



## The Editor's Table

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# The Editor's Table

## A Nebraska Contribution To Peace

Judge Bayard H. Paine, of our Nebraska Supreme Court, is one of the best qualified persons in our country to discuss the most important question before the world—the approach to peace.

The end of the World War is in sight. To hasten that end is the urgent aim of patriots everywhere. The government of the United States is the chief instrument in the attainment of that end.

Every true American, every lover of his home land and the home world of which he is a potent part, will give his full-hearted, overflowing support to our government to end the war.

The approach to peace must come as we near the end of the war. Thinking on the approach to peace is an acceleration of our effort to end the war. As a Nebraska pioneer in a great snow blizzard sees his log-cabin home light gleam through the storm, his strength is stirred to greater effort. So is the gleam of peace through the world storm-clouds about us.

Therefore we are glad to have this fine strong discriminating article from Judge Paine directing public attention to leading phases of the world peace discussion which is certain to occupy the public mind more and more in the months which lie before us.

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## Governor Griswold

Dwight Griswold was one of the first republican governors (if not the very first) to recognize that the oncoming war was not a political party question. With a background of old-time American patriotic descent, our Governor has given leadership to the cause of world freedom as the only basis for world peace. We are glad to have his contribution to this issue which is dedicated to the part Nebraska will take in planning for a permanent peace.

## A Memory Train Through Nebraska

This railroad train of my memories came in the night, like a dream. It was a very real dream and a most realistic train—started, perhaps, by the biennial meeting of Nebraska's one-house legislature. This train was a double-header: It had a Union Pacific engine in front and a Burlington engine behind. It carried a long string of cabooses and passenger cars, and it ran over all the tracks of all the railroads that have been built in Nebraska since the first spike was driven in Omaha.

The train rolled over these mystic rails, stopping at the stations where familiar faces, each turned toward Lincoln, boarded the cars of their choice. Every passenger carried an annual pass which he presented to the conductor, who made a memorandum in his little book and passed on. There were no paying passengers on that legislative train.

The Dreamer moved slowly down the aisles, observing all the familiar faces of those men who flocked to Lincoln to run the government. Each face told a story to one familiar with the history of Nebraska legislatures: a story full of the passions, the conflicts, the bursts of fiery oratory, the big roars of laughter, the fisticuffs, the secret councils, which shaped the destiny of Nebraska through more than seventy years.

There was the big frame of David Butler, boldest builder of the new commonwealth; near by, the little figure of Edward Rosewater, called "Christ-killing Jew" by his enemies—and there were many of them. In the same car were those two pioneers of Nemaha County who filled the first forty years of Nebraska with their fame—hatchet-faced Church Howe and blue-shirted Tom Majors; rivals for a lifetime, and both failing in their ultimate objective.

In another car of the train was a tall, delicate figure with long, daintily trimmed beard: James W. Dawes, the "band-box politician" of the rough homesteading period. In the seat with him sat H. M. Wells, old-time editor of *Crete*, who died by his own hand in his disappointed years. In this same car one could never mistake the short, round-faced, energetic figure of C. D. Casper of David City, for many years the leading spirit on the legislative floor, whose fiery zeal pushed through the investigation

of state affairs that revealed great frauds, leading to the impeachment of three state officers and their ultimate acquittal by a partisan Supreme Court.

How they flock—the faces on this legislative memory train! Senator Fleeks Hale of Norfolk, a soldier in a Virginia regiment fighting under Lee, and leader in the livestock and farming industry of the Elkhorn Valley. Frank North of Columbus, who led the Pawnee battallion in the Sioux Wars and won never-dying fame. And with him his brother, Jim North, splendid specimen of copper-riveted democrat, who broke the democratic column only once in his legislative career by casting one of the decisive votes for William V. Allen, candidate of the Populist Party for United States Senator from Nebraska in 1893.

