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## Article Title: Eugene Field and the “Hayes Saloon” in Omaha: An Episode of 1885

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Article Summary: Chicago journalist Eugene Field asserted that former President Hayes owned property in Omaha that included a saloon. This accusation, which turned out to be true, was highly embarrassing for Hayes, a symbol of the temperance cause.

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# *Eugene Field and the* **“HAYES SALOON”** in Omaha

• *An Episode of 1885* •

*By Lewis O. Saum*

The late spring of 1885 had some unpleasantness for former President Rutherford B. Hayes. More than four years had passed since he finished his term, most remembered for the end of Reconstruction in 1877. Now the ex-president turned doleful attention to several matters. He made what would be his last visit with the great hero of the war and his predecessor in the nation's highest office, Ulysses S. Grant, who would die some two months later. “Nothing was said,” Hayes noted near the end of his May 20 diary entry, “but I left with a feeling that this was our last meeting.”<sup>1</sup>

Three days later, back in Fremont, Ohio, Hayes sent word to a relative regarding “a temporary embarrassment” in his affairs due to the “heavy failure” of the Harvester Works in Fremont. Two days after that dispiriting story of his imminent loss of ten to fifteen thousand dollars, the former president confided in a diary entry that the Fremont post of the Grand Army of the Republic had split. A “saloon-keeper” had become commander of the post, and the “drinking element” had moved “fully into power.”<sup>2</sup> For a man who—with his wife, Lucy—symbolized the temperance cause, this constituted no trivial matter, especially because it involved his own membership in the most vital patriotic organization of the time.

In his May 25 diary entry Hayes agonized over the “sad business” in his home GAR post; his next day's entry began as follows: “I am abused as the



Rutherford B. Hayes.

owner of property used for a saloon in Omaha,—of which I know nothing.”<sup>3</sup>

The central impetus in this Omaha embarrassment for the ex-president came from a Chicago newspaperman of wit, poetry, and politics, Eugene

Field. A strong Republican himself, Field had woefully little patience with fellow Republican Hayes, whose administration he observed and suffered from the perspective of Missouri locations. His disregard for the Ohioan in no way ended with that man's departure from the White House, nor with Field's departure from Missouri. As his fellow journalist and biographer, Slason Thompson, put it long after Field's death, when he took “a scunner, as the Scotch say, to anyone,” he missed no opportunity to “jeer and sneer.” Hayes's Omaha connection provided a golden opportunity for jeering and sneering, and Thompson wrote that it provided the first time in his memory when Field insisted on a “special assignment”—to go to Omaha to get the full story. “Keep your hands off, democrats! This man Hayes is republican meat, and it is for republicans to offer him upon the altar of enduring scorn.”<sup>4</sup> Thus Field pronounced some fifteen months before the Omaha episode, and it is small wonder that he found an early opportunity for heading west to Omaha when the intriguing rumor reached him.

“Through some friend in Omaha,” as Thompson put it, Field got wind of the Hayes involvement.<sup>5</sup> It probably now lies beyond determination who “some friend” was, but one can make some legitimate surmises. Aside from long-time Omaha journalistic figures such as Dr. George Miller, whom Field often treated in a chidingly friendly way, two prime possibilities emerge, one a figure from Omaha's recent past and the other a figure very soon, briefly and tragically, to grace the city. The latter person, the

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young, brilliant, and exotic Ottomar H. Rothacker, had employed Field at the *Denver Tribune* from 1881 to 1883. When his father-in-law purchased the *Omaha Republican*, Rothacker assumed editorial management, and he did much to make it an excellent though ruinously expensive paper. Five years after the Hayes episode Rothacker, yet short of his thirty-fifth birthday, went to an unmarked grave in Omaha's Forest Lawn Cemetery. He may have provided Field the tip regarding Hayes's property, but it remains unclear whether or not Rothacker had yet arrived in Nebraska from a stint in Washington, D.C.<sup>6</sup>

Another of Field's close acquaintances, this one of longer standing, knew Omaha fairly well, probably maintained some ties there, and briefly visited the city just after his old friend did in May 1885. William L. Visscher made Field's acquaintance in St. Louis in the early 1870s, renewing the friendship in St. Joseph later in the decade and again in Denver in the early 1880s with O. H. Rothacker. On a fabled occasion in Missouri journalism, the St. Joseph fraternity said good-bye to 1875 while welcoming 1876, with Field and Visscher at Wehrle's restaurant.<sup>7</sup>

That new year of 1876 had hardly gotten under way when Visscher left St. Joseph to become city editor of George Miller's *Herald* in Omaha. He spent some six months in the Nebraska city, during which time he married. In that exciting spring Field paid Visscher a visit, going to Omaha and then to Lincoln on a journalistic errand that involved both men. Charles B. Wilkinson, Visscher's employer in St. Joseph, had fallen afoul of whiskey ring investigations, and he had fled. In April he was arrested in San Francisco and brought back to Omaha, with destinations at federal district court and, in turn, the penitentiary at Jefferson City. Visscher helped the feeble fugitive down from the train in Omaha, and Field interviewed him on the ride from Omaha back to Lincoln, where Wilkinson boarded the Missouri Pacific for the ride

south and east. A few weeks later both Visscher and Field gave testimony in Jefferson City regarding distillery matters in St. Joseph.<sup>8</sup> Not long thereafter Visscher went farther west for newspaper work, lecturing, and acting.

