

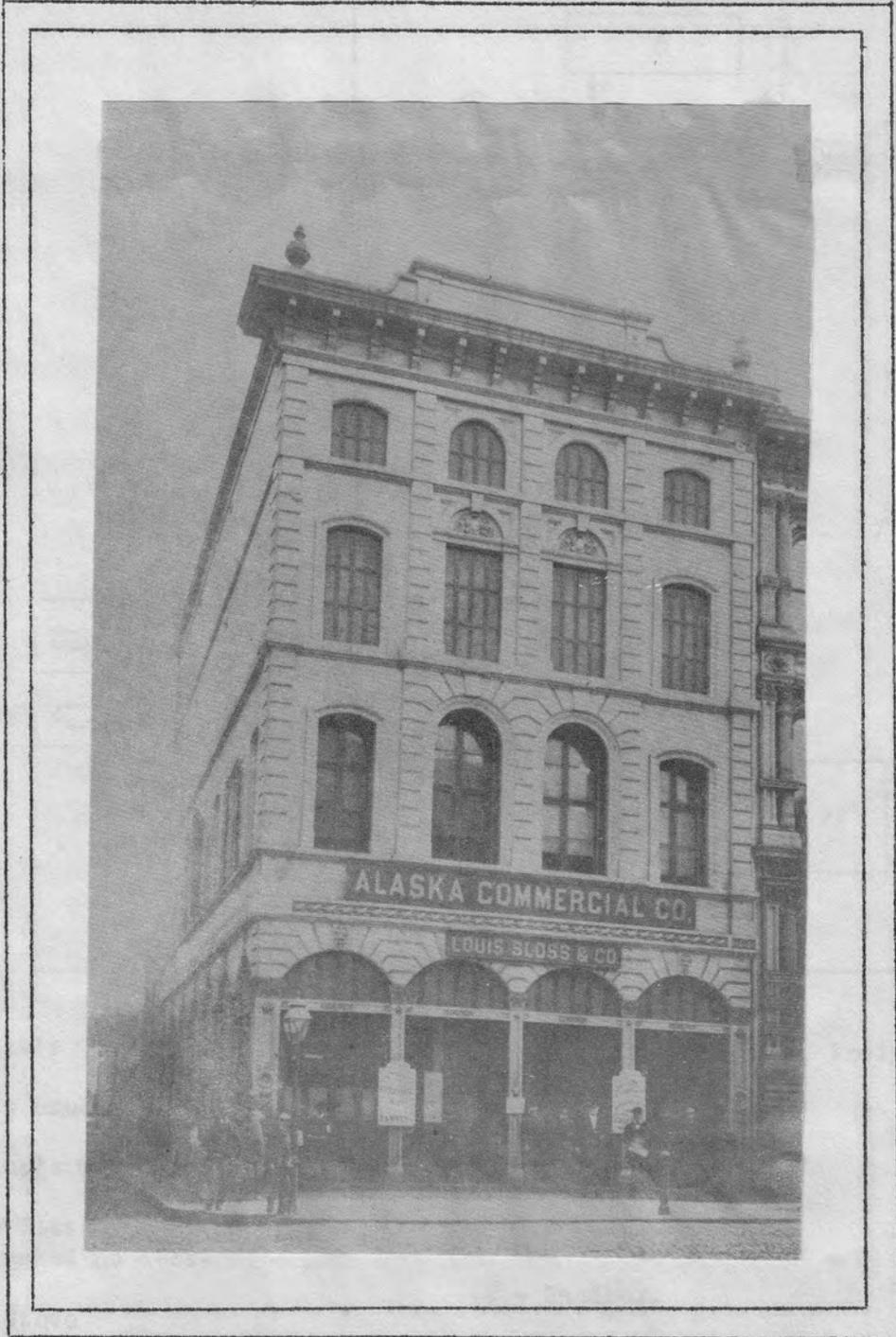
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ALASKA COMMERCIAL CO.
(Louis Sloss & Co.)
310 Sansome

By Louis Greene

310

SANSOME ST.

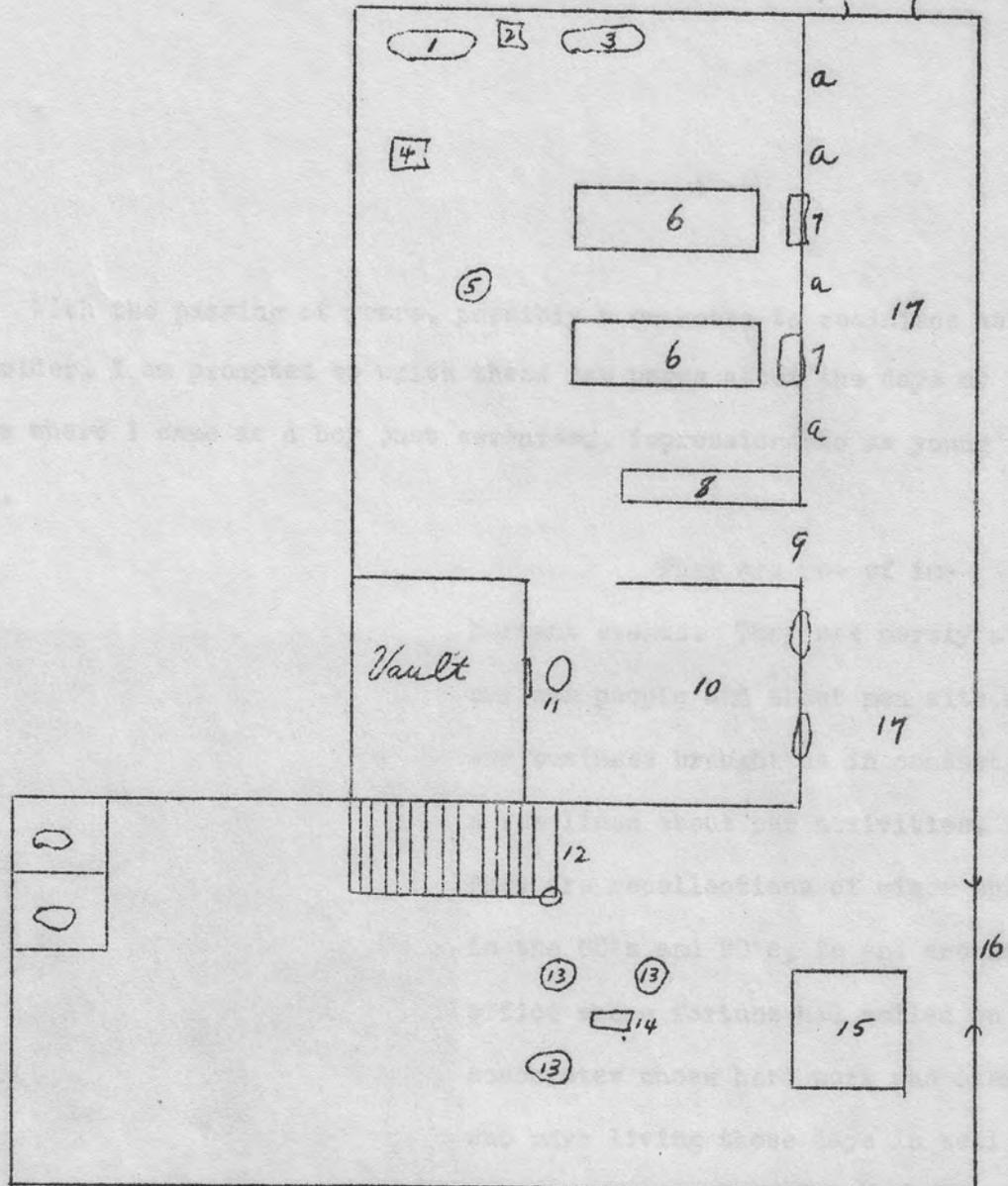
It is fully appreciated, that to any who might read this without having known the people mentioned, the paragraphs may be of little interest.