Most of these men in the legislative train were on their way up: headed for Congress, for Governor, for United States Senator, for judges of the District and Supreme Courts. Some of them were on their way out, but they rode on the Memory Train and each had in his pocket a pass over all railroads in Nebraska, big and little, long and short.

There were other faces of the fighting days: There was red-headed Fred Newberry, who achieved immortality by putting his name on the railroad regulation bill which he knew nothing about. There was another red-head, I. A. Sheridan from far-off Indianola, who fought a pitched battle with the sergeant-at-arms. And in another car another famous fighter, H. G. Stewart, Senator from Dawes County, with a full-flowing set of whiskers—those same whiskers which a namesake, R. Q. Stewart, then sergeant-at-arms, seized and viciously tweaked because H. G. refused to sit down at the command of Lieutenant-Governor Tom Majors when a bill crippling schools along the railroad lines had the floor in 1895.

The cars shift through the stations, the decades. One coach of commanding interest is en route from Lincoln to Grand Island (July 26, 1910). In that car, too, are members of the legislature, but the chief interest centers around the mighty figure of William J. Bryan on his way to the democratic state convention, where he will try to make the democratic mule drink water from the County Option pump. There is a thrilling episode, forever, in state and national politics. There is a man who had been a demigod in

the eyes of democrats, on the way to take such a beating in the house of his friends as never democrat or republican received, before or since. In that car sits W. M. Maupin, one of the Bryan editors, damning the Bryan determination to force county option down the mule's throat. All the pent-up hatred of the Nebraska liquor controversy for thirty years was concentrated in that one volcanic eruption.

Then the car changes, and the scene. It becomes a sleeping car with thirty-three senators lying around on cots and bunks, with the Senate in session trying to pass or kill a railroad control bill. The sleeping-party ends when the railroad buys up one of the senators and ships him out of the state. What a drama for some theater of the future!

Whirling along in another car were the members of the legislature, shaking in political apprehension while three thousand angry and hungry citizens marched down the aisles shouting, "Work! Work! We want work! We want bread!"

Another nearby car in the train carries Charley Bryan, democratic governor, in one end of the car and the republican majority in the other end, throwing mud balls at each other as they try to pass an appropriation bill and fail at the end of the session.

In a huddle in another car are the Eight Immortals—the eight obstinate bolting republicans who left the republican caucus in the fateful winter of 1901 because they refused to vote for the republican caucus choice for United States Senate, D. E. Thompson. There the eight are in a huddle: C. E. Steele of Jefferson; A. R. Olson of Cuming; J. E. Broderick of Clay; J. E. Evans of North Platte; J. J. McCarthy of Dixon; Dan Swanson of Dodge; W. G. Whitmore of Hamilton. In the rest of the car are the republican majority shouting and clamoring for party unity, and all the republican overlords of the land joining in the demand for unity.

So the eight obstinate immortals held the fort and D. E. Thompson did not go to the United States Senate, but he named the two men who did go. Such a Dream Train—and every bit of it true.

In the classic story of the Thousand and One Arabian Nights is the Princess Scheherazade who told a different and thrilling story every night until her new husband forgot his promise to kill

her, and so she lives on forever in the literature of the world. The story of the Thousand and One Nebraska Nights lives on in the memory of the historian and will be told to all generations which live hereafter on these Plains. Other tales and other nights and other chapters follow.

And the Memory Train runs on. All the familiar faces—the Big Shots and the Little Echoes, clamoring for recognition. Their faces are in the framed collections of the Historical Society, awaiting an adequate picture gallery for their exhibition in the new Historical Society Building.

### Fifty Years in Custer County

Emerson R. Purcell has achieved fifty years as publisher of the *Custer County Chief* and celebrated the event with one of the most remarkable anniversary editions known to the Historical Society newspaper collection. It is a seventy-page illustrated magazine printed in the regular newspaper form. It is just one of those things in the country newspaper world like that giraffe in the circus which made the old farmer who looked at it say: "There ain't no such durned animal."

