

# THE PASSING OF DULUTH'S HISTORIC BOWERY

End of Once Notorious Section is in Sight.

Old Buildings Must Crumble Before Advance of Business.

Some Tales of the "Good Days" There.

Grafters Plied Their Merry Vocation of Robbing Woodsmen.

Twelve years ago Duluth's Bowery was a hotbed of vice and crime. For toughness it couldn't be beaten. It was notorious throughout the Northwest. Stories of happenings in that particularly disreputable locality even found their way to the credulous East, and by the time they got there the bare facts had become clothed in exaggeration until Duluthians would not have recognized them.

Now things are different. The Bowery is almost a thing of the past. It will have disappeared entirely within a few years, and at least a block of it is slated for destruction by the Wisconsin Central. H. C. Ribenack, one of the proprietors of the Lenox hotel, says that in two years there will be no Bowery in Duluth, and Mr. Ribenack evidently has full confidence that matters will turn out as he predicts, for he is interested in one of the best hotel properties in the city, which was built in the old Bowery district in spite of the past unsavory reputation of the locality. The class and volume of patronage extending to the Bowery seems to indicate that the general public already regards the Bowery as a dead issue.

Several things account for this very fortunate demise. They all might be put under one classification—progress. An efficient police force, a change in public opinion, a disappearance of the old set of characters necessary for keeping up the reputation of such a section, and big money along the same line, all come with the growth of the city.

In the old days, Duluth was a frontier town. Now it is a metropolitan center. Its population is more stable, and the people are of the same sort that are found in metropolitan centers elsewhere. Picturesque characters such as usually frequent frontier towns, are gone. Their ways of thinking are infrequently that general attention is attracted when they come around. These same characters were the prey of the thugs and big money men, and the victims left, those who depended upon them for a dishonest living went also, urged on by a conscientious police force.

Originally what was known as the Bowery was located on lower Lake avenue. There the Bowery district was to be found. As soon as he struck town the lumberjack and common laborer sought out the lower Lake district. During that period there were no employment agencies in Duluth, and men in search of help went after laborers themselves. Their first avocation was to leave word with all the bartenders along Lake avenue concerning the jobs that were to be done in the lower Lake district. The district lying between Fifth and Seventh avenues west, which later attained notoriety as the "Brewery," was the place where the men who could not afford to spend more than 25 cents for a night's lodging, but who were always ready to spend any amount of money for a drink, were to be found.

The beginning of the West Superior street Bowery was the construction of that street. This attracted a class of trade that meant saloons and questionable resorts to draw the trade to the lower Lake district. The men who could not afford to spend more than 25 cents for a night's lodging, but who were always ready to spend any amount of money for a drink, were to be found.

Even with its promising beginning, the new Bowery would have had a long, hard fight to supersede the old, if it had not been for the fact that it virtually cleaned out the latter. Driven out like rats from a burning barn, the frequenters of the old Bowery moved into the new one, and taking advantage of the opportunity offered, men who saw money in catering to this class of trade erected more lodging houses between Fifth and Sixth avenues west, and the real Bowery was started on its giddy career.

It was the lumberjack that made the district what it was, more than any other one class of men. He was responsible for the deeds of violence, they really were the ones who attracted card sharps, and the men and their like, for the careless manner in which the woodsmen handle their money is well known. The peculiar class of pleasure that was sought resulted in a collection of forbidding characters, men and women alike, who made merry day and night at the expense of the man from the woods.

**Different Class of Men.**  
The lumberjack of fifteen years ago was different from the lumberjack Duluthians see today. He was more of a frontiersman, of the sort described in "The Eldest Trail," and other books and short stories dealing with the woods. Foreigners were the exception rather than the rule. These men of the forest were tall, brawny, broad-shouldered chaps, careless in dress and speech. The straight American language was good enough for them. Such of them as were of foreign parentage had been here long enough to master the language, and to adorn his talk with a picturesque array of cuss words.

They were adventures rather than laborers, and were after excitement above all else, standing ready to give a winter's earnings in exchange for a few hours of it. They lived only in the present. No thought was given the future. Their minds retained pictures of good times in the past, and the bad times were quickly forgotten. This must have been true, else why should a lumberjack get burned in the same year after year?