Now, in 1885 in the midst of the Hayes furor, Visscher came through Omaha with his wife and daughter, Viva. A long paragraph in the "The



**Eugene Field.** Charles Trefts photograph, courtesy of the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia

Breakfast-Table Chat" column of the *Omaha Republican* told of Visscher's dropping in after a long walk of "remembrance and discovery" in the city. Then it offered various pleasant remarks about the visitor, including his close friendship with Eugene Field.<sup>9</sup> On the same day the *Omaha Bee* opened its report in the personals column with reference to Visscher as "one of the brightest, wittiest and best known newspapermen in the west." This "cyclone of humor," as the personals column called him, appeared in a more serious role in

a separate story in the same issue. It reported that Visscher and his wife frustrated the wicked designs of a pair of Chicago "hounds" who attempted to prey upon two German girls traveling unattended across the country. Visscher had a warm welcome in Omaha, and possibly his knowledge of the city had equipped him to alert friend Field as to Hayes's involvements there.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever the source of his information, Field lost little time in launching his campaign against what some in Omaha were calling the Hayes saloon. His column, "Sharps and Flats" in the *Chicago Daily News*, was coming to national attention, and its author would come to be regarded as the country's first columnist. On May 12, 1885, an item in that column mentioned the Hayes property and its incongruous establishment, adding that another building there had until recently housed "colored women plying a disreputable trade."<sup>11</sup> Fuller account of the soon-to-be notorious saloon came when Field had a chance to see for himself. He arrived in Omaha three days later, on the evening of Friday, May 15.<sup>12</sup>

As was nearly always the case, high jinks and hilarity arrived with Field. The next day's *Republican* waxed whimsical—with or without the guidance of O. H. Rothacker. That Sunday editorial column had two items regarding the Chicago visitor, one still comparatively staid and the other taking flight into fancy. Fact seems to have informed this brief observation: "Sell's circus, the rain, and Mr. Eugene Field, of *The Chicago News*, were in Omaha yesterday."<sup>13</sup> Imagination abounded in a much longer piece later in the editorial section. It soberly reported that the Chicagoan had come to town to prepare a series of articles on "the public buildings of Omaha," at least "those edifices which seem to merit the honor."

It is presumed that primary attention will be given to three buildings owned by Mr. Rutherford B. Hayes, of Fremont, Ohio, one of which is now utilized as a saloon, and another of which has borne a reputation even more unsavory.<sup>14</sup>

The *Republican* accurately noted that Field's paper, the *Chicago Daily News*, had gone "mugwump" in the presidential election of the preceding year, and, though that desertion of James G. Blaine had been done literally over the prostrate body of Field, the *Republican* needed him nonetheless. It puckishly surmised that the *Daily News* was, per Field's Omaha visit, starting a campaign to "support Mr. Hayes as a prohibition candidate in 1888." This editorial then reviewed Field's experience for that task and did so in ways that would have amazed and delighted the acquaintances of genial Gene in these years before dyspepsia slowed him. Facetiously this item cited doughty work Field had done in behalf of Kansan John P. St. John's prohibition ticket in 1884. "It is simple justice to the young Chicago journalist," the *Republican* impishly concluded, "to state that his views of Mr. Hayes's buildings in Omaha will be taken from the outside."<sup>15</sup>

The *Republican* also cheerfully credited Field with supporting Dr. George L. Miller, Democratic editor of the *Omaha Herald*, for a place in Grover Cleveland's cabinet. On that same Sunday Miller's *Herald* duly welcomed "the bright, genial and versatile" visitor. But the *Herald's* venture into fancy had a more ponderous quality as it mused about the time that had passed since Field had last come to town. It, too, put him in the context of inclement weather in a way suggesting that humor was not Miller's metier.