Sansome

Street.

Main
Entrance



- | | |
|--|---|
| 1.- Gerstle's desk. | 10 - Small room. Later, Freight and Pass. Dept. |
| 2 - Kohl's usual place. | 11 - Washstand. |
| 3 - Niebaum's desk. | 12 - Staircase. |
| 4 - Where Sloss might sit - he wanted no desk. | 13 - Chairs. |
| 5 - Wood Stove | 14 - Sandbox. |
| 6 - Clerks' desks. | 15 - Hoist by rope to upper floors. |
| 7 - Counters, in partition. | 16 - Halleck Street doors. |
| 8 - Counter at office entrance. | 17 - Hallway where Niebaum & Gerstle & Sloss would take daily walk. |
| 9 - Entrance to office. | AA - Glass Partitions to ceiling. |

With the passing of years, possibly a weakness to reminisce as one grows older, I am prompted to write these few pages about the days at 310 Sansome where I came as a boy just seventeen, impressionable as young people are.



They are not of important events. They are merely about our own people and about men with whom our business brought us in contact, and a few lines about our activities. They are recollections of minor episodes in the 80's and 90's, in and around an office where fortune had smiled on associates whose hard work was over and who were living those days in well earned ease; in quiet, and in peace of mind, never to know of the great fire, the world war, the present commercial

worries, and the crime in Germany.

Ours was a unique place where bosses sat, and clerks carried on, in one large office; and to things going on and with conversations generally, we juniors were never out of range, if you know what I mean.

Upon my entering the employ, Gerstle and Sloss were in their early sixties, naturally in my eyes, old men. Sloss, with chin beard, easy

to meet, a good mixer, and who could frequently be seen standing at the curb on Sansome and California Streets, with his back to the sidewalk, eating peanuts, and who even in the office always wore a "stovepipe" hat, a little tilted on his head, and a cigar to one side of his mouth and pointing slightly upward.

Gerstle, with side-whiskers, and altogether remindful of Vanderbilt's likeness on New York Central Stock Certificates, and whose modesty and reticence created an impression in many that he was proud and unapproachable. How little they knew that fine nature.

Niebaum, with full beard and everything that grew on the face, hardly ever without a cigarette, and while talking would light a match, hold it until burning his fingers, then calmly strike another as if nothing had happened.

And Kohl with old fashioned low cut vest and a ruby stud in center of his shirt bosom.

They all came to California in the early days, Sloss a forty-niner who crossed the plains. - Gerstle in '50 by steamer via Isthmus of Panama, third class or maybe lower. Anyway he told me it was tough. -

Niebaum came around the Horn from Finland, as ordinary seaman before the mast, one hundred and more days on the way. - And Kohl, who began life as a stoker on a Georgia rail-road engine.

The Alaska Commercial Company was incorporated in 1868, and in that year joined with Hutchinson Kohl & Co. who also had been operating in the Territory. The latter received Stock in the Alaska Commercial Company, which in 1870 secured a lease from the United States of the Pribilov Seal Islands in Bering Sea, for a period of twenty years, with

the exclusive privilege of taking seals, 100,000 skins annually. The firm name of Hutchinson Kohl & Co. was retained by us, and in that name a twenty year lease was made with the Russian Government for their Seal Islands, also in Bering Sea but near the Asiatic side. The take there was about 50,000 skins, so that from 1870 to 1890, it can be said we supplied the world with its sealskin requirements, the Islands mentioned being practically the only source of the fur seal.

There was besides, our extensive fur and trading business pretty well throughout the Territory including many stations in the long expanse of the Aleutian Islands. We owned ocean steamers and sailing vessels, and in the very early seventies were already established in the Yukon District, owning River boats to supply those stations. With the Klondike rush that fleet was augmented by large Mississippi river boats built in St. Louis and shipped North in parts.



WILL GERSTLE IN ALASKA
ON INSPECTION MDSE. STOCKS

There were six separate corporations for our six Salmon canneries, and they had their fleet of vessels, and also their own problems of outfitting and superintendents and fishing gangs, etc.

In addition we were operating two producing mines on one of the Aleutian Islands, these companies incorporated and likewise managed in our office.

All in all it was a big business, and meant immense purchases in the United States and Canada of all and every kind of merchandise, machinery and equipment. Leon Sloss was purchasing agent, later succeeded by Will Gerstle, with a separate location necessitated on the second floor, and was that a

busy place! And the main floor office was hardly a haven for rest. All hands reported around 8:15, Saturday afternoons were like any other afternoon, and many a legal holiday went in the discard. And it will be information for our younger family members that up to the late 80's and early 90's Louis Sloss & Company owned and were operating a tannery and conducting a wool and California fur and deerskin business; this in addition to the activities just mentioned.

The Asiatic lease provided that there must be a Russian partner in the business, so we secured the lease as Hutchinson, Kohl, Philippeus & Co. Actually, Philippeus, who lived in St. Petersburg, had no interest in the business, we paying him, I believe, \$10,000 a year for what amounted to the use of his name. As far as I know, the Russian government never inquired into this. I remember Philippeus in our office only once; a very large man, full beard, hearty and jolly, and in conversation would tell of his fondness for whist, and how he could look at his thirteen cards, place them face down on the table and so play his hand; and he told how he could easily eat a young spring chicken, bones and all. (In line with what Niebaum would relate of Russian capacity to eat and drink.)

And there was Grebnitsky, Governor-General of those Islands. It was to an extent in his power to limit the quota of skins to be taken by us in any one year. In my time, he was in the office once, on his way to St. Petersburg via San Francisco. He made us a brief visit, during which he excused himself, returning shortly to the front office in apparent consternation and excitement. A roll of currency from his back trouser pocket, 2500 roubles, had fallen in and gone down! What was he to do? Well, we arranged that (if you follow me); but the folks knew it wasn't true, simply a way of his to suggest a contribution from the company. After all, he was just the Russian official of those times.

Apropos of the foregoing paragraph, it is only fair to the Russians to say that during the term of the United States seal lease we suspected also an occasional American official who I think hoped to be "seen", they apparently assuming that our valuable concession being so far away, we simply must be doing wrong. A number of charges were publicly made that we were taking from the Islands more skins than allowed under the lease, statements emanating from petty government employees to the Governor of Alaska himself. The matter was finally brought up in Congress, and some who had made these accusations were subpoenaed; but when our Washington attorneys, naturally insisting upon facts, got through with these poor fellows there was nothing left of them, and the matter of our violations of contract was dropped for good.

It should be mentioned that our skins were taken on the two small Islands of St. Paul and St. George, on long stretches of beach, where the young males congregated in large numbers. They were killed and skinned right there, hauled and counted into the salting warehouses under government inspection, later counted into our steamer, and tallied on arrival in San Francisco by Treasury Department Agents. All in all, to have taken more than the 100,000 allowed would have meant the bribing of every official on the Islands, our own employees there, government inspectors here, mates and captain of the steamer, and our entire bookkeeping staff in San Francisco. It would have been just impossible.

Just another word about unfriendly moves:

There was for example in San Francisco a weekly paper, "The City Front Gazette", its news and columns what the name implies. They suggested our support, as vessel owners, but we never did any advertising and were not interested. Then followed every once in a while vicious mention of the "Alaska Pirates", and of Mr. Sloss as Mr. Seal-ass, the latter frequently, they apparently thinking it quite a bon mot; but in time the attacks died, likewise the paper.

There was also "Public Opinion", a weekly published by I. N. Choyinski, who at times has scurrilous paragraphs in his paper about our Alaska business, all of which we naturally ignored. At the time of the Wasserman trial there was a letter from him: "At this juncture, more than any other, will the books and papers I have on Alaska be of any use to you?" Sloss shouted something about gall and nerve, immediately writing in few words: "Neither at this juncture nor at any other do we want to have anything to do with you or your books." I mention this partly because it is the only time in my recollection that Sloss wrote anything in the office. Gerstle, in longhand (see last page), attended to some correspondence of what might be termed executive communications. Practically all letters were by us juniors, also in longhand. It was not until 1896 that we had stenographer and typewriter.