Lumbering was then the leading industry hereabouts, and men who made their living in the woods overflowed the town. Extraordinary characters, vultures in human form, hung around to get their money. They made the Bowery their center of operations. They knew all the lumberjacks in the city were to be found there. Gambling flourished. For a time the police seemed unable to cope with the situation. This seems hard to believe, in the light of Duluth's present reputation of hav-



"FORCED OUT BY THE RAILROAD."—Photo by Herald Photographer.



THIS SCENE WILL BE BUT A MEMORY NEXT YEAR.—Photo by Herald Photographer.

ing one of the most efficient police forces in the entire country, but it was true, nevertheless. Big mitt men had the upper hand. They ran the Bowery to suit themselves. When one man was forced there was always another one at hand, to go through with the same process. It was like shearing a flock of sheep.

All these things made business good on the Bowery. Men who were not particular as to how they obtained their money avowed to a realization of the fact that it was a desirable place to locate. There was a scramble for rooms to be used for different purposes. The owners of the land appropriated to Bowery, and rather promptly placed a high valuation on their property, boasting rents outrageously. For many years Bowery property paid better rents than property in any other section of the city, regardless of location. The best business corner in the upper district did not command as high prices as was paid for the rental of a tumble-down shack between Fifth and Sixth avenues west. It was chiefly because of the enormously high rents that the property owners did not object to the existing order of things, and rather encouraged vice, instead of coming out flat-footed against it, and encouraging city authorities to preserve the order.

Fair enchantresses, more commonly known as bleached blondes, recently frequented the Bowery, and they were to be found in the shape of money when he was through with the card sharps and other gambling sharps, the women would take him in tow, which meant that he would be whiling for as long as he became sober. Where a man was not to be fleeced in a card game or on the faro or roulette table, he was to be fleeced by the women's fingers, the simple expedient of knock-out drops was resorted to, and the unfortunate was thrown into the "snake" room to sober up, after his pockets had been searched, and all valuables appropriated to the use of the searcher. When the victim woke up in the morning he would have a very bad headache and a very poor memory of what had happened the night before, and would be in no position to see that justice was done him.

The big mitt men were smooth. There seemed no way of getting back at them, until finally the police got after them, hammer and tongs, and drove them out of the city, never to return.

**Did Not Submit Tamely.**  
But the lumberjacks did not always submit tamely to being robbed. Old residents can cite numerous instances where there was trouble after the losses of the victims were discovered. Sometimes the wronged man had a bunch of staunch friends in the city, and they would all get together and start to "clean up" the place where the knock-out drops were administered. And not infrequently they succeeded. There used to be some great free-for-all fights on the Bowery.

One story is told of a strapping six-footer, by the name of Swenson. He was born in the West, and had roughed it all his life. He considered himself a thorough American, and at all times was possessed with the courage of the minute-men of old, together with the recklessness of a drunken sailor. Swenson was a typical lumberjack, and loved whisky and a good time as much as any of his associates.

He struck Duluth one Christmas day, with half a dozen bow companions. After partaking of a feast which he considered the camp cook could serve, anything the camp cook could serve, the crowd started out to see the sights. For a time the police seemed unable to cope with the situation. This seems hard to believe, in the light of Duluth's present reputation of hav-

ing one of the most efficient police forces in the entire country, but it was true, nevertheless. Big mitt men had the upper hand. They ran the Bowery to suit themselves. When one man was forced there was always another one at hand, to go through with the same process. It was like shearing a flock of sheep.

separated, and soon Swenson found himself in a dirty bar room, seated at a little table. Opposite him was the woman in the case, and between them was a bottle of beer and the necessary glasses. A three-piece orchestra was creating a fearful din in the end of the room, where four or five men and as many women were giving a good imitation of a noisy dance.

**Knock Out Drops.**  
In paying for the beer, Swenson frequently displayed a roll of greenbacks that a pug dog would have had a hard time jumping over. This proved to be his downfall. Before Swenson had enjoyed the conversation of his companion fifteen minutes knock-out drops had found their way into his glass. When the man woke up the sun was shining through a dirty pane of glass on to a dirty floor. It didn't take the lumberjack long to see that he was in the back room of a saloon, and he also learned very quickly that his roll was missing.