The quintessence of good nature paired with genius he burst upon Omaha yesterday like a May sunbeam through a nimbus cloud and dispelled by his cheer the very gloom that nature had hung about us through a protracted storm.<sup>16</sup>

The *Omaha Bee* clearly outdid its competitors in playful recognition of Field's errand in the city. In fact, its editor, the sometimes combative Edward Rosewater, may have been the person who alerted the impish Chicagoan of the saloon matter, as an April 30 item in "Sharps and Flats" might suggest. Now,

on May 18, with Field having spent a weekend in the city, an editorial page quip reported that Hayes would convert his saloon into a hen coop, chickens being another of the ex-president's much-noted interests. On the same page, credulity encountered a greater challenge when Eugene Field was identified as the father of David Dudley Field. That the eminent jurist was born in 1805 and the less eminent journalist was born in 1850 might well puzzle the guileless. This same item brazenly reported that the man from the *Chicago Daily News* had come to Omaha to arrange transportation to Oregon for Samuel Tilden, Hayes's opponent in the contested election of 1876. The item concluded with the observation that Tilden would remain in the city "long enough to take some refreshments at Rutherford B. Hayes' Sixteenth street saloon."<sup>17</sup>

Three pages later in the same Monday issue, the *Bee's* "Local Brevities" went even beyond the editorial page antics. The unsuspecting may have been beguiled by the opening assertion in this piece. Field had come in Friday night, and it may have been the case that he arrived on the same train bearing the circus, "Sells Brothers mammoth aggregation of curiosities." The next sentence began with one of Field's own, almost-patented usages—"We violate no confidence when we remark . . ." Something did get violated as the sentence further indicated that Field had been traveling with that circus since its season opened. The description of Field got worse, as he received treatment perhaps less adroit, but certainly no more preposterous than what he so frequently visited upon objects of his attention.

He appeared in the parade Saturday morning on top of the tiger wagon—Mr. Field is a ferocious animal himself—in the costume of Hercules cleansing the Augean stables. For the favor of Mr. Field's appearance in this role we are indebted to the Messrs. Sells, and the circumstances of the negotiation by which he was obtained were given to us in confidence last night. We feel we cannot betray them. It may be sufficient to remark that when Mr. Field began life he owned three ranges of

the Rocky mountains, noted for their wealth of minerals. All these Mr. Field laid at the feet of a bearded Albino, who soon afterward died. The infatuation for the pink-eyed race still lingers fondly in his breast and he has been placed in absolute control of the herd that goes with this show. During the season the "Sharps and Flats" will, it is needless to say, be edited at long range.<sup>18</sup>

Field's special to the *Chicago Daily News* originated at "Omaha, Neb., May 19," and it appeared in the issue of May 23 as "MR. HAYES'S SALOON." After that heading, a smaller font led into the story itself: "The Osthoff House In Omaha. An Establishment on the Ex-President's Property in Which Liquid Refreshment Is Dealt Out to the Thirsty by an Ex-Milkman." Illustrated by four sketches done by the *News* artist who accompanied Field, the piece began with a conversation that had taken place in Chicago a few weeks earlier. Nebraska Senator Charles Manderson, encountering Hayes at a meeting of the Loyal Legion, complained that the Ohioan's Omaha property depreciated some of his own nearby. Taken aback, Hayes said that the matter would be referred to his Omaha agent, Byron Reed, long a power in real estate in the city. The Manderson-Hayes exchange came within hearing of Edward Rosewater of the *Bee*, but that editor's efforts to bring attention to the matter proved ineffectual. The story had met little but disbelief, but it was, as Field put it, "nevertheless, a fact that Mr. Hayes owns property in Omaha on which liquor is sold and drank."<sup>19</sup>

The marks of Field's research—probably done on Monday, May 18—then emerged, with information from the Douglas County recorder's office showing the sale of the property to Hayes and another Ohioan on November 24, 1866. Then outside the corporate limits, the parcel enjoyed, nineteen years later, a place "near the heart of Omaha." Field provided detailed specifications of the property, essentially the "quarter block of ground at the southeast corner of 16th and California." Saloons had been

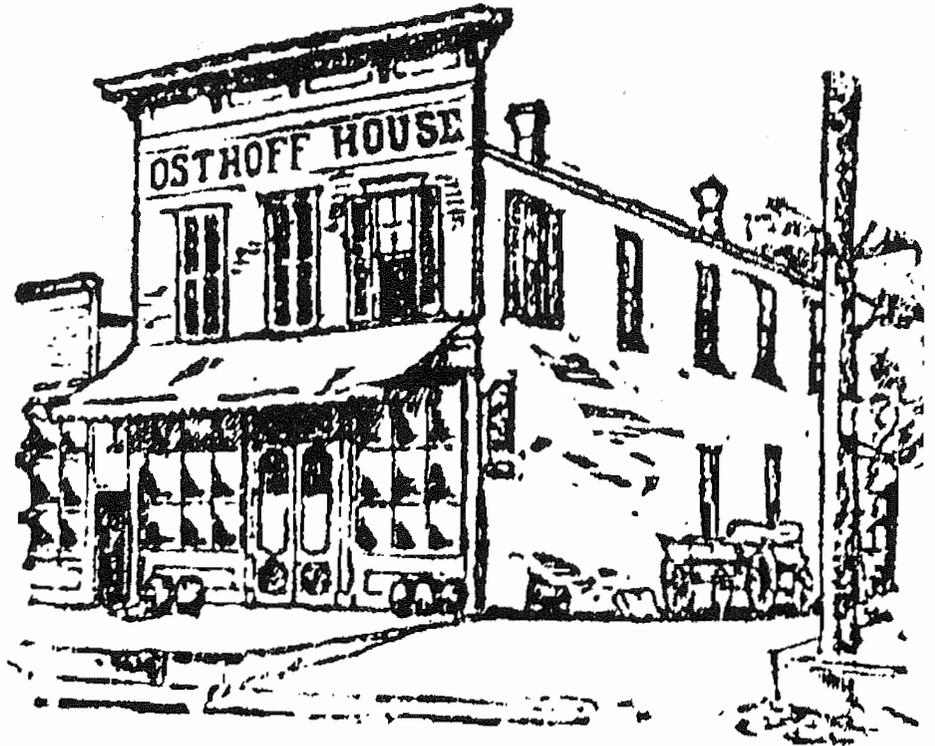
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on the property for several years, the account revealed, but the present arrangement dated from November 1881 when Henry Osthoff took up the lease.<sup>20</sup>

