent in the last 10 years alone.

As new inventions came into the field and took their places in American industry, Omaha readily became the jobbing center for any such articles which would be in demand in the tributary territory. The last 10 or 15 years have seen many such inventions forged to the front...

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