



MOSES STRAUSS

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An old settler of Polk County who has been a potent factor in business and religious affairs in the city, and yet one of the most quiet and unostentatious, is Moses Strauss. He is known principally as a successful merchant, but he is more than that. Not only is he an early settler, he is the founder and builder of an element in the body politic of great helpfulness to the community, thereby adding further graces to its social fabric.

He was born March Sixth, 1833, in Bavaria, Germany. He passed his youthful days with his father, who was a merchant, and attended the common schools.

In 1848, not quite fifteen years old, he set sail for America, and landed at New Orleans, where he found employment in a store as clerk, at fifteen dollars per month.

In 1852, he went, to New York, and took ship for Australia, and engaged in business in Melbourne about two years. He then went to the Mountains, where he remained for a time, when another roving impulse took him to Africa, and thence to South America.

In 1857, he returned to New Orleans, and the same year came to Des Moines and engaged in business with L. Simon and his brother, Leopold, on Second Street, occupying two small stores.

Later, when trade and business began to move west, Strauss moved to Court Avenue, between Second and Third streets, to the Sherman Block.

In 1886, Alexander Lederer, a man of very courtly manner and dignified personality, formed a partnership with Strauss, under the name of Lederer & Strauss, which name has been continued to the present day. The firm opened a dry goods and clothing store in Exchange Block, at Third and Walnut streets. In 1871, the City Directory places them at Forty-nine and Fifty-one Walnut Street; in 1873, they opened up a stock of millinery and fancy goods at Ninety-one Walnut Street, still retaining the dry goods and

clothing at the old stand. In 1875, they sold out their dry goods stock and moved their clothing stock to where Evans' restaurant is now. The following year, they moved the millinery stock from Walnut Street to the old Cooper Building, on Court Avenue, and this business continues to-day, under the firm name of Lederer, Strauss & Company, Incorporated.

In 1872, Mr. Strauss, desiring to invest some of his surplus shekels in banking, became a stockholder and Director in the Citizens' National Bank, and has been re-elected each year since.

In 1887, he was one of the organizers of the State Savings Bank, was elected one of its Directors, and in 1889 was elected President, which place he has held continuously since.

During the present year, he, with Carl Kahler, built the Majestic Theater, at a cost of one hundred thousand dollars, each investing fifty thousand dollars. It is the finest amusement structure west of Chicago, and its interior arrangement not surpassed by any in the United States.

As a business man, he is conservative and optimistic, exercising always those business principles which have given the county and city an enviable financial reputation.

But it is in another field of helpfulness he has been conspicuous, and in which he was the pioneer. Trained and educated in the religious belief of the Hebrews—a religion dating back to the days of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—at the earliest opportunity, he became one of the leaders in organizing the first Hebrew Church, or Synagogue, in Des Moines.

On Saturday, September Fifth, 1873, at the residence of David Goldman, a meeting was held and the congregation of B'Nai Jeshurum, which means "Sons of Peace," was organized, with eighteen members. Joseph Kuhn was chosen President; Julius Mandelbaum, Vice-President; Samuel Redstone, Secretary; L. Hirsch, Treasurer. The Trustees were David Goldman, Nelson Goldman, Alexander Lederer; members, S. Joseph, Morris Riegelman, Henry Riegelman, Isaac Hyman, Moses Strauss, L. Samish, Louis M. Doctor.

For six years after the organization, its meetings were held in a hall in the store of Joseph Kuhn, on Court Avenue, between Second and Third. In 1879, a building at Seventh and Mulberry was purchased and remodeled for the

use of the congregation. In 1886, a lot at the corner of Eighth and Pleasant was purchased and a temple erected thereon the following year, in which services have since been conducted. The congregation has slowly but steadily increased in numbers, and has become a beneficent factor in the religious and social life of the community.

A large Sabbath School is maintained by the congregation, in which there are four divisions, for instruction in Jewish History, Religion, and Hebrew, by competent teachers.

Beginning with his little store on Second Street, Mr. Strauss has, by enterprise, integrity, and public spirit, become one of the solid, substantial men of the city.

Politically, he is a Democrat, but not in any wise a politician. Socially, he is quiet, taciturn, unostentatious, cares very little about ordinary social functions, is courteous and affable; in temperament, decidedly positive. I would classify him with the homebuilders. He is a member of Pioneer Lodge, Number Twenty-two, of the Masonic order; Corinthian Chapter, Number Fourteen, Royal Arch Masons; Des Moines Consistory, S. P. R. S., Thirty-second Degree; a charter member of Lazarus Samisch Lodge of K. S. B., organized November Seventeenth, 1876, and was elected its first Vice-President.

December First, 1907.

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