Apart from sealskins, our collections in the early days comprised blue, red, silver, cross and white fox, land otter, marten, mink, wolf, wolverine, bear of different kinds including the giant grizzly, muskrat, ermine, lynx and beaver. Of Sea otter we received from 700 to 1000 annually: large, silver-tipped, very dark skins could bring as high as £200, purchased almost entirely for the European market. Fine silver fox were also in demand, and likewise purchased for European cities. I saw in a London catalogue in the late 80's one skin (not ours) which brought £585. Many furs now in great demand were neglected, mink and marten, for example, averaging say eight shillings and twelve shillings, respectively. Now a fine mink coat of say sixty skins can cost from \$2500 to \$4500. Also sable, which came to us from Kamchatka and neighboring Siberian territory, averaged only £3 to £4.

The sea otter we received came from the shorelines of many of the Aleutian Islands, and on account of their value were ruthlessly hunted and practically exterminated. However, since 1910 their hunting and killing have been prohibited, enabling small herds to again appear. Government penalties for taking and having them are severe, and disposal is difficult as no fur dealer or garment maker would dare to buy them.

From 1870 to 1890 we were by far the largest fur buyers in the Territory, our agencies and stations covering many miles by land and sea; but with the great coming demand in styles for furs, the advent of mail routes, greater traveling facilities and consequent visits by professional fur buyers, and the purchase of skins by all sorts of people in the Territory from miners down, very few skins now come into our hands. Such as we now receive are mostly blue fox from farms in Alaska; it may be interesting to know that these are on a small scale compared with silver fox farms in Norway, Sweden, Canada and a few of our northern middle states. In Wisconsin there was taken last winter 25,000 skins from each of two farms. The industry is scientifically carried on and beautiful skins produced. However, owing to the great number now available, values of silvers have gone down almost unbelievably.

Sloss and Gerstle were in the office practically every day even though their entire summers were passed in San Rafael, in those fine



VIOLET TERRACE. 1883.

old homes. They always looked forward to the calm days and mild evenings, and sitting around out of doors, free from the winds and fog of the city; and with them lived the children and their little families. Gerstle particularly loved every inch of his place, and could not understand how any of the younger people could think of Tahoe or other outing even for a week or two. Grandchildren were around in numbers, basking in continual sunshine or resting in the cool of the redwoods, and among the

violets. I show you here a part of that progeny from Ben Lilienthal down.



Niebaum was not here regularly, but frequently at his vineyard in Napa County. He had made wine a hobby and a study, receiving innumerable books from Europe on the subject. At the beginning it was not a venture for profit, his aim being to produce as good a wine as could be made in California.

Kohl lived in San Mateo, coming up only two or three times a month. He had a large place; gardens, and fine oaks. You see it today alongside the highway, but now owned by the town for a baseball park and Public Play Ground.

The entire collection of furs went annually to London for sale at public auction; forwarded by rail to New York, thence across.

The seal skins were packed here on the dock in large specially built barrels, about 3000 packages in all. These, with our other furs in many large cases, was welcome business for the railroad companies.

In time, the folks somehow had an idea that the S. P. was charging "all the traffic could bear", as the saying was, and attempted negotiations for a reduction. But thinking they had us sewed up, were curt in their refusal. "Nothing doing, Sloss" said Stubbs. "Well there may be, Stubbs", said Sloss.

And the following season, we forwarded the seal skins to Panama by our "ST. PAUL"; thence by other carriers to England. And next year the railroad people paid us a friendly visit, or should it be said they came around.

Shipping and transportation was naturally an important part of the business not only during the operating season -- March to November -- but when the fleet of steamers, sailing vessels and schooners was laid up for the winter in Oakland Creek. Repairs and overhauling required careful supervision and attention. Vessels' captains were rarely changed, but advent of a coming year's activities meant selection of engineers, mates, etc.; in those days unions were not giving us any orders. We had a liberal policy; all were treated well but we did demand strict compliance to a clause in the shipping Articles; "That no officer or crew member is to engage in trading for furs, under penalty of forfeiture of all wages due."

And these few pages would not be complete without mention that our women figured quite prominently here and in the North, in the companies' shipping records. For, among others in the fleet, were there not the steamers "SUSIE", "HANNAH", "SARAH", "ALICE", "BELLA", "BERTHA", "DORA", "SADIE", and "LOUISE",? (and there was a male member, the Schn. "LEON").



CAPT. BLAIR
OF THE "LEON"

We had in the old building two porters with us for many years, Martin Meyer and Wm. Dauterman. When furs came down from the North the two men were busy, but outside of that and cleaning the offices in the morning, they had little to do and gradually did less. One afternoon Niebaum coming into the office from the rear said "You know I never interfere with running things around here, but I was in the back just now, and the place looked as if it hadn't been dusted for a week. So I spoke to Dauterman about it and he gave me hell". Upon which Gerstle jumped up exclaiming "Well, we'll see about that". He walked out quickly, returning in about five minutes saying, "Well Niebaum, he gave me hell too".

Gerstle was always calm, but I am recalling 1895 when the Wasserman suit was coming to trial. Gerstle had been in Frankfurt in 1888, had seen Wasserman and Livingston, stating he and Sloss had been doing all the work for years in San Francisco and were entitled to a larger stockholding in the company. The foreigners agreed to sell part of their shares, payment was made by Gerstle, and a cable came to Sloss advising purchase. Before the trial Thomas our attorney, wanted to see just what Gerstle had telegraphed, but we could not find the cable. Gerstle was very much upset; did we have no office system at all; how was it possible that no one could remember the wording; young men nowadays have absolutely no memory, etc. etc. Maybe he was right in this last, but after all it was seven years since the telegram had been received.

All in all, the old gentlemen were well balanced in their ideas of things, but a little flare up was bound to show once in a great while. And well I remember how a young man came in asking for Niebaum. The Captain stepped to the counter but in about two minutes turned around, shouting "Call one of the porters and have this man thrown out!" He was a life insurance solicitor,

and the mention of life insurance to Niebaum was like the proverbial red flag. Maybe a peculiar superstition, but he wanted them to leave him alone and not interfere in his private ideas of the future.

Kohl did not smoke, but once in a great while would lean over toward Niebaum's desk, take from a box always open, one of Niebaum's paper mouth piece Russian cigarettes, at times putting the wrong end in his mouth, and when it did not light would mutter "What in hell's the matter", forgetting that the same thing had happened before.

Naive in a way and quiet, he was extremely sensitive. One day crossing Sansome Street I cut my foot pretty badly on an old piece of railway track. It was bandaged for several weeks and I had to walk with a cane. Kohl must have noticed me, and from that moment did not talk to or look at me for over six months. I had no idea what it was all about until Captain Erskine happened to say to me, "I guess Kohl will never forgive you for imitating him". Then I knew; you see Kohl has a slight limp, always using a cane.

Mary Kohl, on the high road to being an old maid, a few years after Kohl's death, married Evans Pillsbury. Apparently Kohl had been quite content to have Mary remain single, for an old friend visiting the city called at our office inquiring about the family, and asked Kohl if Mary was married yet. "Oh indeed" answered Kohl, "Mamie's not the kind of a girl to leave her Mother and Father." (?)

And incidentally, I wonder what the old man, the soul of simplicity would have thought about Fred, when engaged to Bessie, ordering eighteen suits of clothes. (I saw the bill.)

He went to Europe with Mrs. Kohl and Mary, and knowing him, suspected that he was being taken along as many American men were. Upon his return, he handed me some papers asking me to look out for the case upon arrival, custom

entry, etc., adding "I bought a couple of pictures in the Paris Saloon."

