

MOVING OF BOLIVAR TOWN

Curious New Community of World's Fair Camp Followers on the March.



City of Tents Must Get Out of the Way of World's Fair Progress, But It Will Rise Again on Another Site and Though Removed From the Thoroughfare Which Gave It Name It Will Still Be Bolivar Town.



RESIDENCES OF PROMINENT CITIZENS IN A FASHIONABLE PART OF BOLIVAR TOWN.



TENT STREET BOLIVAR TOWN PROMENADE FOR LOCAL SOCIETY.

Enlargement:



Caption on photo at left says "Residents of prominent citizens in a fashionable part of Bolivar Town." Caption on photo at right says "Tent street Bolivar Town promenade for local society."



Caption: "Semi-detached villa in Bolivar Town

[text of the article]

The hegira of Bolivar Town, the new and curious Little Italy of St. Louis, is now under way. It constitutes a World's Fair epic.

Bolivar Town is the quaint little settlement of worn-out street cars, flapping tents and weather-beaten frame shanties that stands at the corner of DeBaliviere and Delmar Boulevards, extending south, where the Lindell cars turn into Forest Park on their way to the pavilion near the Palace of Liberal Arts of the World's Fair. It owes its name to the fact that "Bolivar" was the nearest approach its speakers could make in the pronunciation of DeBaliviere.

The march of World's Fair progress has compelled the abandonment of the present site of Bolivar Town. But it is not the case of the wiping out of a community. It is, rather, a transference, the removal of the household goods of an entire village from one well-defined location to another—hegira, not extinction.

Where Bolivar Town now is, with its entire front facing westward, you will see before many weeks a wide and stately avenue lined with splendid structures. A mammoth combination hotel and shopping arcade is to greet the eye in the place of the little laundry in a street car that now marks the northern beginning of Bolivar Town. The \$350,000 Cuban Clubhouse will arise at the southern extremity at the Bolivar Town of today. The great Napoleon Bonaparte Hotel, costing \$300,000, is to be built just off the southeast edge of Bolivar Town.

It is because of these things that Bolivar Town must move. The inexorable law of the "survival of the fittest" creates the necessity.

The inhabitants of Bolivar Town, who live after the manner of the patriarchs of old, in tents, are mainly Italian plaster workers employed on the World's Fair grounds. They

will establish their new canvas town on vacant land about 300 feet east of where they are now.

It's lucky for them they live in temporary structures. All that is necessary for the removal of such a village is to "strike camp" and make a sprinting dash for the next point of settlement.

Many of them have already done this.

Bolivar Town owes its original foundation to native local demand, but it soon became a foreign colony.

The first "shacks" that went up in this curious settlement were for the accommodation of employees of the St. Louis Transit Co., the motormen and conductors of the division whose offices and car sheds are located on the opposite corner. It is a busy junction and transfer point. In that corner and a little eating place in an abandoned street car was the first Bolivar Town structure. Trade was good and soon there was a tiny laundry, followed by a barber shop. Next an enterprising cobbler set up his bench in a corner of one of the ramshackle old cars that had been placed on the veteran retired list. All this began about three years ago.

Then came the first steps of preparation for the World's Fair, and the next development was the capture of Bolivar Town by the Italian forces of invasion.

These were Bolivar Town's dyed-in-the-wool squatters.

The first settlers paid an nominal rent for the ground they occupied, a dollar a month in some instances. The children of Art's chosen country, the blue-skied Italia, paid no rent. The land was theirs, and the fatness thereof, they seemed to think, without money and without price.

They set up and pegged down their tents at the far southern extremity of Bolivar Town, and soon the surrounding atmosphere became redolent with the smell of cooking macaroni and spaghetti and garlic and onions, and musical with the soft Latin speech of the aliens who paid no rent. Also, at times, this same atmosphere was less fragrant taking on the feverish odors of decaying vegetation and rotting animal matter, for Italian squatters are not the cleanest housekeepers in the world. And, too, the soft Latin speech occasionally shrilled or deepened to the harshness of anger and profanity, as family and other disputes among the Italians cause a "rough house"—or perhaps one should say a rough tent. But this is aside from the main issue.

The Roman conquerors of Bolivar Town were engaged in World's Fair plastic arts. They may be described as substratum artists, the hod carriers of the muse of sculpture, so to speak. They sweated at the calling in which their fellows of a higher class dreamed and conceived and created.

This toiling and perspiring time for the Bolivar Town exiles of Italy came daily between the hours of 8 and 5. During those hours, the tented quarter of Bolivar Town was deserted, save for the women and children left behind by the town's breadwinners. But from early twilight until late in the starry night, Bolivar Town was vital with picturesqueness and rich in foreign color.

