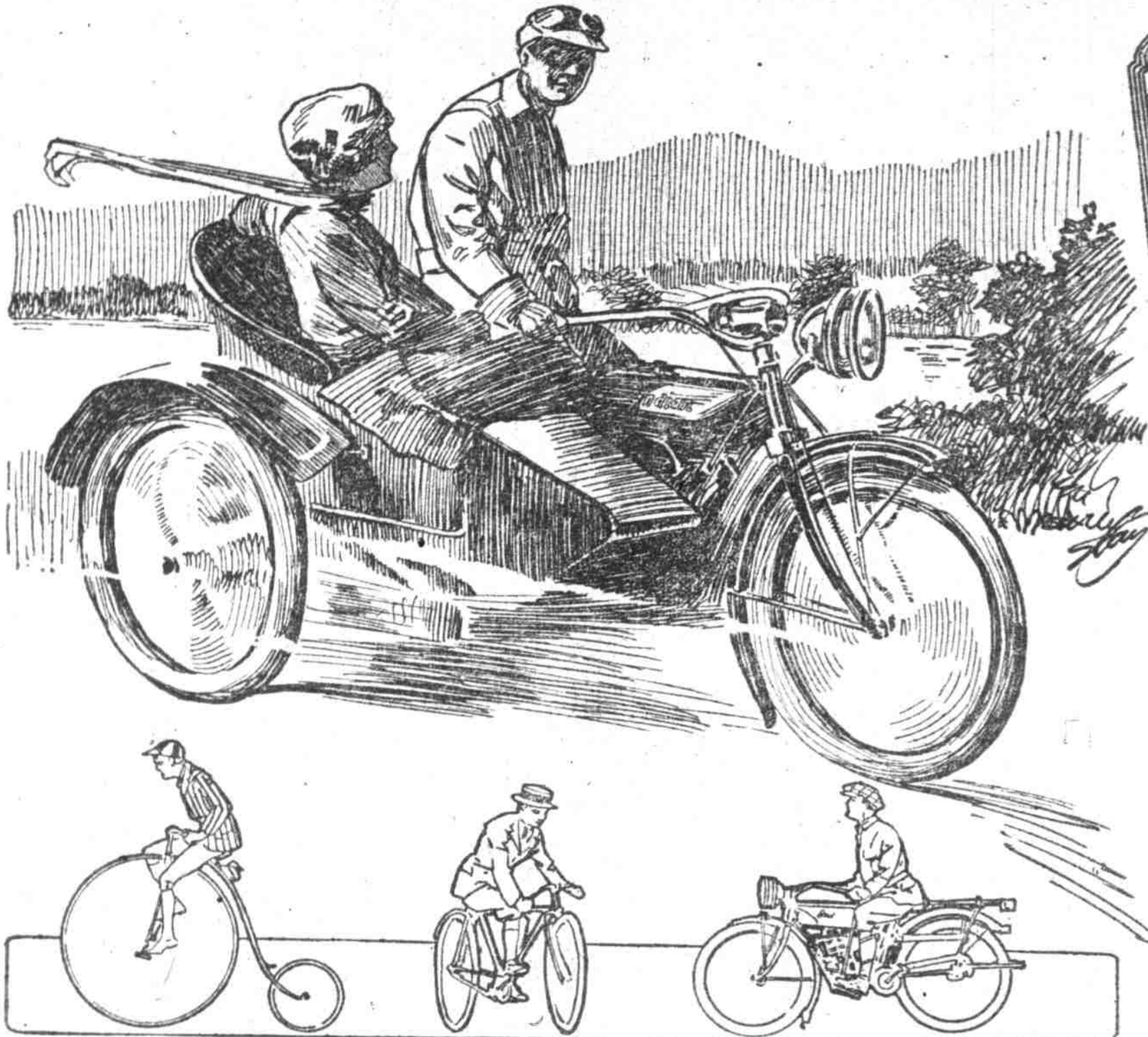


PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 21, 1914.

RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRM OF BALLOU & WRIGHT



THE EVOLUTION OF THE CYCLE

ADVENT OF THE BICYCLE INSPIRES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BUSINESS WHICH SINCE HAS ASSUMED BIG PROPORTIONS

C. F. Wright Outlines History of Partnership Between Himself and O. B. Ballou Which Had Its Beginning in a Small Way in Montana, and Was Resumed Here

By Fred W. Vincent.
CHANCE, the world's greatest gambler, stands out strongly in his true character, that of a roller of life's dice, in the history of the rise and development of the firm of Ballou & Wright, dealers in motorcycles, bicycles and automobile and motorcycle accessories, with headquarters in Portland and a branch in Seattle.