(And slightly apropos, some years ago Edgar Walter and I were sitting late one afternoon in a large room at a dressmakers in Florence, Italy. On the other side of the room some thirty feet away was sitting alone, a little man twirling his cane. We had paid no attention to him when suddenly, "I suppose you fellows are waiting for your wives". We answered yes. He continued, "So am I, and I wish to Christ I was back in New York.")

Kohl kept his account and funds with Louis Sloss & Company, rarely asking about it, with implicit confidence in his associates. However, one morning he called to Ben Arnhold, cashier, "Philip (this he always called Ben), how do I stand on the books?" Ben looked at the ledger and replied "About \$29,000.00, Captain." And Kohl asked "Have I got it, or do I owe it?" He really had no idea.

When he came to town he usually wanted some cash and one time drew \$100.00. That night we were short \$20.00. Early next morning Kohl hurried to our office from San Mateo, asking how our cash was. He was told, and explained at length about his stopping at Third and Townsend for oysters; had found six twenties in his pocket instead of five; didn't want to get any one into trouble, but could not come back to the office on account of his train.

About three weeks later when asking for money he remarked how he had been overpaid recently, why he could not come back, etc. We got that story from him for many months, not as a joke but quite innocently. Any way it got to be a by-word in the office. Niebaum or Louis Sloss, Jr. when wanting money would very seriously say "Ben, give me \$100.00, but be careful; you remember one time Kohl got \$20.00 too much", or they might say "Let me see how was that thing about Kohl and \$20.00 too much?" They loved joking now and then and the original occurrence seemed to have been just made for them.

There were few days when some friend or visitor didn't come in to sit down and chat with the folks: Wm. T. Coleman, John Rosenfeld, Levi Strauss, Alvinza Hayward, John Parrott, President Jordan of Stanford, Benj. I. Wheeler of Berkeley, Officers of the Navy and Revenue Cutters, Governors Low, Perkins and Pardee, General Otis of "L. A. Times", Tom Brown, Daniel Meyer, L. L. Baker, Philip Barth, Timothy Hopkins, E. E. Eyre, Philip Lilienthal, A. H. Payson, and others.

Also Claus Spreckels, one of the first to establish a beet sugar refinery in California and who several times consulted the folks on that project; and in his remarks would complain of the --- --- --
- ----- of the honest farmer. However, we took stock in the venture at \$100 per share, selling out with others about two years later at \$380 per share; so that as far as we were concerned we really thought the farmer was quite all right.

And Henry and Irving Scott of the Union Iron Works in which Sloss and Gerstle had stock: that company were builders of the battleship "Oregon" which in the Spanish-American War made the famous trip from San Francisco around the Horn to Cuba.

Also Yerkes of Chicago with whom we became largely interested in Chicago Street Railways; and Elkins and Widener with whom we participated in New York and Philadelphia Street Railways.

And there were occasional bearers of letters from J. & W. Seligman & Co. and Ladenberg Thalman & Co., and from other friends in New York and Washington.

Something of a character was John ("Johnny") Rosenfeld, (a smaller man than his son Henry) frequently coming around for a chat, smoking a big cigar, quite a portion inside his mouth. He was an intimate friend of John W. Mackey and one time home from the East, the folks asked about Mackey and his sons, and Rosenfeld answering between puffs, "Well, you know, the boys don't understand anything about business: of course they are doing well, but not making any money; of course they've got plenty of money; but they don't amount to much; of course they are fine fellows but Mackey has lots of trouble with them; of course they get along well together. Mackey told me a lot about them, but of course he don't talk about his boys", etc. And this also got to be something of a by word, and Louis Sloss Jr. many years later might say, "I see we're overdrawn in the bank: of course we've got lots of money there" or, "I had too much lunch today: of course I didn't eat anything", etc. And there was always a laugh.

I was very young in the office when a friend of the folks called offering a mine near Grass Valley. He knew about it; was convinced of the high values, and it was a chance that shouldn't be missed. He continued so enthusiastically that we decided to send an expert to make a report. I thought how lucky our people were! The man left, and some days later a postal card came with nothing but these words "Have looked at the property; you don't want it". I couldn't believe it! This grand chance to so suddenly terminate and the matter to be closed in nine words on a post card! How my sympathy went out to Sloss and Gerstle. What a disappointment.

I had yet to learn that turning down these golden opportunities was just regular business.

Gerstle was quite immaculate in his dress. Niebaum didn't care for clothes. When he had ordered a suit, or as he termed it having it built, the customary notice would come about trying on, and as regularly as they appeared on his desk, just so regularly they were thrown in the waste basket, and it would be weeks before he would do anything about it. He had several times asked me whether I would do him a favor. Why, of course, what was it? Would I please go up to Kearney Street and buy him a hat, and which I did and it was quite okeh.



NIEBAUM AT RANCH

He disliked country hotels or outings of any kind. If away from the city the only place for him was his ranch at Rutherford. He just did not want to be troubled, but one morning he came to me very seriously saying his wife had been importuning him about a few days' visit to Del Monte, and he had finally agreed; but she was worried about his clothes, and had asked him to consult me about the proper things. Knowing the Captain so well, I replied in the same serious manner. For the morning, a light sport suit. Yes, he had had that in mind. Then a change for tea and music in the afternoon; blue coat, striped silk shirt, flannel trousers, a belt, white shoes. Yes he imagined those would be necessary. And for dinner, naturally, pumps and tuxedo. O.K., he knew that was the thing. Was I sure I had not forgotten anything?

And all the while he was having a wonderful time with himself, and he knew that I knew it. And they went to Del Monte and he wore the same suit, morning, noon, and night.

And which reminds me, there was another of our Associates who like Niebaum was given to enjoying jokes by himself. H. M. Hutchinson, one of our large stockholders, lived in Washington, D.C., full of fun and always arranging to have a good time, believing that for him anyway, life should be jolly and that it was made for that. He had no business concern excepting to await his dividend checks from the Alaska Commercial Company.

In those days much of the larger and more important shopping of Capital City residents was done in Philadelphia, some three hours nearer than New York. Mrs. Hutchinson had bought quite a lot of furniture there, and he going to Philadelphia shortly thereafter, dropped in at the Store inquiring how the account stood. He was told that a statement had been mailed Mrs. Hutchinson but apparently no attention was given. "Well", said Hutchinson "I tell you what: you send her husband a copy of that account and if that Son -- - don't pay it, I will".

His family was among the Four Hundred of Washington; two attractive daughters, one of which Mrs. Jack Webb you may remember was out here in the early 90's stopping with the folks in San Rafael for a short time and she would never dare venture from the porch without parasol and gloves, not wanting the sun to touch her skin.

With gay times in Washington, the girls might attend two or three dances the same night coming home from one to be "rubbed down", as Hutchinson said, before starting out again.

A friend of Niebaum's in Napa Valley was Jacob Schram, maker of the Schramsberg wines. A severe looking man, long straight beard, hair back from his forehead, and much like the old prints of John Brown of Osawatomie. He did his selling mostly through local commission houses. One afternoon he dropped in for a visit with Niebaum, who asked "What are you doing in the city today?", and Schram replied he had come down to receive settlement for a carload of wine consigned to New York. "I hope you did well" said Niebaum. "Oh yes" replied Schram, "All I owed them was the freight."

These were also the days of the old Tivoli Theatre, where throughout the year, admission 25 cents, could be heard comic opera, but occasionally they would bravely attempt something more serious. And here one could have beer and sandwiches served at their seats; an easy going place to spend the evening.

One morning Niebaum came down town in great excitement. I asked what was wrong. "Such a scandal! How could the city allow it". He and his wife had gone to the Tivoli for a performance of Tannhauser. They hardly ever went out at night, knew nothing of the places of amusement, but had noticed a Tivoli advertisement announcing the production and had ventured forth expecting to enjoy an evening of Wagner. As could have been expected it was bad and the Captain took it as a personal matter.

