



The Editor's Table

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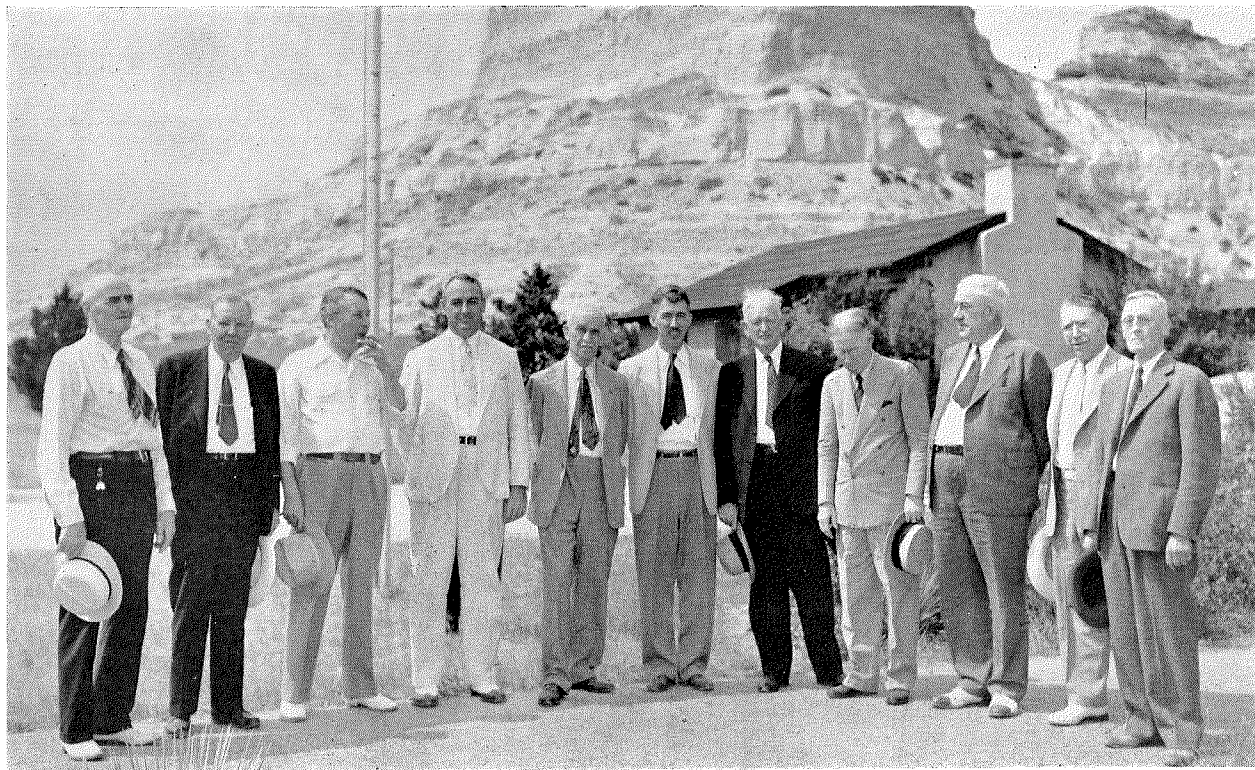
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OFFICIALS OF AMERICAN PIONEER TRAILS ASSOCIATION
A Memorial Service Honoring William H. Jackson

The Editor's Table

American Pioneer Trails Meetings in Nebraska

A series of patriotic and potential meetings was held in Nebraska from August 12 to August 15, under the auspices of the American Pioneer Trails Association. President Howard R. Driggs of New York City was in charge. In cooperation with this nation-wide organization were the Nebraska State Historical Society and various groups of citizens of Nebraska towns along all of the Overland Trails.

In Nebraska, meetings were held at Old Fort Kearny, Fort McPherson Cemetery, North Platte, Scottsbluff, Fort Mitchell, Robidou Pass near Gering, Henry, Fort Laramie, and on across the plains and mountains to Oregon.

In Oregon the meetings culminated in a celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the meeting of Oregon pioneers for the organization of the territory of Oregon. In Nebraska the principal event centered at Mitchell Pass, adjoining Scottsbluff Mountains and the National Museum.

