

A.K. Steunenberg

Mayor 1903



Albert K. Steunenberg was born of sturdy Dutch stock and was one of 10 children born to B. and Corinne (Keppel) Steunenberg, Holland natives. He was born in Knoxville, Iowa, on September 11, 1863. He married Miss Carrie Coulter in 1890 in Des Moines, IA and together they had 3 children, Bess; Ancil K. & Thomas. Although he had many duties and responsibilities he never lacked time to devote to his home and family.

He received his education in his home town and later learned the printing trade. After 4 years of persistent labor, during which he held various positions and had become very familiar with every detail of the business, he became a journeyman printer. In 1886 A.K. Steunenberg and his brother, Frank (future Governor of Idaho) moved to Caldwell to purchase the type and equipment of the Tribune Press Newspaper, which was at that time in financial straits. Within a short time they had resuscitated it into a successful business and a representative journal. The brothers were both practical printers and men of sound judgement and business ability. They were

instrumental in bringing Caldwell to the front as one of the livelier towns of the state. Though they were affiliated with the Democratic Party personally, they edited the paper as an independent journal and continued with the publication until 1893.

One of the pleasant things in his life was the close relationship and mutual dependence that existed between A.K. and Frank, although their tastes and abilities differed. Frank went into politics and won a place both in the state and the nation because of his fearless stand for law and order. Steunenberg was one of the most prominent financiers of the state. His brother Frank Steunenberg was a former governor of Idaho who was assassinated December 30, 1905. Up until the day of Frank's death, Frank went to A.K. for advice and counsel, as did A.K. to him.

After the sale of the Tribune he purchased a new plant and issued the first Odd Fellow paper in the state, which he published for about a year. His next investment was the establishment of the Commercial Bank of Caldwell which was established in 1895 where he served as the cashier. During his 5 year tenure the bank flourished to a capital stock of \$25,000 and an annual dividend of 10 cents to the stockholders. The bank soon outgrew its current quarters and reincorporated with larger capital and a new building was erected in 1903. About this same time he planned and established a chain of banks throughout the state and was successful in this because of his keen insight into business opportunities. He was a student, thoroughly mastering financial problems, and at the time of his death he was recognized as one of the foremost bankers in the northwest.

Steunenberg never craved public office, but was always a leader. He served as a member of the City Council and as a school trustee merely because he was strongly urged to do so for the benefit of the town. He was elected Mayor of Caldwell in 1902 and served a 1-year term. He was a keen thinker along political, social and industrial lines, a student, but also a man of quick, decisive action and sound judgement.

Fraternally Steunenberg was one of the most prominent members of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, having held the position of Grand Secretary from 1888 to 1899 and was elected Grand Master and Grand Representative to the Sovereign Grand Lodge. He was also prominently connected with the Knights of Pythias.

Through the years his income increased and it was largely through his efforts that the city had many of its brick buildings. He was not a financial coward when it came to his city and home town that he loved. He ventured where a less fearless man would have hesitated.

Their home located at 409 N. Kimball Street was a 2-story Colonial Revival expansion which was listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places and still stands today.

He died March 16, 1907 in Caldwell, ID at the age of 43. His death was the result of a complication from a cancerous growth obstructing the duct leading from the gallbladder and chronic liver trouble, from which he had suffered for several months. He is buried in the Canyon Hill Cemetery in Caldwell.