He felt stiff in every joint, and his head was aching, but he was too angry to notice these things. It was a severe case of brainstom, supplemented by the mental derangement and blood in the eye. As a starter, Swenson kicked a pencil out of the door and then kicked the door open, breaking the catch in doing so. Then, as a preliminary to what he was to do, he picked up an iron cuspidor and threw it playfully at the handsome mirror behind the bar.

His aim was good, the mirror had the desired effect. A roulette wheel man, two bartenders and a porter were on duty at the time. The bartenders scooted out from underneath the falling glass and made a run for Swenson. Swenson picked up a chair and knocked the first man senseless with one blow on the ear of the irate bartender. Little skirmishes of this kind were expected in those days, and saloon employes were employed with an eye to their pugilistic ability, as well as to their ability to mix drinks and to do a few other things. This bartender was nearly as big as Swenson, and was not at all lacking in courage. He came back, blow for blow, and for a few minutes there was a "rough house." The porter and gambler danced around, trying to get a change to hit Swenson, but the contest was such a lively one that they could not well interfere at first without endangering the chances of their favorite.

Swenson had his hands full, but was getting the best of it when the gambler saw an opening. He got in a blow with a billiard cue from behind, and at the same time the porter grasped the lumberjack around the knees, the combination of circumstances bringing the man to the floor, and knocked the stove off its legs, while the man was dazed by the blow, and before he could recover himself he was beaten almost into insensibility and thrown into the street.

**Seek Revenge.**  
Bleeding and cursing, he sought out his companions of the night before, but did not get them all together until about toward evening. They hatched out a plan for revenge. Each purchased a cheap revolver and stuck it fully loaded, into his hip pocket. These were to be used only in case of emergency. Thus equipped, the seven headed for the offending saloon, whose proprietors might or might not have been connected with the knock out drop episode.

**Clean Out Saloon.**  
By the time the woodsmen entered the place, the usual evening crowd was on hand. All traces of the morning's disorder had been removed, except that the mirror had not been replaced. Men and women were freely intermingled in

the room, and drinking and talking freely. The full crew of saloon employes was on hand, which does not necessarily mean that all were bartenders. Swenson's friends began to mix things right away. The stove pipe was knocked down to start with, and then two billiard cues in the hands of the lumberjacks played havoc with the glasses behind the bar. A bartender reached for his gun, but got a blow on the head and went promptly out of commission. Some of the women screamed and took to their heels, while others backed up along the wall and held their companions to pitch in and help the saloon men. But the companions happened to be lumberjacks themselves, and did not interfere further than to get out of the way and watch the scrap.

There was a merry mix up for about fifteen minutes, but luckily no shots were fired. When the victorious woodsmen left they left ruin in their wake. The saloon men were all beaten almost into insensibility, and there was not a whole piece of furniture in the room to notice the things. It was a severe case of brainstom, supplemented by the mental derangement and blood in the eye. As a starter, Swenson kicked a pencil out of the door and then kicked the door open, breaking the catch in doing so. Then, as a preliminary to what he was to do, he picked up an iron cuspidor and threw it playfully at the handsome mirror behind the bar.

**Many Humorous Incidents.**  
Old timers recall many instances, both humorous and pathetic, connected with the early days of the old Bowery. One of the most humorous was that of a man who was nearly as big as Swenson, and was not at all lacking in courage. He came back, blow for blow, and for a few minutes there was a "rough house." The porter and gambler danced around, trying to get a change to hit Swenson, but the contest was such a lively one that they could not well interfere at first without endangering the chances of their favorite.

**The Barrel House Plan.**  
Another innovation in the manner of dispensing booze was the barrel house or bodega plan. Great foaming mugs of beer were drawn right from the barrel at 5 cents per, and the business done in a day was enormous. Fairs are mentioned who have amassed fortunes on the Bowery, most of them being in the liquor business or running eating houses and lodging houses.