Nor is that two letter word "if," the greatest little explainer on earth, missing. "If" and "chance" travel together. One rolls the dice, the other reads in them what might have been. For instance—"if" C. F. Wright, when a youth of 17 years, had not wanted to go into the bicycle business at Great Falls, Mont., and in furtherance of this desire had not gone to Helena, Mont., where he accidentally met a third man, there would have been no big Ballou & Wright company doing business in Portland, with a prosperous branch in Seattle.

"If" O. B. Ballou, then a confectionery man at Helena, had not known this third man and been convinced there was money in the bicycle business, he and Mr. Wright would not be heading an establishment that does approximately a million dollar business each year. But "chance" ruled otherwise. It shook the box and out rolled a couple of sixes, side by side. One was Mr. Ballou, president of the concern, the other was Mr. Wright, vice president and general manager. Since then each shake has produced another six, and they together spell "success."

Along in 1895 Mr. Ballou was a resident of Helena and was in the candy business. Mr. Wright, then a youth just turned 17 years, was living at Great Falls and was trying to make a living as a realty salesman. Bicycles were becoming popular and Mr. Wright got the idea that he could make money if he secured a bicycle agency and opened a store and repair shop. With this in mind he wrote to a number of manufacturing concerns. This resulted in him receiving a message from one of the northwest managers of the United States Tire company later, and is now hard on the job of making Washington state read Ballou & Wright.

Ballou & Wright had been having trouble with men sent out by the Morgan & Wright tire people, and finally the Pacific coast manager came to Portland and happened to meet Jones. He introduced him to Mr. Ballou

A. H. JONES MANAGES THE SEATTLE BRANCH



A. H. Jones, manager of the Seattle branch of Ballou and Wright.

A. H. Jones, manager of the Seattle branch of Ballou & Wright, once sold maps. Then he put the Morgan & Wright auto tire on the map, secured thereby the position of northwest manager of the United States Tire company later, and is now hard on the job of making Washington state read Ballou & Wright. There were no more complaints registered in Portland. Jones got the business, and when the Morgan & Wright tire factory joined the United States people, Jones went along and got boosted to the position of northwest manager, with headquarters in Seattle. He held down the job until the Seattle branch of Ballou & Wright was organized, when he took the management and an interest in the business also.

in business in Helena, and at last accounts he was still dealing in bicycles." The venture proved a success. Within a year Ballou & Wright had purchased Dorrance's interests and were sole proprietors of the little shop and store, quarters that boasted just 20 front feet on a side street of the Montana town. Bicycles then sold for \$100 for the cheapest makes, and during the five years they remained in partnership the major portion of Great Falls bicycles came from their shop. Then Mr. Ballou's health began to fail, and in the hope of regaining it he sold out to Mr. Wright, and, taking the Pacific coast agency for Ames & Frost of Chicago, makers of the Imperial bicycle, began the life of a traveling salesman. This was in 1900. Three months later Mr. Wright disposed of the shop and went into the hardware business. But in 1901 he got a telegram from Mr. Ballou saying that he had decided that Portland was a good place for a bicycle store and to men.

(Concluded on Page Four, This Section)

O. B. BALLOU FORESAW IMMENSE FUTURE OF THE BICYCLE AND THEN CAPITALIZED IT

The Fascination of Pedaling Which Seized the Public in the Late '90's Appealed to Merchant, Who Since Has Dealt in Bicycle and Motorcycle.

ONE day in 1895 O. B. Ballou, now president of the Ballou & Wright Co. of this city, stood on a curb and looked around for a man used to the itinerant life of the gold hunter. In short, he wanted a man's size job.

He ought to have been a millionaire, he knew, but he was not. Instead his worldly possessions consisted of a small store where he dispensed sweetmeats to women and cigars and tobacco to men.

He had purchased it with the remnants of his ready cash after the panic of '93 to "fill in" temporarily while he looked around for a more lucrative line of endeavor.

Used to all manner of experiences, armed with that resourcefulness which comes from the ups and downs of the Argonauts, vividly described in Mark Twain's "Roughing It," Ballou was not disheartened by the turn of his fortunes. But the same excitement of selling candles did not appeal to him, a man used to the itinerant life of the gold hunter. In short, he wanted a man's size job.