Attendance at all the meetings shows interest in this aspect of Nebraska history. The first camping place (1866) of that remarkable pioneer, W. H. Jackson, had been designated by him on his last trip west in 1938. A notable marker to his memory will be erected there. An addition to the Scottsbluff National Museum will be constructed with special collections relating to this first photographer of the mountains and plains. Dr. Driggs has secured a gift of \$10,000 from Mr. Julius F. Stone, and as rapidly as possible the money will be expended in this fine historic memorial on Nebraska soil.

Superintendent Sheldon and Museum Director Hill attended these meetings as representatives of the Nebraska State Historical Society. They were joined at various points on the route by Congressman Curtis of Minden; Senator Fred Mueller of Kearney; Wallace Thornton, Secretary of the Kearney Chamber of Commerce; A. B. Wood, Gering; Merrill J. Mattes, H. G.

Wisner, T. L. Green and others of Scottsbluff; Paul Henderson, Alliance; Judge Fred A. Wright, Scottsbluff; and Emil Kopac of Oshkosh, Nebraska. In addition there were present representatives from six states as follows: N. D. Jackson, Independence, Missouri; Dr. Leroy R. Hafen, Colorado; J. S. Weppner, John C. Thompson, Warren Richardson and Tom Powers, all of Wyoming; George Q. Morris, Utah; Francis Lambert, Oregon; Dr. Howard R. Driggs, New York.

Nebraska is fortunate in having within her borders the principal routes of travel east and west across the American continent and around the world. This geographical condition is a permanent one. It constitutes one of the great assets of Nebraska as a tourist route and a place of patriotic pilgrimage. The children of Nebraska are especially fortunate, since these great compelling motives for American citizenship and world advantage are within her borders. No other state has so many miles of these overland trails and so many memorials of significance in world history as has Nebraska.

A Bureaucratic Institution We All Approve

By coincidence the writer met three men together in the office of the Lincoln Postmaster last week. The men were R. E. Fenton, outgoing Postmaster; O. E. Jerner, incoming Postmaster; and L. H. Watson, Assistant Postmaster. The unexpected and fraternal meeting brought to mind the historic sequence of postmasters in Lincoln, and the changes in the postal program which have marked that aspect of Nebraska history.

At the beginning of our recollection, all the postal positions in Nebraska were political perquisites. The way one secured a postal appointment was by active political services for the United States Senators and Congressmen who had the national administration back of them. This was true even of the railway mail service. While the majority of the appointees rendered efficient service to the public, yet the basis of each appointment was the party service rendered by each appointee. In some cases some very unpopular and even unqualified persons were appointed. There was no appeal.

Today most of the postal service is performed by persons

under civil service, during good behavior. Under this rule Assistant Postmaster Watson has been in continuous efficient service to the people of Lincoln during the last thirty-six years. In the case of the postmaster himself he serves under a four-year appointment, eligible to reappointment. Mr. Fenton has served seven years and has reached the age of retirement under the law. So under the present procedure examinations were held and from an eligible list under the examinations three persons qualified. From this number Mr. Jerner, for over twenty years Circulation Manager of the *Daily Star*, has just been appointed with the community goodwill regardless of politics.

The foregoing local history is significant toward a wide generalization. That generalization is this: The United States Postal Service is one of the largest business institutions of the country. It is run by the government and has been for one hundred and fifty years. The people who run it might be called a bunch of bureaucrats. They are not elected by the people. They are not chosen by a corporation or private enterprise. While there have been some errors in the management of the gigantic government enterprise, yet during these hundred years and more the institution has been conducted with increased efficiency and economy. No political partisan, corporation promoter or labor union is demanding the transformation of the government-owned enterprise into a private business adjunct. There it stands today, the postal-department exemplification of a government-managed business.

On July 4, 1892, a great convention of a new political party assembled in Omaha, Nebraska. There were over eleven hundred delegates coming from every state and territory. There were over ten thousand convention visitors coming from the same states and territories. It was a great, new, popular, powerful assembly of the people of the United States. It set new ideas thrilling the heart of the nation. It adopted a mighty platform which has been a guiding star in American politics through the years. One plank of that platform reads as follows:

We believe that the powers of government — in other words, of the people — should be expanded (as in the case of the postal service) as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end

that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land.