In the rear of many of the drink emporiums of those days were rooms, or rather box stalls, filled with hay, and here the lumberjack with an over load of grapes, or the sailor who had first been "rolled" and then dumped into the place to sleep, his legs found a common sleeping place. Men lay around like dead flies in these back stalls, and there was a standing rule that the first man up in the morning took his pick of the wearing apparel. It was unsafe to remove shoes or shirt, for the owner was certain of losing them and would have to look about for some unfortunate companion in turn to "frisk" of his wearing apparel. No

complaints were made, and if a man saw some one else wearing his hat, coat, shoes, he either whipped him, tried to do it, or kept his peace.

**Many Well Known Characters.**  
There were many characters well known to the populace of the Bowery in an early day who were sort of privileged characters. One Jack Mahal, a competent man when sober and often engaged in surveying, grew a wonderful growth of whiskers, and was known as "Old Whiskers." Jack was long since gone to his reward, and only the old-timers will recall him.

The suggestive cognomen of "Bull Skin Campbell" was that under which a typical Bowery character lived and died in the days of the old Bowery. Campbell wore, summer and winter, an old fish jacket of oil-skin, and that garment lasted him at least ten years, according to those who knew him. He was a rough but whole-souled chap, a good fellow and good drinker. He boasted of his ability to carry a "poison" more than any man on the Bowery, and few cared to discuss the question with him. "Yellow Stone Jack" was another character. Jack hailed from the West and was handy with his hands in a fight, "frisking" a drunken sailor or lifting a schooner to his lips. He has long since passed to other fields, and has not been seen here for years.

**"Bob" Smollett on Ground.**  
Bob Smollett, the well-known policeman, patrolled the Bowery many days, and the streets of the police officer were many. The Bowery was the "school of graduation" for the little fellows of the end of the city, and the kids were turned loose to earn what they could in blacking shoes, peeling papers or any other "snatched" of their change, and often some lumberjack came down from the woods with his winters' wages, and after purchasing "store clothes," new boots, and having himself "tricked up," started out like a new man. The little dusky urchins, these fellows were easy pickings for the denizens of the old Bowery. They were "snatched" of their change, and when they finally came out of their Rip Van Winkle slumber found themselves in one of the box stalls of hay along with the others who "also ran."

The enforcement of the curfew law was one of the trials of the police in an early day. The little dusky urchins, like so many rats, would skid in one door and out another, here and there, and the streets were full of them next to impossible. After having driven a swarm of the urchins through a doorway, the officer would find to his surprise that they had simply skudded through to the depot, circled around and were back on the streets, playing all sorts of pranks and deviltry again. It was a hopeless case and the temper of the police was in a decidedly ruffled condition most of the time.

**Gus and His Pigeons.**  
Many will recall old Gus Hollen and his pigeons. He conducted a boarding house and rooming shop on the Bowery and pigeons had nested under the eaves of his buildings, multiplying until the place fairly swarmed with them. Finally Gus passed away and his family followed him or removed to other localities, but the pigeons stayed on, multiplying generation after generation until they became as thick as swarms of bees. The buildings were torn down and the birds took refuge under the eaves of the Great Northern depot where they continued to follow out their habits, and multiply. They became such an annoyance that the railroad officials offered a reward of \$25.00 to the man who would destroy the neighborhood secured ladders and with sacks repaired to the depot one night, climbed up to the nests and made a pigeon haul never duplicated in any country. Sack after sack of the sleeping birds were filled and pigeon dinner, pigeon pot-pie, pigeon on toast and cooked in every conceivable way tickled the palates of the Bowery elite for weeks.

An incident is recalled of one saloon keeper who was so annoyed by the young gamblers frequenting the streets day and night as to be almost wild and how he got even with them. An urchin in those days lured the sight of water as a mad dog does and their faces, grimy hands and bare legs bore out the assertion. The saloon man in question, arranged the big squat gun and tub near his door and at the sight of the brais would turn on the stream, and showering the little fellows in the face, relieved of his valuables west of Fifth avenue west, than he is east of Fifth avenue west. The big mitt men are gone. The money has long since been hidden to enter the saloons, and gambling was long ago done away with. Good order is always maintained in

the district, and the hotels and restaurants and saloons and stores treat their patrons as fairly as hotels, restaurants and saloons and stores in other sections of the city.

The Metropolitan opera house and the Lenox hotel were the first large buildings to invade the Bowery. Next

will be the handsome new Wisconsin Central depot, and from now on it is expected that modern business blocks will replace the smaller buildings now occupying Bowery property. It is entirely reasonable to place faith in Mr. Ribenack's prediction that in two years the Bowery will be but a memory.