Osthoff had come from Philadelphia to engage in the dairy business, but "abandoned cream for beer, butter for gin, and milk for whiskey." He did so in "no unseemly, ostentatious way," conceivably, Field mused, out of regard for the feelings of the former president. "He will be mat,' the resourceful journalist quoted Osthoff's thoughts about Hayes, 'when he sees dot ardkles in dose babers, doand you dinks?'" Solicitude had limits, and Henry Osthoff's eyes "danced with merriment" as he raised that question.

Among the people living and doing business in the vicinity, however, the fact that a saloon was being kept on Mr. Hayes's property has been the source of endless amusement, and many a ribald joke has been passed at the expense of the good man who, while the demon rum was doled out for pay on his real estate in Nebraska, was battling in far distant Ohio against the vice which biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. The place came to be known as "Hayes's Saloon," and so it is called by its habitues and other people along North 16th street at this time.<sup>21</sup>

As noted earlier, the *Omaha Republican* had surmised that Field, because of prohibitionist inclinations ascribed to him by that paper, would observe the Hayes saloon only "from the outside." To be sure, the outside received much attention, pictorial and verbal. In the former category, the first sketch gave a full view of the two-story frame building topped by its sign, "Osthoff House." A close-up sketch focused on the front outside, with a couple of men lounging on a bench and several others seated on beer kegs. The *piece de resistance* featured him whose eyes "danced with merriment," and who "courteously consented" to have the *News* artist make the sketches of the building. In fact, Henry Osthoff's "urbanity" had such extent that "he suffered the artist to make a sketch of him as he sat gracefully poised on a beer keg in front of his



*Chicago Daily News*, May 23, 1885.

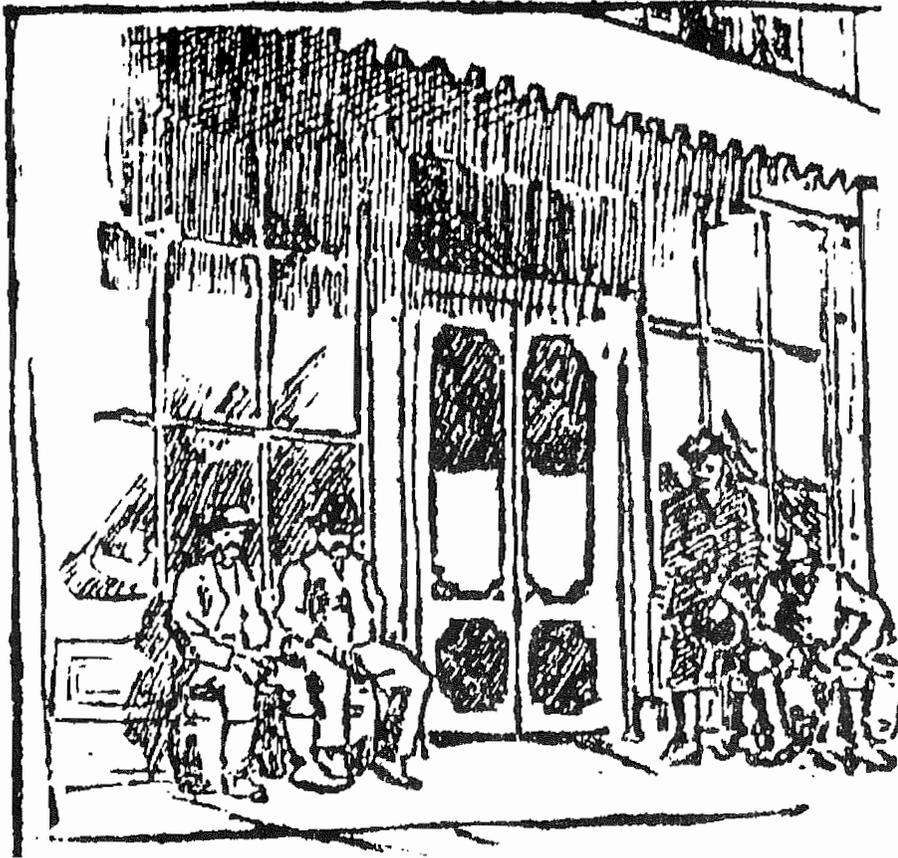
popular tap room." And Field's words did much to apprise readers of the views "from the outside," including such details as the tailoring establishment next door and Senator Manderson's lot across the street on the northwest corner of Sixteenth and California, occupied by a meat shop and a hardware store. Among the signs he noted, this one seems especially to have pleased him: "Read the *Chicago Daily News*. Only Two Cents." "If the advice conveyed by this subtle legend is followed," Field's last sentence read, "there should exist some hope that the evil influences exerted by 'Hayes's saloon' and its habitues is being counteracted to a considerable extent and in a most laudable way."<sup>22</sup>