As he "figured" he idly watched peripatetic bicyclists pedal past him in the street. Bicycles were not geared as high as they are now, and the rapid movements of the riders' legs as they "pedaled" amused him, and in the back of his head a hazy idea was formed. "To see those people rush up and down the street crazily on those wheels somehow reminded me of the old frontier life," he said, in recounting his experiences, "and then I realized all of a sudden that the bicycle business was due for wonderful expansion. I decided then and there to make a fuller investigation, just to see what it could be developed into."

"I hurried to a bicycle shop, planked down half a dollar—the amount it cost to rent a bicycle for an hour, then—and told the proprietor that I was going to go out and learn to ride. "He handed back that four bit piece mighty quick. 'You don't get this machine,' he said, 'There's a riding school down the street; go learn there.' "I went. For half an hour a tired instructor shoved me around the big hall, and then turned me loose. I dodged the walls and posts and in another half hour could get along fairly well. 'This has some hustle and some life in it,' I told myself. 'Guess I had better buy one.'"

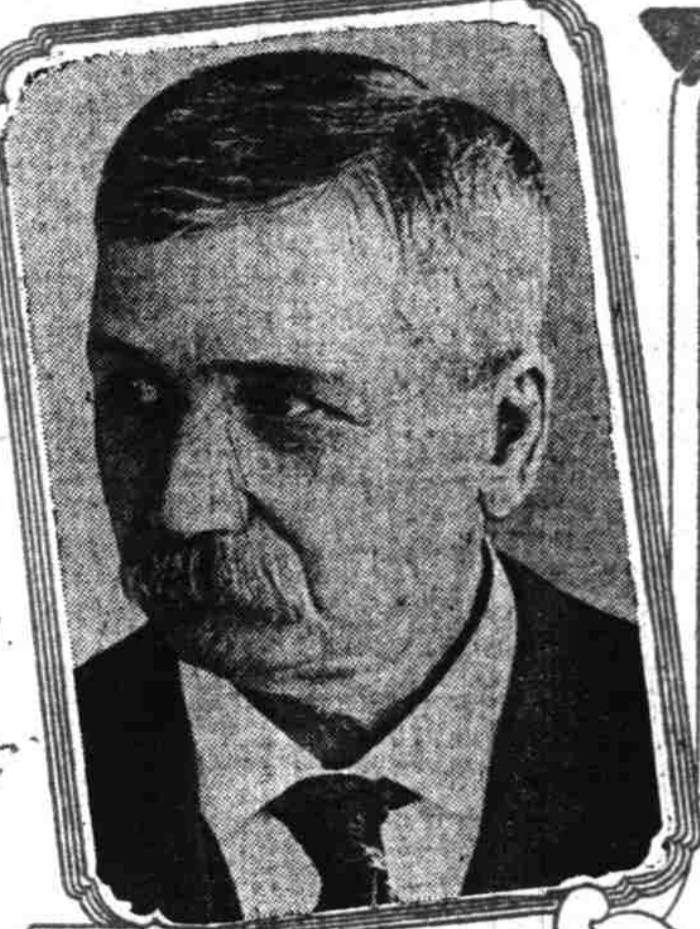
Into the Bicycle Business. It was not long afterward that O. B. Ballou, "confectionery man," was not in that business any more. He got hold of several agencies and began the life of a traveling man with a bicycle as his transportation medium. During the next few months he pedaled 8600 miles on the "bike," covering Montana, Idaho and Washington, and at the end of every day he would shout "Hooraah! this is life!" The big out of doors, long reaches of country,

sparsely settled, all reminded him of the years back as far as '74, when he participated in the gold and silver stampedes in Colorado, Nevada, California and New Mexico; the times when danger was a man's companion and hardship his shadow.

But at last his journey was ended. He found himself back in Helena and there met A. P. Dorrance, a bicycle man, who told him that there was a good opportunity to open a branch bicycle store at Great Falls. He added that a young fellow named Wright was anxious to go into the business. As a result of the interview, Ballou entered into partnership with Wright, now vice president and secretary of the firm.