The country editor is the chief historian of his locality. If he lives many years in a community he knows more people than any other resident. He carries under his hat the intimate knowledge of all the affairs, public and private, in his circulation district. He does not print them all, because he is a human being and because he desires the welfare of the human family in that region. But he does print from time to time the story of the chief events important to know and necessary to know in many cases. The writer of this paragraph spent fourteen years in a country newspaper office and knows the story of the country editor's lot reasonably well.

But here is Emerson R. Purcell who has lived fifty years in one county and published a newspaper through all those years. It is an event worth celebrating and giving a place in the annals of the Nebraska Historical Society Collections.

There are some interesting and peculiar things in the fifty-year story of Emerson Purcell's *Custer County Chief*. Most of

the early-time editors were political writers. In the columns of their papers they fought the battles of their party, and the battles of their political friends, year in and year out. Purcell never was a political editor. In fact, during a large part of the time he did not have a political or editorial column. He had an idea, apparently, that if he could get all the personal and local news of the big Custer County empire into his office every week and print it, the public would buy the paper and the advertisers would fill it with advertising. This policy proved to be a good bet. The *Custer County Chief* has been for years conspicuously at the summit of the country newspaper press in Nebraska. It has built for itself a splendid brick building and filled it with the best of newspaper equipment in the state. It has made itself a household necessity in Custer County

In this Golden Anniversary edition Publisher Purcell has achieved a distinct place at the top of the ladder as a Nebraska historian. He must have had a lot of good helpers because he never could have done the job alone. He has sifted out the grain from the strawstack to make an attractive and fascinating story of the first foundation of a Nebraska country community. Custer County has had all the elements characteristic of American life on this continent: a great block of arable and grazing land of different types; a climate to match; a representative early settlement of typical American-born people; a series of conflicts with natural obstacles; a vast public forum where the free people fought out their different opinions and interests; the emergence of great leaders, great disasters, splendid triumphs; the establishment of a typical American state and county; a look forward across the coming centuries with confidence and faith.

All these things, and more, make the life of the *Custer County Chief* and its publisher, Emerson R. Purcell, conspicuous in the history of the Great Plains and its settlement in our time.

## Important Additions to Historical Library

Gifts are coming to the State Historical Society in greater number than ever before—gifts to its Library, gifts to its Museum. Gifts of high intrinsic value as well as historical value. As custodian of this growing collection, it is the duty of the Historical Society to provide for their preservation and exhibition.

One of the largest and most valuable gifts to the Historical Library is that of 380 volumes from the office of Senator George W. Norris. Among these books are a number of rare documents on the Great Plains region which deal with vital aspects of Nebraska life. The Bicentennial Edition of *The Writings of George Washington*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, includes 37 volumes.

The literature created by Washington is the most important literature in the history of the United States. This splendid new Washington set contains almost the whole of his recorded thoughts, and in his own unedited words. His detailed and vivid (though restrained) descriptions illuminate the pages of American history and impel one to its re-reading in this clear light. His account of the crossing of the Delaware illustrates this point.

Another notable gift to this Library comes from John Cassel, long a New Yorker but before that a Nebraskan, son of Territorial pioneers and born at Nebraska City in 1874. As cartoonist on the *New York World* and *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in particular he acquired fame for his strong, expressive work. For twenty-five years he drew "one a day," then retired and indulged his hobby—the collection of antiques.

"Then came Pearl Harbor and I felt the urge to do something. So now I am making these cartoons (gratis) for the duration. I have more time to do them, and for that reason they are more carefully drawn and better suited for you than the older ones that are not as timely."

So John Cassel has had framed and shipped to the Superintendent five of his drawings that appeared in the *New Canaan Advertiser*, "which has twice received prizes for the best weekly newspaper in America." And the Society displays them proudly. They form a special exhibit and deal with the present World War.