



CONRAD YOUNGERMAN

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FOR forty years there was no better known man in the town and city than Conrad Youngerman. Coming here in 1856, a young man, of German birth, steady, industrious habits, of sterling integrity, he at once began to make a place for himself. He was poor in purse, but rich in earnest endeavor. A mason by trade, the prevailing hard times prevented building operations almost entirely, and he did whatever he could get to do. His first work was laying brick and stone of the first building for exclusive use as a store in town, and erected by G. M. Hippee, at the corner of Second Street and Court Avenue. He also laid stone in the old dam for the Williams mill, at Center Street. He didn't watch the clock. There were no Trades Unions, no eight and ten hour systems in those days. It was from seven in the morning to six at night, or later, according to circumstances, and he was mighty glad to get a dollar and a half a day.

Among his earliest work was the laying of the stone steps at the east front of the Court House, in company with Francis Geneser. They went up to Dell Rapids one day, quarried the stone, hauled it down, and the next day cut and put it in place. It was a procrastinating job, and so was the whole structure. They also laid the bases in the portico, on which stood George Baldwin's pet basswood goddesses, so long admired as specimens of high art in early days.

As financial conditions improved, he took jobs by contract, and whether verbal or in writing, it was all the same, his spoken word was as good as the bond of the best fidelity security company. His energy and integrity soon brought him to the front as the leading builder in the city, and on nearly every street can be seen business blocks, churches, halls, hotels, schoolhouses, public buildings and residences of his erection.

Among those I recall are, on Second Street, the first Casady Bank, now the *Staats Anzeiger* office; the old Given plow works,

now a part of Green's foundry; the Harbach undertaking department building; the German Catholic Church, corner of Crocker; the Central Fire Station, corner of Grand Avenue.

On Third Street, the Harbach Building, now the Court House; a large residence block, corner of Chestnut, and the Whalen Block.

On Fourth Street, the block in the rear of *The Register and Leader* Building, the Iowa Hotel, the Brinsmaid store, and the block adjoining the Valley National Bank.

On Fifth Street, the four-story block corner of Mulberry, which in 1893, he tore down and substituted the present eight-story block with its one hundred and forty-two business offices and suites, and the Manhattan Block.

On Walnut Street, the Verse Block, now occupied by the Heywood Candy Company; the four-story block corner of Seventh, where is now Younker's Block; the Bothwell Block, corner of Sixth Avenue; the Masonic Temple, and the old Exposition Building, now the Iliad.

On Locust Street, the block occupied by the Kenyon and the Miller printing houses; the block northeast corner of Fifth; the four-story Asbestine Stone Block, corner of Fifth, which he tore away and substituted the present fine Crocker Building; the Harbach-Harris store, and the block at northeast corner of Sixth, now occupied by Bromley and the kodak store.

On Eighth Street, the first Turnverein Hall, and the Sheuerman woolen mills.

On Ninth Street, the Wells livery and hack headquarters.

On Market Street, the old Syrup and Refining Company building, which was summarily closed because of the pestilential stinks which filled the air from it. As an infant industry, it received poor encouragement.

He also built the Jewish Synagogue, Irving and Webster schoolhouses, and on the East Side the old Shepherd & Perrior woolen mill, now the casket factory; the original block now occupied by the Capital City Bank, and Goldstone Hotel.

Of the fine residences to his credit are those of J. S. Polk, on Grand Avenue, and Hoyt Sherman, on Woodland Avenue.

In 1875, owing to the scarcity of stone for building purposes, he began the manufacture of artificial, or asbestine stone, from

sand and cement, moulded [sic] from prepared patterns. It proved an excellent, durable substitute, for window lintels and caps, and with it he faced the outside structure of several buildings, since torn away and replaced with a more attractive and substantial vitrified brick made from the excellent clay later found so abundant within the city limits.

He was public-spirited, and aided in many ways in promoting the prosperity of the city. He was no politician nor place-seeker, but, recognizing his business qualifications and large property interests, public sentiment pressed him into service in the City Council at a period when extensive severing, paving and lighting systems were being established, and for four years he was an important factor in perfecting plans for public improvements.

He stood like a rock against jobbery, speculative schemes and grabs, and demanded that all municipal affairs be conducted on strictly business principles. There was no vacillation about him. He was a man of few words, independent in thought and action, plain in speech, called a spade a spade, regardless of time or place. He was genial, social, and popular.

While he builded [sic] well pecuniarily for himself, he helped the city materially.

After the completion of his Crocker Building, he practically retired from business other than to look after his property holdings.

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