Leon Sloss was Dean of us younger men, big hearted, popular, and alert, severe when necessary, but inclined to move away from things unpleasant.



With the advent of the Klondike discovery and a greatly increasing freight and passenger business, it was necessary to make shipping a separate unit, with Leon as manager. In that department, with others, was a young man, Davis, wide awake and Leon liked him. But in time Davis commenced slipping, arriving for work later, and abrupt at the counter. I spoke to him and he must have complained to Leon, who asked me not to interfere; that he was in sole charge of that part of our organization, etc.

But very shortly he too must have noticed something, for he came to me saying "I guess we better get rid of Davis". I said when, and Leon answered "You had better let him out tonight".

In those few seconds the young man was transferred from Leon's sole charge to mine.



Although the business in Alaska was our main pursuit, we were occasionally induced to go into other ventures and in the late 80's Leon and Louis Sloss, Jr. took an interest in a new California champagne company. Louis was made treasurer. There was to be issued 150 ten year bonds, and Louis was told he had to sign each coupon, and he was busy about three weeks writing a tiny signature on 3,000 coupons; some job; but it was labor lost for the company didn't even start. Who told them that coupons

had to be signed, I don't know. It must have been their attorney, and I guess he didn't know either.

Paper money, or currency as called, was practically not in use in California. As our various salmon cannery crews and employees came back in the fall, they were settled with in our office, the usual payroll for each of the companies being around twelve to fifteen thousand dollars. With canvas bag I would be sent to the bank several blocks away to get the money which was paid me in gold, and then walk to the office. Here I was, carrying a large amount of money leisurely through the streets with no thought of risk: (think of it today).

To say nothing of going to the bank regularly three or four times a week, usually for a thousand dollars, carried back in the same fear-free manner.



BEN ARNHOLD came to the Alaska Commercial Company through his brother, who was a valued whiskey salesman with Lillienthal & Company. He was proud of his position with A. C. Company, and in time joined the old Verein; never missed a ball at the Club and became strongly social minded. Invitations were his great joy and he was asked quite regularly. But one day he told me his social ambitions were not satisfied. May Steinhart was a beautiful woman, and who gave occasional Friday night dinners, with well known people as guests; if only he could be asked there. The temptation was strong in me and I arranged for a girl friend to write Ben a few lines asking him for dinner and signing Cordially, May (Mrs. Ignatz) Steinhart. Our desks adjoined, and I watched Ben receive the letter and then swell up. He simply couldn't stand it, so walked to a small adjoining office, looked in the mirror over the washstand, ran his hands through his hair, parted his moustache, worked on his necktie, gazed at himself profile and full face, all the while, I was sure, picturing himself being shown into the Steinhart living room. Of course I could not allow the fun to go on too long, and that afternoon confessed the best way I could, but it was some days before we were the same again.

One summer Ben had returned from vacation at Tallac and confided to me his engagement to Betsy Wangenheim. Congratulations of course, and he was very, very happy. That afternoon he sought an opportune moment to speak to Mr. Gerstle, saying he was getting older: wanted to settle down, and was considering marriage; what did Gerstle think of it? He received approval, and in his enthusiasm repeated the conversation to me. - Perplexity. - Here was Ben actually engaged, and what would the situation have been if Gerstle had urged waiting; had no right on his present income; better consider it very seriously, etc.

You will see here part of a page from a ledger record kept by Max Heilbronner, Secretary of the Company. In letters his writing was larger, but you can imagine what a good time a certain office boy had in copying his letters on wet tissue sheets, the old process. He changed his pen frequently, would take the box, a gross when full, empty on his desk and pick up one pen after another, holding each on a level with his eye until satisfied. You see Max wasn't much of a crank: no not much. If his watch had lost five seconds in a week, you'd think it was a catastrophe. Wouldn't go to a theatre unless he could secure the aisle seat in fifth row, left side of house. And at Marchand's, dining there almost every night, if another happened to occupy Max's regular place, somebody was going to hear something.

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17 To Bill Hampton Co London *Chgo 1076 L 0-6-8*
add
 Pr: *Amsterdam Oct 27 95*

part 76 Conty:
 ✓ *32 Silver fox*
 \$1600
 \$1920

27 To Bill Hampton Co London *Chgo: 1-11/14 L 2-11-*
Pr: St New York Oct 28 95
add *11-11-1*
11-11-1
11-11-1

2 boxes 1 conty:
 ✓ *116 Green fox*
 ✓ *45 Green*
 ✓ *797 Black*
 ✓ *1 Blank*
 ✓ *2 Green*
 ✓ *42 Green Bear*
 ✓ *47 Black de*
 ✓ *502 Black DTP* *from file 174, 175, see file 174.*

5803-
502-

In the office every morning by eight o'clock, he would take all the morning papers, retire to the "reading room", and sit there until nine or nine thirty. And certain personal letters he would tear and keep on tearing until in tiniest bits: then throw them into

the office wood stove fire and watch them until complete consummation. He wasn't taking any chance that towards night someone might go through the embers and read his love letters. And his summer holidays were an event. A month of preparation for a two weeks' sojourn at some resort in Lake County but which usually terminated after three or four days: he couldn't stand the bed or board and would return to the city. For days he'd been busy making notes of things not to forget to take along. I saw one of these memorandums on his desk. "Cigars for walks, - cigars for after dinner, - cigars for windy afternoons - cigars for the driver." Each a different kind.

Max had been here some fifteen years, when he arranged for a visit to his folks in Germany. A week before departure, he hurried to Yosemite Valley, and remained a few hours, on the same day connecting with nite travel back to San Francisco. He feared being asked about it while abroad and afraid to confess not having seen this wonder.

One morning Ben and I were checking invoices covering a shipment to Alaska and names and amounts would be called to one another. One of the bills was of Wright Bowne & Co., a large ship chandlery business on the city front, and Ben called out "Wright, Bowne, and Wunsch", upon which we both laughed loud. Max was furious. What right did we have to make jokes on his family; too much damned nonsense in the office all the time, etc. You see, Wunsch was brother-in-law to Max; had a jewelry business and fussing around the insides of watches. And that flash to visualize old Wunsch mixed up with anchors and chains and tar and oakum - well, I couldn't stop laughing, and the angry spot glowed on Max's cheek all day.



Max Heilbronner

There were many Newmanns. The first was Emanuel who in the beginning was Secretary of the Company. A brother, Edward, Chemist, who could never pay his bills, (Rudolph always coming to the rescue) the entire receipts of his drugstore going in living expenses, and who when asked how things were would always reply "Schlecht Gott sei dank". Another brother was Paul, lawyer, who in the 90's went to Honolulu as Attorney General. A good friend of the folks, and over a period of years had borrowed in all about \$4500.00, but this little detail had escaped him when leaving San Francisco. A few years later we happened to learn that Paul was in town again, and Gerstle told one of us to drop him a line saying we would like to see him. The following day he appeared, greeting Sloss, Gerstle, Niebaum in effusive manner, and after a few minutes Gerstle began, "Paul, we asked you to come in because we heard you'd been here a week, and we thought you might drop in and say something about the money you owe us." Well, said Newmann in great indignation, such a thing had never happened to him before! Did years of friendship count for nothing any more? Was an old association held together by so weak a tie that the matter of a little money could strain it? And he continued this line of oratory: and everyone began to feel uncomfortable. Gerstle tried to explain, to ease the situation, but to no avail. Finally Neumann briefly "What do I owe?" He was told the principal of his notes. "How much interest?", and Gerstle said "Now, Paul, we don't want any interest". No sir, he would pay what he owed, and it was figured during a dead silence, and told him \$5500.00 in all. "Is that the full amount?" Yes. "All right" said Neumann, raising an arm high in the air, "Make out a new note"!