During those years of his life he went through many adventures and covered the entire west on horseback. Once he spent eight months in the saddle, and traveled 2300 miles over five states and territories—Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada and Wyoming. But that was just an "incident." He opened a number of mining prospects in those days, but somehow or other he happened to be among those unlucky ones who sought gold but never found it in quantities worth mentioning. But he got possession of something just as valuable. He learned men, and acquired the art of knowing how to meet them, two big golden nuggets that have done much in helping him to succeed.

And today he is still an enthusiastic mountaineer. He loves the wilds and at every opportunity leaves the city with its drab of business care and hurries to the forested reaches where he clambers up peaks and eats jerked beef around a campfire. "I always feel better in the high altitudes," he says, "and besides, where nature is big, awesome, regal, and man small and insignificant in comparison—there is life in its fullest."



O. B. BALLOU, PRESIDENT



C. F. WRIGHT, VICE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY

PHOTO BY C. E. ELMORE GROVE



BALLOU & WRIGHT HEADQUARTERS PORTLAND, 80-82 BROADWAY



BALLOU AND WRIGHT SEATTLE BRANCH, 817 EAST PIERCE

C. F. WRIGHT DESERTED STOCK RANCH FOR PROSAC CAREER OF A BICYCLE SALESMAN

Portland Merchant Began Life Chasing Cattle on Montana Ranch, Which He Forsook for Salesmanship; Has Followed Line With Success.

IT'S a long jump from punching cattle to selling bicycles, but C. F. Wright made it in 1896 and as a direct result is now vice president and general manager of the firm of Ballou & Wright of this city. When the jump was made from the cattle ranges to the business which has placed him where fortune smiles he was only a youth just turned 17 years.

His previous business experience can be summed up in one phrase—six months as a realty salesman. But at that particular stage of his career, what was really needed was not so much business experience as plain everyday persistence and get up and go. And he had both qualities, and in addition, the benefit and counsel of his elder partner, Mr. Ballou, with whom has been associated in business for virtually his entire career. Together they made a combination hard to beat. After they had opened a bicycle store at Great Falls, Mont., they set to work to capture the market and when they quit, about five years later, they were in possession of the field and only one firm—a hardware company—was selling bicycles in the town.

He sold out immediately and soon afterward Ballou and Wright, reunited, were in business in Portland. Busting Business. They pursued the same policy as had marked their rise in Great Falls. In other words, they went out after business and it was not long before they had their full share of it here. But as they grew, so grew their ambition. When the automobile came into general use they were the first to put in automobile accessories and supplies. As soon as they realized the future of the motorcycle they added a motorcycle department to their establishment, and today, with a branch store in Seattle, they are looked upon as leaders in their field—motorcycles, bicycles and auto supplies.

To the hurricane deck of a broncho Mr. Wright is no stranger. His father was a stockman in Montana and there young Wright used to put in his spare time chasing the erratic bovine, and it might be added that he had plenty of spare time. And "chasing" about describes it because it is whispered his father used to give him many lectures because he ran the fat off the animals in an effort to develop them into racers instead of beef. The elder Wright had no doubts that his son might be president of the United States, but he was certain he would never be a success in the cattle country. So it probably is just as well that the mart of business beckoned when they did.

G. GRAY LEMLEY ONCE CONFECTIONERY MAN

Quits Candy Business to Become Assistant Manager for Ballou & Wright.

G. Gray Lemley, assistant manager in charge of the purchasing department of the Seattle branch of Ballou & Wright, has a high respect for candy, and during his life has probably eaten more different varieties than any man of his acquaintance. But an abnormal appetite is not the reason for this. It lies in the fact that he until two years ago was a confectionery man. A product of Illinois, he put in most of his manhood years in the confectionery line with his father, who retired a short time ago.

During the years they were in business together they owned a store, first at Great Falls, Mont., where he became acquainted with Mr. Ballou and Mr. Wright, and in Salt Lake City, where they owned the two principal confectionery stores when they sold out and retired in 1912. The elder Lemley went to California and the younger one on invitation of Ballou & Wright took the assistant managership of the Seattle branch, then being organized. Mr. Lemley purchased an interest in the establishment also, and since he has been engaged in his new duties he has mastered the business and has done much to put the branch on a paying basis.

When then 2 years of age. His school years were spent at Bozeman, his summers on the ranch, and he had just budded into the real estate game when he saw the advantages of the bicycle line, and with Mr. Ballou and A. F. Dorrance, a mutual friend who brought them together, went into that business. That was the only start he needed. It was the big opportunity; he grasped it, and at the age of 37 years he is found a partner in a successful establishment.