**FAMOUS OLD LANDMARK WILL BE TORN DOWN.**

complaints were made, and if a man saw some one else wearing his hat, coat, shoes, he either whipped him, tried to do it, or kept his peace.

**FISH FAST FOR MONTHS**  
Salmon Gorge in the Ocean and Then Seek Fresh Streams to Rest Up.

"Come along, come along o' me, I'll pretty soon show you why the salmon runs out of the wee brooks and rivers into the salt water. Yes, I'll show you, just I will!"

The speaker is a well known guide on the Grand river of Gaspe, a thorough authority on fishing subjects, says a correspondent of the St. Louis, Mo. Globe. This sample of his talk will identify him to scores of former patrons.

As he spoke he led the way to a large leechhouse, where any numbers of the finest of the salmon caught by the deep-sea fishermen, stored there until the summer marketing season sets in. At least one of them, a beautiful male fish of thirty-three pounds, had not yet been opened, and when it was opened, the fish was found to be in the prime of life. "More'n what ye would be wanting to eat in a day isn't it? Such a fish as you would eat his weight every two days, if he had his will. Where would he be getting all that, think, in a bit o' a stream, or in a big river even?"

"Ah, well, the salmon's no such a fule as ta tak' chances o' being left hungry, ye see. He'll just go straight away for the first drove of herrings or haddocks, or even caplin, if there's nothing better, and fairly live with the crowd as well as on 'em. No getting away from the big chaps, for they can swim some, I tell ye. The boats get 'em in the nets, when they are after the other fish, ye see, that's how all these gobs caught last winter and spring."

"But I was always told that in the sea the salmon fed on crabs, or crabs, fish, or things of the shell families, which accounts for their color," said the other man.

"Eh, man, but that's main fulehness," was the reply. "Why, a big salmon would be clammed to death before he'd fill himself with such wee creatures as that. It's something big he's wanting to fill up on. And color, do ye say? It's fat, just fish oil, as gives color."

"If they are so well fed in the sea, why do they ever leave and go up the rivers?"

rate, the salmon is driven to the sea by his want of food, though he is by nature a fresh water fish. But if salmon spawn was deposited in brine it would die. Accordingly nature has provided against this by making it necessary for salmon to leave the sea every year and rush back to the fresh water, and that just at the time when the preservation of the race requires that he leave the sea and go back to his native spawning place.

**SANE AND REAL FIRE ESCAPE**  
Is Urged by International Society of Building Inspectors.

Washington, Aug. 9.—To go down the ordinary external fire-escape ladder one has to be more or less of an acrobat and possess unusually strong nerves and sinews; nearly all such fire-escapes are placed where, in a severe fire they are liable to become red hot and useless, and in nine cases out of ten are located so as to be more or less inaccessible. The International Society of Building Inspectors, through its executive officer, Architect Fitzpatrick of Washington, is making an effort to have cities incorporate in their building requirements a rule that will give every structure a safe and positive fire-escape.

The main stairs, it is argued, the ordinary means of access to a building by day, is the most natural means of egress, or into a fireproof corridor in a moment of need, therefore, it is contended, the main stairs of every building should be absolutely fireproof, and having wash-down doors at every landing, and the said stairs to either abut directly upon the street, or into any other portion of the building. It may be a very slight inconvenience to open and close a door every time one goes up or down a stairway, but this is counterbalanced by the absolute security and safety afforded by such a stairway. It is the sanest and best fire and ordinary exit from any building, and there should be no time lost in making the suggested change in our ordinances operative, compelling new buildings to be so built, and the old ones changed as speedily as possible.

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A learned physician, who writes of the party remarked as a commentary upon the report of this conversation that surgical research had established the fact that the digestive tract of the salmon was almost functionless and inactive when he entered fresh water from the sea. The big fish have, in fact, then hardly any power of assimilating food, and doubtless live upon the matter stored in their systems until their return.

With regard to the impelling thirst for fresh water science was unable to discover grounds for the theory, which was, however, not imposing on its face. According to Sandy's idea, which science has no proof against, at any