But the *Republican's* surmise proved inaccurate; much attention went to the inside of this noteworthy establishment, beginning with spatial arrangements. The only interior sketch showed Osthoff "playing the agreeable to his patrons," but shown in a perspective that Field

elsewhere referred to as "rear elevation."<sup>23</sup> That neglected the particulars of this pleasant, balding, middle-aged, and mustachioed man, but it had its merits.

The public will be grateful for this faithful delineation representing Mr. Osthoff leaning up against his hospitable bar regaling a patron with a timely anecdote preparatory to quaffing a convivial glass.<sup>24</sup>

After that commentary on the sketch, Field's pen provided an abundance of other interior items, starting with a back-bar mirror "bedecked with fancifully cut paper of red, purple, and yellow colors." An animal lover himself, the visitor took special note of a pair of "stuffed gray squirrels, rampant," and two caged baby squirrels. A couple of caged birds had the silent company of a stuffed duck standing on a shelf near the beer cooler, but whether that duck "came from Mr. Hayes's Ohio poultry farm is not stated." From matters of decor Field turned to matters of business and serving—various mixing instruments and bottles labelled "Bourbon," "Old Rye,"



Chicago Daily News, May 23, 1885.

“Holland Gin,” and others among the “significant labels.” The reader then learned a bit about the furniture of the place, arranged for drinking, dominoes and political discussion. Opposite the Sixteenth Street entrance another arrangement caught the newsman’s eye: “Upon four large casks stand seven small barrels—a spectacle at once imposing and artistic.” Beyond that “artistic” eastern wall of “this doggery, bar-room, ale house, tap-room, or sample-room—as you please—” stood that portion of the “gasthaus” where guests could get, for “a merely nominal sum,” a “square meal,” with servings three times a day. Though this culinary feature was common, it may help explain why a neighboring groceryman described Osthoff to Field as a “nice” person who ran his business in a careful and responsible fashion.<sup>25</sup>

Still, the “Osthoff House and Saloon,” as it appeared in city directories of the time, could hardly do other than mortify the man on whose property it was located. Eugene Field—who had long since taken a “scunner” to that owner—came, saw, and gave the world a graphic depiction of that establishment. It seems unlikely that many drinking places in the land, even those of elegance and fame, figured, at least for the moment, higher in public awareness than did Omaha’s Osthoff House and Saloon. One can assume that the attention pleased Henry Osthoff, and one recalls how pleasant and obliging he was with visitor Field and his accompanying artist. The episode must have given Osthoff enhanced visibility in his trade area, and it probably put him in a better position to bargain with Byron Reed and Rutherford B. Hayes. As he told Field,

he had a lease with two years remaining, and “Mr. Hayes will have to buy him out at the end of that time, or he will buy out Mr. Hayes.”<sup>26</sup> Henry Osthoff did not have to wait that long.

Back in Ohio a vexed ex-president fumed and explained, writing letters to an interested temperance paper in Buffalo and to Senator Manderson of Nebraska. The gist of these and others involved the contention that, over the years, the handling of the Omaha property had been left to his partner in the investment, R. P. Buckland, also of Fremont, Ohio, and to Byron Reed of Omaha. In effect, Hayes pleaded ignorance—“entire ignorance on my part,” as his diary entry put it on May 28. This same entry allowed that the *Chicago Daily News* had given Hayes’s discussion with Senator Manderson in Chicago “with substantial correctness.” In this troubled setting Hayes appealed to Manderson for “the facts,” perhaps not relying fully on a nemesis, Eugene Field. He appealed also to the Nebraska senator for “the remedy.”<sup>27</sup> Ten days after the Field special and four days after that appeal to Manderson, the “remedy” received attention around the country.