The editor of this magazine was elected a delegate and sat in that convention. The essential proposal of the post office plank is still a sound guide in American public affairs.

Is the United States Postal Department a bureaucracy?

Passing of a Pioneer Editor

EMERSON R. PURCELL, founder of the *Custer County Chief*, died at Broken Bow September 6, 1943. The State Historical Society has lost one of its best friends and Nebraska one of its best public servants. For over fifty years his loyal effective work in the heart of Nebraska has been a power for the state's best interests.

Hail Insurance in Nebraska

The following correspondence with Hon. A. T. Howard of Scottsbluff tells its own story. It will be followed in the next issue of this Magazine with information of consequence from Nebraska and Canada. The subject is one of first class importance: its discussion ought to lead to some practical economic results.

Dear Senator Howard:

I am interested in the hail loss problem in Nebraska. I notice your advertisement in the *Star-Herald* states that you write hail insurance on growing crops. I wish that you would give me the names of the companies you represent and the rates which are paid for hail insurance in your agency.

Hail insurance is a vital subject to every Nebraska farmer and, of course, through him to every Nebraska citizen. I have made investigations and written reports upon hail insurance in our state and in Canada. As a result of my reports the State of Nebraska enacted a hail insurance law some years ago. In its passage through the legislature it was emasculated by its enemies. It became a dead letter and was finally repealed.

The rates offered by the companies on hail insurance in Nebraska are extravagantly high. I have had occasion to investigate that subject thoroughly. I shall await with interest a statement from you. I have been a landowner and farmer in Scotts Bluff County since 1910, and consider deeply the question of hail insurance. Years ago I found the rates were too high and therefore carried my own insurance. In thirty-two years I have had three years of hail losses of magnitude on the section of land I own near Lyman. One of these was met by federal hail insurance; the others I met myself. It was cheaper to carry my own risk through thirty-two years than to pay the rates.

The federal hail insurance on wheat in the last few years has been a boon to Nebraska farmers. Just at present the appropriation for its continuance is an issue between the two houses in Congress.

In the Canadian Provinces a system of Provincial hail insurance has been established for more than forty years. I made a careful study of it

when I was there in 1913 and since. We ought to have a system of hail insurance in Nebraska covering the entire state. The cost to each farmer would be trifling, as I know. At present one farmer loses his year's work by a single hailstorm while his neighbor harvests an abundant and profitable crop, as has happened this year. We can end these excessive losses if we will. A heavy hailstorm within four miles of my land near Lyman last week, and another two weeks ago on the Dutch Flats north of Morrill, ruined the hopes of many Scotts Bluff farmers.

You are chairman of the Republican State Committee. You have a high responsibility in that position. You ought to be a leader in a state movement to furnish hail insurance at cost to the farmers of Nebraska.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Senator Matzke of Seward County, who is chairman of our State Legislative Council now investigating power and water diversion. It is highly desirable that the Council shall add to its program an investigation of farm hail insurance in Nebraska.

Mr. Howard's reply, under date July 7, is as follows:

Dear Doctor Sheldon:

I have your letter with regard to the hail-loss problem in Nebraska. I agree with you that the cost of hail insurance in western Nebraska is almost prohibitive. We do, however, have quite a lot of inquiry, and we had some trouble in finding a connection that cared to solicit this class of business in our territory. You would be interested in a circular on the subject entitled: "Nebraska — 1943 Rates and Rules — Hail Insurance on Growing Crops." This circular contains a map showing the basic rates applicable to different zones in the state. East of Kearney, which enjoys a basic rate of 7%, the rate is probably not unduly excessive; but west of Kearney it increases until Scotts Bluff County has a basic rate of 12%. Potatoes and sugar beets take 4% less than the basic, or 8%. Wheat and oats take the basic rate of 12%, rye takes 14%, and barley and beans take 4% over the basic rate or 16%. I think you are correct in stating that, over a period of years, one can better afford to carry the risk than to pay the premium.

I shall be glad to talk with Senator Matzke at the first opportunity and see how he feels about the matter being given some study by the Legislative Council.

The company with which I am dealing is the Cavanaugh Company, General Agents at Omaha, who represent the Homestead Fire Insurance Company of Baltimore, Maryland.

With very best of personal good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

A. T. HOWARD.