Immediately tragedy had changed to comedy, and there was laughter, and a slapping of backs, and more laughter, and the four men adjourned to the "Silver Dollar", next door.

And then and there, forever, ended that account.

There were others of that Bohemian type, good fellows, good company, good stories. There was for example Petey Bigelow with the "Examiner", a good reporter and one of their special writers; frequently breezing into our office with something to tell, and always broke. He came in one morning in a great hurry; had to leave that night for Victoria. Will Gerstle happened to be at the counter, and Petey said "Will, can you let me have \$100.00?" And Will answered, "Let you have \$100.00? What do you mean; lend it to you or give it to you?" And from Petey quick as a flash "It's the same thing". And, of course, it was.

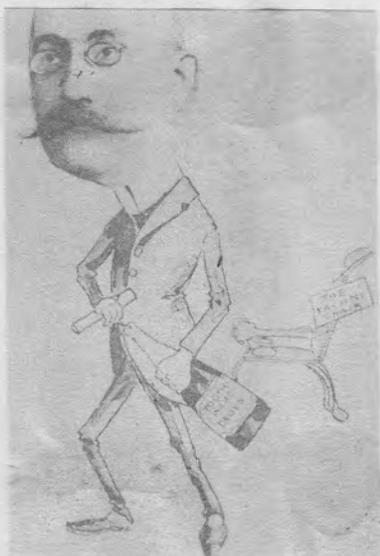
He was just another in that innumerable caravan which moved to our sundry debtors' account, where the ledger ruling for credits remained unsullied and free of entries.

Henry Newmann, our agent at St. Michael, Yukon River, was the very retiring and bashful member of the family. He had been there a long time before coming out, to visit his Mother in Europe. We secured his transportation, and on the morning of departure he came to me very confidentially, and in a whisper, "Tell me about sleeping on the train; do I undress?" He had become like many old timers in the far North, quite dazed when away from their isolated existence and the companionship of natives and trappers.



And there was Rudolph Neumann, a nephew, our General Agent in Alaska, headquarters at Unalaska. Was fond of the good things of life and full of the joy of living. Was in Washington one time, met some Navy people whom he had entertained in the North, and they gave him a dinner at Metropolitan Club. It seems that on occasions of this kind, it was the regular thing to entertain so well that the visitor was expected to gradually disappear under the table. But Jack Webb, our Washington attorney, told me that when the dinner was over and it was late into the nite, Rudolph was standing around and all the others were under the table.

And Leopold Neumann, dentist, socially popular, bon vivant, man about town, with a penchant for wine, women, and food. His brother, Rudolph, died in '98, and the doctor was liberally remembered in the Will. As a consequence, he retired, giving up his practice entirely. He now owned some stocks, and I saw him often at Barth's studying the ticker. Established a margin account, unfortunately made a little money in the beginning and concluded he was a natural born operator, and here was a game he had mastered. This continued, not so well, for a few years, when he had to go to the hospital which he never left.



He frequently expressed his idea that the time to enjoy money is when you have it. And Fate seemed to have figured it well, for his Estate was practically nothing; all gone in high living, in stocks, (and stockings).

M. C. Erskine, master of our SS "ST. PAUL", was Dean of our sea captains; a tall fine looking man and perfect type of mariner. When in port he and Niebaum might sit by the hour in the rear, a spit box of Monterey sand between them; and they were out there one afternoon, when Dick Mack came to the office with Jim Gerstley, just then engaged to his daughter Adele; and Dick asked me if Captain Niebaum was in, and I took them back, and there were introductions, Jim saying how he remembered the Captain at his home in London years ago. How glad his father had been to meet this associate of his brother; he recalled what a pleasant visit it had been; and were he and Mrs. Niebaum coming abroad again, etc. And Jim spoke in strong English accent and very rapidly. They remained a few minutes only, and after departure Niebaum looked at Erskine saying "He seems an awfully nice fellow", and Erskine replied slowly in his deep voice "I didn't understand a God damn word he said".



ERSKINE

One of our able men was Martin Washburn, agent at Kodiak, energetic and aggressive. In the late 90's E. H. Harriman had organized an expedition to the Siberian Coast. He had with him some scientists and his family. On their way his steamer stopped at Kodiak for



WASHBURN

fresh water, and the party came ashore. Harriman introduced himself, telling Washburn incidentally that his women would like to buy some furs. It was the policy of the company to sell no skins at the stations, but Washburn considering who Harriman was, thought it would be all right. There were a dozen blue fox selected, but the price did not suit Harriman, and after the vessel's short stay, the expedition continued its journey. About a month later the steamer on its way home, again put in at Kodiak, and Harriman came ashore and meeting Washburn spoke about furs. Whereupon Washburn replied "Sorry, but you cannot buy any furs here". Harriman in great surprise asked why not. "Because, Mr. Harriman, I made an exception to sell any skins at all, but you apparently thought we were doing you, and the matter is closed."

Something in Washburn must have struck Harriman; here was a man who was not afraid to talk up. The following year when two books of the expedition had been published, Washburn received copies autographed by Harriman. Later when Harriman's daughter was married in New York an invitation came to the wedding for Washburn and wife. And again, Harriman visiting San Francisco, a request came to our office that if Washburn and his wife were in town, the Harrimans would be glad to have them call at their hotel.

MILTON WIGHT was a conductor on the California Street Cable cars in the 80's; a big man, and cordial. Sloss and Gerstle rode that line every day and the conductors would get to know the passengers. We had an agent in Kodiak, Ben McIntyre, and news came one winter that he had been killed by a native. It was in the papers and Wight came in to inquire; he had known McIntyre. It happened Sloss was in the hallway, and recognizing Wight spoke to him, and after a few minutes' conversation Sloss in his impetuous manner said "How would you like to go to Alaska?" "Fine", answered Wight; and we sent him up. He went to Kodiak under Washburn; after some years became Assistant Agent, and when Washburn was appointed General Manager in the territory, Wight was put in charge at Kodiak. He was there some ten or twelve years, saved his money, and decided to move to Seattle where he went into business, got married, and prospered. Had Sloss' back been turned, or had he been inside, say reading the paper, one of us would have answered Wight at the counter and he would have gone out again to his street cars. Bringing Wight into these pages is not of much interest re A.C.Co., but also a thought how a trifling occurrence can change a man's whole life.

At Kodiak for many years was Fred ("old man") Sargent, reporting tides for the Government. He had married very late in life, a native woman, and had a number of children. When we landed at Kodiak he was standing on the dock, a tall man, white beard, and holding a little one about six months old. Captain Thomas seeing and greeting him said, "Hello, Sargent, have you got another baby?" and Sargent in a very slow drawl replied "Well I don't know; it's my wife's."

We had constant business relations with different Missionary Societies of the United States, and who seemingly felt that the Aleuts were in line for spreading the Gospel. One morning of thick fog in Bering Sea, Captain Erskine had been on deck a number of hours intent on the weather when one of these Reverends, to be companionable but choosing the wrong moment, approached Erskine in cheerful manner saying "Captain, it seems to be clearing overhead", to which Erskine without turning barked back, "Well, we're not headed that way!"

The Missionary accounts were at times large but always promptly paid. Nevertheless we ran into funny ideas, and I remember a letter from the President of an Evangelical Society of Bethlehem, Pa., referring to an item of a few hundred dollars for freight on a quantity of goods from Unalaska westward. He thought we should make no charge as our steamer was going out there anyway and their shipment could have caused no additional expense! And he wanted to take the occasion to say that we were charging over the counter, 5¢ for a spool of thread that cost us no more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ ¢, and he thought the poor native shouldn't have to pay us a 100% profit on our goods.

A letter of introduction from one of these Societies was presented by a woman on her way to Alaska. All she wanted just then was a little money and which I gave her. She took off her gloves to sign the receipt and such black fingernails I'd never seen. I was a little shocked, and also it struck me as funny, for in the work to guide her prospective flocks in the North, surely cleanliness was to be imagined as one of the fundamentals.