In Omaha both the *Republican* and the *Bee* aired the matter fully, the *Republican* heading the description this way: “EX-PRESIDENT HAYES’ SALOON. The celebrated Osthoff House On Sixteenth Street Sold yesterday.” “The property had within the past few weeks, through Eugene Field, attained a national celebrity.” After Field “thoroughly ventilated the situation” newspapers both “east and west” have been “holding high revelry” at Hayes’s expense. The *Republican* told that one of its reporters sought out “Herr Osthoff” and found him “presiding as mein host over the beer with a crew of congenial guests.” He seemed quite pleased, even to showing a “supercilious tinge,” but he showed no eagerness at all to discuss the details of the purchase whereby he and his backers obtained the Hayes property for fourteen thousand dollars. Nor could this reporter bring himself to

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do what visitor Field had assayed, reproducing at least parts of the interview. That would only "confound the chaste free born vernacular with the uncouth German idiom."<sup>28</sup>

Chaste or uncouth, much other discussion did take place, often regarding Field and his special report. A few days after the much-remarked sale, the *Bee* offered the thought that Field should receive "a commission for the advertisement and sale" of the property. Three days before that the *Republican's* "Breakfast-Table Chat" column had, with apparent seriousness, told of the thousand dollar check Osthoff had written the Chicago journalist. Indeed, congratulations seemed in order all around. "Mr. Hayes is to be congratulated upon his great moral sacrifice, Mr. Osthoff upon his good bargain, and Mr. Field upon the brilliant success of his late visit to Omaha."<sup>29</sup>

That tale of the thousand dollar check likely came, as did so many other things in this episode, with tongue very much in cheek. But Field had scored a coup, so nearly the last word in the matter should come from him. With much discussion of Hayes's having done nobly or ignobly—having sacrificed in quick sale or having looked the other way from Omaha saloons for years—Field pronounced vigorously in "Sharps and Flats" fifteen days after his special from Omaha. In reviewing the situation, he essentially excused R. P. Buckland, Hayes's partner in Fremont, Ohio, and Byron Reed, his agent in Omaha. Instead, he charged directly that Hayes had been quite aware of the nature of the businesses on his property at Sixteenth and California, noting in fact that Hayes had joked about this interesting situation.

Mr. Hayes has done a bad turn by Omaha. He has boomed her liquor industry, and, having done so, he quits Omaha but leaves the saloon behind. He should have taken that saloon back to Fremont, where eighty vile doggeries are in full blast every Sunday of the year. But perhaps Omaha will find some consolation in the fact that the 16th-street saloon will always be

known as "Hayes's saloon," a title which will keep the distinguished Ohioan's memory fresh and green among the tapsters, bums, and brawlers of the Nebraska metropolis.<sup>30</sup>

That "scunner" Field had taken against Hayes, that dudgeon so amply dramatized in the spring of 1885, had a source somewhat different from what might readily be supposed. It seems axiomatic that this young and often irrever-



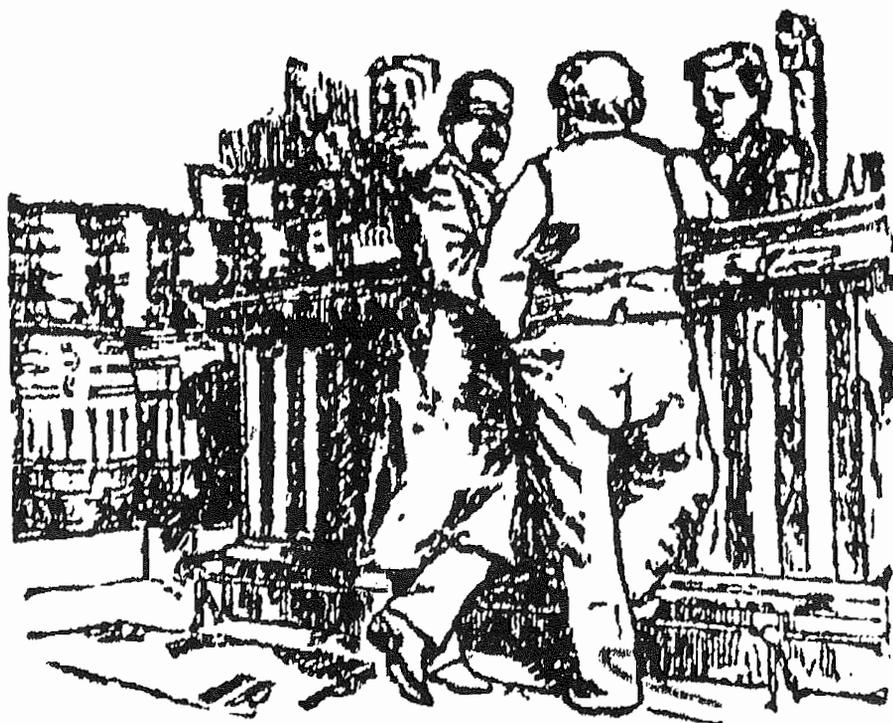
*Chicago Daily News*, May 23, 1885.

ent humorist would feast on the ostentatiously virtuous. In the heat of this brouhaha, Hayes ascribed his difficulty to just such a working. "It is still true," he entered in his diary, "that the best acts of a man's life bring him the most abuse. The exclusion of wine from the White House is at the bottom of three-fourths of all the lies that are now told about me."<sup>31</sup> In turn, one would suppose that when virtue betrays hypocrisy—different standards for the White House and for the vicinity of Sixteenth and California in Omaha—that Field and his kind would react with special vehemence.