It is "a vividly spectacular one-side-of-a-street town anyway. The first human habitation you encounter is that of the original laundryman of Bolivar Town, whose domicile is in a street car. Next is a shoe shop, flanked by "The World's Fair Barber Shop," both of these establishments also finding street car homes. Then, as you walk southward, comes a lunchroom under canvas, the tent proper being reinforced around the bottom by a circle of corrugated iron. Another laundry, this time in a tent, next demands the visitor's attention, and adjoining it is a second lunchroom in a tent, with aristocratic glass-paned windows and a stately stove-pipe aspiring heavenward.

The "Blue Front Lunchroom" follow, being a tent with cerulean trimmings around the edges.

And then you reach the most ambitious structure in Bolivar Town, a saloon in a brick home, one corner of which is occupied by a barber shop. Shoulder to shoulder with this combination liquor and lather is a "shack" poolroom for psychic recreation and gentle bodily exercise, and then you pass into the "squatter" settlement proper, the tented Bolivar Town of the sons and daughters of Italy. This is the section where the enforced hegira has already become perceptible in effects, the principal tent contingent having now moved about 300 feet to the rear, eastward of its original Bolivar Town lines.

It is here that one is instantly enveloped in the glamour of Bolivar Town as a foreign colony.

If perchance, you choose to visit Bolivar Town "by the pale moonlight," as Sir Walter Scott would say, or preferably for spectacular results on a night when the sky is overcast with clouds, you will witness an Italian gypsy scene that needs only the music of "Il Trovatore" to make it perfect—and some say that the "anvil chorus" may be heard as matters now stand, because certain of the Italians are "knocking" good and hard at

having to move. But at any rate, it's a spirited picture, the many tents aglow with the gleaming of campfires, cloaked and belted figures passing to and from between shadow and firelight, dusky women and aloe-eyed children with dreamful faces, grouping themselves in unconscious gracefulness on the open-air stage. The melodious tinkle of guitars is in the air. A mellow clarinet occasionally adds to the concord of sweet sounds. There's an Italian woman out there who has a Leonora voice to beat the band, and a Roman tenor who could sing Manrico's score without turning a hair. It's all mighty tempting to the imagination. Any one of the nearby World's Fair towers would do for a Miserere setting, and your aroused fancy hears the "Non ti corda di me" sounding out from its gloom as poignantly as if you had just been separated from a \$10 bill for two opera seats.

Bolivar Town has its esthetic side, all right.

And there's really no reason for telling of those other times when Italian discord reigns in the tented quarter of Bolivar Town. Of course, we all know that the Latins are a hot-tempered people, loving passionately and hating like sin and that a gypsy life of card-playing and woman wooing and occasional visits to the nearest wine shop—and that's right next door to the tents of Bolivar Town—is as breedful of fights as a bag full of Kilkenny cats, but let's let it go at that,

Anyway, the soul that has truly surrendered itself to art with a big A contemplates such scenes with a disregard of their moral significance—and Italian vendettas in Bolivar Town only add to the "value" of the settlement from the artistic and dramatic point of view. One might as well complain that Fra Diavolo wasn't a Sunday school superintendent as to protest at the occasional flash of a stiletto in Bolivar Town.

It was hard to make the tent-dwellers of the singular colony realize that they must move simply because the ground on which they had "squatted" was needed to furnish sites for structures costing several million dollars in all. They had come to regard the place as their own so long as they were engaged in World's Fair work, and the realty agent managing the property was wrought to surpassing feats of pantomimic eloquence in forcing the truth of the situation upon Italian minds. It was a case where hands had to be waved like windmills, eyebrows worked overtime, teeth flashed in a manner to make President Roosevelt green with envy, and interpreters called for in tones of anguish. But at last the facts grew apparent to the exiles and their 300 foot hegira followed.

They'll have to move again before very long, but they're a happy-go-lucky set and firmly believe that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" voices the soundest

philosophy. One of their number made his hegira on the day of a fierce snowstorm some time ago, ingeniously contriving a sort of sledge and moving his household lares and penates [??] over the snow on runners. But he didn't complain, All Latins are fatalists, reasoning that what is to be must be, and there's no use registering a kick at the inevitable.

And so it has come about that the site of Bolivar Town has been shifted bodily and that the pretty stretch along DeBaliviere avenue which knew the town once will know it no more forever. "Go west, young man," said Horace Greeley—but the folk of Bolivar Town went east, about 300 feet.

And they're there now until further notice.