Many of our Western Aleutian stations were visited only twice a year - in the fall to take out merchandise and in the spring to bring back furs. A young man Patrick Sullivan Giles had recently been put in charge of one of these places.

Rudolph Neumann, on regular tour, stopped there to pick up the season's furs, went up the beach to the store, and after some talk about the winter's business, asked to see the books. "What do you mean books?" cried Giles. "I keep no books; there's the goods upon the shelves, the money is in the drawer, and the furs are in the loft; what the hell more do you want?" And all this in Giles' strong Irish brogue. He was honest and a good trader, with only one thought of his position, to get furs. He could not be bothered with any fancy ideas.

And this reminds me, in a way, of Charles Hirsch, of San Francisco office, and in charge of our Salmon canning operations. I went North with him in 1891 on a tour of our canneries. We were standing in a processing or cooking department where thousands of hermetically sealed cans were being taken from the boilers, rapidly vented or punctured to eject any air, the tiny holes being immediately soldered. Said Hirsch to me in explanation, "That is how they let the vacuum out".

Another man, with one idea, to pack fish, and no time to worry about language.

One of our traders in the North was George Landsburg in charge of an isolated station. There was a letter from him saying the winters were long, and wouldn't we please subscribe for some paper that would reach him whenever there was a vessel, "either the San Francisco Chronicle or the Police Gazette". And some years later he came out to visit his old home. A tall rough looking man, bashful and reserved, and in a few months he returned from his trip East and spoke to Leon Sloss, saying sheepishly "I brought something along to take North with me; will the company object?" Leon in good faith answered "What is it, a dog?" having in mind our vessels rule against such transportation. "No", said Landsburg, "I got married".

Joe. Burke had a saw mill in Dawson and in which the Alaska Commercial Company was interested. He died some 30 years ago, his estate probated in San Francisco. Among other provisions, \$2500.00 was left "to each of my nieces and nephews", but no names mentioned, although quite a number of them.

I was executor and in due time appeared with Louis Beedy, Attorney, before Judge Coffey, where strictest decorum ruled, but occasionally fond of a little joke in Court, if he could make it. Had all the heirs been properly notified? "Yes", said Beedy, "all but one niece; we couldn't get her full name and address." You see, Burke's was a Catholic family, and this girl having married outside of the faith was anathema, and they would tell us nothing. However we learned from others that her name was Levy and lived in New York, and that was all the address we had. And Coffey very solemnly "Well of course, any letter addressed to 'Mrs. Levy, New York City' is sure to be delivered at once to the correct party."

An old friend of the folks was Isaac Marx, father of Mel (theatre) Marx, and who when sick sent for Gerstle, saying that he was making a will and wanted Gerstle to be executor. Gerstle didn't want to be bothered about any Estate and tried to get out of it, suggesting to Marx there was no hurry; he would like to think it over, and Marx should put it off say until tomorrow. "Tomorrow" cried Marx "All hell cannot save me until tomorrow!" He died that night, and we got the Estate in the office all right.

Visiting our office occasionally was J. A. Graves, prominent Attorney of Los Angeles. He mentioned one day that he had come to San Francisco to buy a pair of carriage horses. Gerstle happened to be leaving shortly for Europe, and here was a good chance to dispose of his team. He was glad to inform Graves of this and it was arranged for the latter to examine the horses up town. He came back that afternoon telling Gerstle "I am not looking for voters".

Not many people had their own horses and carriages; it was quite exceptional but Aunts Sarah and Hannah did have that great comfort.

For the very great many not owning their own, carriages were for special occasions, not merely to get around in as automobiles today. On theatre nights the Washington Street cable cars for example were crowded with the best people: silks and satins, feather boas and picture hats. One summer evening I saw a couple arriving in a hired coupe at the Baldwin Theatre. I stared in wonder. How was that possible in such perfect weather!

A character of these days was Isaac (Oregon) Kohn, very wealthy, and very close, and whose business was done at a small desk in a Montgomery Street office. Forty and fifty years ago people were giving only in a small way, and that mostly in annual dues to organized charities, but with the changing of times, institution expenses were increasing, our Orphan Asylum among them. So a committee was formed, Leon Sloss a part of them, and he and another called on Kohn explaining the Asylum's needs, the good work done, and how important it was to secure additional income in the future; to which Kohn answered in indignant surprise, "I am giving them \$6.00 a year already"!

A different kind of man was Lenny Jacobi, an early San Francisco mining broker, retired and living abroad, revisiting San Francisco about 1890. Coming to our office one morning he said to Sloss and Gerstle "I understand Hollub's widow is badly off. I am getting twenty-five friends to give me \$100.00 each for her". Of course our folks consented immediately. I was intrigued. Jacobi's initiative was something new. Up to that time it seemed to me that charity was confined to joining some benevolent society, or the Woman's Exchange, or Sisters' of Mercy, etc. But here was a man who by himself was doing something, and I looked at him in greatest admiration.

Daniel Meyer, banker, a well known financial figure down town, often dropped in for a chat. He would berate extravagances and once told how at home after dinner, to start his pipe, he would tear off a piece of the evening paper and go into the kitchen to light it from the stove. He said he could not waste even a match when it wasn't necessary.

Professor George Davidson was for many years identified with astronomical work and with Coast and Geodetic matters. You may



DAVIDSON

remember his observatory among the eucalyptus trees on the hill west of Clay and Gough Streets. Had been in the government service in Alaska and was a good friend of ours; a frequent visitor, coming many a Saturday for lunch, and he and Niebaum would sit and talk endlessly. Tom Williams, manager of the "Examiner" also a visitor at 310, had requested Davidson to write a few articles for the paper on an important eclipse about to appear. In due time Williams wrote the professor for his bill. Davidson answered that there was no bill: that his time belonged to the public. Williams wrote again that nevertheless

the "Examiner" would be glad to pay. Davidson answered that he could not take any money "even though our mutual friend, Sloss, told me I am a damned fool".

And there the subject closed when Davidson received the following:-

"My dear Professor:

Sloss is right.

Yours, T. T. Williams"

Considering the many callers at our office with their stories and laughter, there was little drinking, and if sociability prompted going out to a bar (many in the immediate neighborhood), our folks confined themselves largely to the popular Napa Soda Lemonade. But what they really liked was going to Saulman's occasionally in the afternoon for coffee and cake. This was an old fashioned German restaurant where the waiters in idle moments would stand around breathing on the perforated tin tops of glass sugar shakers, then polish the tops on their sleeves.

But was there good baking and cooking!

I went there frequently for lunch, where for mid-day meal at a round table would sit old cronies, and affairs of the world would be discussed and settled. And I remember some of the patrons. Old man Thannhauser (you may remember did not like cold tongue), and who almost daily complained to the waiter about the food, threatening to send it back to the kitchen, but never did.

And Meyer of the banking house, whose progress through the meal was just one finger in his plate after another, and I recall his being served with a cold half wild duck and which he held in both hands to eat;

And Dr. Aronstein in vehement criticism of Bismark's policies, shaking his hand high in the air, forgetting it was holding an asparagus. He was a nervous little man who paid his professional visits on horseback, and he had been known to hurry from his office to the sidewalk, jump on the horse, cluck giddy-up, but the horse couldn't start because it was still tied to the wooden post.