One cannot deny the involvement of such impulses, and at least some truth may reside in Hayes's statement. But

Field's animus had another source, one based on his consistently held suspicion of fellow Republicans who compromised. Hayes's greatest claim to fame involved the Compromise of 1877, the end of Reconstruction. That accommodation with Democrats resembled, in Field's view, the Liberal Republican gravitation in Missouri, an accommodation fatal to the party in that state. And those deviations of the 1870s anticipated the self-defeating Mugwump move of 1884, so much regretted by Field. Other Republicans shared this outlook. When the *Omaha Republican* wearied of the sport at the ex-president's expense in an editorial titled "Give Hayes a Rest," it did not do so out of comprehensive regard for him. "It was the republican party's mistake to nominate him for president," the *Republican* contended, "and his administration was one long ignominious error."<sup>32</sup> It was more than coincidence that Omaha's two Republican papers took greater wicked delight in Hayes's Omaha embarrassment than did the *Herald*, under the direction of prominent Democrat George L. Miller. As Field had exclaimed more than a year before: "Keep your hands off, democrats! This man Hayes is republican meat, and it is for republicans to offer him upon the altar of enduring scorn." Not all Democrats desisted, but Field had made an understandable urging, one based more on political convictions than on raw impishness.

In the decade remaining to him, Field continued to keep a sometimes puckish, sometimes earnest eye on Omaha and some of its notable people. In fact, he seemed genuinely to like the place, and some fifteen months after his Hayes mission he found occasion to refer to it as being "without question the queen city of the Missouri valley." Omaha moved briskly ahead in progressive ways, while its competitors such as Kansas City were busy "blovating and bragging."<sup>33</sup> Naturally, he turned frequent attention, often fond and sometimes impish, to Omaha journalists.



Chicago Daily News, May 23, 1885.

Both Democrat Miller and Republican Rosewater appeared in "Sharps and Flats" in the exciting midterm year of 1894, a banner time for Republicans and the last full year of Field's life. In late summer staunch Republican Field offered advice to Nebraska Democrats—listen to George L. Miller. "He is a veteran and adroit politician; he has absolutely no personal ends to serve; his counsel is wholly unselfish." The Democratic Party, Field concluded, "needs Nestors of the George L. Miller type."<sup>34</sup> The same day's column had an item treating briefly "the fiery, untamed" Edward Rosewater. Three weeks later—again referring to him as "fiery, untamed"—Field depicted Rosewater's drift toward Populism as a "campaign of revenge and ruin."<sup>35</sup> That was much akin to Republican heterodoxies that had brought failure before, a case in point having been Rutherford B. Hayes. Field evidently regretted Rosewater's bolt from orthodox Republican ranks, but respect suffused the regret. When

Rosewater's break became apparent in August, Field described the editor of the *Bee* as "a man of exceptional ability and determination . . . and if it be conceded that he is often headstrong and overbearing, it must also be conceded that he has at all times been truthful and incorruptible."<sup>36</sup> Unlike compromising Republican Hayes, life-long Democrat Miller and deviationist Republican Rosewater gained and retained the admiration of stalwart Republican Eugene Field.

As a postscript one can note that Henry Osthoff continued his business, in one arrangement or another, at the same location until at least the turn of the century, both old man Hayes and young man Field having gone to their graves. And, contrary to Field's prediction, it is likely that the "distinguished Ohioan's memory" no longer remains "fresh and green" in the vicinity of Sixteenth and California streets. In 1995 the property Hayes and his friend bought in the late 1860s and which caused a stir in

1885 claims only an unprepossessing parking lot, though just across California to the north, at 601 North Sixteenth, sits the Happy Bar.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles Richard Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes: Nineteenth President of the United States*, IV (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1925), 212.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 212-13.

<sup>4</sup> Slason Thompson, *Life of Eugene Field: The Poet of Childhood* (New York and London, D. Appleton and Company, 1927), 221-23. "Sharps and Flats," *Chicago Daily News*, Feb. 9, 1884.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, *Life of Eugene Field*, 222.

<sup>6</sup> At the time of his death, Rothacker was described by the *Omaha Republican* as having arrived in Omaha in 1885. *Omaha Republican*, May 11, 1890. City directories first list him in 1887. The purchase of the *Republican* by his father-in-law, what was taken for the occasion of his coming to Omaha, is dated 1886, as in James H. Savage and John T. Bell, *History of the City of Omaha, Nebraska, and South Omaha* (New York and Chicago: Munsell & Company, 1894), 168. Alfred Sorenson's *History of Omaha from the Pioneer Days to the Present Time* (Omaha: Gibson, Miller & Richardson, Printers, 1889), 206, tells much the same story.

