

History of El Paso Chamber of Commerce Reports of All

Here—in a condensed and brief form—may be traced the development of all those industries, with a future that promises activities upon a magnified scale and accomplishments which even the imag-

SUMMARY.

Report of Presidents of El Paso Chamber of Commerce—1899-1920.

The first annual meeting of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, taking into account the work of December 1899 and January of 1900, was held on the night of February 6th, 1900.

The original reports being disposed of, the Chamber took up the election of directors. Secretary Russell read the name of the Board and A. P. Coles moved that they be re-elected, saying that he did not believe any better men could be secured. Mr. W. H. Burgess offered as a substitute for Mr. Coles' motion that a vote be taken on the question; "Resolved that it is the sense of the members of the Chamber of Commerce no change be made in the Board of Directors." The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

The meeting was presided over by S. J. Freudenthal, President. Secretary Russell reported the enrollment of 231 members of which number 15 had dropped out, leaving a net membership of 215. The Secretary's financial report showed \$336.00 collected in dues and fees, with disbursements of \$141.60. Treasurer H. B. Stevens' report showed total receipts since organization of the Chamber of \$860.00, disbursements \$236.60, leaving balance on hand of \$623.40.

It is interesting to note in the first report of the Secretary of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce how well the needs of El Paso, even in those early days, were anticipated. One cannot go over these reports, taking into account the discussions and recommendations that arise in connection with all the meetings, but what they are stirred with admiration for the men who so conscientiously gave their time and enthusiasm and lent their moral and financial support to the creation of the Chamber of Commerce.

Among the suggestions for the new year's work brought out at the first annual meeting were:

(a) A. P. Coles advocated bringing to El Paso of an electric railway system and a good lighting system. A. W. Gifford suggested a mineral collection of specimens from the surrounding mining districts to become the nucleus of a permanent exhibit and to be taken by El Paso delegates to the International Mining Congress. U. S. Stewart advocated the improvement of what was then wretched side walk conditions, and that an ordinance should be passed to that effect as 90 per cent of the people were ready to improve their side walks. W. G. Walz corroborated Mr. Stewart's view and said that El Paso had worse side walks than any city or town in the Southwest. W. A. Irvin suggested the Chamber of Commerce should assist in taking care of the Teachers

Convention which was to meet in El Paso in June, 1900.

An issue of considerable importance at that time was the matter of telephone service, there occurring a transition from the old telephone company to the new telephone company. In this connection U. S. Stewart recommended that the wires be put under ground, stating that he thought with two telegraph, two telephone and two electric light wires, and probably an electric car line, the streets might become dangerous if the wires were all overhead. Adolph Krakauer was opposed to the new telephone, objecting on the ground that to have two phones he would have to use two phones, and this he contended would be necessary in case a new one was put in. C. M. Brown said he had had experience with two telephone systems in Las Vegas where the rate was cut one-half by the advent of the new one although two were now used and the service was improved. After twenty years again the issue of telephone rates and costs has become just as keen an argument pro and con.

—1901—

In the year 1901 among the activities planned and many of them carried out by the Chamber, was the urging that the State make a thorough mineral survey of its resources and that a revision be made of the anti-trust laws, the bill as passed being a handicap to new industries. The final meeting of the outgoing Board was held on January 8th. The annual meeting of the Board was held on the night of January 9th, 1901:

(a) One of the first subjects to be brought up at this meeting was a suggestion that a program be developed, was a resolution from A. P. Coles setting forth the danger and unsightliness of the railroad tracks through the central part of the city and the injury which is now and always will be worked on the property adjacent to the tracks and on the north side which is now difficult of access. Mr. Coles stated that the people of the City are opposed to granting any more railway privileges in the heart of the city. The resolution further afforded the substantial aid of the people of the railroads to enable them to establish a union depot and terminals in some part of the city where the nuisance would not be so great. Since that time there has been from year to year repeated agitation of the question of whether or not the tracks through the heart of the city should be moved, and it is even a more vital issue today than it was in 1901 when the resolution was presented by Mr. Coles.

(b) A. W. Gifford stated that the time was ripe for pushing a union depot project, and suggested a plan whereby 25 or 30 blocks of ground might be acquired for a union depot and ample terminal facilities.

(c) At that time there was being held from year to year a carnival looking toward the development of El Paso and the Southwest, and

the Chamber of Commerce agreed to lend all assistance in the development of this yearly program of business and pleasure.

(d) In the report of President S. J. Freudenthal he brought out the following facts:

1. The necessity for developing the mining resources of the Southwest and that the usefulness of the Chamber of Commerce is not confined to the city limits.

2. The construction of an International dam for the purpose of controlling the waters of the Rio Grande and the development of the agricultural possibilities of the Rio Grande Valley.

3. The need of improvement in freight rates for El Paso through influential committee or bureau in order that El Paso might be substantiated in carrying on an enlarged jobbing and manufacturing program.

4. Mr. Freudenthal recommended that while the Chamber of Commerce should lend every assistance within its power toward bringing new manufacturing industries to El Paso, it would be unwise to give a bonus in money or in land, although aid might be given in certain instances to encourage industries not already established here.

(e) Direct assistance to the building of the Bisbee road into El Paso, it is being announced that a \$50,000 bonus would be offered by the business men of El Paso to assist this vital improvement. Mr. Freudenthal brought out the fact that a large amount of literature had been distributed throughout the year, and in this connection paid tribute to the efficient work performed by Mr. Russell in advertising El Paso.

(f) A matter for which the El Paso Chamber of Commerce took full credit was the movement to form a State Commercial Organization with a view of having all the commercial organizations of the State act together on issues of mutual interest.

As a matter of observation it is timely to state that the records of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce during the first few months of its organization substantiate the fact that El Paso took the lead in a program to form a State Commercial Association and this idea was realized in May, 1919, when the Texas Chamber of Commerce was created at Dallas, Texas, with James Z. George as General Manager.

(g) At the time Mr. Freudenthal made his report, the membership was a little more than 200, and the monthly income was \$250.00, while the original fixed monthly expenses were \$200. Mr. Freudenthal recommended that interest be aroused in increasing the membership and the issues of both the El Paso Herald and El Paso Morning Times during the whole of 1901 reflected splendid articles by Mr. Russell, showing as clearly then as now the relations of the Chamber of Commerce to the community