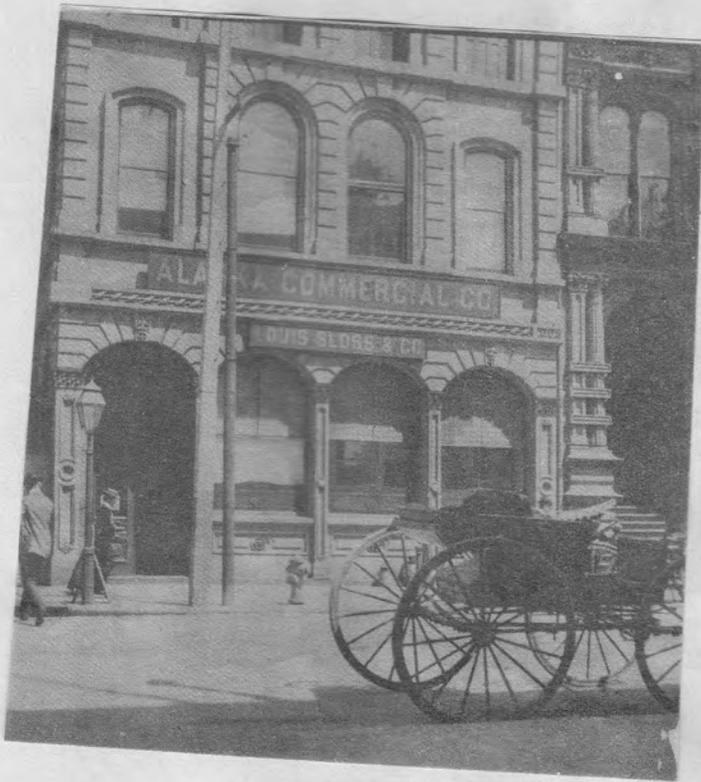
In the fall of 98' I was scheduled, so to say, for a holiday and how I had been looking forward to a few weeks in New York. Shortly before date of departure Gerstle came to my desk: "Sloss and I have been talking about your going away", and sudden disappointment hit me hard. Was I to be told we were entirely too busy, a bad time to leave, etc.? And Gerstle continued "and we want you to draw \$600.00 toward your expenses". What a change from clouds to sunshine! a sunshine diffused with thoughts of these men for whom it had been my good fortune to work, and whose approbation had been my constant aim.

As each of our salmon companies incorporated, there were issued 2000 shares at \$50.00, that being about the funds required for construction of cannery, purchase of machinery, and outfitting generally. It was a profitable business: canned salmon sold readily in the U.S.: there was a continued demand in England and Australia, and we never had any carry-over.

One of these companies paid in 1886 a dividend of \$50.00 per share: in 1887 - \$50.00: in 1888 - \$125.00; but in 1889 things were not so good, and all we could pay was \$50.00. However, a cheerful outlook was maintained, finally concluding that a dividend of 100% was really nothing to be discouraged about.

One often hears people say at random, "Those were the good old days".

WELL, MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT.



Horse and Buggy Days.

Glimpse of fruit stand where Sloss bought peanuts.



Today's Bosses in 1891.



1517 Van Ness Avenue. President Theodore Roosevelt in Carriage.
GERSTLE RESIDENCE

I. W. Hellman

I. N. Walter

Philip N. Lilienthal



Friends of the Folks;

Franklin Street in the Nineties.

San Francisco July 1st 1884

Mr. H. Brown
at St. Michael



Pioneers of Alaska

It seems not to be necessary to mention the names of the gentlemen referred to in connection with the work of exploring, exploring, exploring the sources of prime timber for the establishment of a colony, to mention any particular kind of large quantities of population.



P.O. BOX 2329

San Francisco, May 7th 1886

Mr. M. Loring,
agent to Michael, Alaska.

Dear Sir

We have been informed that a large number of miners have already started in the Yukon and Stikine river mines, it is probable that many others will be attracted to that section of the territory in consequence of the supposed existence of rich diggings in that district, considering that the Company's station at St. Michael is the nearest source of supply, an extra amount of groceries and provisions has been sent to you to meet the possible demand likely to be made upon you during the coming winter.

It must not be understood however that the shipments referred to is made for the purpose of realizing profits beyond the regular schedule of prices heretofore established, our object is simply to avoid any possible suffering which the large increase of population.

insufficiently provided with articles of
food might occasion, hence you are directed
to store these supplies as a reserve to meet
the probable contingencies herein indicated, and
that you dispose of the same to actual
consumers only, and in such quantities as
will enable you to attend the wants and
necessities of each and every person that
may have occasion to ask for it, in this
connection we deem it particularly necessary
to say to you, that no person in the employ of
the Company, or such others as draw their
supplies from the stores of the Company doing
business on their own account must not be
permitted to charge excessive profits, otherwise
all business relations with such parties must
cease, as the Company cannot permit itself to
be made an instrument of oppressive practices
any more than they may come in contact with.

It is wished to add, that in a case
of absolute poverty and want, the person
or persons placed in that unfortunate
condition should be promptly furnished
the means of subsistence without fail,
simply reporting such facts to your chief

conveniently to the same office.

Asking your strict compliance with the foregoing instructions, which we hope will be carried out with due discretion on your part.

I am, with kind regards to yourself and Mrs. Lorenz,
Yours truly,
Lewis Gerstle, Pres.

San Francisco "EXAMINER", July 4th, 1927.

Corporation Showed Its Soul North of 53

By Edward H. Hamilton

YOU have read and I have written a great deal about "soulless corporations," and concerning the oppressions, exactions and general cussedness of "big business."

We've all read, too, of the romance of far lands and of the fellowship of men in the realms of adventure. And out of the north,

through the tales of the Sourdoughs of the Yukon, comes to me the copy of a letter that warms the heart, that puts back a faith in the humanity of business dealings and in our fellow man.

It is a letter from the government files at Washington in the volume entitled "Investigation of



the Fur Seal and Other Fisheries of Alaska." The volume has the imprint of the government printing office and bears the date 1889.

The letter came out of our own San Francisco under the date May 7, 1886. It is from Lewis Gerstle, who, with Louis Sloss and Captain Niebaum, practically owned the Alaska Commercial Company, which controlled about all the trade of Alaska and the far north. It is written to M. Lorenz, the company's agent at "St. Michaels," as it was then called, and then the farthest north white settlement in the world.

THE occasion was the influx of miners for the mine at "Forty Mile"—ten years before the discovery of the great gold placers on the Klondyke, and the letter reads:

"San Francisco, May 7, 1886.

"Dear Sir: We have been informed that a large number of miners have already started to the Yukon and Stewart River Mines, and it is probable that many others will be attracted to that section of the Territory in consequence of the supposed existence of rich diggings in that district. Con-

sidering that the company's station at St. Michaels is the nearest source of supply, an extra amount of groceries and provisions has been sent to you to meet the possible demands likely to be made upon you during the coming winter.

"It must not be understood, however, that the shipment referred to is made for the purpose of realizing profits beyond the regular schedule of prices heretofore established. Our object is to simply avoid any possible suffering which the large increase of population insufficiently provided with articles of food might occasion. Hence, you are directed to store these supplies as a reserve to meet the probable contingency herein indicated, and in that case to dispose of the same to actual consumers only, and in such quantities as will enable you to relieve the wants and necessities of each and every person that may have occasion to ask for it.

"In this connection we deem it particularly necessary to say to you, that traders in the employ of the company, or such others as draw their supplies from the stores of the company, doing business on their own account, must not be per-

mitted to charge excessive profits, otherwise all business relations with such parties must cease, as the company cannot permit itself to be made an instrument of oppression towards anyone that they may come in contact with.

"It is useless to add that in case of absolute poverty or want, the person or persons placed in that unfortunate position should be promptly furnished with the means of subsistence without pay, simply reporting such facts at your earliest convenience to the home office.

"Asking your strict compliance with the foregoing instructions, which we hope will be carried out with due discretion on your part, I am, with kind regards to yourself and Mrs. Lorenz,

"Yours truly,
"LEWIS GERSTLE,
"President."

DOESN'T that make you feel a little better? Doesn't it restore faith in the general goodness of human kind? There was a soul in that corporation of a certainty; and perhaps if we could inquire more closely we'd find "good in everything." corporation and all.