<sup>7</sup> Visscher's own account appears in "Tales of Many Cities: The Confessions of a Bohemian," an autobiographical series he wrote in the *Tacoma Globe* in 1889. See issue of May 1, 1889.

<sup>8</sup> For Field's Omaha venture, see *St. Joseph Gazette*, Apr. 19-20, 1876. For a brief description of Field and Visscher offering testimony in Jefferson City, see *St. Joseph Gazette*, May 12, 1876. When Wilkinson died in early 1881, Field, then with the *Kansas City Times*, offered extensive thoughts about the deceased and about his own trip to Omaha to interview him. *Kansas City Times*, Jan. 11, 1881.

<sup>9</sup> *Omaha Daily Republican*, May 26, 1885. On the day after Visscher's treatment in that column, Field received attention, as did, in a separate item, the fact that Hayes's temperance principles did not extend to Omaha. The discussion of Field dealt more with humor generally than with the Hayes affair.

<sup>10</sup> *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 26, 1885. The latter story, "Valliant Vischer (sic)," makes it clear that Visscher had been in Chicago, and that could very well have involved a visit with Field.

<sup>11</sup> Other items in "Sharps and Flats" dating back to Apr. 30 intimate the fuller campaign soon to be launched.

<sup>12</sup> *Omaha Daily Republican*, May 16, 1885.

## Eugene Field and the "Hayes Saloon"

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, May 17, 1885. The name was Sells, not Sell.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *Omaha Herald*, May 17, 1885.

<sup>17</sup> *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 18, 1885.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> *Chicago Daily News*, May 23, 1885. This special did not appear in "Sharps and Flats," but there is no doubt that it was Field's work. Hayes's Chicago trip appears in Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters*, IV, 205-8. And it contains fond mention of Senator Charles Manderson, whom Hayes would have known in Ohio and in Civil War service.

<sup>20</sup> *Chicago Daily News*, May 23, 1885.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "Sharps and Flats," *Chicago Daily News*, Oct. 6, 1885. Here, a few months after the Omaha venture, Field offered a series of comic suggestions for statuary at Illinois's new state capitol. His own impish sketch provided a rear view of one of the Illinois politicians of the time, and he ascribed to architects that term of "rear elevation."

<sup>24</sup> *Chicago Daily News*, May 23, 1885.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters*, IV, 213-14. A few days later Hayes set down the points that he

wanted Buckland to convey to "my young friend Edward W. Bok," as explanation of the "Omaha slander," 217. That very young journalist—yet short of his twenty-second birthday—had indeed become a friend of the ex-president and would become a friend of Eugene Field. *The Americanization of Edward Bok: The Autobiography of a Dutch Boy Fifty Years After* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922) tells of both associations, but seems not to include the Omaha story.

<sup>28</sup> *Omaha Daily Republican*, June 2, 1885.

<sup>29</sup> *Omaha Daily Bee*, June 6, 1885. *Omaha Daily Republican*, June 3, 1885.

<sup>30</sup> "Sharps and Flats," *Chicago Daily News*, June 8, 1885. At the outset, Field noted some of the more extreme reactions to Hayes and his dealings, correcting an especially censorious treatment in the *New York Sun*, and correcting a *New York World* depiction that he viewed as too sympathetic. An editorial item he did not treat, one in the *New York Times* of June 2, 1885, illustrates well Hayes's agonizing over the saloon on his property. No one at the time or later, so far as I have been able to learn, connected Hayes's quick and sacrificial sale with the fact that he had just lost a similar amount in the difficulties of the Harvester Works in Fremont. Of course, there may have been no connection.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters*, IV, 217. This observation came in prefatory remarks to instructions for a letter to Bok.

<sup>32</sup> *Omaha Daily Republican*, June 5, 1885. Ari Hoogenboom's new biography of Hayes mentions

Hayes's being "bothered by the press's delight when a piece of Omaha real estate that he owned with Ralph Buckland was leased for the sale of liquor without their knowledge." *Rutherford B. Hayes: Warrior and President* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 488. Hoogenboom's positive treatment of Hayes's Republican political acumen leaves little or no room for the sort of disregard Field had for the man. Unlike Hoogenboom, earlier biographer Harry Barnard did mention Field, though apparently not the Omaha imbroglio. In both instances, Barnard depicted Field and Hayes as being related—"at least third cousins"—a connection I have been unable to authenticate through the Hayes Library in Fremont. *Rutherford B. Hayes and His America* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1954), 102, 508.

<sup>33</sup> *Chicago Daily News*, Aug. 5, 1886.

<sup>34</sup> *Chicago Record*, Sept. 1, 1894. A newspaper reorganization left Field's last few years of contributions in the *Record*.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., Sept. 20, 1894.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., Aug. 24, 1894.